

**GROWTH AND FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT:
A EURASIAN COMPARISON OF EMPLOYMENT INSECURITY
(EURASEMPOI)**

Project summary

This project analyses the relationship between economic growth, changes in employment, and the forms of employment insecurity that these changes cause. Led by four partner institutions (Inalco, Paris Diderot University, EHESS and Sciences Po) including senior historians and sociologists and doctoral students, with expertise in several cultural areas, it takes a comparative approach across both in space and time. Indeed, the project compares Chinese, Japanese, and French national configurations, as well as those of a number of European Comecom countries. The comparison is also inter-temporal, between the growth period from the 1950s to the 1970s for France, Japan and the Comecon, and the era that began in the 1980s for China.

The four compared socio-historical situations share the common characteristic of building a production-oriented model that gives the state a central role in regulation aiming to be simultaneously economic and social. In order to understand and compare the forms of “precariousness” in a context of growth that are linked to this model, this research seeks to provide a more “complex” and “rooted” vision of the fragmentation of labour market hierarchies, and especially of the resulting insecurities for the categories of workers concerned. For this purpose it will trace the diversity of situations according to the industries and forms of employment, choosing sectors that, from the perspective of the problem raised, present cases which are paradoxical and thus “good to ponder”: human services, which were profoundly reshaped in the 20th century under the effect of changes in work, in demography and in family structure; energy, with mines as symbols of the dialectic between intense risks faced by employees and a quasi-military regulation of the labour force; and finally, textile production, the oldest industrial sector and also the first to have confronted global competition. In each of these sectors, we will pursue both a quantitative and qualitative analysis following work life trajectories, household budgets and time budgets. Furthermore, in each country considered we will analyse statistical and political economic categories used by the actors and observers of work relations – unions and employers as well as experts and creators of social surveys or indicators – to describe the forms of labour market insecurity.

In addition to portraying the heterogeneity we will identify patterns in the mechanisms building this “precariousness” and in its preferred targets. We will show and measure variations in the level of insecurity depending on the types of employment or work contract, gender, level of exposure to risk (illness, layoffs, work accidents), access to social services and degree of state regulation (of professions or industries). In each of these national case studies the idea will be to show, more systematically than is currently the case in the literature, to what extent the working class is pluralistic for a given activity, age, gender and skill level. The standardization of forms of employment during the period of high growth did not yield a homogenization as complete as that assumed, for the next period, by the “de-standardization of work” thesis, which is key to understanding current labour market hierarchies.