

**WORKING PAPER**

**SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF GENDERED PRECARIOUSNESS: CHALLENGES**

**FOR COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS**

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The distribution of precarious employment by social group and sector is an important focus of national and comparative research. However, its *spatial* distribution has received less attention in the literature. Precarious employment by definition is insecure, lower paid and unprotected compared with ‘standard’ work norms. The literature focuses on the resurgence of such work, especially associated with certain employment forms such as temporary, part-time and self-employment. However, there are longstanding spatial dimensions of labour market insecurity that have been largely overlooked in the recent interest in precarious employment. Three such dimensions are regional, rural/urban and intra-urban employment disparities. Precariousness is created not just by specific job characteristics but by the spatial contexts in which such work occurs. Precarious employment affects individuals in particular locations and is shaped by spatial dynamics.

Spatial analysis is closely related to temporal considerations in the study of precarious employment. Temporal analysis includes not only the evolution of employment forms and the forces that constitute and reconstitute precarious employment over time, but the dynamics of people’s participation in such work. Aspects of interest include the duration of precarious employment and life-course patterns (see Fuller, this volume). Gender is central

to these dynamics. Temporal and spatial dynamics intersect as jobs and workers move across space and through time. Understanding this kind of mobility (or the lack thereof) thus becomes fundamental to the study of precarious employment in either a national or comparative context.

Spatial analysis is increasingly at the core of scholarship in political economy. For example, complexity theory stresses the importance of simultaneous spatial and temporal analysis of systems, emphasizing ‘processes at multiple and interlocking geographic scales’ in a system marked by constant change (O’Sullivan *et al.* 2006: 614). At least two scales are always relevant in any context. In the case of precarious employment, then, analysis at the national scale alone is insufficient. Similarly, a focus on scalar analysis brings the importance of space to the forefront, as the socially produced scales of regulation, policy discourse and individual action interact with geography (Jessop 2002; Keil and Mahon 2008). Multi-scalar perspectives on labour markets and labour market policies are called for.

How can the spatial dimension be better taken into account in the study of precarious employment, both conceptually and empirically? What challenges does this present for comparative analysis, which is inherently spatial but only at the national level. The focus of this chapter is how to also take account of the spatial dimension *within* countries. Three types of considerations arise. First, what does a spatial perspective contribute to our understanding of precarious employment? Is precariousness manifested and shaped differently by spatial context (rural versus urban, for example)? Is attention drawn to key

dynamics (mobility, for example)? Second, how does a spatial perspective alter how we study precarious employment? Do we need additional variables or indicators? Do certain concepts in the precarious literature have an urban bias (temporary employment, for example)? Third, what questions need to be asked in a comparative context to better understand the spatial political economy of precarious employment and its gender contours?

When considering spatial dimensions, the other distributional aspects of precarious employment such as gender, industry, ethnicity and immigrant status need to be simultaneously mapped and analyzed. In which spaces, and how, is precariousness for immigrants constituted, for example? There is also an important temporal aspect to these considerations. How have the spatial dimensions of precarious employment changed (by region, or by rural/urban for example)? Has the discourse around these spatial inequalities changed?

This chapter considers conceptual issues and draws some implications for comparative data analysis. Three common levels of spatial differentiation in labour markets are considered in terms of the challenges they raise for the study of precarious work: regional, rural/urban and intra-urban. As noted above, worker spatial mobility/immobility comes to the forefront in this analysis. In some contexts it is the immobility of workers that provides a captive labour force for precarious employment. Such immobility may be related to residential patterns in an urban context, or to household gender dynamics. In other contexts it is the mobility of workers — through temporary and permanent migration, internally and

internationally — that provides the labour supply. The sending and receiving regulatory contexts shape migration patterns and the ensuing linkages of labour markets and households. Mobility of capital is no less an issue, as the location constraints and strategies of employers come to the forefront — again shaped by regulatory contexts. Finally, the meaning of precarious employment in people's lives is shaped by factors such as the social wage, cost of living and support networks, which are constituted to a significant degree at sub-national scales.

## **REGIONAL DISPARITIES**

In many countries regional disparities are an important focus of labour market analysis, with certain regions having a disproportionate share of precarious employment (though the term may not be used). By regions in this context we mean sub-national geographic areas — broad groupings that have meaning in a particular country due to physical geography, institutional arrangements, or history. Regions can be broader or narrower than province/state divisions, depending on the focus of inquiry and data availability. The indicators used in analyses of regional disparities overlap with those used in the precarious employment literature. The region of Atlantic Canada (composed of four provinces) has lower wages, higher unemployment and underemployment rates, more temporary jobs, and higher earnings inequality than other regions of Canada (Sanga 2000; Galarneau 2005). The differences among regions may be as significant as differences among countries. For example, a recent Statistics Canada study of regional variation in annual hours worked found these differences similar in magnitude to the Canadian–US national differences

(Heisz and LaRochelle-Cote 2007). National comparisons are subject to misinterpretation if key regional differences are ignored.

There are important long-standing regional disparities in many countries (northern versus southern Italy, for example). Some are resource-related, while others emerged in the process of industrialization as activity tended to concentrate spatially. In the era of globalization, supra-national regional concerns have tended to supplant intra-national regional analysis. For example, the controversial OECD Jobs Strategy (OECD 1994), which promoted flexibility for Europe as a whole, did not address regional disparities. Subsequent interest in precarious employment largely reflected the erosion of secure, protected jobs that tended to be concentrated in the 'have' regions of national economies. In the new global economy some of these traditional 'have' regions saw an increase in precarious employment (the American mid-west, for example, or the north of England). But what of the traditional 'have not' regions? Has there been a reconfiguration of the regional distribution of precarious employment?

While the information economy has overturned some spatial constraints, the evidence suggests that the distribution of economic activity remains highly concentrated and spatial inequalities persist. A recent OECD review found that, though regional disparities decreased slightly from 1993 to 2003 overall, they 'remain relatively persistent' (OECD 2005: 74). The relative position of regions did not change much in this time period, especially in Europe. Indeed, they report *national* convergence but not *regional* convergence in unemployment and employment rates. Thus, regional differences have

become more, not less, important. There is considerable variation by country, however, both in the extent and trend of regional disparities. Regional differences are relatively strong in Italy, Germany, Belgium, the UK and Canada, compared with Australia, the Netherlands and Norway (OECD 2006: 4). Regional disparities in unemployment rates increased in Canada, Italy, Spain and the UK, while they decreased in the US, Germany, Greece and Switzerland (OECD 2005: 75). While there is some turnover in the list of high unemployment regions, about 65 per cent of regions with high unemployment rates in 1993 still had high rates in 2003.

Maza and Villaverde (2005) also find large, persistent regional disparities in the EU12 and a stable ranking of regions. They find regional incomes polarizing across the EU, with a concentration of rich regions in the north and poor regions in the south and east, mapping intra-country regional disparities onto inter-country disparities. Similar strong spatial disparities in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) across the EU27 (including accession countries) are shown for the 1995–2000 period by Ertur and Koch (2006). In the enlarged EU they find a north-west/east division replacing the traditional north/south division. Regions tend to agglomerate. Thus, a poor region may have more in common with a neighbouring region in a different country than with a richer region in the same country. These important cross-country regional similarities will be masked in national comparisons.

Such findings are interpreted in the literature on scale in terms of the re-scaling and the relativization of scale that has accompanied globalization. As the national state loses prominence, there is more focus on other scales of economic and political activity and more

complexity in scalar relations. The resurgence of regions, including the increased importance of cross-border regions noted above in Europe, is part of this rescaling (Jessop 2002). The tendency to ‘naturalize’ regions, or view them as the inevitable result of economic forces, masks their ongoing construction and transformation through political economic processes across scalar levels. Comparative scholarship focused at the national level risks overlooking these scalar forces.

The regional disparities literature tends to focus on aggregate labour market measures such as the unemployment rate or average earnings (or per capita GDP), while the precarious employment literature focuses on job characteristics, including low wages and the risk of job loss. In a high unemployment region there is likely to be both an absolute shortage of jobs and a concentration of insecure jobs. In Canada, for example, high unemployment regions also have slightly higher incidences of non-standard work (Kapsalis and Tourigny 2004; Pérusse 1997), lower average wages, and lower rates of unionization. All these are indicators used in the study of precarious employment. This suggests that the study of precarious employment might move beyond its focus on *job* characteristics to also take account of overall *labour market* characteristics, such as unemployment rates. In comparative research this would enable a better understanding of the overall political economy context of precarious employment.

There is an important intersection with the literature on labour underutilization and hardship, in which the unemployment rate is supplemented with measures of discouraged workers, involuntary part-time, temporary work, and sometimes low-wage work (Howell

2005; MacDonald 2002; Ruiz-Quintanilla and Claes 1996). This research shows that countries (and perhaps regions) differ in their manifestations of labour market hardship; in the absence of available 'standard' work, people may become unemployed, discouraged workers, involuntary part-time, or contingent (Sorrentino 1993), depending on the economic and institutional context. For example, the option of involuntary part-time work rather than unemployment may exist in some contexts (countries or regions) and not others (OECD 1994; Fagan and Rubery 1996). For Canada, Pérusse (1997) finds similar provincial patterns in unemployment rates, involuntary part-time rates, incidence of non-permanent work, and involuntary self-employment. Leore (1999) shows that while measures of underemployment (including discouraged workers and involuntary part-time) and unemployment move together in Canada, the gap is wider in high unemployment regions (that is, underemployment, the indicators of which overlap with precarious employment indicators, is accentuated). An important empirical question is whether in particular countries the forms of precarious employment tend to cluster together regionally, as seems the case in Canada, or if there is regional 'specialization' — for example, with part-time work concentrated in certain regions and temporary work in others. In Germany, for example, part-time work for women and mini-jobs are more common in western rather than eastern Germany, a legacy of different past institutional structures (Weinkopf, this volume).

If there are significant regional dimensions to precarious employment, what are the implications for our understanding of that work? Might the experience (or consequence) of a certain form of employment differ by regional context? For example, it may be easier to

move from temporary to permanent work in a low unemployment region. On the other hand, temporary work in a poor region may have higher relative status than in a rich region — in fact it may be the norm. In the Atlantic provinces of Canada the ‘good’ jobs which have been lost in the traditional resource sectors would be considered precarious by most measures (seasonal, lacking social protection, often self-employed). However, the jobs in the service sector which have replaced them (in tourism, for example) are considered even more precarious. In the boom region of Alberta, on the other hand, where by most indicators employment is less precarious, workers face a housing shortage and a low social wage. These differences are missed if we focus only on job characteristics.

How does the regional concentration of precarious employment map onto other distributions, such as those by industry? For example, Atlantic Canada has a higher concentration of seasonal resource industry jobs, which are precarious regardless of their location. It also has a higher concentration of consumer service jobs, which are also associated with precariousness. Other regions are depressed due to losses in ‘good’ mining or manufacturing jobs. While an industry analysis alone would pick up part of this, something of the meaning of precarious employment for people’s lives would be missed. Spatial concentrations of precarious employment, even if industry-based, raise issues of labour market adjustment, especially labour mobility. If precarious employment is understood in terms of risks, the risk of having to relocate needs to be considered.

Gender may also play out differently in relation to precarious employment across regions, as it does across countries. Fagan and Rubery (1996) draw attention to the different

meaning of part-time employment for women by country. Do such differences also exist regionally? The narrow employment base in a particular region may be more gendered than national averages indicate. Furthermore, this may change with economic restructuring (the loss of male-dominated resource jobs and the rise of female-dominated service jobs, for example). Gender is also crucial to the analysis of the mobility/migration issue raised above, considered in more detail later.

To the extent that regional differences matter, an analysis of scale points to institutional mechanisms that affect labour market dynamics at this level. These include organizational strategies of firms as well as government policies and community dynamics. For example, footloose firms, whose location decisions are responsive to labour market conditions, may choose to locate in more marginal regions. The Atlantic Provinces of Canada have thus been an attractive destination for call centres in recent years. Furthermore, the restructuring of firms has a spatial dimension even when there is no actual relocation.<sup>1</sup> On the policy side, some programs may be explicitly or implicitly regionally differentiated. In Germany differences exist between the western and eastern regions in the availability of full-time, public childcare facilities (Weinkopf, this volume), as is true between Quebec and the rest of Canada. Canada's Employment Insurance has regionally differentiated entrance requirements and benefit durations. One could argue that precarious employment is better protected in Canada's high unemployment regions, as fewer hours of work are needed to qualify for income replacement benefits, which can be received for longer periods. It should be noted, however, that not all types of precarious employment in high unemployment areas fare well under this policy — part-time work in a seasonal context, for

example, is especially difficult (from both the employer and employee perspectives), whereas full-time temporary/seasonal work is better protected (MacDonald 1999). Another institutional framework which may be linked to regional differentiation is the structure of collective bargaining. If bargaining is national or sectoral, workers receive similar protection and benefits regardless of region. However, in a decentralized bargaining regime, weak regional labour markets may lead to less union coverage and/or poorer contracts, resulting in more precarious employment. These examples suggest the importance of subjecting national comparative stories to a regional lens.

## **RURAL/URBAN**

The rural/urban dimension is also an important axis of differentiation, increasingly so in many countries. The definition of rural is usually based on population density (with various cut-offs), though sometimes distance from major urban centres is factored in. There are of course also degrees of urban, and careful attention has to be paid to definitions used in particular rural/urban comparisons. Rural and urban labour markets may differ in the incidence of precarious employment and its demographic distribution, the mix of employment forms considered precarious, and the consequences of such employment. The size and significance of these distinctions will of course vary by country. While renewed interest in precarious employment may reflect recent labour restructuring in primarily urban contexts, it is a long-standing feature of work in many rural areas. Recent Canadian studies show a higher incidence of part-time, non-permanent, seasonal and low-wage employment in rural areas compared to urban (Rothwell 2002; Curto and Rothwell 2003; Alasia and

Rothwell 2003; Pérusse 1997). Kapsalis and Tourigny find a 49 per cent incidence rate of non-standard work (part-time, self-employed and temporary) in rural areas compared to 35 per cent in large urban areas (2004: 10). A cursory examination of the European literature indicates similar issues in many countries and regions, though there are also cases of strong rural employment growth (Kiehl and Panebianc 2002; Bryden 2003; Bryden and Bollman 2000).

The *mix* of non-standard employment forms may differ between rural and urban contexts. For example, own account self-employment (farmers, fishers, and tourism operators) is high in rural areas. Rates of self-employment in rural Canada are approximately double those in urban areas (du Plessis 2004). Permanent part-time work may be less available in rural areas, and/or less attractive, than temporary (seasonal) full-time work. In Canada one cannot qualify for Employment Insurance on temporary part-time hours, nor is year-round part-time work an appealing alternative to seasonal full-time work in many rural communities.

The *consequences* of precarious employment may also differ in rural and urban contexts. For example, the probability of escaping low-wage work has been shown to be lower (and its incidence and duration higher) in rural than in urban areas in the UK, especially for women (Phimister *et al.* 2006). Canadian research also finds a lower probability of moving to a higher wage job for rural low-wage workers (Vera-Toscana *et al.* 2003). Entitlements to income security protection, such as Employment Insurance, may systematically differ in rural versus urban contexts. One-half of temporary full-time workers in Canada (who are

concentrated in rural areas) receive Employment Insurance compared to about 15 per cent of part-time workers (Kapsalis and Tourigny 2004). Other employment protections may differ by industry or occupation in ways that overlap with an urban/rural divide (for example, employment standards for agricultural workers, union eligibility of self-employed fishers or farmers). Occupational health risks are also often high in traditional rural resource industries (arthritis and rheumatism, for example, were found to be higher in rural areas in Canada, adjusting for age — Mitura and Bollman 2003). The risk of having to move to look for work is of particular concern in rural areas, with women generally less mobile than men (Phimister *et al.* 2006; MacDonald 2004). Higher rates of home ownership in rural areas also contribute to lower mobility (Phimister *et al.* 2006). On a more positive note, family and community support networks are often found to be higher in rural areas, which may cushion the effects of precarious employment.

Some categories common in the precarious employment literature are too broad to capture important rural/urban distinctions. For example, temporary work includes seasonal, short-term contract, and casual (in the Canadian context). Conceptually, seasonal work is quite distinct and is especially prevalent in rural areas. Galarneau (2005) examines the separate components of ‘temporary work’ in Canada, which in 2003 represented 12.5 per cent of paid employment. Seasonal workers made up about 3 per cent of total employment and were disproportionately concentrated in rural areas (43 per cent of seasonal workers lived in rural areas compared to 14 per cent of casual employees). Seasonal workers earned 28 per cent less on average (hourly) than permanent, compared to 8 per cent less for contract and 24 per cent less for casual (2005: 7). Although rural seasonality is often associated with

resource industries, in Canada there is a higher incidence of seasonal work in every industrial sector in rural areas compared to urban (Rothwell 2002). Seasonal work in rural areas differs from other forms of temporary work in that it tends to be predictable and ongoing. For example, seasonal workers, though temporary, may have ongoing relationships with employers and long tenure (though this may not be shown by standard measures of tenure). In the Canadian context many seasonal workers are unionized (though at a much lower rate than permanent employees), with seniority and other benefits continuing despite annual shutdowns. Seasonal workers in Canada are also often able to access Employment Insurance.

The divisions *amongst* seasonal workers also need to be examined. Gender differences are significant. For example, amongst seasonal workers in Canada, the earnings gap for women (compared to permanent) was found to be 38 per cent compared to 27 per cent for their male counterparts (Galarneau 2005). A lower share of employed rural women in Canada work full-time, and their part-time employment is more likely to be involuntary, compared to their urban counterparts. Part-time employment rates for men, on the other hand, do not vary by rural/urban location (Curto and Rothwell 2003). Studies of Employment Insurance use have found that, given the gender division of labour, women seasonal workers are also less likely to qualify for Employment Insurance than men (HRDC 2001). Another important distinction in many countries is whether the seasonal worker is local or a temporary migrant. Some countries have a tradition of using migrant workers in agriculture and other seasonal industries. Note that this may involve internal as well as international migrants, sometimes in the same locale.

While precarious employment has been more prevalent in the rural context, restructuring is changing its dimensions and consequences in rural as well as urban labour markets.

Canadian research points to new forms and new risks (Winson and Leach 2002; MacDonald 2004; Sinclair *et al.* 2006). Seasons may be shorter and work more temporary in resource industries as well as in the emerging service sector; 'occupational skidding', or downward mobility, has occurred; and changes within jobs result in increased precariousness (higher health risks, less control). State policies of deregulation and re-regulation in the areas of income security, industry supports (such as agricultural subsidies), resource management and trade form part of the restructuring process. Rural research identifies the particular gender contours of this restructuring (Leach 1999; Winson and Leach 2002; MacDonald 2004). International research on the fisheries demonstrates similarities across countries in the increased precariousness of employment (Neis *et al.* 2005). European research on Italy, Germany and Britain shows some areas of strong rural employment growth as a result of economic restructuring in recent years, while other areas have suffered, suggesting a growing polarization among rural areas (Kiehl and Panebianc 2002).

The rural context draws attention to certain key aspects of precarious employment . One is the relevance of family work patterns to understanding the consequences of, and strategic responses to, precarious employment. This raises the question of the possible role of data on the family as a work unit, not just the individual, in comparative research on precarious employment. Galarneau (2005) examines spousal as well as individual earnings in her

recent study of temporary and permanent workers and finds that spouses partly compensate for the lower earnings of temporary workers, though less so for women temporary workers. Another issue that emerges in the rural context is the ecological impact of economic restructuring. Just as 'flexibilization' strategies of firms and governments intensified the labour process, they put pressure on the resources, with disastrous effects such as stock collapses. Both the resource base and employment have become increasingly precarious in many rural contexts, caught in a symbiotic downward spiral (Neis *et al.* 2005).

## **INTRA-URBAN**

Another meaningful spatial division that emerges from the literature on the geography of work is intra-urban (Martin and Morrison 2003; Peck and Theodore 2001).<sup>2</sup> Work in this area goes back to the early days of labour market segmentation analysis. The mapping of precarious and standard work in a metropolitan area in comparison with residential patterns explains the concentration of precarious employment among certain groups (such as immigrants, ethnic and racial minorities). Peck and Theodore (2001), for example, write of the relocation of 'good' jobs to the suburbs of Chicago. This geographic restructuring has resulted in underemployment in inner-city Latino and African-American communities, while the overall Chicago economy is booming and suffering from labour shortages. Furthermore, temporary work agencies are specifically targeting the captive surplus labour in the inner city. In a similar vein, Browne finds that young black women are penalized more than their white counterparts by the 'spatial mismatch' caused by the suburbanization of jobs in US metropolitan areas (Browne 2000).

In other countries the urban patterns may differ, but the distribution of jobs and neighbourhoods remains of critical importance to understanding precarious employment in the urban context (for France see Fagnani and Letablier, this volume). Canadian data show a widening gap between rich and poor neighbourhoods in urban areas (Heisz and McLeod 2004), with differences by city in the spatial pattern (poor core versus poor suburbs). Where there is a concentration of recent immigrants in precarious jobs, the spatial correlates to this are an important part of the political economy analysis (Cranford and Vosko 2006). Intra-urban labour markets are likely to be important. In Canada, for example, Heisz and McLeod (2004) show that new immigrants make up a large and increasing share of residents of low-income neighbourhoods in many Census Metropolitan Areas.

In a comparative context one would look for differences in such intra-urban patterns, and the institutional factors that account for these differences. Housing, transportation and other policies will shape the distribution of both the jobs and the workers within an urban area. In the Chicago case, the temp agencies themselves are one of the key institutions shaping the spatial mapping of precarious employment. The agencies locate near the labour pool and solve the transportation problems of inner-city workers by shipping them to day-labour jobs in the suburbs (Peck and Theodore 2001: 477). Moreover, the temp world is characterized by fragmentation, with some agencies 'restructuring up' and some 'restructuring down', creating segments *within* this form of employment that have both spatial and occupational dimensions (Peck and Theodore 2001: 479).

Like the other spatial dimensions, the intra-urban example directs attention to the movement of workers and the locational congruence or incongruence of the precarious jobs and the workers who hold them. One can imagine a situation where inner-city workers are trapped in inner-city precarious jobs, with lack of access to good suburban jobs (or vice versa), which was the image conveyed in the American segmentation literature of the 1970s. In Peck and Theodore's Chicago, on the other hand, the precarious jobs are also in the suburbs, filled by workers 'shipped in' daily from the inner city by temp agencies. Clearly, the restructuring has been profoundly spatial, especially in how the flexibility strategies of firms are manifested and facilitated.

## **LABOUR MOBILITY AND PRECARIOUS EMPLOYMENT**

Once space is introduced to the study of precarious employment, the location of jobs and workers becomes an issue. This is important to understanding the creation and maintenance of precarious employment as well as its consequences. From the regional disparities literature it is clear that demand factors are more important than supply in explaining the differences between the strong and weak regions — that is, the nature of the jobs, more than the labour force. While labour mobility refers to all aspects of the movement of workers across jobs and labour markets (including changes in industry or occupation), spatial mobility is often, though not always, part of this movement. The maintenance of precarious employment in poorer regions is associated with labour immobility and inadequate labour market adjustment (OECD 2005: 87). Similarly, rural precariousness is often understood in terms of workers being tied to a place. In a final example, the

inelasticity of women's labour supply, due to mobility constraints, makes them a captive labour force for precarious jobs. Thus, labour *immobility* can be a facilitating factor for precarious jobs.

On the other hand, labour *mobility* can be a factor maintaining some precarious jobs, given the availability of labour willing to commute large distances, or migrate permanently or temporarily, even for poor jobs. For example, rural workers and those from poor regions have provided a pool of labour for precarious employment in other areas through seasonal and temporary internal migration. International immigration, both temporary and permanent, supports precarious employment that citizens refuse to do. Therefore, both labour immobility and mobility can be part of the creation and maintenance of precarious employment.

In either national or comparative work on precarious employment, factors related to spatial labour mobility are thus important to the political economic analysis of the process (see Fuller, this volume, for discussion of the related issue of temporal mobility). How does worker spatial mobility, or lack thereof, shape the dynamics of precarious employment in a particular place? Migration, whether temporary or permanent, international or internal, is a key dimension of this. In some countries/regions, the precarious employment sector is fuelled by a stream of new immigrants. In others it may be sustained by the use of temporary guest workers. In still others it may be internal movements of people — rural/urban migration, or (as in Canada) permanent out-migration from poorer regions, or migration for temporary/seasonal work in another area, with connections maintained to the

home community — that fuel the precarious jobs. OECD data (2006: 151) show considerable variation in internal migration flows, with workers more mobile in the US and Australia than in Europe. In this research, mobility is interpreted positively as a key part of flexibility. However, as with flexibility, mobility has a downside and can be the problem not the solution. The different dynamics of spatial labour mobility are shaped by many factors, including immigration policy, the housing market, social policies, employment insurance and transportation.

In a national context it may be useful to think of two types of migration: permanent, which is typically related to the hope of finding a better job (reducing precariousness); and temporary, which is often for precarious employment. At a national or regional level, the extent of temporary migration for employment, or non-local job holding (and the workers who do this), could be examined as one aspect of understanding precarious employment. Of course, not every non-local job is precarious (think of long-distance commuting for short-term lucrative contracts). However, such work carries costs and risks beyond those experienced in comparable local jobs, especially if one takes account of the family context.

To what extent are spatial mobility issues picked up through other indicators commonly used in the study of precarious employment? Distributions of precarious employment by gender or immigration status clearly reflect some of the mobility factors. However, the use of more specific mobility indicators would clarify the relationships. For example, if one looks at the characteristics of fish plant jobs on Prince Edward Island (Canada), these would clearly be considered precarious, since they are low-paid, seasonal, non-union, and

predominantly taken up by women. One might imagine that a local pool of captive rural labour keeps these plants viable. In reality, it is women from the neighbouring province of Newfoundland, migrating seasonally, often with children in tow, who have kept these plants going in recent years. This past season, the Newfoundland women worked alongside Russians, brought in on temporary worker permits (Grzetic 2007). Knowing the workers are temporary migrants, like knowing women take these jobs, clarifies our understanding of the perpetuation of precarious employment, as well as its consequences (for example, the impacts on sending families and communities). Attention is also directed at the policy frameworks that support this form of precarious employment, including Employment Insurance rules and immigration policies.

While spatial mobility (or the lack thereof) facilitates precarious employment (allowing and shaping dimensions of precariousness), it also has implications for the consequences of precarious employment and the distribution of those consequences. Workers who can only access better jobs by physically moving are in a different position compared to those in parallel jobs with more local options. One can think of it as an added dimension of economic insecurity associated with employment in some spatial contexts but not all. There are also notable differences by gender. Women are generally found to be more restricted in their mobility options (due to childcare, transportation, gendered immigration policy, tied migration and other constraints) and to be less likely to improve their earnings as a result of migration (Finnie 1999; Gabriel 2004; HRDC 1996; Morrison and Lichter 1988). Thus, they risk being either stuck in precarious employment due to lack of mobility or relegated to precarious employment in a new area when they migrate.<sup>3</sup> Racial and ethnic differences

in mobility constraints and consequences are equally significant and may explain some of the distributional patterns found in the precarious employment literature (Cranford and Vosko 2006).

The institutional framework is particularly important in shaping mobility options and consequences. Housing, transportation, training policies, child care policies and unemployment insurance rules all shape the interaction of precarious employment and labour mobility across countries, regions, rural/urban areas and city neighbourhoods. Comparative research has much to teach us about these dynamics.

## **CONCLUSION**

Precarious employment has an inherent spatial dimension, with implications for theoretical and empirical work. The spatial dimension is part of the dynamic that creates and maintains precarious employment and determines its distribution, including by gender. While considerable research exists on spatial labour market inequalities, be they regional, rural/urban or intra-urban, this work is not always integrated with the precarious employment literature.

The exploration in this chapter raises implications for comparative work on spatial dimensions of precariousness. The conceptual work needed includes an examination, in a comparative context, of particular forms of precarious employment that are known to be spatially concentrated. The leading candidate from a rural perspective is seasonal work.

There is little comparative work on seasonality and its institutional context. How is it viewed and supported in various countries? What is the balance of employer and state responsibilities for the conditions and security of this work (and the role of families)? To what extent is it precarious? How is it gendered? How does it intersect with other forms of employment? What difference does family context make?

Another conceptual challenge is to better understand the role of migration in the development of precarious employment, its gendered consequences and its spatial contours. While countries differ in how labour mobility or immobility facilitates precarious employment, internal migration, especially temporary, is an important issue for rural areas and poor regions.

Overall, it is important to use different spatial lenses (rural, regional, intra-urban) as well as a gender lens to examine the policy/institutional frameworks related to precarious employment and the social wage (for example, housing and transportation).

Implications also emerge for empirical work and comparative data analysis. Spatial comparisons would be facilitated by including indicators of the extent of regional (and rural/urban) differentiation in the labour market, such as the variation in unemployment rates, average earnings and earnings inequality. Whenever possible, the examination of forms of employment should reach beyond indicators of precariousness (wages, unionization, social security protection) to include regional (and rural/urban) distributions (or rates) of each form of employment. Country profiles can also include information on

regional differentiation in components of the social wage (for example, Employment Insurance rules, housing costs, minimum wage).

Whenever possible, it is helpful to disaggregate temporary work (seasonal, contract, casual, agency), given the quite different spatial implications of these forms. Finally, measures of temporary and seasonal migration (such as non-local job holding) are useful to complement the more commonly used indicators of precariousness.

While this is a tall order, even a little more attention to spatially differentiated data and spatially aware conceptualizations will have pay-offs for our understanding of precarious employment and its gender contours.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, the account of increasing precariousness of work in forestry in Newfoundland in Sinclair *et al.* (2006).

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that work on scale and the geographies of local labour markets also emphasizes inter-urban differences in the construction of precarious employment. See, for example, Reimer's UK study of contracting out local cleaning and catering services in three cities (Reimer 2003).

<sup>3</sup> For example, Morrison and Lichter (1988) find that inter-county migration in the US increases rates of involuntary part-time employment and low pay for women and contributes to labour force non-participation and unemployment.