

**SOCIOLOGIA
NEL LAVORO**

n. 144

Diseguaglianze oggi: quanto conta ancora l'occupazione

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Work and Employment Precariousness: a transnational concept?*

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1. Introduction

In European societies, the social gains of the 20th century, the advancement of the social protection system and the salariat, along with access to social property and public services, marked and shaped people's relationship to society through their participation in the world of work. While it had earlier been the plight of the poorest, salaried employment became the basic form of social integration into a society deeply organised and regulated by the Welfare State (*Etat social*) around the theme of work. However wage labour, as it exists today, is likely to present new dangers, at least for the growing population on the fringes (Castel, 1995). In these societies, precariousness has become a dominant theme of the research on transformations occurring in the world of work and salaried society, and has renewed the approach to inequality. The rapid recognition of the heuristic value of this concept explains its spread beyond the confines of Europe. In Latin America, sociologists refer increasingly to this phenomenon to describe the situation in their countries. The popularisation of

* The authors acknowledge the financial support from FAPESP-Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo [The Foundation for Research Support at the State of São Paulo], Grant # 2016/08283-0, and from the General Consulate of France at São Paulo, Brazil. They also acknowledge the translators Paulo Scarpa and Renuka George.

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this concept is nonetheless problematic if one forgets the historical singularities that give precariousness its structural shape and meaning for individuals. This concept was developed in Europe, in reference to a deteriorating salaried society. Is it really possible to mechanically transpose it onto emerging countries that have little in common with salaried societies, despite the emergence of a progressive formalization and extension of salaried employment in these places?

This article proposes to look anew at the very definition of precarious work, distinguishing two different aspects: one the one hand, precarious work with an intensification of production and a new relationship to work, and on the other, precarious employment with flexible work contracts and unstable statuses. While we will look at several countries in this paper, we will pay particular attention to two of them: France and Brazil. The former is characteristic of a salaried society in crisis and the latter, of an incomplete salaried society. In recent times, in a context of strong economic expansion, Brazil has seen a marked increase in formal employment, wider access to labour rights and a progressive reduction in inequalities. This article will analyse how employment and work precarity have evolved over the last two decades in both these countries, and how they are responsible for new inequalities among salaried employees.

2. Work and Employment: a fundamental distinction

Without seeking to retrace the genesis of the concept of precariousness in the sociology of work here, it is necessary to underscore that, like many sociological concepts, it is highly dependent on the national context – in the economic, social and political sense – in which it was conceived and defined. Now, fulfilling the very definition of cultural ethnocentrism, sociologists often believe their concepts constitute the legitimate reference that is likely to be accepted at a transnational level. They do not always realise the risk of unconsciously reducing the scope of their research by ignoring the implicit choices they make when constructing their objects of study. This becomes evident when one compares the manner in which the concept of precariousness is used, not only in European countries, but also in emerging countries like Brazil (Guimarães, 2012).

The concept of precariousness was developed in France, at the end of the 1970s, to describe working class families who had become vulnerable as a result of the first effects of the economic crisis (Pitrou, 1978). In the 1980s, in the context of a severe deterioration of the labour market, precariousness was also associated with the phenomenon of “new poverty” that became increasingly visible with the rise in the populations that made use of the social action services. Little by little, however, the

usage of this concept was to become more precise and it served primarily to describe atypical employment statuses that, from this time onwards, could be compared to other statuses, particularly stable, protected, employment (Maruani, 1989; Schnapper, 1989). Precarious employment then becomes a dominant theme in social science research, a relevant subject of social and political debate, and it begins to interest public statistics institutes responsible for producing reliable and legitimate time series (Heller, 1986; Cézard, Heller, 1988; Elbaum, 1988; Fourcade, 1992).

Sensitive to the effects of the crisis, the sociologists of the 1980s and 90s look at unemployment, employment statuses, as well as the segmentation of the labour market and the institutionalisation of job insecurity. It would not be wrong to say that, over this period, the sociology of work became a sociology of employment (Maruani, Reynaud, 1993). It seemed essential to highlight the growing instability of professional statuses and unemployment, and to examine the extent to which these precarious statuses could correspond to trajectories on the labour market (Nicole-Drancourt, 1992) or be associated with other factors. Combined, these could lead to situations of extreme misery, on the threshold of the last phase of social disqualification (Paugam, 1991, 1995; Paugam, Zoyem, Charbonnel, 1993). This type of research made it possible to confirm that different employment statuses are hierarchized today, not only according to levels of responsibility and power in the workplace, but also, increasingly, according to the level of stability the job provides and the scope of the economic and social advantages the professional activity procures. In the automobile sector, sociologists studying the working class also emphasised differences in status between permanent and temporary employees (Pialoux, Beaud, 1993). Based on this work, Robert Castel (1995) also defined the precariousness salaried employees face depending on their relationship to the job. When he speaks of the *destabilization of the stable* and *getting used to precariousness*, he is referring, on the one hand, to the threat of a section of the working class and the lower middle class toppling into this situation, and, on the other hand, to the hazy world of uncertain employment made up of unstable contracts and alternating periods of employment and unemployment. From this perspective, precariousness is seen from the viewpoint of economic and social insecurity.

This approach is essential but nonetheless remains incomplete. It makes the relationship to employment the determining aspect of integration and neglects the relationship to work as it was studied both by classical sociology, from Marx to Durkheim, and by sociologists of work in the 1960s. The latter made abundant use of the idea of alienation to describe the development of work, the forms of economic dominance, the misdeeds of

industrial civilisation, social limitations and attacks on man's freedom.¹ While work is a source of fulfilment, it can also be a source of physical and moral suffering that cannot be reduced to a question of employment status. An analysis of professional integration has also to take into account both the objective and subjective dimensions of the work experience.

Even if we limit ourselves to European reality, the idea of job insecurity does not, in fact, mean the same thing from one country to another.² While in the 1980s and 90s, French researchers were sensitive to the instability of employment, British research paid more attention to the low salary levels and bad working conditions. The theme of exploitation in the world of work was an important aspect of the British sociology of work tradition, whereas the theme of the precariousness of employment statuses was not really seen as a subject that deserved specific attention. The word "precarity" or "precariousness" was in fact used in a limited fashion, and with some reserves regarding its meaning. In reality, there was a legal explanation for the difficulty in using this idea in reference to different types of employment, and this remains valid today: in the United Kingdom, all employment contracts are considered equivalent and therefore do not stand out by their level of precariousness (apart from casual work which does not require a formal contract). The dismissal of employees in Great Britain is also subject to legal restrictions that are far less severe than in France. Now, as Rodgers (1990) notes, when the law makes it easy to dismiss permanent employees, there is no longer any reason to create a temporary worker category. However, it is common to speak of "poor jobs" or "bad jobs" when referring to degraded and unattractive work conditions.

In reality, precariousness was primarily the result of the relationship to employment for the French, and of the relationship to the work for the British. To be in a precarious situation meant living in a state of permanent insecurity for some, and having a "bad job", that is to say a devalued, badly paid job, for others. One can also understand the differences in approach through the nature of the Welfare State and the manner in which the labour market functions in each of these countries. In France, in a corporatist spirit, the social protection system is based on stability of employment, which allows individuals to access social rights. The system in force in the United Kingdom, particularly since the major

1. The journal *Sociologie du Travail* dedicated a special issue to the sociological usage of this idea in 1967, and published articles on this subject again in 1969.

2. This became evident over the course of an international study coordinated by Duncan Gallie and Serge Paugam in the context of the European programme "Employment Precarity, Unemployment and Social Exclusion" (EPUSE) carried out between 1996 and 1999.

liberal reforms carried out by Margaret Thatcher, is however organised on the principle of minimal state intervention, which in actual terms means modest social transfers, and lower social protection for employees. In the first case, not having a stable job is a major risk as it inevitably leads to lower social protection, while in the second case, the stakes are lower, because, in any event, employees are little protected. On the contrary, it is important for the latter to have a good salary in order to ensure their own protection through private insurance systems.

Thus, the definition of job insecurity depends on the national situation, and at least partially, the researcher's sensitivity to specific problems that arise in his or her own country. There was nonetheless no doubt that low salaries existed in France too, and that job insecurity was also a factor or inequality in the United Kingdom, that went far beyond the social question of "bad jobs". It is clear that the risk of unemployment affects different sectors of activity differently and the levels of qualification required for different types of jobs is proof of this. French sociologists had consequently not developed a less appropriate definition of job insecurity than English sociologists. Above all, one should recognize that both groups focused on a specific aspect of precarity, the most visible and most widely discussed in their country, underestimating the importance of the second.

This difference decreased over time. French researchers, who are increasingly preoccupied by the question of work intensification – which becomes an important theme at the end of the 1990s – make use of the INSEE's³ regular surveys on "Working Conditions". They underscore the new types of physical and moral restrictions created by recent management models and new forms of organisation of work (Gollac, Volkoff, 1996, Linhart D., Linhart R., 1998)⁴. European collaborations also develop to study the transformation of the relationship to work, based on a vast survey carried out by the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (Parent-Thirion *et al.*, 2007; Valeyre *et al.*, 2009). For their part, British researchers increasingly integrate the idea of job insecurity into their surveys, or they study the transformations in this area, in collaboration with other European researchers, making use of European studies (Gallie and Paugam, 2002; Gallie, 2007).

At the end of the 1990s, and in the 2000s, job insecurity is to be analysed from the twofold angle of the relationship to employment and the relationship to work (Paugam, 2000). European researchers admitted, on the one hand that an employee is in a precarious situation when his job is

3. INSEE is the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies in France.

4. This new sensitivity was also a result of research carried out in the field of the psychopathology of work, during this decade (Dejours, 1993).

unstable and he/she cannot plan their professional future. This is the case of employees whose work contract is short-term, but also of those who are under constant threat of being dismissed. It was, in fact, possible to carry out a subjective evaluation of the precarity of a job based on the question asked during the first wave of the European Community Household Panel in 1996, regarding the feeling of insecurity in the job occupied.⁵ But on the other hand, European researchers progressively admitted that an employee is also in a situation of precariousness when the job seems uninteresting, badly paid, little recognized by the company and a source of suffering and distress. Consequently, it became increasingly clear that these two aspects of precariousness needed to be studied simultaneously. They reflect the radical transformations of the job market, as well as structural changes in the organization of work. This type of analysis was facilitated in Europe by the use of large-scale surveys, homogeneously conducted in most European countries, and in which it turned out to be possible to cross reference both these aspects (Paugam, 2007; Paugam, Zhou, 2007; Valeyre, 2014). This concern with taking into account the global evolution of the relationship to employment and to work is also to be found in jurists' analyses and in reflections carried out at the European level, on the right to employment (Supiot, 1999).

However, the diversity in understandings becomes even more intriguing when we expand the radius of our interest to encompass communities of scholars analyzing the recent changes in employment relationships and working conditions outside of Europe. In doing so, we may clearly see how the transnational trajectory of a concept is inseparable from the social history of the labour market itself across different societies. The moment in which a given notion emerges as an analytically necessary category as well as its scope, i.e., how it grasps a reality, only gain meaning if we understand them as part of the reality of work, whose changes we wish to describe.

Take, for example, the case of Brazil, where such history took place (i) free from the experience of a salaried society (the so called “*société salariale*”) and under the heavy weight of non-market and patriarchal relations, (ii) where the standard type of employment (the open-ended contract in a full-time job, as regulated by CLT⁶) only covered a small parcel of the employees, thus (iii) grounding this particular labour market on a remarkable numerical flexibility, given its large informal sector; (iv)

5. Measuring precarity on the basis of the precise legal definitions set out in employment contracts in European countries – which are clearly different – makes it complicated, and sometimes even impossible to carry out comparisons (Barbier, 2005).

6. CLT (Consolidation of labour Laws) is the current Brazilian labour law. It was created by Decree-Law n. 5,452, of May 1, 1943, unifying the existing labour legislation.

with a significant segmentation of access to social rights. Significantly, in 1960, for example, six in ten working age Brazilians were outside the labour market. If we observe the occupied Brazilians, is equally noteworthy the weight of unpaid members in family businesses among those employed until the 1970s; along with self-employed workers they accounted for no less than half of those who were active. Meanwhile, the wage workers (with or without rights ensured by a formal labour contract) only became the absolute majority among occupied Brazilians from the 1980s on (Guimarães and Brito, 2016).

Much of the Brazilian sociological literature explored the morphology and determinants of that particular and heterogenous labour market, leaving thought provoking clues for the debate on employment relations and the subjective experience of labour⁷. This interpretive effort carved a sociology of labour markets, which established itself from the urgency to understand the links between social change, class structure, and labour relations; and thus establishing an intense dialogue both with modernization theories and dependence theories. It challenged Brazilian scholars, as well as Latin American intellectuals during the 1960s and 1970s, to explain the particularity of labour markets, which albeit capitalist had not generalized capitalist employment norm. This was the paradox they deemed necessary to tackle.

An intense debate stirred the Latin American intellectual circles in mid-1960s until the early 1980s on the notion of “marginality”, a concept that came in handy as an interpretive solution for this reality. Thus, unlike the European case, the focus was not on theorizing about the dissolution of a previously generalized employment norm; instead the challenging was to understand the heterogeneity within the labour market structure, which in Latin American countries prevented the generalization of wage relations due to the strength of so-called non-capitalist employment forms and informal labour.

The notion of “marginality” seemed to deliver a sociological theory for such a historical singularity, being both a theory of development and a theory of the labour market. Particularly important in this regard are the first texts by the Peruvian author Anibal Quijano (1966, 1967, and 1973). Almost simultaneous to those writings, another seminal article surfaces in 1969, authored by the Argentine Jose Luis Nun (1969), which argues for the relevance of a new category, the “marginal mass”. He proposed that this heterogeneity mirrored the particularities of the relative surplus production processes in peripheral countries under monopoly capitalism. Under such historical conditions part of the surplus population would

7. For a more systematic review of this literature, see Guimarães (2012).

fail to function as a reserve army of labour, as Marx advocated when analyzing the dynamics of the labour market under competitive capitalism⁸.

This phenomenon was especially noticeable in emerging metropolises, where the dynamics of industrial investments thrived and attracted a significant demographic contingent. Among scholars of Brazilian urbanization, a challenging theme for those analyzing the ongoing changes in Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s, the problem of the so-called “urban marginality” had established itself solidly, becoming central to the research agenda on labour market issues through the writings of Machado da Silva (1971), Oliveira (1972), Berlinck (1975), Kowarick (1975), and Faria (1976).

It was up to these authors to show how the reproduction of these non-standard work relations, then called “non-typically capitalist”, were a constituent part of the development needs for capital, to use the parlance of that time. These studies have documented not only the heterogeneity, but also the instability of occupational inclusion. A research agenda similar as to what was happening in Europe, but which equated its interpretation from other analytical categories. If they were similar in appearance, due to an interest in non-standardized forms (as per employment norms) and the instability of ties, some were immersed in very different socio-cultural contexts, in Latin America vis a vis Europe. Conceptual solutions at the time trailed equally different routes to the south and north of the equator.

Not without reason, and in the midst of the same intellectual movement, analyses on the reproduction conditions of the working class also challenged mainstream academic sociology theories, questioning the belief that the market should be the exclusive mechanism for the allocation of resources and social distribution. Instead, they underlined how other institutions – family, neighborhood groups, and social networks – played a key role in understanding living conditions and labour insertion. These, as a rule, equated themselves by having the family unit as the arena for building strategies in the face of poverty (Fausto Neto, 1982; Bilac, 1978).

However, the constitution process of the labour market would be incomprehensible if detached from an understanding of the political legitimization forms of Brazil’s capitalist order. Machado da Silva (1971 e 1991) and Santos (1979) documented how the constructions of citizenship in the Brazilian Republic were inseparable from the process of production and

8. Curiously enough, the focus of marginality theories was, in a sense, precursor to the idea of “redundancy”, which would appear with force among authors in the 1990s when interpreting employment crises within intense restructuring contexts in central capitalist countries, among them DiPrete and Nonnemaker (1997), and Elias (1994 and 2004).

regulation of labour relations. This allows us to unravel the mystery of the powerful symbolic presence of a wage norm, whose actual implementation was frail and gradual and challenged by crises and backflows of economic activity, both national and international.

Machado da Silva (1991) demonstrated how the process of regulating the conditions of labour provision and usage, an eminently political process and historically commanded by the State, happened differently here, “organic and minimally disciplined” (to use the author’s terminology). In Latin America in general, and Brazil in particular, the unlimited supply of labour (unlimited because deregulated, according to Machado da Silva) created the conditions for the existence of a market with no entry barriers, as was characterized at the time the functioning of the so-called “informal market”.

Legitimacy problems resulting from the lack of an effective labour regulation would have been circumvented by two social mechanisms. On the one hand, by imposed wage labour through an amalgamation of openly repressive forms applied topically, and assistentialism, both public and private. According to Machado da Silva, clientelism would have been, for a long time and/or for many contingents of workers, the key to the mystery for solving legitimacy problems under a poorly institutionalized wage norm. The other route for resolving legitimacy problems was, as demonstrated by Santos (1979), the adoption of social procedures ensuring (restricted) access to citizenship rights to only a segment of workers, those participating in the “hard core” of the economy (the modern industry and the service sector); a process that the author conceptualized as “regulated citizenship”, but also named as “occupational citizenship”. Those two concepts refer to the restricted nature of access to rights and social protection as to the centrality of the labour market to ensure access to those rights. Thus was established the interpretive key to the challenge of understanding this enigmatic feature, namely that a capitalist labour market failed to generalize the capitalist employment norm.

The disconnection between an increasingly commoditization of social life (sustained within a context of economic growth and persistent social incorporation) and a restricted institutional regulation of labour (and the *fortiori* of its market) is at the root of the symbolic value attributed in Brazil to the typical employment relation (the formally contracted job), even if it has remained a minority throughout the twentieth century. In effect, the characteristic segmentation of the regulated citizenship model, although work-related, was grounded in differences in political legitimation, in the type of citizenship, which established the spectrum of rights associated with labour, establishing a set of benefits, and associated them to a small group of eligible workers. Thus this same exclusionary inclusion movement not only consecrated the symbolic value of bestowed benefits, but:

- (i) the mechanism for access, which is to say, formally registered work;
- (ii) a symbol providing the passport for this access: the work card (*carteira de trabalho*);
- (iii) a reference group, social and spatially circumscribed, of industrial and service workers in urban centers.

Disconnection and segmentation were not free of subjective consequences, which have been addressed through different ways by the scholarly literature at the time. One such analysis, in line with the pioneering works by Lopes (1965 and 1967) and Rodrigues (1966 and 1970), underlines the difficulty to generalize among these workers a worldview, a self-image, and a rationality centered on wage labour. The reason for this is that for a significant portion of them, social differentiations (functioning as reference axes) were not grounded on a wage norm. For this reason, the political construction of differences failed to find its referents in labour relations or in a salaried employment norm. For other scholars, Machado da Silva being among them, waged labour was a kind of spectral device, simultaneously a reference matrix and criticized. In this sense, the praise of self-employment and working “without a boss”, far from being a persistence of the past, a component from a traditional dimension of subjectivity guiding the conduct of new urban workers, became a way to resist the condition of waged labor and – during this specific moment – the low wages paid in the formal market.

This was a fertile analytical vein. Important debates within Brazil’s sociology of work were established therein. One example being the controversy on the possibility that an urban-manufacturing labour movement base would galvanize the political arena, establishing its ideological hegemony on these deep heterogeneities of working conditions and lifestyles; a central topic at the turn of the 1970s to the 1980s⁹. From the point of view our present discussion, this debate is revealing. The social heterogeneities that drew attention were the ones segmenting workers between those employed in typically capitalist forms and those outside this circuit (or included in a transitory manner and outside the propellant heart of the industry and modern services). In this sense, it was through politics, and by way of class action, that one would surpass the hiatus established in the structuring of the labour market and translated within the workers’ daily experience.

The debate was renewed in the 1990s, now under a new guise and pressed by the urgency to interpret the restructuring of firms and its

9. For more on this subject see, for example Almeida, 1978; Humphrey, 1982; Le Ven and Neves, 1985; Leite, 1985; Antunes, 1986; Castro and Guimarães, 1992; Agier and Castro, 1995; Lima, 1996; Abramo, 1999.

effects on the shopfloors¹⁰. The novelty can be seen in the several ways through which individuals were nominated and ranked according to their different statuses in the firms. Thus, classification systems (produced in different managerial cultures governing social relations within these microcosms) placed “permanent” workers before “temporary” workers; sometimes “monthly” before “hourly” workers; and not rarely “regular” before “subcontracted” workers. There was certainly something new happening: the nature of the workers’ concrete work, their occupation, or professional activity did not provide the criteria to separate them; nor their job position; but rather how they established themselves in employment relationships. This became the socially significant differential marker.

An innovation, soon grasped by the sociological literature during the years 1990-2000, came from the presence of a new contractual form: the so-called “outsourced” workers. This novelty forced interpreters to theorize both the particularity of intra-company difference management and its consequences for the representation of interests, hitherto monopolized by a sole union, whose once undisputed boundaries began to show disconcerting fluidity (Martins and Ramalho, 1994; Abreu *et al.*, 2000; Druck, 1999).

The years 2000 broadened the spectrum of the debate on the connections between heterogeneity, sociability forms, and collective action, now in a context of contraction of employment opportunities in markets deemed “external” to labour, and differentiation of status within “internal” markets in an expanding micro-organizational restructuring. In this long reflux conjuncture, the retraction of formal waged employment stagnated a movement that since the late 1940s had gradually included new contingents of workers, migrants mostly, under the mantle of capitalist regulation. In doing so, changes in the workplace and in the labour market were placed at the center of the debate, under the spur of rising unemployment and the dilution of once successful trajectories of workers now “deserted from the industry” and, why not say, “deserted from formal jobs” (Cardoso, 2000 and 2010; Guimarães, Cardoso and Comin, 2004; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2009).

This movement propelled the debate in Brazil on the relevance of the concept of “precarization” of labour. This becomes particularly noticeable both in the frequency by which this category becomes socially employed and the recurrence by which the topic becomes the object of academic analyses.

10. Case studies in the workplace emerged with force during this time, setting the tone for the new Brazilian sociology of work, which migrated from markets to the workplace, notably the shop floor.

Thus, when observing the records regarding the use of this term in the printed press¹¹, we see that it appears more vigorously precisely when academic studies multiply, suggesting that the echoes of the international debate begin to make sense as to what takes place in Brazil's labour market since the 1990s. In the Brazilian printed press, the category of "precariousness" certainly shows a long-lived existence; its usage dates back to the 1950s, albeit not yet commonly referred to the world of work. The use of the category «precarization», in turn, is much more recent, not existing in the press before the 1990s; moreover, it almost exclusively pertains to a phenomenon occurring within the space of labour. Significantly, its usage encompasses transformations observed in employment relationships as well as working conditions (in this case its intensification and risks, especially for health). The decades of 2000 and 2010 reveal a significant increase of recorded uses, tripling in the passage of the last decade of the twentieth century to the first decade of the current century. Within this same period, we documented in the most important database for academic articles in Portuguese (SciELO) the existence of circa one hundred and fifty articles published in Brazil containing «precarization» as its study object. As it had happened in the printed media prior to the 1990s, the frequency of this subject was null; between the 1990s and the 2000s going from a mere 4 to no less than 100 articles in Brazilian scientific journals.

Could such a migration of the concept between very different social contexts and across so many different intellectual worlds be a sign of a global process of precarization? The next session hopes to answer this question.

3. A Global Process of Precarization?

While one can agree on the importance of the analytical distinction between the precariousness of employment and the precariousness of work, it is important to know whether one can speak of a process of precarization that affects both these aspects equally. Here, for the reasons mentioned in the introduction, we will look mainly at the cases of France and Brazil.

In France, over the period of the "Thirty Glorious Years", characterized, among other things, by full employment, there was a high probability of an active person being in a stable professional situation. There

11. For this we used the digital collection for Brazil's oldest newspaper "O Estado de São Paulo", searching from 1875 until 2016 all records of the use of the terms "precariousness" and "precarization" (website: <http://acervo.estadao.com.br/procura/>).

were undoubtedly sectors with a high workforce turnover, where working conditions and remuneration were bad, but the risk of not being employed at all was low, even for unqualified workers. One should certainly see this as an exceptional period in social and economic history. The reduction of economic and social precarity was possible thanks to a conjunction of several factors that are clearly recognized today: the progressive generalisation of social security, the increase in the size and stability of companies, the growth of the officially or almost officially recognized salariat in the nationalized public sector (that represented 20% of the total salariat in 1980) and finally, trade union actions promoting what one can call established workers' rights (Sellier, 1984). It is over the course of this period that the typical norms of employment that correspond to an open-ended employment contract developed. Legally, several texts were to define precise regulations relating to the termination of a contract and to seek the greatest job stability possible (Fourcade, 1992). Then, as we saw above, the economic crisis in the 1970s and 80s led to a diversification of possible employment statuses.

Alain Supiot discusses the challenges to the established levels of security. According to him

It is because the legal protection of salaried employment has acquired a certain density that it is rejected by those who would like to ensure that the entrepreneur's freedom takes precedence over the worker's security. This rejection was primarily expressed in policies encouraging flexibilisation or a deregulation of work relations. The changes in labour law that resulted from these policies differed depending on the country, but they all had the same effect of promoting a diversification of the legal situation workers enjoyed. In some cases this occurred through the development of conventional law (and particularly company agreements) to the detriment of state law, and in others, the development of atypical forms of employment (fixed-term jobs, part-time jobs, occasional jobs, temporary jobs, etc.). These transformations lead to the emergence of a second type of labour regulation, where most of the basic notions of labour law (employer, enterprise, representations, strikes, even the idea of salaried employee) are under attack (Supiot, 1994, p. 93).

In reality, the evolution of the labour market sanctioned the decline of the integrating role of the stable salariat. More and more workers are faced with the prospect of precarious or unstable careers and some have never managed to attain the status of open-ended contract employee, with career and social protection guarantees. For this reason, from the time it was developed, the concept of employment precarity has been associated with the observation of a process of precarization of employment that affects the growing fringes of the active population. In addition, it is in the sense of a contrast to the classical salariat that the concept of "precarious"

was used both in France (Castel, 2007), and internationally (Standing, 2011).

It is easy to mobilize several statistical series to support this theory of the precarization of employment (Paugam, 2015). From 1982 to 2011, the proportion of specific types of employment statuses (fixed-term contracts, assisted and apprenticeship contracts) has more than doubled, and the number of jobs affected has risen from 5% to 12% of the total. Among young people aged between 15 and 24, this proportion increased throughout the 1980's and 90s, before it became a generalized phenomenon: in 2011, for this age group, about half of all jobs occupied involve specific types of employment statuses, as compared to one out of six jobs in 1982.

The progress of part-time employment reflects a form of precarization of employment. Its weight in the total number of jobs has greatly increased over the last thirty years. The proportion of the active population in part-time employment rose from 9,2% in 1982 to 20,4% in 2011. For women, it increased from 19,1% to 33,6%. This progression can be explained by the adoption of specific measures exempting companies from the payment of employers' social charges. It hence corresponds more to an increase in the offer rather than an increase in employees' demands for this type of job. Quite logically, the unemployed constantly express their preference for open-ended contracts and full-time jobs, as the latter provide better social protection and better guarantees for the future. Research carried out in several European countries also underscores the risk of poverty and social insecurity amongst part-time salaried employees.

An approach to job insecurity must also take into account the employees' risk of losing their job, even when the job is formally subject to an open-ended contract. Employees may in reality live under the threat of dismissal. In this case, job insecurity is linked to the company's management practices with regard to employment and not to the type of contract. Eliminating stable jobs is henceforth a common practice that is followed in the context of redundancy schemes. The latter plan a series of measures to achieve the aim of reducing numbers; these measures can be early retirement departures but also forced redundancies. In the recent past, France, and more generally all the highly industrialised countries have experienced large-scale loss of employment. Belgium, Great Britain, Sweden and the Netherlands have been severely affected. Job loss has been slightly lower in Germany, but nonetheless remains at a high level. On the contrary, loss of employment in the industrial sector has been much lower in the countries of the South: Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy. It is hence the most advanced countries in terms of industrial development that have faced a massive reduction in jobs in large-scale industries.

These statistical series clearly validate the concept of a precarization of employment. Can one also speak of a precarization of work? Let us note that the statistical series collected in France from surveys on “Working Conditions” made it possible to highlight three main progressions (Paugam, 2015). To start with a tendency towards greater autonomy in work appears very clearly, particularly from 1991 to 2013, when there was a regular progression in this area. The proportion of salaried employees who do not always follow instructions, or who are not given any, rose from 58,9% to 68,7% among men and from 56,9% to 64,2% among women. This increase is true of all socio-professional categories, except intermediary professions, where the figures have remained stable. The progression was particularly high for unqualified workers: the proportion rose from 38,7% to 53,9%. Hence, one can say that this is an underlying trend of the organisation of work. In addition, it can be observed in all the European countries and it concerns both the industrial and the service sectors. Secondly, while employees are more autonomous, they also have to deal with a high increase in the restrictions imposed upon them, both in terms of the rhythm of work and in terms of the quality demanded of them. This is particularly evident in the period from 1984 to 2013. On these aspects, the statistical series are also highly significant. The proportion of salaried employees who declare they face at least three rhythm restrictions rose from 6,8% to 41,3% among men, and from 4,4% to 29% among women. One can also note a very significant increase for all socio-professional categories. Thirdly, one should not believe that the traditional hardships and risks connected to working disappeared with the new forms of organization, which overall, provide employees greater scope for autonomy and initiatives. One can also refer to statistical series on the physical hardships at work since 1984 and amongst them we find: 1) standing for long periods, 2) remaining in an uncomfortable position for long periods, 3) having to walk long distances or move frequently, 4) having to carry or shift heavy loads, 5) being subjected to tremors or vibrations. The proportion of salaried employees who declare they are subjected to at least three of the five physical stresses mentioned above has risen steeply between 1984 and 2013. It has increased from 15,7% to 40,5% among men and from 7,2% to 28,1% among women. All socio-professional categories are equally affected. For unqualified workers, the proportion has risen from 21,2% to 64,6%.

These three progressions do not occur independently of each other. On the contrary, analysing them successively allows for a better understanding of the evolution of the relationship to work over the last years, and the rationales employees use to enhance their value within their professional universe. It also allows us to see the difficulties they have to face to achieve this. These changes allow us to underscore the fact that while

certain forms of alienation of labour have probably disappeared due to the increased autonomy employees enjoy, new forms of work precarization have emerged. These are at least partially related to the intensification of production rhythms and the growing difficulty employees have in attaining the goals set by the company. This process encourages a sort of competition amongst employees and, for some, this provokes higher stress levels and symptoms of depression.

In other words, the data collected in France and several European countries allows us to validate the idea of a twofold process of precarization, not only of employment, but also of jobs. This precarization does not affect all employees equally and is not as intense in all European countries but these are unquestionably underlying tendencies in post-industrial societies that are facing progressive challenges to the social protection floors connected to the classical salariat, and a transformation of the productive system as well as the way in which work is organized.

What about emerging markets? We saw earlier, in light of the Brazilian case, that only in the 1990s would the notion of «precarization» establish itself within the national debate (as well as in the everyday jargon) as the dominant mode for understanding the changes in employment relations and work conditions since the 1980s. Other concepts lost centrality, such as «urban marginality» or even «underemployment». Thus, we should ask: what is the novelty brought by the 1980s and consolidated in the 1990s? What inflection took place from that moment onwards to establish the terrain for the consecration of a new category of “precarization”? We shall continue to use the Brazilian case as a rich analytical example for our analysis.

The 1980s inaugurated a long conjuncture of economic growth reflux in the country (not without reason these years became known as the “lost decade”)¹². The period witnessed a stall of the slow, albeit progressive incorporation of individuals to waged labour, followed by the establishment of a modern industry and urban services since the 1960s and 1970s. However, the intense influx of people toward the labour market continued¹³.

12. The Brazilian GDP growth during the twentieth century was on average 5% per year. Compared to other countries, Brazil's economic performance in the last century was above average. In the four decades between 1940 and 1980 GDP growth was above the century average, reflecting the ongoing structural changes (intense urbanization, industry growth and modern services), and the 1950 and 1970 were especially important for their best performances. However, the situation deteriorated at the end of the century, and the two worst results of GDP occurred precisely in the last two decades, making the average ten-year growth falling from 9% in the 1970s to 2% in the 1980s (the “lost decade”) and 3% in the 1990s.

13. The growth of the working age population (15-64 years) has accelerated between 1970 and 2000, when it stabilizes. That is, the economic flow of the last two decades of

At the same time, an intense process of restructuring of firms coexists with the 1980-90's crisis and economic openness to the international market from 1990 on¹⁴. Such restructuring has deepened the segmentation of the labor market, differentiating between, on the one hand, employees who represent the core businesses (relatively more educated workers with longer career in the same company, with more than forty years old, low turnover rate and income associated with production targets) and, on the other hand, outsourced workers (under the age of forty, low education, high turnover and low income).

It also changed working conditions in the shopfloors. Brazilian Sociology of Work gathered and analysed a rich set of evidences on those changes, mostly based on research produced during the 1990's and 2000's. Anchored in Marxist tradition, a new methodological tendency distinguished itself for valuing the microanalysis of labour processes instead of the macroanalysis of the labour market tendencies or on the unionism¹⁵. Evidences came from a large set of case studies on different types of firms, mostly on manufacturing and service sectors, recovering not only the "brownfields" of capitalist growth in Brazil (as Southeast and South regions), but also the Northeast and the North, since a process of industrial deconcentration had been occurring from the 1970's on, as part of the dictatorships economic plans and also political strategies of control over a militant unionism that grew up in the Southeast, mainly in Sao Paulo. Increasing control over the workers associated with the introduction of new forms of human resources management strategies, labour force internal segmentation under an accelerate externalization of tasks, health problems, work injuries and death mostly related to job conditions of outsourced workers are some of the issues brought into the surface for this literature. But, it is also interesting to observe that, differently from the French case, no national inquiry on working conditions was put into

the twentieth century coincided with an increased supply of workers in the market. We had seen before that, in 1960, no less than six out of ten working age Brazilians were not registered by census statistics as being in the labour market; we also saw that it was precisely in the 1980s that this relationship was reversed, revealing that, from then on, most active individuals began to seek the labour market (as employed or looking for work) for their means of survival.

14. The new strategies of productivity and management spread by most companies. Nevertheless, only large national and transnational companies (10% of all firms in Brazil at the time), tended to make significant technological changes. In small and micro-enterprises, access to new technological packages was restricted, and the new human resources management programs were the main mechanisms for increasing productivity and quality and to reduce costs; this deepened the downsizing effect, as they were great absorbers of labor (for a revision on the Brazilian literature on this issue, see Guimarães and Leite, 2002).

15. For a detailed revision of this literature see Guimarães and Leite, 2002.

place by any level of the government, in order to provide information on workers perceptions of those changes. Knowledge was part of a political compromise of intellectuals aiming at provide militants with evidences on the effects of recent and fast changes, underlining the signs of what could be named (in European terms) as “precarization of working conditions. Nevertheless, as for the official data, labour market remained as the key issue.

Not without reason: within a context of slowdown in productive activity and an increasing rationalization in the use of labour by companies, this convergence of trends led to a significant growth in unemployment, that reached almost 13% in 2002. The average unemployment rate, as measured by official data (the PME – Monthly Employment Survey of Brazil), more than doubled, from about 5.2% in 1984 to 12% in 1999¹⁶. Alternative forms of measurement this phenomena indicated even higher rates, since they captured not only the so-called “open-employment” but observed also its hidden forms that lurked in precarious work or discouragement¹⁷. Although there are important challenges in comparing measures taken from different types of labour markets, it is certain that a similar phenomenon took place in France and Brazil at this time, with notably high figures on the workers’ eviction and their transitions between the occupation, unemployment and inactivity (see Kase and Sugita, 2006). With regard to the risks of unemployment, they were also distinct in Brazil by age, sex and education (see Bairros, 1991; Guimarães e Castro, 1993, Guimaraes, 2002; Guimarães e Brito, 2008; Demazière *et al.*, 2012 and 2013).

The emergence of unemployment as an structural dimension of labour market and also as a relevant social question during the 80’s in Brazil reflects a new characteristic of labour offer: a major and growing share of the workforce was now stuck, with no return, to the labour market (Hirata and Humphrey, 1989); for these workers, engagement ceased to be a transient flow between countryside and city, and/or a pendulous commute, moving between extra-market forms of subjection and the market¹⁸. In these conditions, unemployment established itself as a structural dimen-

16. <https://brasilfatosedados.wordpress.com/2010/09/09/unemployment-evolucao-1986-2010-2/>.

17. This was the case of the statistics provided by the “Survey on Employment and Unemployment” (PED), a household representative research conducted by unions and some state governments in the many Brazilian metropolises. As for São Paulo metropolitan region, PED counted almost 30% of unemployment rate among Black people in the core municipalities of the manufacturing industry (the so-called ABC region) in early 2000.

18. For a much more detailed development of this argument, see Guimarães and Brito (2016).

sion of the functioning of the labour market, starting with major metropolitan markets¹⁹.

Within the plurality of its forms – and especially in the remarkable weight of unemployment hiding itself through “precarious employment” or “discouragement”²⁰ – another dimension of this process expressed itself: the lack of a social protection policy for labour in order to institutionalize a minimum set of unemployment benefits (insurance, training, intermediation, and relocation) to allow the unemployed worker to devote oneself to seek work. The Fordist expansion of the years 1960-1970 in Brazil not only lacked a universal standard for longstanding wage employment, but it was also seated in a restricted protection system in coverage and benefits, leaving private sociability instances with both the burden to provide the conditions to tackle unemployment as well as the responsibility to support and guide the search for work²¹.

For this reason, unoccupied workers found it impossible to express their (subjective) condition of being engaged in a (statistic) form internationally known as “open unemployment” (Guimarães *et al.*, 2010 and 2014). This long-lasting category was conceived and widely used to account for the phenomenon in countries that created more inclusive social protection regimes in their coverage and generous in their benefits. In Brazil, as well as in many emerging countries, the insufficiency of the category was notorious: how to remain without a job and devote oneself exclusively to seek for work with a lack of institutional forms of protection to ensure the conditions for this proactivity? Therefore, it was crucial to measure a particular type of unemployment associated with underemployment. This challenge brought the notion of precarious employment to the center of the analyses (and statistics), a primary condition of those who, by having a “precarious occupation” (due to working hours lower than intended, and/or wages lower than the minimum required to survive, and/or an informal

19. The centrality of the market imposes itself in spite of the fact that resources stemming from the private sociability sphere could provide (by way of group solidarity) the means of survival placed at risk during unemployment; and even though these private sociability resources allied themselves to engagement and sociability via the labour market (Bilac, 1978 and Fausto Neto, 1982).

20. Note that this form of unemployment “hidden by precarious work” or “hidden by dismay” (as it was categorized) was the more ponderable and fastest growing category in Brazilian metropolises when the phenomenon began to be measured in the mid-1980s (Dedecca, Montagner and Brandão, 1993; Dedecca and Montagner, 1993).

21. Not without reason, with the end of the military regimes in 1985, the new Constitution, promulgated in 1988 brought the mark of political pressure from popular movements in search of regulatory rights, then understood as the right to protection in case of unemployment. However, only in the 1990s would the unemployment-insurance institute, the minimum ballast of this protection, become regulated and set in motion in Brazil.

work bond outside the established norm) continued to seek work. These new unemployment measures improved the description of the particularities of the Brazilian labour market structure, emphasizing not only relevant traits for understanding this scenario, but which were also common to other emerging Latin American countries.

However, if we shift our observation and focus on the findings on forms of employment, the debate continues to be revealing. It refers us to another key issue, the instability of bonds, a central dimension to how authors in Europe developed the concept of «precarious employment». This instability, expressed in high «turn-over» rates was a lasting trace in Brazil's labour market. Unlike other realities, such as in France where a Fordist wage standard resulted in the vital importance of «open-ended contracts», labour legislation in Brazil, especially after the military 1964 coup and the institution of a special fund to support workers in case of lay-off²², has always favored intense turn-over.

Therefore, what was the novelty brought by the recent years? We could say that, until 1980, the breach of an employment contract presaged the establishment of another work bond, usually in the same sector, and commonly with another employer (albeit sometimes the same employer, but at a different moment in time), although (most likely) with lower wages and more unequal bargaining conditions. However, the turn-over mechanism itself beckoned the horizon of a future readmission, of re-inserting oneself within the sector from which one had left. That is, it did not deprive someone of the chance of (long-term) re-insertion, or – and for this very reason – the symbolic representation of an identity (professional) and a destination (occupational). So much so that, in the crisis of the early 1980s, unions still protected “their” unemployed members. The foundation of “strike funds” immunized the transience of layoffs and announced that in the future, even if more distant than desired, the worker would re-establish bonds with their original destination. Moreover, it should be underlined that the unions itself costed this interregnum. Thus, due to the lack of a public-state institutional framework, the passage way bridges were established by non-state public institutions, whereas trade unions and workers' solidarity were among the main ones.

Admittedly, during the years of intense growth under the military regime, the so-called “economic miracle” (1967-1973), the intense turn-

22. The FGTS – Fundo de Garantia por Tempo de Serviço – was a reserve financial fund nourished by contributions from employers and employees, to be used only under special circumstances (dismissal, marriage, death, to buy a house...). Its creation tried to compensate the end of the norm on the stability of job contracts, an important labour right in Brazil, available up to 1965 for those who reached a long time of contract with the same employer.

over was also an instrument par excellence of labour management in the everyday life of factories, further complemented with political repression. Turn-over depressed wages and subjected workers to increasingly intense working hours, through the exaggerated amount of “extra-hours” in working conditions degraded by the deprivation of rights (such as stability, replaced by the FGTS legislation). That is, turn-over was an increasingly intensified economic strategy for work management, which degraded the conditions of its use. It is still interesting to note that the academic literature of the time preferred to describe this process as «super-exploitation» (Marini 1969 and 1973; Humphrey, 1982), treating it as a peculiar dimension of dependent development; the category «precariousness» was not used, even though the phenomenon was indeed about precarious conditions.

When the selectivity prompted by employers began to express needs stemming from the companies’ intense technological and organizational restructuring, especially from the 1990s, occupational instability changed its nature. Thus, it became increasingly clear that the rupture of the work bond, for a very significant portion of those laid off, meant facing the horizon of the ultimate loss of ties with a preterit trajectory, with a potential professional career, with a social identity. Therefore, this was not simply about turn-over. Survival in the new restructured spaces became increasingly anchored in the ability to live not only under new employment conditions, but also under new working conditions. During this time, notions such as “flexibility” and “precariousness” gain the front stage²³. However, it is imperative to understand that the emergence of these new words, within academia and the lexicon of the work actors refers to specific phenomena. Let’s focus on a final argument.

The set of evidences so far revealed – contraction of economic activity, technological and organizational restructuring, increased turn-over rate, contraction of the “good jobs”, expansion of unemployment, intensification of transitions on the labor market as well as job intensification, increasing control over the workers, problems on injuries and deaths on the job – suggest the existence of a movement with characteristics that mimic those observed in European countries (and described before), that point to a process of precarization both of the employment and work conditions. Nevertheless, to grasp the specific nature of this process as it occurs in Brazilian society other aspects have to be taken into account concerning the political dynamics and the relationship between the actors.

In fact, if the 80’s were a “lost decade” from the perspective of economic growth, they were a decade of political and social gains associ-

23. For a further development of this argument, see Guimarães (2012).

ated with the restoration of democracy in the country. The new regime, the 3rd. Republic, which is installed in 1985 under the influence of a strong wave of social movements (including organized labor), had its apogee with the promulgation of a new Constitution in 1988 marked by its openness to social rights, particularly those related to work and protection. The new Constitution created the architecture for a new social pact, the possibility of a broader protection regime, paving the way for several public policies of social inclusion implemented in the subsequent years. The electoral disputes and social debates in the public sphere made some possibilities come true and shaped new policies, as for example, the financial basis for implementing unemployment insurance and the income transfer programs, the control on child labour and on forms of work analogous to slavery. In other words, an opposite tendency vis-a-vis the French case, where the crisis of a social pact led to restrict rights and reduce forms of social and labor protection.

Brazil, by contrast, created the institutional and political conditions for an impossible marriage (if we take the European point of view) between micro-changes related to economic restructuring at firm level (leading to increase labour market flexibility) and macro-transformations amidst the political democratization (which favoured the extension of social rights and social protection). Following this new deal in the second half of the 2000s, there was a significant decline in unemployment in Brazil: in 2014, its figures corresponded to a third of what was observed in 1999 (a decline of 12.6% to 4.8%).

But the most remarkable trend was the resumption of formal employment. In recent years, scientists and public policy makers enthusiastically welcomed statistics that revealed the systematic growth of the formal wage labor in Brazil. Taking as a baseline a historical range of 15 years, we see that the average growth in formal wage labor in the Brazilian economy was 74% between 1994 and 2009²⁴. This is a move that corresponds to a doubling of employment contracts in trade (139%) and in services (105%); even industry, which experienced negative growth rates between 1995 and 2001, the volume of reported jobs increased by 46% during this period. However, the same process can be approached from a slightly different but very suggestive point of view. The indices of employment growth, mentioned above for industry, trade and services, concerned employees hired directly. But if we observe the rate of growth of employment through “placement, recruitment and selection of staff” agencies, we

24. We took 1994, immediately after the stabilization plan in Brazil, and 2009, when employment declined sharply in the northern countries as a consequence of the 2008 crisis.

will see that formal jobs obtained through those labour market intermediaries grew nearly 300% (Guimarães, 2009)²⁵.

In other words, the new economic revival cycle Brazil over the course of the years 2003-2014 deepens differentiations in employment relationships, broadening the range of contract forms, which is to say the movement toward flexibilities gains breath *pari passu* with the notable expansion of access to formal labour occurring at this same time; i.e. bringing workers once without any form of protection into the world of rights protecting their professional activities; flexibility, therefore, may come disassociated from precarization. This brings us to a last important tendency in the Brazilian case, namely, the association between new forms of labour segmentation and the (re)creation of occupational inequalities.

Those recent tendencies allows us to conclude that the heterogeneity in Brazilian labour market has been changing in its nature. Previously differences put a part those that gathered the formal working relationships and those who were outside, or those who had a lasting integration into regular work and those transiting between various forms of work or even between work and unemployment. Nowadays this heterogeneity consolidates itself inside the universe of workers with a formal contract. More importantly, if the diversity increases with the expansion of employment opportunities, it also concerns separately the various segments of workers. It is therefore difficult to reduce it to a single magic word, the “precarization”, and borrow a conceptual definition for other realities. It is necessary to examine how this new reality coins new representations on the job experience, especially among those who have experienced recurrent unemployment or never achieved a stable job in their previous labour market trajectories.

Does the simultaneous existence of so contradictory trends implies we should abandon the diagnosis of (employment and work) precarization in Brazil? Or is it a challenge to elaborate on the various forms of its embeddedness under specific social and political realities. In light of all this evidence, we would say that it would be absolutely improper to reduce notions such as “precarity” or “flexibility” to how they were originally conceptualized, within the context of significantly less heterogeneous markets due to their employment relationships when compared to Latin American markets, and working environments significantly more attuned to management forms historically grounded in labour unions and state regulation than those occurring in Latin America.

25. This process also undecodes the importance of this new business in Brazil, that became one of the most important international players in the industry of temporary jobs (Guimarães and Vieira, 2015).

4. Conclusion

Comparing professional precariousness in countries as different as France and Brazil is hence not a straightforward exercise. France is characteristic of a post-industrial country, highly marked by what is consensually called the crisis of wage-labour. In contrast, Brazil is an emerging country, traditionally known for its high level of social inequalities, the extremely diverse structure of its job market and its limited social protection system, which is particularly evident in the marginalization of a large proportion of its workforce. Between 2003 and 2012, however, it experienced high economic growth and a large number of salaried employees joined the formal sector. These countries seem to be in total opposition from the viewpoint of the progression of the labour market and working conditions, but nonetheless, the concepts of precarity and precarization are increasingly employed in both societies, in academic circles as well as in economic and social debates involving trade unions and political forces.

In this article we have sought to understand the reasons for the widespread use of this concept and to confront the scientific and social usages of this notion with empirical data drawn from recent surveys. While in France, the word precariousness is often used to describe the living conditions of the working classes, it was more broadly used in the 1980s and 1990s to explain the process of flexibilization of the workforce and the creation of so-called “atypical” jobs, or jobs deliberately designed outside the norms of open-ended contracts. More generally it was used to define the rising insecurity of stable jobs against a backdrop of industrial restructuring. Over this period, the sociology of work largely became a sociology of employment and precariousness became one of its major themes. However, the end of the 1990s saw the emergence of a new question: that of the intensification of work. This engendered discussions on a dual process of precarization that affected both employment and work.

In contrast, Brazil is an example of a job market marked, not by the crisis of wage labour, but by a labour market with a diversified structure. On the one hand there are formal jobs that are more or less protected, and on the other, survival jobs for the vast population on the fringes that actually represents the majority of the active population. For this reason, if we refer to the history of social thought on the Brazilian job market, and to its specificities, precariousness is not a concept traditionally applied to this country, but rather “over-exploitation”, “informality” and “marginalization” of the workforce. The idea of precariousness is more recent and initially adopted to coin a type of mass unemployment disguised as occupations that are precarious in terms of salary and stability. Although the question of unequal working conditions has not been neglected, it remained little studied as such, as in the eyes of the researchers working

during the period from 1960 to 1980 it seemed to be totally dependent on the mode of development characteristic of peripheral capitalism. And yet, the intense international economic integration of the 1990s and the rise in unemployment provoked by the restructuring of companies, which constitutes the central feature of this globalization, have led to a progressive reformulation of the objects of study. There have also been increasingly pressing demands from workers' movements for recognition of the pernicious effects of these globalized strategies of human resources management on working conditions.

The analysis of statistical series available in France allows us to support the thesis of a dual process of precarization, but with regard to Brazil it should be understood in a more nuanced manner. While we can note the high growth in temp jobs, provided by employment agencies (the so-called "intermediated jobs") over the last two decades in this country, suggesting a flexibilization of the workforce comparable to what we find in France and more generally in Europe, one must nonetheless underscore the high growth of formal jobs from 2003 onwards, which provide greater protection for the workforce. It is true that Brazil has a long way to go to reach the developmental conditions of a large-scale salaried society, but the reality seems more complex than it appears. In Brazil, employment flexibilization seems to be concomitant with a progressive extension of wage labour society. In fact, the idea of "precariat", which Robert Castel (1995, 2007) referred to designate a specific regime on the fringes of the norm of stable and protective employment, and which Guy Standing (2011) used recently to describe the emergence of a new dangerous class – consolidating the turn between a process (precarization), a condition (precariousness), into an actor – seems ill-suited to this type of social formation, or at least, out of step with the structural inequalities that have accompanied the process of development of the job market in this country.

But in a declining wage labour society and in a fragile and incomplete, emerging wage labour society, the job market and the world of work in general constitute today, as they did yesterday, an entry point for analysing social inequalities. In France, as in Brazil, the segmentation of the job market in its various forms reinforces not only social and status cleavages between employees, but also the unequal conditions for integration citizens face, by creating a context that is little conducive to social cohesion.

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