
Flexible labour and intermediate forms of organization: Theory and Praxis

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Résumé

During the past decades there have been numerous discussions about the transformations of work, the working class and modern capitalism. Flexible work has been in the center of these discussions. The pursuit of flexibility became one of the main remedies of "eurosclerosis" in the EU. Soon, though, the devastating effects of flexibilization policies became apparent, since at least a segment of flexible workers was entrapped in insecure and unstable careers. Despite policy changes towards "flexicurity", the situation hasn't changed substantively. On the contrary, after the crisis 2008, such policies became the cornerstone of EU's employment policy and strategy to overcome the negative social impact of the crisis and consequently flexible work expanded.

On a theoretical level these policies led to a revival of heterodox and radical theories of labour market duality and segmentation and theories that argued that flexible workers have (or tend to) become a new class. Lately, theories of segmentation have increasingly been incorporated into neoclassical analysis, drawing from the insider-outsider approach

Drawing from the growing recent marxist literature on the reserve army of labour, we offer a critique of these theories and discuss whether and in what ways the trend flexibilization of labour reflects qualitative changes in the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, we examine how the dynamics of the accumulation process and capitalist competition tend to constantly re-differentiate the working class and how it affects competition between workers. These considerations have important implications for the organization of contemporary labour. Based on past attempts to organize insecure workers in Greece, we argue that there is a need for intermediate forms of struggle and coordination, which could provide a stable point of reference for the fragmented working lives of the reserve army.

Mots-Clés: precarity, flexibility, working, class, reserve army, marx, labour organization

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