

Vulnerable Workers

The leading academic authorities contributing to this book have been involved in major studies carried out for international organisations, individual governments, and national trades' union organisations; in *Vulnerable Workers* they consider the growth of job insecurity, the prevalence of flexible or temporary work, and the emergence of precarious forms of self-employment. They look at the new market economies of post-communist Eastern Europe and China, where economic development may occur at the expense of workers' lives and health; 'misclassification' by employers of workers as 'contractors', denying them access to rights; and the plight of migrant, transient and 'invisible' workers. The impact of supply chain business strategies on the most vulnerable workers; and on the complex relationships between levels of job security and the presence of different kinds of risks are similarly assessed.

The contributors also propose responses to the challenges they highlight. The role of employee representatives is examined, together with the potential to enhance worker capability through organisational change. New legislative approaches, and changes to traditional compensation and social security systems are considered. Academics and researchers, policy makers, regulators, trades unionists and occupational health professionals – and wise employers – will all find a use for this book.

This brilliant book breaks new ground by addressing an often overlooked subject – how work in our new economy acts as a persistent stressor with both physical and mental health ramifications. The authors examine the occupational safety and health risks associated with chronic job insecurity and precarious employment, and take important steps toward identifying positive solutions to them.

Susan Bisom-Rapp, Professor of Law, Thomas Jefferson School of Law, USA

This book sheds light on the occupational health and safety concerns of vulnerable workers, who are often employed in high-risk sectors, reporting poor health and being more prone to occupational diseases and injuries. It covers migrant workers, a particularly relevant group as migration is likely to keep on increasing and research is needed on the links between occupational health and safety, working conditions and health of migrant workers.

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Vulnerable Workers

**Malcolm Sargeant
and Maria Giovannone**



Vulnerable Workers

Health, Safety and Well-being

EDITED BY

**Malcolm Sargeant
and Maria Giovannone**

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Vulnerable Workers

*Safety, Well-being and
Precarious Work*

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Occupational Health and Safety in Organisations: Applying Amartya Sen's Capability Approach and Organisational Climate

*Andrea Bernardi*¹

Introduction

This chapter, after a brief statistical analysis of occupational safety trends within Italy specifically and Europe in general, summarises different research perspectives on occupational well-being and safety. There is no doubt from the statistics that higher incidences of accidents and fatal accidents occur among non-standard workers than among standard workers. Occupational health and safety (OHS) is a key organisational priority to reduce risk and promote employees well-being.

As well as applying Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to OHS behaviours, this chapter's contribution lies in the way it introduces and discusses the role of *organisational climate* as an important mediator linking workers' contractual status (standard/non-standard, permanent/atypical²) with their attitudes and

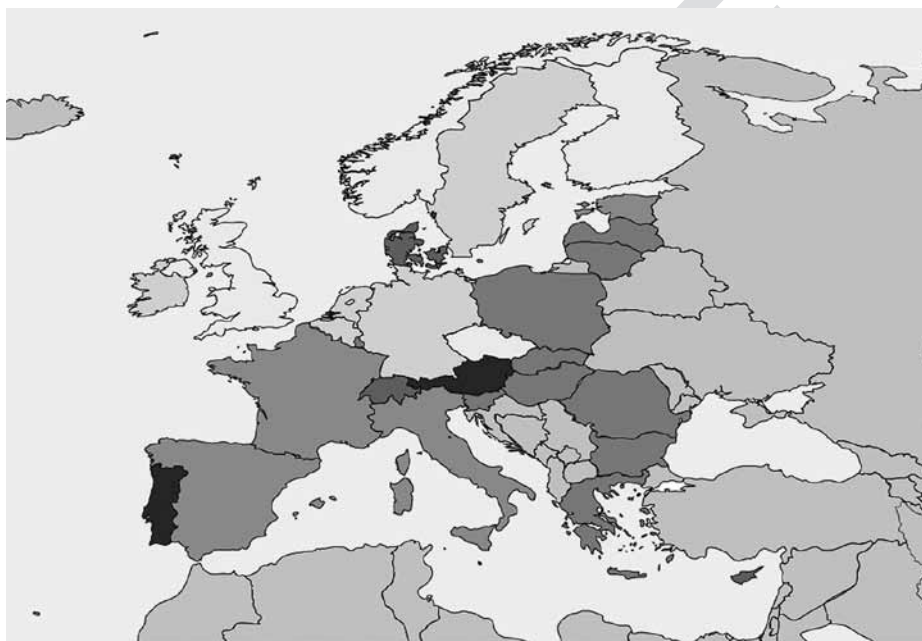
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² According to Eurofound: Atypical work refers to employment relationships not conforming to the standard or 'typical' model of full-time, regular, open-ended employment with a single employer over a long time span. 'Typical' work in contrast is defined as a socially secure,

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1 behaviour in relation to safety. As such, this chapter proposes a new theoretical 1
 2 methodology to deal with OHS issues, and further suggests cross-border co- 2
 3 operation among social sciences in this field. 3
 4 4

5 The motivation for carrying out this research lies in the official statistics on 5
 6 labour safety, although these in themselves present considerable difficulties. 6
 7 Any comparison between European countries becomes immediately 7
 8 methodologically difficult, especially when dealing with all 27 member states. 8
 9 At best, standard indexes and harmonised figures therefore have to be used 9
 10 as exemplified in Figure 7.1 (fatal accidents every 100 thousand workers). 10
 11 11



31 Legend 31
 32 1.0-1.3 1.3-1.8 1.8-2.5 32
 33 2.5-3.3 3.3-6.3 N/A 33
 34 34
 35 **Figure 7.1 Fatal accidents at work in Europe, standard impact on 100,000** 35
 36 **workers, 2007** 36
 37 37

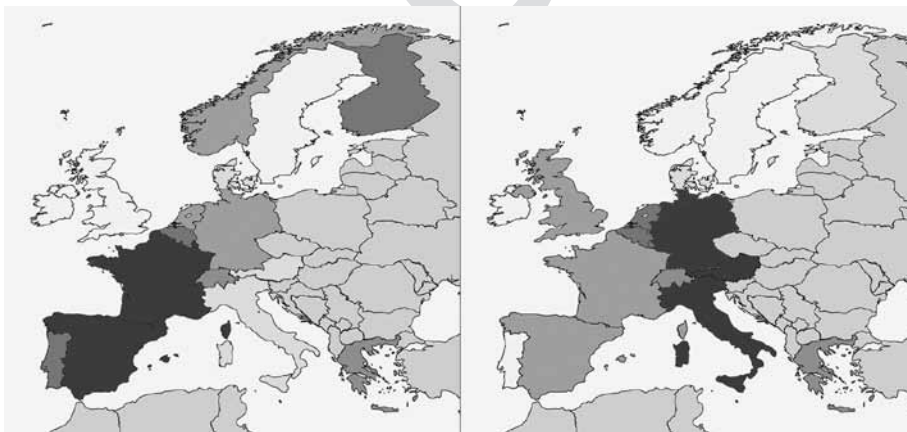
38 *Source:* EUROSTAT (2010). 38
 39 39

40 full-time job of unlimited duration, with standard working hours guaranteeing a regular 40
 41 income and, via social security systems geared towards wage earners, securing pension 41
 42 payments and protection against ill-health and unemployment. 41

1 As can be seen, countries are grouped into bands, identified by different
 2 shading. The safest of these countries records only 1 fatal accident per 100
 3 thousand workers, compared with 6.3 per 100 thousand workers in the least
 4 safe place. It is notable that among the main economies, the UK and Germany
 5 outperform Italy in terms of their OHS records.

6
 7 The background to this can partially be explained by the fact that, during recent
 8 years, Italy has experienced several tragic industrial accidents which have attracted
 9 the attention of the press, public opinion and policy makers alike. As a direct
 10 consequence of this poor trend, however, in 2008 the Italian Parliament reformed
 11 their health and safety law combining the many existing laws into a single act³ and
 12 strengthened the penalties for non-observance or negligence of its stipulations to
 13 include prison sentences for employers or persons in charge of safety.

14
 15 Predictably, however, this is not a simple case of Italy lagging behind the UK
 16 and Germany, as the statistics point to a much more nuanced and complicated
 17 picture. A map illustrating non-fatal accidents, for example, actually suggests
 18 that worse safety conditions exist in the UK and Germany than in Italy. Several
 19 other peculiarities can also be discerned: for instance in Italy and the UK
 20 the agricultural sector is more likely to experience accidents than that of
 21 construction, while in France precisely the opposite is true (Figure 7.2).

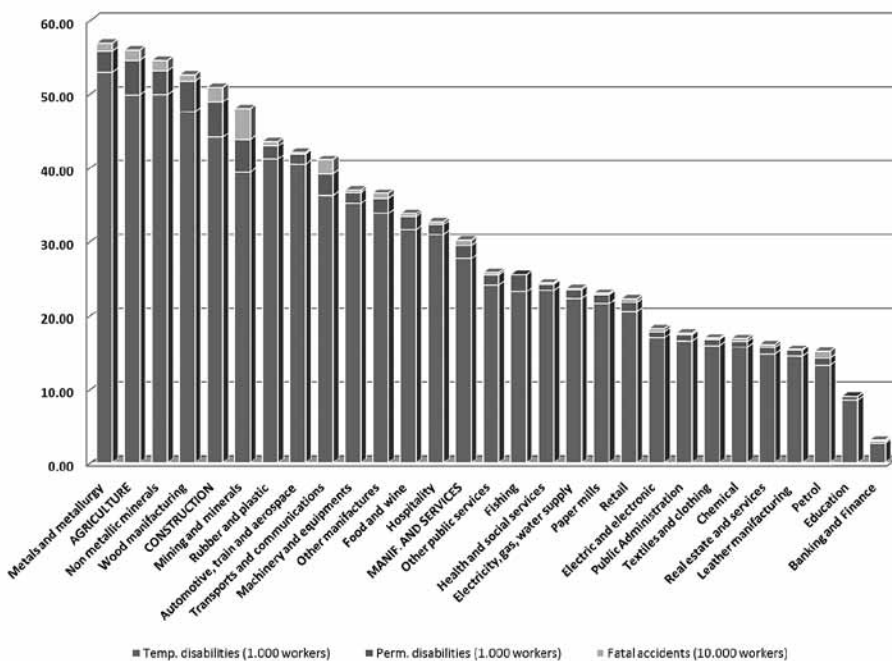


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 36 **Figure 7.2 Accidents at work in Europe, agriculture and building, at least**
 37 **three days leave, standard impact on 100,000 workers, 2007,**
 38 **construction (left), agriculture (right)**

39 *Source:* EUROSTAT (2010).

40 ³ The so-called 'Testo Unico sulla salute e sicurezza sul lavoro' [Unified law on occupational
 41 health and safety].

1 A compiled index of disabilities and fatal accidents occurring at
 2 work in Italy, organised by industry (Figure 7.3) reveals, unsurprisingly,
 3 that banking, finance and education are the safest industries. Equally
 4 unsurprising is finding that the most 'dangerous' industries are named
 5 as being those associated with agriculture, wood and iron manufacturing.
 6 Other features are less predictable, however. The chemical, petrol, textiles
 7 and leather industries perform better than public administration (which
 8 is in fact deteriorating). Such findings strongly suggest that technology is
 9 not the only variable needed to explain risk. Safety culture (Gherardi and
 10 Nicolini, 2000, 2002), risk management and labour organisation are clearly
 11 very important as well.



33 **Figure 7.3** Disabilities every 1,000 workers and fatal accidents every
 34 every 10,000 workers in Italy by industry, 2004–2006, consolidated
 35 averages

36 *Source:* INAIL (2010).

1 The relatively bad performance of public administration as illustrated in 1
2 Figure 7.3 could in part be attributable to the police and armed forces being 2
3 in themselves relatively dangerous jobs. Nevertheless, such linkages between 3
4 safety and contractual flexibility often display consistency. For example, in 4
5 Italy, the state is the largest employer of atypical workers thereby going against 5
6 common assumptions. 6

7 7
8 It is against this context, mapping the variable performances of European 8
9 states in OHS issues, that this chapter has the following objectives: 9

- 10 10
11 1. To review the literature on risk and safety and to analyse the role of 11
12 organisational climate in affecting safety. 12
13 13
14 2. To discuss the feasibility of introducing the capability approach to 14
15 organisation studies. 15
16 16
17 17

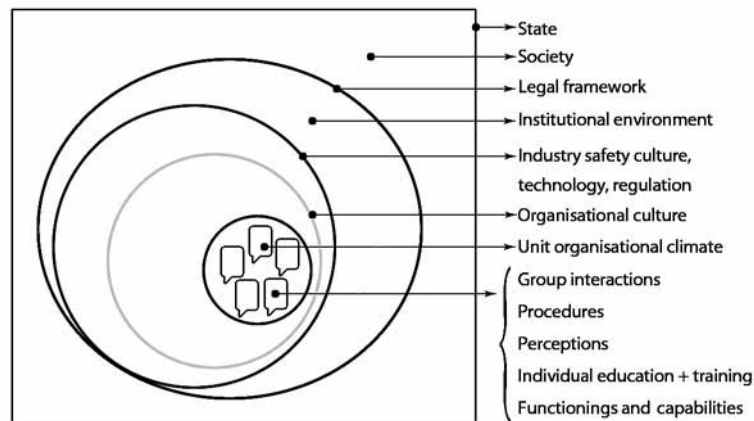
18 **Safety, Risk, Well-being and Organisations** 18

19 19
20 Although the general rate of occupational accidents has decreased in Italy during 20
21 the last 30 years, there seems nevertheless to have been a noteworthy recent increase 21
22 among atypical workers and foreign workers (typically Eastern Europeans or North 22
23 Africans) in the same context. In 2008 Italy experienced about 1.140 fatal accidents 23
24 and 874.866 accidents. In total this comprised one accident at work for every 23 24
25 people, but significantly also one accident at work for every 16 non-nationals. 25
26 26

27 This trend of greater risks for non-nationals is also borne out in other 27
28 European locations. In Austria for example, 37 per cent of migrant workers 28
29 surveyed felt affected by poor health conditions at work, compared with only 16 29
30 per cent of Austrian workers. Furthermore, some 30 per cent of migrant workers 30
31 felt particularly affected by the risk of accident and injury in their workplace, 31
32 compared with only 13 per cent of Austrian nationals. In Spain the statistics 32
33 build a similar picture: in 2005 8.4 out of every 100,000 migrant workers died 33
34 in labour accidents, a proportion in excess of that experienced by the Spanish 34
35 labour force, who were said to have an accident mortality rate of 6.3 per cent 35
36 (Eurofound, 2007). These findings support the contention that, not just in Italy, 36
37 jobs with less contractual security are also those which also bring with them 37
38 lower levels of social protection, higher risks and poorer safety standards.⁴ 38
39 39

40 40
41 ⁴ There is a growing debate in Italy on labour market deregulation. It seems that after 10 years 40
41 of labour market reforms the outcome of increased job flexibility is, disappointingly, decreased 41

1 Risk, safety and well-being are complex phenomena that must be tackled at 1
 2 a systemic level, taking into account individual, organisational and institutional 2
 3 factors (Douglas, 1966; Tversky and Kahneman, 1974; Reason, 1990; Giddens, 3
 4 1991; Beck, 1992; Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001, Weick, 1992; Weick and Roberts, 4
 5 1993; Perrow, 1994; Gherardi, 2004; Gephart et al., 2009; James and Walters 5
 6 1997; Guiol and Muñoz, 2009). Figure 7.4 illustrates this point, showing how 6
 7 micro-level behaviour is affected by a plurality of influences. The authors 7
 8 mentioned above and schematically presented in Figure 7.5 represent the most 8
 9 important sample of those who have addressed the risk issue academically. 9
 10 A large number of economic and psychological studies on the subject show 10
 11 how individuals calculate risk more or less rationally, both objectively and 11
 12 subjectively. This literature is supplemented by other research findings that 12
 13 stress the way that societies and governments (even in a Marxist perspective) 13
 14 calculate what they deem to be acceptable levels of risk. Additionally, literature 14
 15 within the fields of sociology and ergonomics has done much to emphasise the 15
 16 way technology affects modernity and has done much to illustrate how risk has 16
 17 become an intrinsic characteristic of modern societies. 17

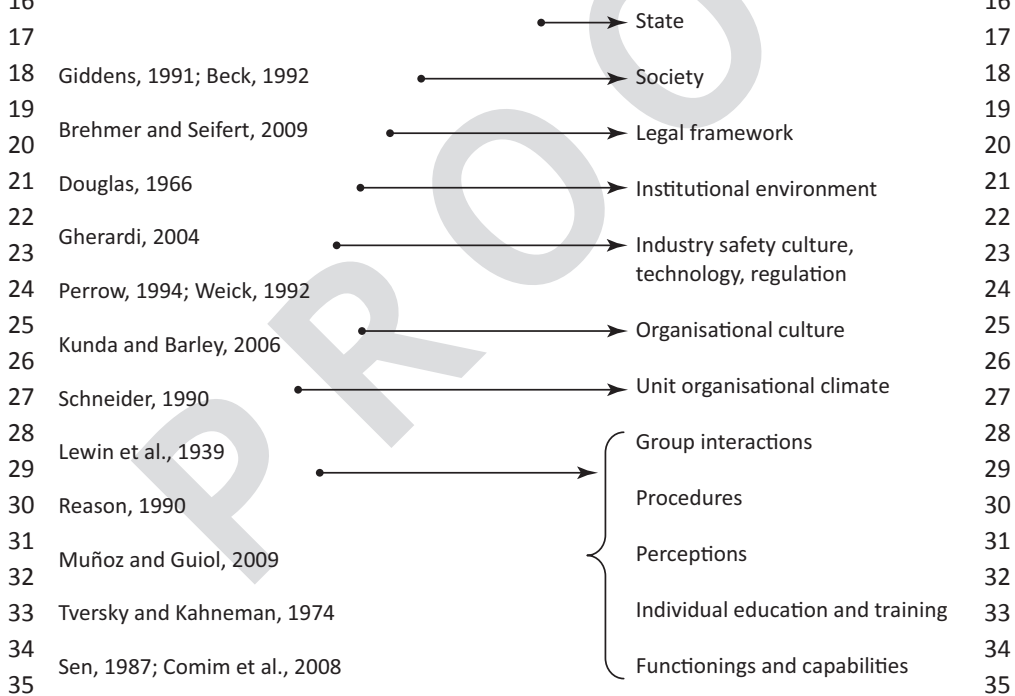


33 **Figure 7.4 Levels of risk analysis**

36 productivity and increased job insecurity. This is in line with findings by Kleinknecht, 36
 37 who showed that higher levels of employment flexibility such as policies dictated should 37
 38 be increasingly practised in Italy and other parts of the European Union did not increase 38
 39 productivity (Kleinknecht, 2008), although it may have increased employment (Kok, 2004). 39
 40 Although the issue of productivity is not tackled in this chapter, nevertheless it presents itself as 40
 41 an interesting field for further research, particularly if it were to be studied in a multidisciplinary 41
 perspective, integrating labour law, labour economics and organisation studies.

1 There is a long tradition of studies on risk and safety among social
 2 scientists.⁵ In particular, much can be gleaned from the different standpoints
 3 and methodologies offered by organisation studies, which as a discipline
 4 pays much attention to the way perspectives have evolved over decades,
 5 simultaneously with broader influential changes in society, technology and
 6 economy.

8 Finally within organisation studies and industrial medicine, research has
 9 focused upon a more detailed and nuanced elucidation of the interrelationship
 10 between safety culture, climate⁶ or workers' participation both as individual
 11 and cumulative factors contributive in helping to lower risk. A further issue,
 12 which has yet not received as much attention, would be to consider the
 13 difference between risk and uncertainty at work according to different possible
 14 perspectives such as those of Keynes, Knight or Definetti.



36 **Figure 7.5 Levels of risk analysis, literature**

39 ⁵ A very good review is offered in the special issue on 'Organizations and Risk' of *Organization Studies*, 30/2009 issues 02 and 03.
 40 ⁶ Organisational climate and organisational culture are very close constructs. See for instance
 41 Denison (1996); Moran and Volkwein (1992); Kunda (1992).

1 With specific regard to an exploration of the connections between economic 1
 2 democracy (profit sharing, participation, co-operation) and occupational well- 2
 3 being the works of Guiol and Muñoz are particularly interesting. Their studies 3
 4 consider a sample of firms of different business sector and size in France and 4
 5 show that the organisations with the best record for safety and well-being 5
 6 are those where systems of workers' participation have been most actively 6
 7 implemented (Guiol and Muñoz, 2007, 2009). With regard to the Finnish context, 7
 8 a similar study has been conducted on the relationship between worker's well- 8
 9 being and participation (Bernardi and Köppä, 2011). 9

10
 11 Supplementary to the available literature described in Figure 7.5 and above, 11
 12 this chapter explores an additional facet – the special aspect of western labour 12
 13 markets concerned with flexibility and atypical contractual arrangements 13
 14 (Amuedo-Dorantes, 2002, Barrett and Sargeant 2008) in a post-Fordism 14
 15 context. It would seem that any discussion of this 'non-standard' segment of 15
 16 the market challenges the suitability of some of the above-discussed model 16
 17 theoretical frameworks (risk society, post-modern society, and so on). Indeed, 17
 18 these frameworks alone cannot explain why in the same industry, and in the 18
 19 same organisation, a worker with a worse contractual status is more likely to 19
 20 be in jeopardy, having either more chance of being affected by occupational 20
 21 diseases, or increased chance of being involved in a fatal accident at work. 21

22
 23 I consider that one way of exploring this interrelationship between job 23
 24 insecurity and exposure to risk at work would be to apply the human 24
 25 development and capability approach formulated by Sen. This seems 25
 26 particularly pertinent given its intrinsic interest in freedoms and rights and 26
 27 its ability to discern between real and formal abilities and capabilities,⁷ taking 27
 28 into account formal and informal institutions (De Muro and Tridico, 2008) and 28
 29 cultural constraints (Alkire, 2002). 29

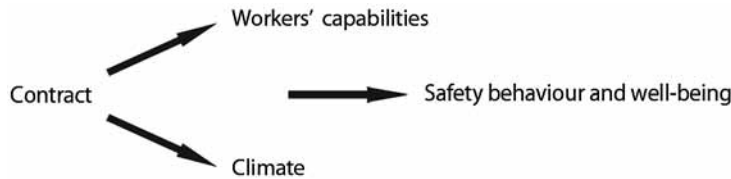
30
 31 This chapter postulates that, together with freedoms, rights and capabilities 31
 32 the role of organisational climate (Woodman and King, 1978; Waters, Batlis 32
 33 and Roach, 1974; Litwin and Stringer, 1968; Argyris, 1958) and culture (Schein, 33
 34 2004; Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952; Hofstede, 1980) is highly important 34
 35 in affecting individual safety behaviours and performances. Furthermore, 35
 36 36

37
 38 ⁷ 'A functioning is an achievement, whereas a capability is the ability to achieve. Functionings 37
 39 are, in a sense, more directly related to living conditions, since they are different aspects 38
 40 of living conditions. Capabilities, in contrast, are notions of freedom, in the positive sense: 39
 41 what real opportunities you have regarding the life you may lead' (Sen, 1987). We can say 40
 42 that functioning means the act of function, capability instead being the ability plus the real 41
 43 condition and the freedom to use our own ability. 41

1	the way individuals and groups perceive risk can be variously influenced by	1
2	organisational climate, by group leaders, by interactions, and by structures and	2
3	cultures within organisations. As the climate influences the attitudes of workers	3
4	and managers towards risks and helps to determine the conditions of well-	4
5	being at work (Lewin et al., 1939; Schneider, 1990; Kunda and Barley, 2006),	5
6	it seems logical to combine the capability approach and the organisational	6
7	climate as theoretical tools to further examine certain trends and behaviours in	7
8	the relationship between atypical workers and OHS.	8
9		9
10	INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR, GROUPS AND SAFETY	10
11		11
12	Danger is evaluated by individuals not rationally but through filters of	12
13	perception (Clarke, 1999). The difference between the real (or objective) risk and	13
14	the perceived (thus subjective) risk is significant because the danger increases	14
15	if individuals underestimate the real risk. The discrepancy between subjective	15
16	and objective risk is taken into account in the theory of safety and in the theory	16
17	of cognitive dissonance. In all cases, the organisational climate plays a role at	17
18	the individual and group level in identifying and assessing risk.	18
19		19
20	Organisations can reduce the dissonance by acting on individuals:	20
21	borrowing neo-institutional terminology, it is possible to influence safety	21
22	behaviours with normative, cognitive and regulatory actions. The employee –	22
23	a professional or a manual labourer (white or blue collar) – should be oriented	23
24	by the organisation and other institutions in its behaviours or attitudes by	24
25	communicating and explaining what is required to do (regulative), what is	25
26	appropriate to do (normative), or what is right to do (cognitive). Attempts to	26
27	change perceptions often encounter strong resistance, since these are the result	27
28	of processes of self-learning and reinforcement.	28
29		29
30	The arguments, so far, have highlighted how perceptions influence the	30
31	subjective cognition of danger and hence individual behaviour. From a	31
32	systemic perspective it is also necessary to analyse the consequences that the	32
33	individual perception of risk has on the behaviour of others. In particular, it	33
34	is important to take into consideration the risk perceptions of executives and	34
35	entrepreneurs, which are reflected in both the organisational climate and in	35
36	the labour organisation. Furthermore, the socialising of experiences and	36
37	perceptions increases both the quality and quantity of group assumptions.	37
38	Group cohesion makes the socialisation even stronger, amplifying the effects.	38
39	Safety culture is also built on training risk perceptions and on sharing cognitive	39
40	elements (Roth et al., 2006; Payne and Mansfield, 1978).	40
41		41

1	ORGANISATIONAL CLIMATE AND SAFETY	1
2		2
3	Climate analysis and capabilities' development can be considered tools for	3
4	OHS prevention: initially this chapter will consider the importance of climate,	4
5	taking as axiomatic that organisational culture is the broader environment	5
6	where climate develops.	6
7		7
8	There is a large literature on organisational climate (Lewin et al., 1939;	8
9	Schneider, 1975, 1990) and several studies on safety climate in particular	9
10	(Nasurdin et al., 2006; Johnstone and Johnston, 2005; Vaananen et al., 2004; Neal	10
11	et al., 2000; Miceli and Near, 1985; Zohar, 1980). There are no major studies,	11
12	however, on the relationship between safety, climate (in a broad, general,	12
13	sense) and organisational well-being. In this section I will try to explain how	13
14	the general climate and well-being can influence safety conditions and the level	14
15	of objective risk.	15
16		16
17	The reality is a complicated one. Climatic elements can even promote, for	17
18	instance, a no-blame approach (most easily exemplified via the airline industry).	18
19	Some organisational cultures, in contrast (for example those developed around	19
20	productivity stress or cocky and macho behaviours) may instead encourage	20
21	the spread of assumptions without explicit managerial direction, which is	21
22	particularly dangerous when linked to safety.	22
23		23
24	A useful means of highlighting the power of these different organisational	24
25	climates would be to consider policies towards whistle-blowing, beyond the	25
26	protection provided by the law for workers reporting illegal offences. In this	26
27	context, it is important that internal mechanisms should permit employees	27
28	to communicate sensitive information to top management or authorities in	28
29	confidence. Organisations need to develop policies and tools to facilitate	29
30	whistle-blowing, and above all, they have to foster a climate that encourages	30
31	those behaviours and identifies them as safe and morally right. Judicial	31
32	protection alone may not provide sufficient incentive.	32
33		33
34	The relationship between climate and safety therefore seems sensible, even	34
35	self-evidential, and has already been studied in the literature. An organisation's	35
36	success or failure can thus depend on its organisational climate. What is not	36
37	explained, however, is how job insecurity varies amongst different categories	37
38	of worker. How is it possible that a given job in a given factory is statistically	38
39	more dangerous for non-standard and alien workers than for their so-called	39
40	'standard' counterparts? Some possible reasons readily present themselves	40
41		41

1 (the dynamics of the underground economy, the propensity to assign harder
 2 tasks for weaker workers, and so on), but this phenomenon still lacks scientific
 3 analysis.



11 **Figure 7.6 Contractual arrangement, climate, capabilities and behaviour**

13 In Figure 7.6 I try to explain how the contractual arrangement influences
 14 behaviour and, in turn, safety performance: naturally contractual arrangements
 15 confer different status within organisational climate. The organisational climate
 16 is a mediator between individuals and the collective cognitive phenomena. It
 17 can amplify or limit the individual perceptions of risk. The climate can allow
 18 colleagues with full contractual rights to ask their atypical co-workers to be
 19 allocated the most risky, unsafe, unpleasant or stressful tasks. The climate can
 20 help the individual to define subjective risk and it can influence the group
 21 appraisal of objective risk.

23 To further elucidate this analysis the capability approach can be usefully
 24 applied. Given that the phenomenon described in this chapter is one mainly
 25 based on differential access to rights, since an employment contract is mostly an
 26 issue of rights and duties, it is my contention that the capability approach can
 27 supply a useful tool to dissect and understand the complex interrelationship
 28 between rights, well-being and safety.

31 **The Capability Approach and Organisations**

33 The Capability Approach (CA) was introduced by Amartya Sen in 1988, ten
 34 years before he received the Nobel Prize. Since then, the approach has been
 35 widely used among scholars of many disciplines, but mainly amongst those
 36 studying national or regional level phenomena. The main idea of this school
 37 stresses the need for both researchers and policy makers to look at capabilities,
 38 rather than merely consider economic data or formal legal systems (Fukuda-
 39 Parr, 2003; Sen, 1994). Equality and development should be pursued, Sen
 40 has argued, through capabilities that encapsulate notions of freedom and

1 real opportunities regarding the desired life. Capabilities as defined by Sen 1
2 are enabled by rights and functionings (in our case education, safety, health, 2
3 and so on). The well-being of citizens and the development of nations rely on 3
4 capabilities and real equality of opportunity and not on GDP per capita, which 4
5 has sometimes been the principal measure of assets, or equality of resources, or 5
6 primary goods as suggested by Dwarkin (2000) or Rawls (1972). 6

7
8 Currently, the capability approach is used by researchers with different 8
9 educational backgrounds involving many fields of study, including economics, 9
10 anthropology, philosophy, political science, psychology, education science, 10
11 health studies, welfare and public policy. There are also studies on labour, 11
12 welfare and happiness, with a micro – or macro – economic emphasis. There 12
13 have been no applications to organisational studies, however. Traditional 13
14 applications (as illustrated in Figure 7.7) have seen policy makers and 14
15 researchers concentrating upon human development indicators, rather than on 15
16 growth or economic development. 16

17
18 In a liberal and pluralistic view of individual ambitions and well-being, 18
19 scholars utilising the CA believe that the state should grant citizens freedoms 19
20 and opportunities to achieve certain essential ‘rights’ or functionings (health, 20
21 education, safety, for instance). Given a personal set of functionings, human 21
22 beings should then be able to pursue their own selected goals for well-being, 22
23 thanks to their own capabilities. A given set of functionings can be defined as 23
24 the creation of an environment that allows positive pluralistic opportunities for 24
25 citizens to both be and behave. It provides a context in which there is freedom 25
26 and there is real (not merely formal) equality of opportunity. Furthermore, 26
27 once citizens are placed in such an environment they are given the possibility 27
28 to acquire some capabilities and to use them autonomously in their own lives. 28
29 Participation could well be considered as a functioning referring to workers’ 29
30 participation as well as the more traditional interpretation focussing on 30
31 political participation. 31

32
33 A study of human development differs from other examinations of liberal 33
34 frameworks of equality (see for instance those examined by Rawls or Dwarkin) 34
35 because it does not focus on equality in terms of the rule of law or on access to 35
36 primary goods or resources. Human development instead concentrates on the 36
37 equal ability of citizens to pursue well-being in the context of all the cultural or 37
38 social constraints on human development. It is worth noting that researchers of 38
39 this school frequently also focus on economic development, but they believe that 39
40 economic development is a consequence of human development, not its cause. 40

41
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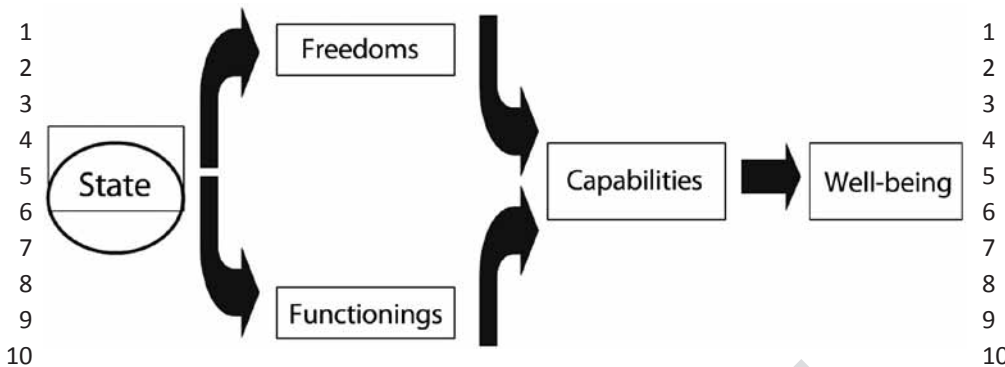


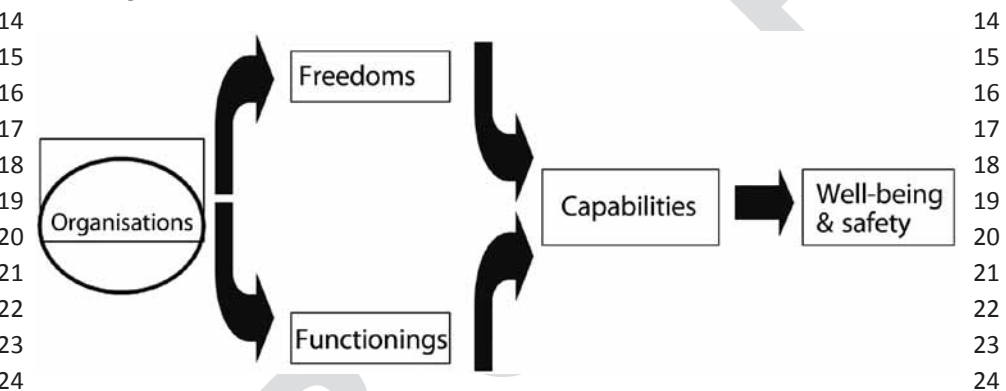
Figure 7.7 Capability approach and human development at a regional level

So far, the areas where the CA has been mostly developed are the analysis of human development at national or regional level (Sen, 1985a; Comim et al., 2008); the analysis of well-being and local development (Alkire, 2002); the study of the conditions of the poor in developing countries; the development itself (Klasen, 2000; Qizilbash, 2002); the measurement of poverty and welfare in advanced economies; the study of the difficulties of disabled people; the study of gender discriminations (Sen 1985b; Robeyns 2003; Costantini and Monni, 2008; Nussbaum, 2000) and the analysis of public policies (Schokkaert and Van Ootegem, 1990).

To the extent that organisational studies deals with the individual and collective welfare of workers, the development of their potential contribution, the understanding of the exchange of contributions and incentives, cultural diversity, the psychological components of organisational behaviour and with fairness, justice and change, the CA seems to offer an original opportunity for researchers. Perhaps surprisingly however, although this framework has been widely used, it has not been applied within organisational studies – yet its usefulness is immediately apparent. Rather than consider OHS, matters such as formal obligations, legal formalities or the presence of safety tools (hard hats and extinguishers for instance), it is perhaps more useful instead to focus on capabilities (the real abilities of workers to protect themselves) and on their freedom to request safe environments and proper procedures. This represents the measure of the potency of workers to affect or assume change within their working environments. Understanding the capabilities of atypical workers in this way, by locating them within their various organisational climates, therefore provides a tangible means of understanding how contractual insecurity turns into risk and helps explain why foreign workers are in greater danger where they lack education, language skills and rights.

1 In this chapter I explain how the CA can be combined together with 1
 2 analysis of organisational climate to provide insights into OHS trends at the 2
 3 organisational level. Shifting from the regional to the organisational level, the 3
 4 most important institution is no longer the state, but the organisation itself, 4
 5 given the importance and the role of all the other institutions (ILO, 2004), both 5
 6 formal and informal. 6

7
 8 Figure 7.8 illustrates the methodological framework with reference to OHS 8
 9 and one specific capability which I call *safety capability* and which I define as 9
 10 *the worker's attitude to self-protection through the understanding of safety procedures,* 10
 11 *the proper assessment of the objective risk and the freedom to ask the organisation to* 11
 12 *respect the law and to implement safe work processes⁸ fitting the environmental and* 12
 13 *technological context.⁹* 13



25 **Figure 7.8** Capability approach and organisational development at the 25
 26 **organisational level** 26
 27 27

28 Some preliminary studies (Bernardi 2009, 2010) have been conducted with 28
 29 this methodology. The empirical findings were interesting. In the workplace it 29
 30 seems that workers' capabilities are activated by particular functionings, namely 30
 31 autonomy, trade union rights, occupational well-being, organisational equity, 31
 32 labour rights and workers' safety awareness. As in Sen's original application, 32
 33 functionings need a general context of freedom in order to flourish. 33
 34 34

35 To assess workers' human development (meaning the development of their 35
 36 functioning and capabilities), however, one needs to place them in the context of 36
 37 organisational development. This re-orientation recognises the importance of 37
 38 organisational development as the primary means of fostering both individual 38
 39 39

40 ⁸ Drury (1983). 40

41 ⁹ Collinson (1999). 41

1 and collective well-being at work. Human development, in contrast, tends to be 1
 2 a more useful lens via which to analyse the economic and social development 2
 3 of a nation or region. 3
 4 4
 5 **CAPABILITY APPROACH AND SAFETY** 5
 6 6
 7 Sen introduces the idea that the satiation of basic needs is a means to ensure 7
 8 positive rights or to improve the ability of individuals to exercise their rights of 8
 9 freedom in different areas, ranging from the social to the political and economic. 9
 10 Sen tries to analyse and measure these individual achievements and values by 10
 11 focusing his research on what people are theoretically able (or, to use his term, 11
 12 capable) to do because of the context in which they exist, rather than focusing 12
 13 on the tangible economic opportunities offered to them through disposable 13
 14 income, consumption or spending. This analytical framework therefore 14
 15 measures not only earnings, property and consumption but individual self- 15
 16 esteem, the way an individual is regarded by the community and their well- 16
 17 being in the workplace (for the purposes of this chapter, organisational climate 17
 18 and OHS). In short, this model gives more emphasis to the well-being of 18
 19 individuals and to their satisfaction of feeling fully realised as human beings. 19
 20 These intangible conditions are harder to measure than national product, per 20
 21 capita income, or a nation's endowment of infrastructure. According to Sen, the 21
 22 capabilities of individuals to achieve what they aspire to match with freedom: 22
 23 the freedom to do what you want in a context of 'equality of opportunities'. 23
 24 24
 25 The capabilities' framework is based on two concepts: freedom and 25
 26 valuable beings and doings. Sen managed to summarise both terms into a single 26
 27 expression, *functionings*. This encapsulates what every person is able to obtain 27
 28 and to achieve during his lifetime, in Sen's terminology their 'doings' and 28
 29 'beings'. But how can we achieve these *states of being*? At this point, Sen develops 29
 30 a path based on individual capabilities. According to him, the capabilities of 30
 31 a person depend on a variety of factors, including personal and social assets 31
 32 (that is, what the social conditions of individuals are and how society handles 32
 33 it). Every person, according to Sen, has a set of basic and general *capabilities*, 33
 34 which is one of the several possible combinations of functionings that he is 34
 35 able to achieve. The basic capabilities refer to the freedom to do whatever is 35
 36 necessary to escape from a state of poverty. This model has become crucial for 36
 37 the analysis of poverty, and more generally, to analyse well-being (quality of 37
 38 life) (for example, Nussbaum and Sen, 1993). 'General capabilities' are described 38
 39 as growing in a pleasant and healthy environment and refer to physical and 39
 40 mental health, education and knowledge, social relations and interactions, 40
 41 41

1 physical and moral well-being (Sen, 1983). The basic idea is that the abilities of 1
 2 individuals are linked to their actual freedom to be whatever they want and to 2
 3 achieve what they aspire to: that is 'what are the real opportunities you have to 3
 4 live as you want' (Sen, 1987). Freedoms are closely related to functionings which 4
 5 are what you absolutely need to carry out your own capabilities (Figure 7.7). 5

6
 7 In this view, the capability approach can be used with regard to the 7
 8 development of individuals that are part of an organisation (see Figure 7.8). In 8
 9 particular, we look at the conditions that an organisation can provide to foster 9
 10 safety capability as defined above. Organisational freedoms refer to trade union 10
 11 rights, the respect of employment rights and freedom of association among 11
 12 workers. These freedoms underpin the functionings, relating to health and safety, 12
 13 that have already been identified earlier in this chapter: general organisational 13
 14 climate, safety compliance attitudes, well-being at the workplace, autonomy, 14
 15 participation, proper training, equity and the general respect of rules. 15

16
 17 It is my contention, based on the existing and above mentioned literature on 17
 18 health, safety and risk at work, that this combination of functionings is the root 18
 19 of safety capability: namely a complex tacit knowledge acquired by the worker 19
 20 that allows him to understand the importance of safety standards, to demand 20
 21 respect for rules, to limit the divergence between objective and subjective risk 21
 22 evaluation and independently, if necessary, to take own measures to ensure his 22
 23 individual, group and organisational safety. 23

24
 24

25
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26 **Possible Applications** 26

27
 27

28 This chapter aims to put forward a new tool for OHS analysis. To do so, I 28
 29 have proposed a new means of measurement, one that takes into account 29
 30 both the climate of organisational units and the capabilities of workers. The 30
 31 capabilities framework enables us to understand that human beings are fully 31
 32 able to exercise their rights, to express their personality, to achieve personal 32
 33 satisfaction only if they can rely on an endowment of skills, suitable physical 33
 34 and moral conditions (Herzberg, 1959), or knowledge. It is ineffective to 34
 35 know your rights if you are not able to make a full use of them. To give 35
 36 an example at national level, Sen would argue that nothing is achieved by 36
 37 allowing under-privileged black citizens in the USA formal political rights 37
 38 unless they feel enabled and motivated to vote. Similarly, the presence of a 38
 39 university in a town is of no value to women if the local culture prevents them 39
 40 from studying there. In the same way, the full benefit of having purchasing 40

41
 41

1 power is undermined by poor education if this leads to the consumption of 1
2 junk food and a consequently lower life expectancy. 2

3 3
4 Following this line of argument, it is not enough for a worker to simply be 4
5 aware of a safe procedure, especially if he is part of an organisation that fosters 5
6 risky behaviours, either formally or informally. Awareness of risk may not lead 6
7 to the adoption of safe procedures in the face of a challenging climate and the 7
8 negative attitudes of colleagues, managers or groups. A positive circumstance 8
9 would be one where the employee enjoyed a condition of freedom and well- 9
10 being. In this context, organisational well-being is a necessary condition in 10
11 order for the worker to be able to protect himself from risks. Freedom, which 11
12 generally speaking suggests a condition of equity and the respect of rules, 12
13 creates a situation whereby workers feel at liberty to call for safe tasks and 13
14 procedures. Freedom is also the ability to make full use of a proper level of 14
15 autonomy where the procedures are objectively hazardous or where it is 15
16 necessary to intervene in order to avoid an accident. Finally, freedom implies 16
17 that a worker may denounce violations of rules and proper procedure and 17
18 illegal conditions without having to fear serious personal consequences. 18

19 19
20 Within a context of well-being, in a lawful environment where there is 20
21 respect for safety rules, it is possible to reduce the cognitive dissonance between 21
22 subjective and objective risks. Organisations should promote awareness and 22
23 risk assessments that are reasonably objective (Neal et al., 2000). On the other 23
24 hand, some organisational cultures may instead promote risky assumptions 24
25 concerning processes, rules, procedures and safety-related behaviours. 25

26 26
27 Short-term and atypical workers, foreign citizens or illegal workers usually 27
28 have little freedom, social security, education, psychological confidence, 28
29 autonomy or bargaining power. That is why such workers have to fight against 29
30 false assumptions, if they are to refuse to undertake excessively dangerous 30
31 tasks or challenge the perception of risk within the organisational unit: factory, 31
32 office, shop, small firm or complex organisation. Furthermore, the social 32
33 interactions and organisational behaviour of employees, who are not fully free, 33
34 either in terms of employment contract or in terms of evaluating skills, entail 34
35 risk. The social construction of reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) among 35
36 citizens who are not free or workers who are not skilled is risky. 36

37 37
38 Education, safety awareness, participation and the active use of civil and 38
39 trade union rights give to any employee the capacity to take advantage of the 39
40 available opportunities. It is the comparative lack of access to these that creates 40
41 41

1 a situation of greater risk among foreign workers and non-standard workers. 1
 2 Further empirical studies could usefully study the relationship between safety 2
 3 attitudes (a capability), the organisational climate and the labour employment 3
 4 status (intended and measured both as functionings). Respondents would 4
 5 manifest their level of agreement with propositions on a Likert Scale. 5
 6 Sociodemographic information and health confidential data, anonymously 6
 7 coupled with each questionnaire, could be collected. The functionings could 7
 8 be measured from the questionnaire and from data on health conditions and 8
 9 safety history obtained from the employer and from national authorities. 9

10
 11 The hypothesis that the safety capability of workers (dependent variable) 11
 12 depends on functionings (predictors, independent variables) could then 12
 13 be tested using a linear regression. At that point it would be possible to say 13
 14 whether the safety climate, the quality of work, the general respect for rules 14
 15 and the job stability and other possible factors are useful indicators to ensure 15
 16 that safety standards are understood and respected by workers with a proper 16
 17 attitude towards risk. Such a theoretical construct can also be seen in the form 17
 18 of a linear regression equation that relates the dependent variable capability to 18
 19 the functionings that are independent variables. 19

20
 21

22 **Conclusions** 22

23
 24 Going back to the original research question posed in this chapter, my purpose 24
 25 was to demonstrate that in OHS the overall organisational climate influences 25
 26 safety behaviours. Organisational studies can be very useful in dealing with 26
 27 safety at work, not least as it is clear that labour organisation and safety climate 27
 28 do matter; as evidenced in Figure 7.3. Using a complex definition of safety 28
 29 prevention skills and a broader definition of well-being, it is clear that not 29
 30 only the safety climate but the entire general climate within an organisation 30
 31 influences OHS-related behaviours. 31

32
 33 Moreover, the aim of this piece was to introduce the capability approach 33
 34 to organisational studies researchers. In my view, this study has revealed no 34
 35 incompatibilities between this approach and the general theoretical framework 35
 36 of organisational studies. Indeed, it is hoped that this work will show how 36
 37 Amartya Sen's framework can be applied in the field of organisational studies 37
 38 by addressing not only issues of well-being and safety but also by using it 38
 39 throughout the array of existing research interests and methodologies. Finally, 39
 40 by combining these two approaches, this chapter should be seen as contributing 40
 41

1	to debates on economic democracy, not least with regard to the relationship	1
2	that can be clearly mapped between workers' rights and participation and their	2
3	occupational health.	3
4		4
5		5
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