**Thematic session 4**

***Precariousness and Free/Unfree Labour at Global Level:***

***Connections and Intersections in a Long Historical Perspective***

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The session aims to explore the historical connection between job precariousness and free/unfree labour by adopting a global approach. Looking at labour relationships from the perspective of Free/Unfree labour provides an important theoretical framework for analysing precarious work in the long duréé, overcoming the traditional Global North/South hierarchy and questioning the Western “Standard Employment Relationship” as a norm. At the same time adopting the category of job precariousness to investigate the multiple forms of free/unfree labour in diachronic and synchronic perspectives, allows us to better understand their level of “stability” and whether “stability” matters in perpetuating or reducing the spread of certain free/unfree labour forms over the centuries.

In a long historical perspective, job precariousness has characterized not only the whole history of industrial capitalism but also pre-industrial societies as the session aims to unveil. Following this approach, job precariousness cannot be defined as a labour relationship as such but can be viewed as a “condition” in which female or male workers can find themselves as a consequence of both subjective and objective factors. From an objective point of view, it seems to be linked to three main aspects: wage stability, job length and continuity, the relationship between the labour contract and social/labour rights. From a subjective point of view, precariousness should be viewed in a relative manner and referred to the condition of the so-called stable workers, their self-perception and social perception.

If insecurity, informality and precariousness represent the real standard of global capitalism and stable labour relationships can be viewed as historical exception spreading throughout Western countries in the third quarter of the 20th century, questioning the relationship between free/unfree labour and job stability/precariousness can be particularly fruitful for understanding the process behind the commodification of labour in the long run. Furthermore, the recent new spread of unfree labour forms both in the Global South and North, seems to be related to the issue of job stability/precariousness.

Gender, race, ethnicity, age play a crucial role, revealing how certain groups such as women, migrants and child have been more likely in the long run to be involved in forms of precarious labour (both free and unfree). Freedom of movement, and more broadly speaking mobility, represent an additional lens to investigate the relationship between free/unfree labour and job stability/precariousness. By intersecting spatial mobility, job stability and free/unfree labour in the different historical periods allows us to recognize hidden forms of “precarious work” as well as unexpected stable jobs.

The session addresses several aspects of the relationship between job precariousness and free/unfree labour in different historical periods, ranging from 18th century to the New Millennium, and spatial contexts such as Western, Eastern and Northern Europe, Latin America and India. The different free/unfree labour forms will be investigated though the lens of job precariousness in regard to the Global North, the Global South and former Socialist countries. All the economic sectors will be taken into account, as well as long-lasting figures of precarious workers such as servants, industrial homeworkers, day labourers, construction workers.