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# The Unemployed and Unemployment in an International Perspective

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# The Unemployed and Unemployment in an International Perspective

## Comparative Studies of Japan, France and Brazil

Edited by
Kazutoshi Kase & Kurumi Sugita

ISS Research Series No.19

INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE UNIVERSITY OF TOKYO

# The Unemployed and Unemployment in an International Perspective

## Comparative Studies of Japan, France and Brazil

# 国際比較の中の失業者と失業問題

## ――日本・フランス・ブラジル――

# Contents　目次

はしがき　加瀬和俊

**Part One** 1

Unemployment As Social Construction

Trajectories and Biographies in a Comparative Perspective: Japan, France and Brazil

**Chapter 1**　Aims and Methods of International Comparison 6

*Didier Demazière, Kurumi Sugita*

**Chapter 2**　Codification and Measures: Changing Frontiers of Unemployment 17

*Paula Montagner, Maria Teresa Pignoni, Kurumi Sugita*

**Chapter 3**　Unemployment and occupational transition: Trajectories and perceptions 44

*Nadya Araujo Guimarães*

**Chapter 4**　Unemployment as a Biographical Experience 70

*Didier Demazière, Nadya Araujo Guimarães, Kurumi Sugita*

**Appendix** 142

**Chapter 5**　National Configurations of Unemployment: Empirical Results and Theoretical Implications 150

*Didier Demazière, Helena Hirata*

**Bibliographic references** 156

**第Ⅱ部**　失業対策の国別特性――失業の個性との照応関係 160

**第１章**　フランスの失業対策における失業者　都留民子 161

**第２章**　日本の失業対策――国際比較と歴史的背景に注目して　加瀬和俊 185

# はしがき

本報告書は、失業問題についての国際比較を意図した共同研究の成果の一部である。この共同研究は、失業者からのヒアリングを含むフランス・ブラジル・日本における実態調査を中心にして組み立てられているが、その成果を交流するためにフランス側グループの尽力によって 2005 年 1 月にパリにおいて国際シンポジウムが開催された。このシンポジウムには、職業行政・労働組合等の関係者も加わって多彩な報告がなされ、多面的な議論が展開された。

本報告書は、このシンポジウムに提出された論文をもとにして、当日の討論の成果を加えて改めて体系的に執筆し直した原稿を収録している。シンポジウムではこのほかに、各国の行政当局および労働組合からの、具体的な経験に裏打ちされた貴重な報告もなされたが、本報告書にはそれらは収録していない。

本書の第Ⅰ部は、フランス・ブラジルの研究チームによる日本を含む三国の失業者の実態についての分析である。このグループによる国際比較調査の中間報告はすでに『職安求職者にみる失業の実態――国際比較および失業指標の動向を含めて』（法政大学日本統計研究所『研究所報』No.29、2002 年 12 月）として刊行されており、今回の報告文はその後の調査結果も加えて、より体系的に問題の全体的把握を試みたものである。その内容は、失業者の心理状態、失業者と家族との関係、社会の側の失業者を認知する仕方等、社会学的ないし文化人類学的視点を重視し、失業者を取り巻く人間関係のあり方に焦点を当てつつ、失業の実態と政策の効果の判定に迫ろうとするものであり、その視点を厳密に方法化しようとする主張も打ち出されている。この原稿はそれぞれフランス語、ポルトガル語で寄せられたが、なるべく多くの読者を得たいという編者の希望を容れてフランス側の責任の下で英訳していただいた。

本書の第Ⅱ部は、各国固有の失業問題のあり方が各国固有の失業対策のあり方とどのような照応関係にあるのかを解明する意図を込めて、フランスおよび日本の失業対策について国際比較・歴史比較の観点を意識して整理したものである。資本主義国家における失業問題は量的な差はあっても基本的には同性格であり、したがってその対処方策もどの国においても同性格のものであろうという往々見られる想定とは異なって、各国の失業対策がそれぞれ固有の特徴を持ち、時には反対方向の政策がとられる場合も少なくないという事実を重視して、政策とそれを規定する諸事情が考察されている。

ところで、本報告書の編集作業を急いでいた１１月初旬、パリ周辺都市から起こった若者と警官との衝突事件が、夜間の放火・暴動事件としてまたたく間にフランス全土に広がり、連日のトップ・ニュースを占め続けるという事態が生じた。この事態の解釈についてはすでに多くの議論が現れているが、移民二世達の失業問題の深刻さと彼等の疎外感が共通して取り上げられている。失業問題の検討に際しては、失業率の動向の背後に潜んでいる、当事者および非当事者の意識・人間関係に迫ることが不可欠の課題であることを、衛星放送の映し出す炎を見つめながら改めて強く確認せざるをえなかった。

２００５年１２月

加瀬和俊

# Part One

## Unemployment As Social Construction
## Trajectories and Biographies
## in a Comparative Perspective:
## Japan, France and Brazil

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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | In original language | In English |
|---|---|---|
| ANPE | Agence nationale pour l'emploi | French National Employment Agency |
| CEBRAP | Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento | Brazilian Center for Analysis and Planning |
| CEM | Centro de Estudos da Metrópole | Center for Metropolitan Studies |
| CNRS | Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique | French National Center for Scientific Research |
| CNPq | Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico | National Counsel for Technological and Scientific Development |
| DARES | Direction de l'animation de la recherche des études et des statistiques | Department of Research Animation, Studies and Statistics |
| DIEESE | Departamento Intersindical de Estatísticas e Estudos Sócio-Econômicos | Inter-Union Department for Socioeconomic Data and Analysis |
| ESS | 就業構造基本調査 | Employment Status Survey |
| FAPESP/ CEPID Program | Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo/ Programa "Centros de Pesquisa, Inovação e Difusão" | State of São Paulo Research Foundation/ Centers of Research Innovation and Diffusion Program |
| GTM | Genre, Travail, Mobilités | Gender, Work, Mobilities |
| IBGE | Fundação Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística | Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics |
| INSEE | Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques | French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies |
| LASMAS | Laboratoire d'Analyse Sociologique et de Méthodes Appliquées aux Sciences Sociales | Laboratory for Sociological Analysis and Methods Applied to Human Sciences |
| LFS | 労働力調査 | Labour Force Survey |
| MRSH | Maison de la Recherche en Sciences Humaines de Caen | Center of Research in Human Sciences of Caen |
| MTE-DEQ | Ministério do Trabalho e do Emprego, Departamento de Qualificação | Ministry of Labour and Employment, Department of Professional Training |
| PED | Pesquisa de Emprego e Desemprego | Employment and Unemployment Survey |
| PESO | 職業安定所 | Public Employment Security Office |
| PME | Pesquisa Mensal de Emprego | Monthly Employment Survey |
| SEADE | Fundação Sistema Estadual de Análise de Dados | State of São Paulo Foundation for Data Analysis |
| SEBRAE | Serviço Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas | Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service |
| SEERT | Secretaria do Emprego e das Relações de Trabalho do Governo do Estado de São Paulo | State of São Paulo Department for Employment and Labour Relations |
| SSLFS | 労働力調査特別調査 | Special Survey of the Labour Force Survey |

# Chapter 1
# Aims and Methods of International Comparison

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Working life trajectory is going through a profound change. In many places in the world, traditional forms of employment are threatened by various forms of atypical employment. Unemployment, which used to be an unusual experience happening as a transition between stable full-time jobs, is becoming a widespread, common experience. It occurs to most people, and often more than once in one's professional trajectory. Furthermore, the ambiguous grey zone between employment and unemployment is broadening: one often cannot qualify a worker's situation completely as unemployment, but not as employed in the full sense of term either. The phenomenon of underemployment is growing, and the border between unemployment and economical inactivity is becoming more and more indistinct as well.

If these characteristics are shared in many countries, in contrast, the ways in which each society treats these phenomena are quite diverse. Institutions concerned with employment and unemployment are very differently conceived and have different degrees of presence (public employment agencies, unemployment insurance, social assistance, employment policies, etc.). Social networks may or may not have functions in job seeking or in support of deprived people. The way society views the unemployed is not the same, and the way the unemployed persons perceive their situation and react to their hardship is different between countries and within the society. It is therefore time to undertake an international comparison of unemployment which goes beyond the comparison of standardized statistical figures.

Such a project concerning Brazil, France and Japan initially calls for a clarification as to the construction of the comparison in terms of the object – unemployment, and related methodology. The relevance of the parameters of comparison always lies in a tension between proximity and distance. If the two objects to be compared are too close and similar in such a way that almost no differences can be observed, comparison seems

meaningless; if, on the contrary, they are too different, one wonders what is the point in comparing such "incomparable" objects. However, from our point of view, the relevance of comparison cannot be discussed in an abstract and general manner in terms of distance. It is more closely related to how we approach the sociological enigma to be resolved and what aim we give to ourselves. The goal of our comparison here is not to describe and explain national variations of the volume of unemployment and their modulations between social, gender or age groups. It is centered on the meaning of unemployment, the differences between and within national spaces. Through analysis of recent statistical research and microanalysis of in-depth interviews, we focus in the following chapters on three related areas of unemployment: a definition and description of the codification of unemployment, and its increasing and thickening margins; a view of this thickening as essentially a temporal process involving individual trajectories; and a subjective accounting of the individual experiences and the meanings people give to their situations, and how they react and improvise to cope with their ordeal.

In this chapter however, to better conceptualize and introduce our aims and methods in this international comparison we will confront the following questions and others. What is comparable and why did we choose these three countries? How is unemployment socially constructed in each country and what do the similarities and differences tell us? To what extent is it institutionalized? What of the validity of the various analytical instruments used to measure unemployment, and how do we propose to frame this research in new ways? The answers to these questions can help to establish a point of departure for interpreting the results of our research.

The initial assumption underlying this study is that there is not a single and universal definition of unemployment, in spite of the development of standardized and stabilized measuring indicators, and abundant, regular statistics. The expression of this stance in terms of research methods made clear a number of methodological and theoretical obstacles that we will clarify later. But the principle is rather classic: let us consider the discussions and comments concerning Durkheim's work on suicide (Durkheim, 1897). In his famous opus he made a meticulous and thorough analysis of the statistics in order to identify the variables, and to propose sociological explanations for what was considered a purely personal act (Baudelot, Establet, 1984). In doing this, and despite his statements of intent, he considered the taxonomies being used to code the causes of the deaths as obvious and relevant, and neglected other previous causes of variation: the administrative work necessary for statistical production, the medical and legal activity determining cause of death, the varying propensities and capacities of social groups to dissimulate the suicides for religious or moral reasons. (Besnard, 1976; Garfinkel, 1967; Sacks, 1968).

The existence of conventions of measurement and statistical indicators making it possible to define a social phenomenon obviously constitutes a resource for the production of knowledge, but it can also lead to a reification of analytical categories. Like suicide, unemployment is, in this respect, a typical case since it can be apprehended by easily usable rates and other standardized measures in international comparison. Our approach led us in another direction: to the exploration of social variations of unemployment understood not as the values measured by the standardized indices, but as the range of meanings associated with the manner of seeing, of saying, of describing situations. This

approach leads to exploring the processes of categorization of certain situations like unemployment, and the complementary attributions of some others with which they share a certain family resemblance: forms of non-unemployment other than unemployment, for example inactivity, retirement from the labor market, early retirement, professional activity , etc.

## 1. Comparing what is not comparable?

The international comparative perspective is always confronted with a contradictory injunction, well summarized in the expression "comparing the incomparable". There is a double trap. It relates first of all to the range of countries compared: a too great proximity is likely to erase any difference, while too great contrasts are likely to dilute the comparison. This relates as much to the phenomena to be compared, which according to countries can show different characteristics, be part of a specific history or have heterogeneous significances. To stick only to a nominal linguistic category, like unemployment, runs the risk of producing a comparison without sociological relevance. But inversely, leaving aside the social and collective categories in order to understand a reality independent of its denomination is to go down an impracticable and chimerical path. How can these difficulties be faced and overcome?

Concerning the first difficulty, that which relates to the comparability of the countries selected, two ways are classically used to conceptualize the proximities and distances, and to dissolve contradictions (Dubar *et al.*, 2003). The first underlines the divergences between countries and tries to identify national models that organize particular characteristics in a coherent system. These models, whose consistency and force are often explained by their historical and cultural rooting (d'Iribarne, 1989, 1990), crystallize the significant variations and condense irreducible specificities. The second way consists, on the contrary, of laying the stress on dominant and transversal trends that diminish national characteristics, and constitute a base of common or similar characteristics. The phenomena are then registered in a movement of convergence that attenuates or even erases the variations, under the weight of global dynamics that bring them closer in a more or less inescapable way. In the first case the historical processes are considered as unilateral movements of deepening cultural dynamics, in the second they are considered as movements of convergence and standardization of national features. In both cases the tension between proximities and distances is solved at the price of an excessive simplification of the historical dynamic and processes of change.

However, pioneering research has shown that it is possible to avoid these traps, to push aside the temptation to consider that everything is contingent and specific to each culture, and also to avoid the temptation to consider that everything is convergent and common, except for a few details (Gadrey *et al.*, 1999). It is not a question of preaching a middle road that would try to keep culturalist singularism on the one hand and universalist functionalism on the other in an improbable syncretism. It is rather building a specific perspective that avoids the mechanical transpositions of analytical categories inherent in the two preceding approaches. That implies recognition of the socially constructed character of the concepts, and of social categories in general, and contextualization of their analytical uses. This approach must be based on the situated transpositions of analytical

categories, in order to avoid the double pitfall of either overestimating the differences perceived as irreducible and incommensurable or erasing variations artificially eliminated by standardizing and normative conceptual tools.

Such a strategy of comparative research starts with the choice of the countries and in the formulation of the referent question. At first glance, the three countries chosen (France, Japan, Brazil) are very different, as much in their unemployment situation as for the characteristics of their economy. Each country is characterized by a specific level of unemployment (assessed by unemployment as defined by the ILO): France maintains a high rate of unemployment despite a recent fall (10.9% in 1998 and 9% in 2002), Japan has the lowest level in spite of a tendency to increase (4.5% in 1998 and 5.4% in 2002), and Brazil has experienced the most unfavorable recent change (7.6% in 1998 and 9.5% in 2002). Moreover, even if international exchanges are intensifying on a world scale, each of these countries is part of a distinct regional economy: Latin America and privileged relations within the framework of the MERCOSUR [1] for Brazil, integration in the European Union for France, participation in the APEC[2] for Japan. In the same way, each country has a specific socio-economic trajectory. Thus Brazil, in the last decades is seeing a transition from an agricultural and rural economy to a rapid industrialization and urbanization, and these changes are particularly sharp in the State of Saõ Paulo. At the same time France has experienced an important tertiarization of its formerly industrial economy, alongside a concentration of its population and economic activities, the Île-de-France being the most characteristic example. Finally, the recent history of Japan has been marked by nearly constant economic growth that has made possible the considerable development of industrial activities and services, particularly marked in the Tokyo metropolitan area. The current and historical differences between these three countries and these three areas (where we carried out our fieldwork), are so obvious that going on with more thorough description will certainly not justify our choice of the three countries from the viewpoint of their unemployment situations or economic characteristics. In fact, our comparative project is based on a different perspective.

The choice of the three countries is linked to the assumption of a variation in the processes of social construction of unemployment. It was thus not a question of selecting one country with high unemployment, another with low unemployment, and a third in an intermediate situation. Each country presents, in our hypothesis, specificities in the expression of unemployment and the ways in which it is experienced and dealt with, in short, in the ways of identifying it and of recognizing it. The choice of the countries thus aims at varying the national situations insofar as they correspond to differentiated social constructions of unemployment. The meaning of unemployment differs in national spaces, both at the normative level of the institutions that define the unemployed, codify social status and contribute to distributing the individuals within these statuses, and at the subjective level of the life experience of the people concerned, confronted as they are with different and contrasting contexts, and who try to escape from this condition and organize their lives to resist it. In this sense, being unemployed is always to be recognized, indexed, regarded as such, but the mechanisms of this labeling are not uniform; and it is also to define themselves, assert themselves, regard themselves as such, but the processes of this identification are not identical everywhere. In this case, each country can be characterized

by the specific conventions of unemployment, therefore also of activity and employment, which can for the moment be presented as an initial hypothesis.

In France, where unemployment has been a mass phenomenon for quite a while, and where public institutions for job-seekers form a dense network, unemployment is strongly institutionalized. People without jobs tend to declare themselves as unemployed and to register at the ANPE. However, the most precarious and poorest people do so less frequently, and long-term unemployment can lead to discouragement and even a halt to signing on and a retreat into inactivity (Demazière, 2006). While there are different ways of living the fact of being unemployed, it is in some ways more common, particularly as unemployment is less and less frequently a brutal rupture in the middle of a stable professional career. Employment conditions have changed greatly in the last decades, leading to "specific forms of employment" which diverge from the norm in terms of duration and stability of job contracts (fixed-term contracts, temping, internships) or of working hours (part-time). At the beginning of the year 2000 almost 6 million of the economically active population of 24 million is affected, of whom 3.9 million are in part-time work. Young people entering the labor market are the most numerous in such jobs, while part-time jobs are massively feminized (almost 85%). Nevertheless, women's activity rates remain very high. Salaried work is also distributed between the generations (Gaullier, 1999): entry into professional life is later and later and marked by unemployment (or intermediary situations between unemployment and employment), and working life can come to an end at an ever earlier age (unemployment of older workers but also the policy of early retirement and non-obligation for the older unemployed to actively look for work). Thus the variables of gender and generation seem particularly important for the analysis of occupational trajectories and the subjective relationship to social status, and also of institutional policies in the management of unemployment and the workforce.

Unemployment is less institutionalized in Japan and in Brazil than in France, but for different reasons. In Japan, not only has it remained at a very low level until recent years but also the regulation of employment was the responsibility of the large firms rather than of the State. It is only recently that the major companies have begun to make workers redundant; before they had been kept as workforce entitled to a stable job. In this context, for workers settled in "life-time employment," who are almost exclusively men, the experience of unemployment remains sharply marked by social disgrace and to register at an employment agency is considered shameful. The number of atypical jobs is increasing in diverse forms (28% of the salaried workforce in 2003 according to the LFS): fixed-term contracts, small jobs particularly among young people, and temping which is concentrated among adult women. Finally the "part-timers," often working comparable hours to full-timers but excluded from the different benefits accorded to regular employees by the company, are more than 90% women, most of them returning to work after having brought up their children. For the categories of the workforce that do not have regular employment, the frontier between unemployment and employment (and also inactivity) is more porous and uncertain. Periods without work are not systematically categorized and recognized as unemployment, particularly when they do not give access to unemployment benefits. One of the reasons often used to explain the low level of unemployment even during periods of crisis is that women who have lost their unstable jobs do not look for

another job (Freyssinet, 1984). In such a context the norms of activity and behavior in relation to unemployment and work are often very different according to gender (Nohara, 1999) and also place in the life cycle.

In Brazil, the institutionalization of unemployment is both weak and recent: the weakness of the social safety net, of government aid to unemployed and unemployment insurance leads to a substantial under-declaration of the number of jobless. This results in a considerable blurring of the frontiers between social statuses, which appears openly in the public polemic concerning unemployment figures.[3] Employment conditions are very heterogeneous, between a formal economy shaped by legal norms and social protection, and an informal economy which is particularly developed and diversified. In the context of the strong decrease in formal employment, in particular in the industrial sector, during the 1990s, the informal activities (the workers *sem registro em carteira* - unregistered - and the workers *por conta própria* – self-employed -) ensured most of the flexibility in employment (they represent more than half of all jobs), while feeding the growth of service activities and unstable jobs. Thus the progression of salaried employment among the economically active population, which had not attained an advanced level (Lautier, 1987), even receded. In addition, the destabilization of employment conditions encouraged an acceleration of the transitions between regular employment and informal activities. The workers developed survival strategies based on the combination of these two types of activities, either for the same individual (having more than one job, or alternation) or within the family group. The majority of economically active women work in unstable or informal posts, which are also occupied for a significant part by the youngest sector of the active population. The social mechanisms of distribution of the forms of employment have structuring effects on the subjective relationship to unemployment, and overall with professional lives and activity. The social construction of unemployment is marked by a big gap between job deprivation and its designation as unemployment: the boundary between unemployment and employment is all the more fuzzy as job precariousness is stronger, and other identifying categories (homeless people, for example) more prevalent because of the extreme weakness of the social safety net.

These sketches of the social construction of unemployment point out major differences between the countries, but also show some common features. Thus, while having contrasting histories, they have also undergone parallel transformations that have affected the contours of social status. All experience a common phenomenon, but of variable scope and timescale: a threat to employment norms inherited from the previous period and the rapid development of new, atypical modes of employment compared to the reference norm. This is expressed in a different way in each national context: the increased mobility between formal salaried employment and informal activities with weak regulation of work relations, in Brazil; the growth of particular forms of employment affecting both the duration and the stability of job contracts as well as working hours, in France; the decline of the model of life-time employment characteristic of the large company and the emergence of forms of unstable or atypical contingent employment, in particular fixed-term contracts, in parallel with the extension of non-regular employees, often part-time, in Japan. The transformations of employment forms, and consequently of unemployment, thus have specific expressions, but affect in a parallel way modes of regulation of wage

relations and professional trajectories. A second common feature seems to be that these changes do not affect all categories of the population in the same way: women are more affected than men, and the youngest and the elderly are more vulnerable than adults.

Finally, one can isolate in each of the three countries two rather similar cores corresponding to stable employment on the one hand, and institutional unemployment of the other, but the most important element is that a very broad zone extends between these poles, and that this zone has differentiated characteristics according to the country. It also appears clearly that gender and age play a direct role in the distribution of the population in these social statuses. These observations are provisional and will be enriched and developed, but they show the interest in comparison between France, Japan and Brazil, because of the differences in the way in which unemployment appears, is defined, is treated and is lived. Research must clarify the processes of construction of these forms of unemployment (but also of activity), starting from a double analysis: on the one hand the institutional norms and logics, resources and rules as regards employment, on the other hand the life trajectories of the unemployed and their subjective relations to social status. As we shall see, this approach does not derive from a theoretical framework that would direct the development of our research; it results from a priority given to the empirical approach, from a concern to break with the obviousness of pre-existing categories, and from a requirement of criticism and reflection. These preliminary observations justify the comparative study undertaken because they bring up stimulating research questions, centered on the problem of the categorization and the social construction of unemployment. To continue to elucidate them it is still necessary to clarify the comparative stance taken and the research strategy developed.

## 2. Comparative position and languages of reality

Undertaking any international comparison requires the production of relevant analytical instruments for each country studied. A classic way to obtain them is by harmonizing measurement. In the case of unemployment several international organizations propose standardized and harmonized data (ILO, OECD, Eurostat). This harmonization rests on two principles: a precise theoretical definition of statistical categories, and an application colored by the specificities of each country. The harmonization thus does not concern the methods or the protocols, as many commentators believe, but to the "products" or the "outputs" (Desrosières, 2003). This is typically the case for measuring unemployment according to ILO definitions: three criteria (to be without employment, to be actively seeking employment, to be immediately available) provide a theoretical definition of unemployment, and this is then translated and interpreted in heterogeneous enquiry protocols according to country. The application of this measuring standard poses differing problems, given the institutional forms of regulation of the labor market and the system of assistance for the unemployed, which differ from country to country and contribute to defining the unemployed.

Underlying this approach is the idea that the phenomena captured by the measuring instruments exist indeed in reality, independently of their observation, in a real and objective way. The indicators must thus reflect or describe this reality as closely as possible, even if, strictly speaking, they can provide only an approximate description, marked by

distortions and errors of measurement. This fact does not deny the existence of real objects, such as unemployment, whose reality is supposed to be constant and uniform. International comparison thus implies the application of codified procedures to capture the object pre-existing the measurement, and to give the statistical information that was posed *a priori*. This type of comparative approach is very widespread, particularly as it encourages the language of competition and makes it possible to produce classifications of countries according to supposed performance.

These uses of indicators in terms of calibration have not made the debates and the controversies on measuring conventions disappear. Questions are recurrent concerning the measurement of unemployment, and various indicators have been worked out to supplement the restrictive ILO definition of unemployment. It is the case for example, to stick to the international level, of the "broad unemployment" defined by the OECD. This definition includes "discouraged workers" who are classified by the ILO as inactive and corresponds to "any person who would wish to work but which does not seek employment because they think that there is no employment available" (OECD, 1995). It also includes involuntary part-time work, which covers the people who state that they work part-time for lack of full-time employment. This indicator measures levels of unemployment as systematically higher than the conventional levels since it broadens the definition of unemployment, including in particular women (more affected by imposed part-time work), older workers (more affected by discouragement) and people who have trouble finding employment and give up their active search.

The development of new indicators intended to measure unemployment in a less restrictive way and to understand what lies on the margins can follow multiple tracks. To take the French case, where an official report sought to define the phenomenon of underemployment and to evaluate the number of people directly touched by employment difficulties (Castel *et al.*, 1997), several circles were added to the core of unemployed by the ILO definition, making the number concerned rise from three to seven million. The people affected included the jobless persons following vocational training courses, those working part-time and wishing to work longer hours, those occupying subsidized jobs in the non-commercial sector, those who were so discouraged that they did not seek work, those wishing to work but unable to look for it because of their circumstances, those who had withdrawn from the economically active population in the governmental scheme of early retirement, and those who were forced into precarious situations.

However, this multiplication of indicators does not solve the difficulties of international comparison, in particular the question of the harmonization of measurement methods. Each broadening of the definition brings into play different norms and institutions which vary according to the country: vocational training courses, subsidized jobs in the non-commercial sector, and the mechanisms of early retirement are not universal. Imposed unstable situations or circumstances preventing the job search cannot be understood apart from inevitably relative frameworks of legitimacy. In other words, the comparative perspective, whatever the method on which it is based, must take account of the irreducible heterogeneity of the inputs, i.e. materials, information. These inputs do not correspond to an objective and uniform reality that must be grasped by sophisticated tools, but are initially institutional phenomena which contribute to qualifying and treating

individuals as unemployed, or as inactive, or as active with work, and distribute individuals among the social categories.

In this respect each country has its own history and its own institutional mechanisms. In the Netherlands, the flexibility of the rules governing access to invalidity allowances transforms a number of the unemployed into invalids, so the latter are more numerous than the former (Jean, 2000). In France, the oldest unemployed are exempted from job seeking in exchange for guaranteed resources and thus become pensioners in early retirement (Demazière, 2002). In the United Kingdom, the system of social protection and unemployment benefits deprives many women working part-time of any compensation and hides a part of female unemployment (Hegewisch, 1998), etc. These examples could be multiplied, but they already suggest with sufficient force the need for an international comparison to take into account the historic dynamics, the characteristics of the institutional mechanisms and the ways in which the problems are formulated in each country, even when, and perhaps especially when, the phenomenon studied is formulated in an apparently identical way, as is the case for unemployment. For that it is necessary to break with the realistic posture, and to adopt a nominalist or constructivist posture.

This anti-realistic posture means first that the object "unemployment" does not exist independently of the instruments making it possible to observe and measure it. It also means that these conventions of coding and categorization are not simply the product of the investigation protocols adopted by the researchers, but that they are also languages invented and used by many actors (institutions, groups, individuals) to observe the phenomena, to qualify, define, debate and to characterize them. Reality is always apprehended in a language that makes it possible both to describe and to institute it. And this language is plural: there is a statistical language, rather firmly codified and stabilized, and a legal language having rather similar properties, but also an ordinary language with more unstable and indexical characteristics. The discovery and the exploration of this plurality of languages of reality are central aims of our research, for several reasons. First because the most codified language participates in institutional constructions which vary according to the country, then because in the contemporary context of destabilization of inherited categories this institutional language is losing permanence and unicity. It is the subject of more frequent revisions and grows richer by new categories. Finally, this lesser stability of institutional language opens new spaces for ordinary language, which takes on an increasing importance in the categorization of social phenomena and the definition of their meanings.

## 3. Strategies of research and mechanisms of categorization

While any comparison must take into account the mechanisms of categorization in the principle of social divisions and the organization of the social worlds, it is just as necessary to place this analysis in context. It is necessary to avoid making these mechanisms an absolute, which requires making them historical while being attentive to their alteration, and not reducing them to powerful institutions crushing any other vision of the world. That implies adopting a strategy of relational and diachronic research, which privileges the point of view of plural and interacting actors. It is thus important to take into account the institutional forms, the systems of rules, the normative dynamics, which, because they are

different in each country, influence in a specific way on the contours of unemployment and employment. It is just as decisive to take into account the age-specific activity rate, the categorizations which individuals make of their situation, the biographical path, the systems of values and beliefs, which interact with these institutional forms.

Understanding unemployment at the crossroads of institutional logics and biographical experiences supposes an articulation of several approaches. The first is centered on the process of the institutional coding of unemployment, and more largely of social status: employment, activity, inactivity. It requires examining the mechanisms of definition of these statuses, the mechanisms regulating access to them, the social protection systems, and the norms organizing the distribution of the populations among these different statuses. From this point of view we tried to take into account not only the roles of the State and the firms, but also the role of the family institution which contributes to the social and sexual division of labor, and all the networks of assistance, mutual aid or control directed to the unemployed, which take part in supporting in this hardship. The second approach is based on extensive statistical surveys intended to explore various dimensions of the experience of unemployment: characteristics of the households of the unemployed, methods of seeking work, profiles of professional paths, etc. were elicited. We used questions formulated in the most similar possible way, but without trying to produce an identical survey in the three national contexts, because such an undertaking would find its limits precisely in the differences in the social categorization - the statistical or legal definition of which is only one modality of unemployment. In this sense the standardization of the questionnaire, selection of a sample of the unemployed, the distribution method, cannot be at all freed from the conventions particular to the principle of defining unemployment. The third approach uses open and in-depth interviews with a more limited number of unemployed. The objective of the interview is to understand how the experience of unemployment fits into the occupational trajectory and what are its effects on the level and means of existence, on activities and the ways of life, on professional beliefs and the modes of thinking in connection with employment and activity. It is thus a question of apprehending the evolution of the situation of the individuals confronted with the loss of employment as well as the ways in which they define their situation and envisage their future. The interviews were made respecting a protocol privileging open questions in order to encourage individuals to think about their experiences and to enable them to clarify their own interpretations and definitions of their situation.

The articulation of these steps aims to make operational the theoretical posture that regards unemployment as a social construction (common to the three countries) marked by variations (specificities of each country). Also, throughout this research we tried to conceptualize unemployment and activity as a configuration (Elias, 1985), i.e. as a chain of interdependences between institutional actors and individual actors, as a combination of structural processes and subjective processes, as an interlinking of collective regulations and individual strategies, institutional standards and subjective worlds, codified rules and actual experience. We consider that the frames of reference for working life, activity and work emerge from these interactions and mediations.

This central theme is developed through three principal contributions. Chapter 2 clarifies the processes of the coding of unemployment in order to show its place in the statistical mechanisms of categories in each country. The path followed does not consist in retracing the conventions of measurement and making an exegesis of research protocols. It is rather a question of clarifying the margins of unemployment by showing parallel but nevertheless differentiated processes in the thickening of its borders. The destabilization of the norms of employment is accompanied by a contraction of the territory of the employment/unemployment duo because of the multiplication of marginal, hybrid or peripheral situations, which blur the frontiers of these different social statuses. This blurring has direct consequences on the individual trajectories of the unemployed, thus the following contribution, Chapter 3, locates unemployment in the individual trajectories and characterizes this situation as a temporal process. This makes it possible to examine how the period of unemployment affects individual trajectories after that experience, in terms of the status and non-codified places left available for them. Even if unemployment is codified as the anticipation of employment, the range of these more recent non-codified situations tends to multiply, configuring the trajectories in complex and uncertain paths. This increasing uncertainty has effects on the ways the unemployed live their condition, thus the final contribution, Chapter 4, recounts the biographical experiences of unemployment. The meanings that individuals give to this situation and the ways in which they react to this hardship are at the heart of the analysis. Individuals may suffer personally from the destabilization of the institutional and normative categories which are supposed to be resources for dealing with unemployment, but in return they react and resist, in particular by organizing their situation and improvising new definitions for themselves, which make their ordeal more bearable. Finally, we shall go through the main empirical and theoretical results of our comparative research and put them into perspective in Chapter 5.

## Notes

[1] In Spanish Mercado Común del Sur; in Portuguese Mercado Comum do Sul; Southern Common Market in English.

[2] Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

[3] The polemic around the official indicators of the IGBE gave rise in 1984 to a second survey, the PED of the SEADE, a foundation belonging to the Secretary of Economy and Planning of the State of São Paulo. The SEADE indicators take into account not only unemployment in the ILO sense, but also unemployment hidden by discouragement and unstable work. According to this second survey, the unemployment rate was not 7.6% in 1998 but 18.3%. See Chapter 2.

# Chapter 2
# Codification and Measures: Changing Frontiers of Unemployment

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As regards international comparisons of unemployment, the mobilization of statistical surveys based on international norms (the ILO or the OECD, for example) is commonly practiced. In each of the three countries upon which this research is focused we have at our disposal national surveys constructed on standardized criteria, of which the objective is to favor the analyses of labor markets from a comparative perspective: the Employment Survey of France,[2] the Labour Force Survey of Japan, and the Monthly Employment Survey (PME) of Brazil. However, these measures, which are thought to be comparable and objective, present limits which merit explicit analysis.[3]

Since the 1980s, the concepts and survey methodology advocated by the ILO have been the object of questioning and critical analysis, although in different ways from one country to another. In France, the realization of an increasing inadequacy of official statistical categories to account for the on-going changes in the labor market has given rise to a number of studies on the enlargement of "grey zones" between the categories of employment, unemployment and inactivity. In Japan, the controversy of the low level of unemployment encouraged in the same period an elaboration of alternative indicators which could more accurately describe the functioning of the Japanese labor market. In Brazil, the controversy led to the elaboration of alternative indicators to the national standardized survey and gave birth to an alternative survey which is carried out in major metropolitan areas.

The objective of this chapter is neither to implicate the statistical categories of the ILO nor to propose new ones. We would rather undertake a qualitative analysis of these same categories and indicators in order to better understand, for each of the three metropolitan

regions, Île de France, Tokyo and São Paulo, the contours of the active population, which are increasingly blurred under the impact of labor market transformations.

## 1. The debate over the measure of unemployment in the three countries

In France, the controversy over the figures of unemployment has been heated since the end of the 1970s, when the statistical instruments registered an increase in the number of unemployed. The official report, undertaken by experts on unemployment statistics, didn't quell the questioning surrounding the unemployment figures (Malinvaud, 1986; Dubois & Lucas, 1991). The variability of the definitions of unemployment is directly related to the fact that the unemployment statistics are the object of a "greater social or institutional control than others" (Merllié, 1989).

The increasingly indistinct contours of unemployment have become a recurring issue since the middle of the 1980s. Certain studies emphasized "the widening, indistinct borders between employment, unemployment and inactivity" and a delineation of the borders of these categories which are more and more dated (Marchand & Thelot, 1986). Almost twenty years ago, in the journal "Economy and Statistics", of the French National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies (INSEE), a special issue entitled "Employment and Unemployment: the Breakdown of categories" (1986) was devoted entirely to the question of the blurring of statistical categories of the labor market, which were still considered functional in the previous ten years. In the following years, under the effect of the transformations in the labor market the problem of a "*halo*" of unemployment, to paraphrase the title of an article by M. Cézard, didn't cease for statisticians.

Ten years later, D. Guillemot (1996), analyzing the principal factors of divergence between the measure of the economically active population according to the ILO, and that of the Census, pointed out the difficulty in accounting for the ongoing changes in the labor market and in unemployment in particular through the categories of the ILO. At the beginning of the year 2000, when demographic changes foreshadowed a long-term problem of shortage of manpower, it was in these "grey zones of activity, unemployment and inactivity," that one tried to identify the reserves of manpower which could still be mobilized (Gonzales-Demichel, & Nauze-Fichet, 2003).

In the course of the 1980s, the low official rate of Japanese unemployment (between 2 and 3%), stimulated a series of debates concerning the quality of the parameters used to measure this phenomenon (Taira & Shiraishi). The central theme of these controversies concerns the question of a large number of people discouraged in their search for employment or in their underemployment. The fact that they are not taken into account in statistics would explain the underestimation of the unemployment rate in this country. Following this argument, some American and Japanese economists denounced the obfuscation of the phenomenon of unemployment on the part of some Japanese politicians.

The statistical categories mobilized in the measurement of unemployment in Japan, borrowed from North American labor force surveys, appear inadequate for understanding the functioning of the Japanese labor market. In Japan, these debates oriented toward the elaboration of alternative indicators which are more likely to account for its labor market, characterized by strong internal mobility and weak external mobility on the one hand, and also by women's age-related economic activity on the other hand (Iwai). Toward the end of

the 1990s and into the year 2000, in order to better describe the transformations occurring in the labor market, noticeable changes were brought into the Special Survey of the Labour Force Survey (SSLFS), complementary research to the Labour Force Survey. This concern was reflected in the White Book on Labor of 2002 in which several pages are devoted to hidden unemployment and alternative indicators.

In Brazil, the beginning of the 1980s was a time of economic crisis that escalated in a most intense way in urban industrialized areas, especially in the metropolitan region of São Paulo. This period was marked by debates over the labor force survey (PME) carried out by the IBGE, namely over the relevance of ILO criteria used by this survey to describe the Brazilian labor market. As in Japan, these debates oriented toward the construction of new indicators, which led here to the implementation of an alternative survey on employment and unemployment (PED). This survey was more able to capture the functioning of the weakly structured labor market, characterized by the great availability and high turnover of manpower, a highly heterogeneous productive structure, and a high level of informality in wage relations. This survey was introduced in 1984 in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, and then extended to other metropolitan regions in Brazil (Hoffman & Cutrim, 2000).

In this country, it is only since the 1980s that unemployment has become a subject of scientific as well as public policy concern. Until then, it was employment which was the object of attention by elite intellectuals and politicians. Sometimes, the problems of employment were considered as being due to a mismatching of the labor force, either in terms of geographical localization or level of education. At other times, the problems were perceived as being the result of the poor quality of employment for a significant part of the population. It is in this context that, in the 1960s, in Brazil as elsewhere in Latin America, such formulations as "marginality" and "informality" came to characterize the functioning of these labor markets. Thus, we could say that until the crisis of the 1980s, the dominant understanding in Brazil was that Brazilian society was confronting problems of employment, rather than the problems linked to unemployment.

The debate on the question of a new measure of unemployment acted as a catalyst and made possible the labor union intervention in the sphere of public policy, in the period of the crisis of the authoritarian regime. From a scientific point of view, the PED has given the regions the possibility to experiment with different measurements, which could account for the diverse forms of unemployment. The PED has maintained a compatible measurement with the recommended criteria of the ILO, focused on open unemployment[4], and tested, at the same time, the new modalities of measurement. Other indicators have thus been advanced, more adapted to the specificities of Brazilian capitalism and to the organization of its labor market. The innovative aspect of the PED was in the way it proposed to measure hidden forms of unemployment, hidden by unstable work or by discouragement.

## 2. The contours of unemployment: methods

The surveys which we have relied on are the following: the Employment Survey for the Île-de-France (Paris) and metropolitan France, the LFS and the Employment Status Survey (ESS) at the national level for Japan, and the PED for the metropolitan region of São Paulo.[5] The analysis which follows is dependent on the different conditions of access and

availability of data in the three countries, as well as the way in which the survey questionnaires are constructed, so it is necessary to explain the method used in each case.

## 2.1. France: ILO unemployment and self-declared unemployment

The Employment Survey is constructed with the goal of establishing international comparisons on the basis of standardized ILO criteria. With these criteria, it is difficult to fully account for "the expanding new margins of the activity connected to the crisis in employment and in massive and durable unemployment" (Guillemot, 1996). Nevertheless, we can cross the concept of an economically active population of the ILO with the subjective way in which individuals "spontaneously"[6] classify themselves in a certain status proposed in the Survey (cf. Box France). As a result, it is possible to identify a progressive phenomenon of a blurring of categories which refers to the transformations of the situations in the labor market and the way in which individuals internalize their status in the same market.

Box France

**Two conceptions of the economically active population**

- The first conception is the ILO construction for international comparisons based on the questioning of factual elements.

According to the ILO the active population comprises:

- the group of people who declare to work or have worked at least one hour during the reference week (employed) ;
- those who declare to be without work, nor have worked at least one hour in the reference week, who are available within 15 days, looking for work and have effectively sought out work during the past month prior to the survey (unemployed).

- The second definition, which we call self-declared, is based only on the statement of individuals who chose 1, 2 or 4 among the modalities proposed in the second question of the questionnaire :

**Q2. What is the present occupation of M… ? He (or She)**

**Works.**
1. He (She) has an occupation, is self-employed or is a paid employee, even part-time. He (She) helps a member of his family in their work even without being paid. He (She) is an apprentice, in paid internship, public servant student, temp staff, etc.

Or

**Does not work currently (or does not work any more). He (She) is…**
2. Unemployed (either registered or not at the ANPE)
3. Student, pupil, trainee, non-paid intern
4. Contingent soldier
5. Retired (ex-paid employee) or in early retirement
6. Retired from business (ex-farmer, craftsman, merchant)
7. Housewife
8. Other inactive

## 2.2. Japan: ILO criteria in the LFS and subjective assessment in the ESS

The statistical data analyzed are results of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and the Employment Status Survey (ESS). In the case of Japan, where there is no access to the survey files, we have relied on published data. Moreover, contrary to the French case, the two Japanese surveys do not contain questions that permit the respondents to define "spontaneously" their situation as regards the labor market.[7] Nevertheless, in contrast to the LFS, which applies the criteria of the ILO, the ESS does not utilize the concept of a reference period and leaves the respondent space for a subjective assessment of their situation as regards work by the bias of the question, "Are you usually engaged in any work for pay or profit?" (cf. Box Japan)

Box Japan

The economically active population defined by the LFS includes:

- Employed
  - Employed, at work: All persons who worked for pay or profit, or worked as unpaid family workers for at least one hour during the survey week.
  - Employed, not at work: Among the persons with jobs but not at work during the survey week.
- Unemployed persons. Those who satisfy the following three conditions:
  - with no job and did not work at all during the reference week (other than employed person);
  - ready to work if work is available; and
  - did any job seeking activity or preparing to start business during the reference week (including waiting the outcome of the job seeking activity done in the past)

The ESS does not use the same labor force status as the LFS. However, the following ESS statuses can be used for a crossing with the LFS statuses:

- Engaged in work: Those who are usually working for financial reward and intend to continue working after the survey date, and those who have jobs but are absent from work at present. (equivalent of employed persons of the LFS)
- Those who are usually not working for financial reward, wish to work for earnings, and are seeking a job. (equivalent of unemployed persons of the LFS)

## 2.3. Brazil: open unemployment and hidden unemployment

In contrast to France, and as in Japan, there is no measurement based on self-declaration of unemployment in Brazil. However, with the PED, which provides us with multiple indicators concerning the modalities of unemployment existing in the region, we can construct appropriate indicators to describe the forms and contours of unemployment in Brazil.

To understand the different indicators of unemployment mobilized by the PED, it is necessary to identify the parameters used to classify the working age population according to its insertion in the labor market:

- the effective search for work
- the availability to work, with a search within the last twelve months
- the situation of work (regular or non-regular)
- the type of job
- the necessity to change work.

Combined, these parameters permit a construction of the concepts to identify the segments of the working age population (cf. Box Brazil).

Box Brazil

| | |
|---|---|
| Employed | People who have: paid work, even if it is irregular; non-paid work in a family business; work paid in kind; and who do not search for work. |
| Open unemployment of 7 days | People who have not worked during the last 7 days, and who have effectively searched for work during the 7 days prior to the survey. |
| Open unemployment from 8-30 days | People who have not worked during the last 7 days, and who have not effectively searched for work in the 7 days prior to the survey but who have searched for work during the 30 days prior to the survey. |
| Open unemployment of 30 days | Combined total of open unemployment of 7 days and of open unemployment of 8-30 days. |
| Hidden unemployment due to unstable work | People who carry out unstable work – some self-employed or family workers – and who sought to change work within the last 12 months. |
| Hidden unemployment due to discouragement | People who do not have work and have not sought work during the 30 days prior to the interview, due to disincentives in the market or fortuitous circumstances, but who effectively sought out work within the past 12 months. |
| Inactive with occasional work | People who carry out occasional unstable work during the 30 days prior to the survey, because they had free time from their usual activities and who did not search for employment. |

To construct indicators compatible with the reality of the Brazilian labor market, the PED enlarged some of the usual concepts adopted for the household surveys.

- The working age population includes children of 10 to 14 years of age, a segment in which the age is less than the legally stipulated minimum age for working in Brazil. Although its quantitative impact on the global indicators is not very large, the presence

of very young employed persons in the labor market is a sociologically significant reality.

- The employed is not defined in function of the reference week but rather in relation to the criteria of continuity and regularity of activity.
- The reference period of the search for a job is extended to thirty days.
- The criterion of the absence of work has been revised, because the inexistence of social protection for the unemployed pushes them to attempt irregular and discontinuous activities, in parallel with the search for more stable employment.

## 3. The blurring borders of unemployment

### 3.1. Metropolitan France[8] and the Île-de France

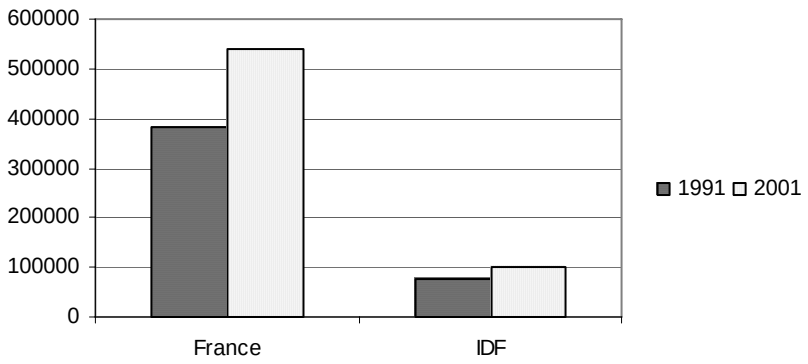
### More than a million people on the margins of the economically active population

This analysis of the contours of unemployment in France is based on the Employment Survey of March 2001.

We have limited the working age population to 15-60 years, the higher age corresponding to, at the time, the legal age to begin retirement. Globally the rate of activity of those over 60 years is very low according to any indicators: it is respectively 4% and 7% in metropolitan France and in the Île-de-France, according to the ILO indicator.

In comparing the active population in the ILO sense to that measured in the statements of respondents we note that the ILO indicator is constantly below the Self-declared measurement. This gap continued to increase between 1991 and 2001, although less rapidly in Île-de-France than in the rest of the country (respectively +42% and +29%, cf. Fig. 1). This region, which represents one-fifth of the active national population, is particularly attractive and dynamic from the point of view of the labor market. This fact translates into a lower rate of unemployment than the national average (7.6% or 9.3% according to the ILO or Self-declared indicators against respectively 9% or 10.7% on national average). But if the peripheral situations of unemployment, inactivity and employment, as well as the phenomenon of discouragement are slightly less frequent than in the rest of the country, they are nevertheless structurally identical.

Figure 1 – Evolution of the gaps between ILO and Self-declared measures in the active population, France and Île-de-France (IDF)

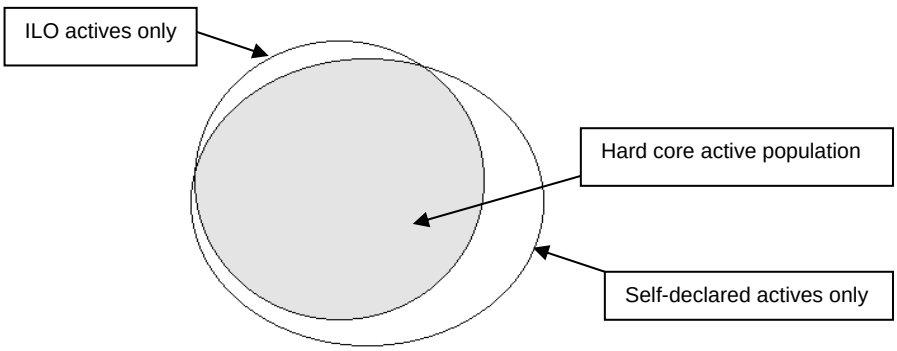



In number of persons
Sources: Employment Survey 1991 and 2001
Field: population of 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France and Île-de-France

The increase in the gap between the two indicators is revealing of the change in situations in employment, unemployment, and inactivity which also affect the "hard core of the active population" as the qualitative surveys show.

However, the self-declared active population and those active in the ILO sense do not overlap totally. In crossing these two indicators one obtains what we could call the hard core of the active population, which corresponds to actives according to the two concepts, around which figure the margins. These margins are composed of individuals who declared themselves either to be active, whereas the ILO excludes them from the active population, or to be inactive whereas in the ILO sense they are classified among the actives (cf. Fig. 2).

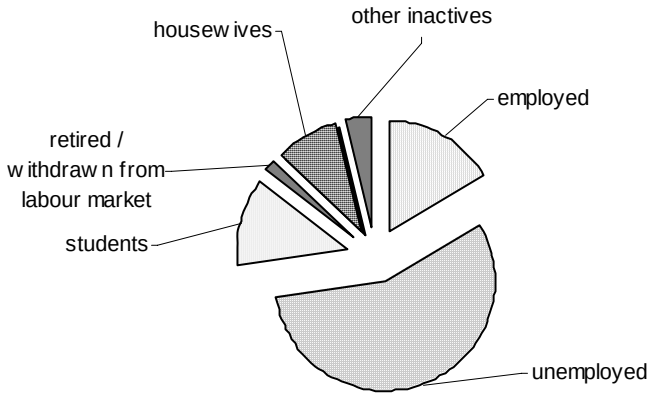
Figure 2 – The hard core of the active population: overlap of actives in the ILO sense and the Self-declared actives




Source: Employm
Field: population of 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France

In total, the active population at the margins represented in 2001 more than 1.2 million people, about 5% of the hard core of 25.4 million actives (cf. Fig. 3).

Figure 3 - Margins of the hard core of the active population according to declared status - France




Source: Employment Survey 2001
Field: population of 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France

This 5% of the hard core consists essentially of students, housewives and retired people that the ILO assimilates to the active population, or unemployed people and employed persons that the ILO considers as inactive (cf. Table 1).

Table 1 – Declared statuses and categorizations according to the ILO

| Declared inactive and classed as active by the ILO | | | Declared active and classed as inactive by the ILO | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | France | Île-de-France | | France | Île-de-France |
| Students | 47% | 55% | Unemployed | 77% | 80% |
| Housewives | 33% | 26% | Employed | 23% | 20% |
| Retired | 20% | 19% | | | |

Source: Employment Survey
Field: population 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France and Île-de-France

Close to half of the self-declared inactives in France and even more in Île-de-France identify themselves as students, whereas they are reclassified in the active population in the ILO sense. Their portion has more than doubled in ten years.

In close to eight out of ten cases these students have worked at least one hour in the course of the reference period, which is sufficient to be considered active by the ILO. Whether they are in a fixed or indeterminate term contract, they work less than half-time. We note three major influences on their choice of student status as regards the labor market: the secondary place that the work occupies in relation to their studies, the purely survival function attributed to this employment and the way in which the work is located in expected trajectories of these youth.

Housewives represent a third of these self-declared inactives in France, and a quarter of the self-declared inactives in Île-de-France. Aged from 30-49 years, they are all classified as unemployed according to the ILO criteria. In fact, more than six women in ten declare that they are searching for work, and almost all are available to hold a job (more than nine in ten). Yet, only 42% are registered at ANPE and they do not even collect unemployment benefits. The majority among them have dependent children. Poorly qualified, they look for work in the personal care service sector or as employees in commerce.

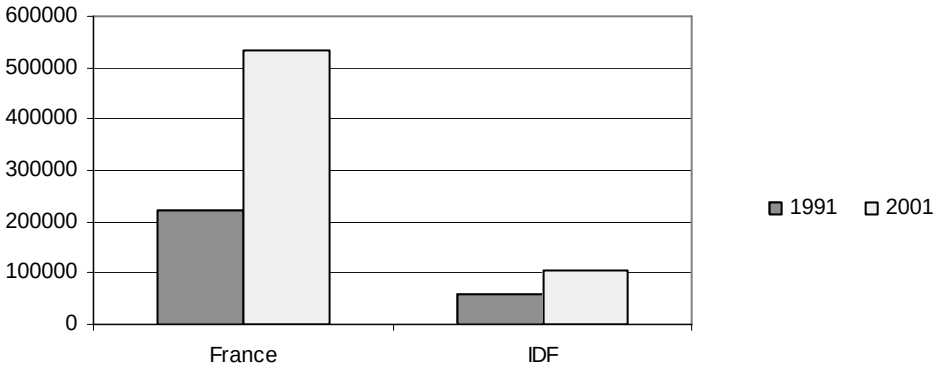
Finally, retired people constitute the third group of inactives who are qualified as actives by the ILO. In contrast to students, the portion of females and the retired has noticeably decreased in the course of the 1990s (respectively -33% and -16% in ten years).

The self-declared actives represent the most numerous marginal situations. This population has grown in an important way between 1991 and 2001, close to six times more than the hard core of the active population (+31%, versus +6.5% for the whole of France). It is especially the case of people who have declared themselves unemployed. More than three self-declared actives out of four are classified as inactive by the ILO.

## The magnitude of unemployment: the principal difference between the two indicators

The gap between the conventional definition of the status towards the labor market (the ILO definition) and the self-classification of individuals is particularly large concerning unemployment. The gap grew during the course of the 1990s, especially because of the great increase in the number of self-declared unemployed: when the ILO number of unemployed between 1991 and 2001 grew from 2.22 to 2.27 million, the increase was of 2.44 to 2.81 million for the self-declared unemployed. The differences between the two measurements increased between these two dates from 221,000 to 533,000, and for the Île-de-France the gap increased from 57,000 to 105,000 (cf. Fig. 4).

Figure 4 - Evolution of the gaps between ILO and Self-declared measures of unemployment, France and Île-de-France (IDF)

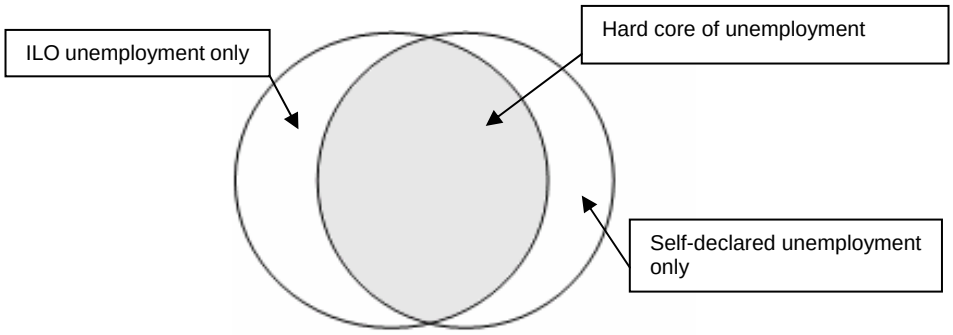



In number of persons
Sources: Employment Survey 1991 and 2001
Field: population of 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France and Île-de-France

The fact that the latent demand for employment by relatively marginal categories of people in the labor market has surfaced in the course of the period of economic reprise and the growth of employment at the end of the last decade (+20% of self-declared unemployed between 1997 and 2001), only partially explains this still continuing phenomenon.

The margins of unemployment amount to more than half of the hard core of unemployed in France as well as in Île-de-France (cf. Fig. 5).

Figure 5 – The margins of the hard core of unemployment in France

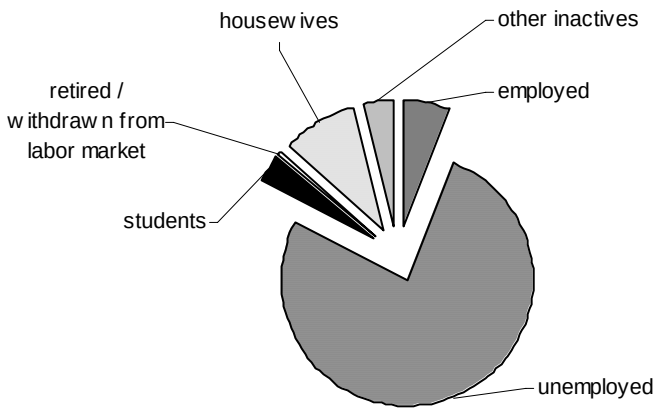



Source: Employment Survey 2001
Field: population of 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France

In 2001, about three people in four declared themselves unemployed, though they did not correspond to the ILO unemployment criteria, according to which they were classified as inactive (in nine out of ten cases) or as employed. The fact of having worked at least one hour in the reference week of the survey determines the requalification to the employed status by the ILO (cf. Fig. 6). The unstable and occasional status of their job explains to a large part their self-identification to the condition of unemployed.

In contrast, close to one-fourth of the people questioned declared themselves inactive (students, housewives, and retired people) or as working when, according to the ILO, they would have been reclassified among the unemployed.[9]

Figure 6 – Margins of the hard core of unemployment according to declared status - France




Source: Employment Survey 2001
Field: population of 15-60 years of age in Metropolitan France

## Temporarily unavailable women and the discouraged elderly

Most of the self-declared unemployed did not work in the course of the reference week (90%). By contrast, although three in four are registered at the ANPE, and close to half are compensated, only one person in two declares to be looking for employment. Finally, six people in ten declare not to be ready to go back to work within fifteen days.

Among the self-declared unemployed classified as inactive by the ILO, three groups stand out:

- Numerically the most important group (60%) consists of women (90%) who are not available to resume work within fifteen days for family reasons (children, pregnancy, maternity leave), or for health problems if it concerns an elderly person.
- Two in ten self-declared unemployed persons are discouraged either by their unsuccessful search for employment or because of the unlikely chance they think they have to find a job. Age is cited by most of them as the main reason for their difficulties and abandoning their search.
- Finally, a certain number of self-declared unemployed situated in the margins of the hard core of unemployed have not started looking for employment or are waiting for the results of their previous attempts. The young are most particularly represented in this category. Reclassified especially as inactive according to the ILO criteria because of not searching for employment, they are moreover less often registered at the ANPE.

### Unemployment: an experience that makes sense in relation to past or future trajectories

For the unavailable women who have worked in the past, the fact that they declare themselves unemployed rather than housewives signifies the affirmation of a social identity, that of active women, which is important in France. They thus do not feel stigmatized by a temporary retirement from the labor market. Raising young children seems "natural" for them as part of a socially shared professional path.

Likewise, the status of unemployed can appear socially more legitimate for the elderly, especially men. They are still far from retirement but discouraged by the difficulties that they encounter in the labor market which projects their devalued image in the mercantile sense. The status of unemployed can also fill a more coherent place in their professional trajectories than the inactivity to which they are consigned by the statistical categories.

Finally, the choice of status proposed in the Survey is the result of arbitration among different real-life experiences sometimes concomitant, for example, being a student and doing some small jobs perceived as for survival income or pocket money, for a short while; being unemployed and not searching for a job regularly or according to clearly identified institutional modes; being elderly and declaring oneself as unemployed, underlining the involuntary nature of the exclusion from the labor market. These are all complex situations, difficult to characterize through conventional statistical categorizations but which take on a magnitude, hence significance, and require analysis.

Finally, the study of the margins of unemployment in France, through the labor force survey data, shows the distance between two contrasting approaches to this phenomenon: an economic approach in terms of proximity as regards the labor market (cf. the case of students reclassified as employed according to the ILO measure) and a more sociological approach in terms of norms, legitimacy, life conditions and subjective perceptions of the experience of unemployment and work.

## 3.2. Japan

In the case of Japan we are going to consider as working age population one of 15 to 64 years of age, because the activity rate remains high in the class aged 60-64 years.[10] Even though the three groups 15-29, 30-44, and 45-64 years of age would have been more relevant, we have been constrained in using the classification of the LFS, which is 15-24, 25-44, 45-64 years of age.

The data analyzed were those of the LFS of the third quarter in 2002 and those of the ESS of 2002.[11] For the two surveys, we were obliged to use national statistics, because we cannot carry out the analysis proposed below with the data available for the metropolitan region of Tokyo.

### The employed

The published results of the two surveys do not allow us to analyze the border zones between the employed on the one hand, and the unemployed and inactives on the other hand. Concerning the employed, we note that the employment rate is slightly higher

according to the ESS, except for the men of 15 to 24 years of age, but the difference is not significant. Our analysis shall concern the population who are classified either as inactive or unemployed by the two surveys.

Table 2 - The employed

| | | M | F | Total | Total | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| Working age population | LFS | 4303 | 4272 | 8575 | 1523 | 3496 | 3556 | 780 | 1765 | 1758 | 743 | 1731 | 1798 |
| | ESS | 4287 | 4268 | 8555 | 1515 | 3491 | 3549 | 774 | 1759 | 1754 | 741 | 1732 | 1795 |
| Employed | LFS | 3447 | 2427 | 5874 | 642 | 2688 | 2544 | 330 | 1623 | 1494 | 312 | 1065 | 1050 |
| | ESS | 3469 | 2496 | 5965 | 649 | 2738 | 2578 | 327 | 1632 | 1510 | 323 | 1105 | 1068 |
| Employment rate (%) | LFS | 80.1 | 56.8 | 68.5 | 42.2 | 76.9 | 71.5 | 42.3 | 92.0 | 85.0 | 42.0 | 61.5 | 58.4 |
| | ESS | 80.9 | 58.5 | 69.7 | 42.9 | 78.4 | 72.6 | 42.2 | 92.8 | 86.1 | 43.6 | 63.8 | 59.5 |

Numbers in ten thousand persons; the employment rate = employed / working age population
Field: population 15-64 years of age

## The unemployed

We have constructed two indicators of unemployment according to the LFS, three according to the ESS, which vary from the most restrictive to the most open criteria. The comparison of these diverse indicators allows for the emergence of grey zones between employment, unemployment and inactivity which constitute the changing frontiers of unemployment in Japan. The first indicator developed from the LFS consists of the people who haven't worked during the reference week, who are immediately available and who have sought employment during the past month. The second integrates equally the people who have not looked for employment during the past month.

As for the ESS, the first categorization of the "unemployed" consists of people who do not usually work, who wish to work, look for work, and are available right away. A second category includes equally those people who declare themselves "available but not in the immediate future." A third indicator of unemployment also includes everyone who declares to be uncertain if they would be ready to accept a job if offered to them ("I don't know if I would take the job offered").

Table 3 - The unemployed

| | | | M | F | Total | Males 15-24 | Males 25-44 | Males 45-64 | Females 15-24 | Females 25-44 | Females 45-64 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LFS | 1 Unemployed in search of a job in the last month | N | 162 | 113 | 275 | 34 | 67 | 61 | 25 | 59 | 29 |
| | | % | 4.5 | 4.4 | 4.5 | 9.3 | 4.0 | 3.9 | 7.4 | 5.2 | 2.7 |
| | 2 Unemployed in search of a job in the last year | N | 212 | 138 | 350 | 41 | 86 | 85 | 29 | 71 | 38 |
| | | % | 5.8 | 5.4 | 5.6 | 11.1 | 5.0 | 5.4 | 8.5 | 6.3 | 3.5 |
| ESS | 1 Unemployed immediately available | N | 170 | 198 | 367 | 42 | 58 | 69 | 37 | 90 | 71 |
| | | % | 4.7 | 7.3 | 5.8 | 11.5 | 3.5 | 4.4 | 10.2 | 7.5 | 6.2 |
| | 2 Unemployed available | N | 217 | 299 | 516 | 59 | 70 | 87 | 55 | 139 | 105 |
| | | % | 5.9 | 10.7 | 8.0 | 15.4 | 4.1 | 5.5 | 14.6 | 11.2 | 8.9 |
| | 3 Unemployed including uncertain availability | N | 230 | 323 | 553 | 65 | 73 | 92 | 60 | 149 | 114 |
| | | % | 6.2 | 11.5 | 8.5 | 16.6 | 4.3 | 5.7 | 15.7 | 11.9 | 9.6 |

Numbers in ten thousand persons; the unemployment rate = unemployed / (employed + unemployed)
Field: population 15-64 years of age

## Availability, the key factor in the borders of unemployment

The unemployment rate as measured by the ESS is higher than that measured by the LFS, whichever indicator is to be considered. The gap increases greatly when we pass from the first, more restrictive indicator of the ESS, to the second which includes people who do not declare themselves available to go back to work again in the immediate future. The rate of unemployment measured in the ESS increases when the criterion of availability is abandoned, but in a smaller proportion. Whereas the limitation of the period of searching for work to one month has a weak effect on the declining number of unemployed in the approach of the LFS, the availability to take employment seems to be one of the key factors of the fuzzy borders of unemployment in Japan.

## The women and the young, between unemployment and inactivity

According to the ESS, women of all ages and young men register the highest unemployment rate. These two groups are both particularly sensitive to the question of availability. The unemployment rate calculated for the first two indicators of the ESS

(which take into account the immediate or non-immediate availability of the unemployed person) is double, indeed triple in the case of women aged from 45 to 64 years, as regards unemployment measured by the first indicator of the LFS (which makes reference to a search for work in the last month). This first point brings us to locate the grey zone of the borders between unemployment and inactivity among women and the young. However, whereas for young men the divergence appears only where we adopt a more flexible definition of availability, for women the gap is already significant between the more general definition of unemployment according to the LFS and the more restricted definition of unemployment of the ESS. Thus, women seem more inclined to a subjective evaluation of their situation as unemployed rather than inactive. It applies especially to mothers whose children are already independent.

## The "hard core of unemployment"

In contrast to the groups just described, among men aged 25-64 years the divergences between these different indicators are not significant. Therefore, it is this population which constitutes the "hard core of unemployment" in the sense that the gap is narrower between the most restrictive institutional definition (the ILO criteria) and the definition where a subjective evaluation is considered. Adult men seem to adhere the closest to the institutional norm.

## The time since the loss of the most recent employment

The time passed since the loss of the most recent employment allows us to better characterize the female population in the border zone between unemployment and inactivity. In comparing the results of the two surveys, we notice that where no criteria of availability is taken into account in the definition of the situation of unemployment (the third indicator of the ESS), more than half of the women over 25 years of age and of the men of over 45 years who are in search of employment, have been without a job a year or more (Table 4). The important gaps between these figures and those according to the LFS criteria, in particular among women over 25 years of age, indicate the important presence of women who are not available, but who declare themselves to be looking for employment. Thus, they show the tendency to choose unemployment rather than inactivity to define their situation as regards the labor market.

Table 4 - The time since the loss of the most recent employment

| | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LFS | Unemployed in search of employment in the last month | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| | Less than 3 months | 40.0 | 36.8 | 24.6 | 46.2 | 50.8 | 37.9 |
| | 3-6 months | 22.9 | 13.2 | 27.9 | 23.1 | 19.7 | 20.7 |
| | 6 months-1 year | 17.1 | 17.6 | 21.3 | 11.5 | 14.8 | 20.7 |
| | Over 1 year | 20.0 | 32.4 | 26.2 | 19.2 | 14.8 | 20.7 |

| | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| LFS | Unemployed in search of employment in the last month | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| | Less than 3 months | 35.9 | 29.4 | 21.4 | 44.8 | 43.8 | 34.2 |
| | 3-6 months | 25.6 | 12.9 | 22.6 | 24.1 | 20.5 | 21.1 |
| | 6 months-1 year | 15.4 | 17.6 | 20.2 | 13.8 | 16.4 | 23.7 |
| | Over 1 year | 23.1 | 40.0 | 35.7 | 17.2 | 19.2 | 21.1 |

| | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ESS | Unemployed in search of employment without criteria of availability | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| | Less than 3 months | 26.0 | 15.1 | 10.0 | 27.4 | 9.8 | 7.4 |
| | 3-6 months | 21.2 | 16.8 | 5.6 | 19.7 | 11.5 | 9.5 |
| | 6 months-1 year | 23.5 | 23.9 | 30.9 | 23.4 | 17.0 | 17.9 |
| | Over 1 year | 29.3 | 44.2 | 53.5 | 29.5 | 61.6 | 65.2 |

In %
Field: population 15-64 years of age

## Hidden unemployment and unstable work: adult women and the young

From the ESS we have constructed an indicator of "precarious workers". They are those people who have declared "to work usually" but who take limited-term or weakly protected employment. They are self-employed, family workers, or they work part-time, do a small job (*arubaito*), work as temp staff, have a short-term contract (up to one year) or have an activity, *shokutaku*.[12] Moreover, they wish to change employment because they consider the present work as temporary or without a future and they are looking for other employment. These precarious workers are representative of a hidden unemployment. They represent 17% of the group "unemployed with immediate availability" and "precarious workers". It is among young and adult women (25-44 years of age) where this rate is the most significant (Table 5). The perception of their professional situation as precarious would translate into a grey zone on the border between employment and unemployment. However, the data available do not permit us to go much further in this interpretation.

Table 5 - Precarious workers

| | | | M | F | Total | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| ESS | Precarious workers | N | 34 | 41 | 75 | 14 | 14 | 6 | 11 | 25 | 5 |
| | | % | 16.7 | 17.2 | 17.0 | 24.2 | 18.9 | 7.8 | 23.0 | 21.6 | 7.1 |

Numbers in ten thousand persons; rate = precarious workers / (unemployed with immediate availability + precarious workers)
Field: population 15-64 years of age

## The involuntary inactivity of adult women

The indicator "involuntary inactivity", constructed from the LFS, consists of those people who did not work more than one hour during the reference week and who would like to work. However, they have not undertaken steps to look for employment because they are momentarily ill or because household tasks or the education of children forced them to withdraw from the labor market. Finally, they have not been looking for employment over the course of the last year. Their part in the group of the inactive population is weak, whatever age group or sex it may be, with the exception of women of 25 to 44 years of age who are overrepresented among the involuntary inactives. Indeed, more than 18% of inactive adult women are involuntary inactives, being close to three times more than the rate for the total of the involuntary inactives. This indicator illustrates well the state of economic inactivity of women in a given moment in their life cycle.

Table 6 - Involuntary inactives

| | | | M | F | Total | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| LFS | Involuntary inactives | N | 11 | 134 | 145 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 108 | 19 |
| | | % | 1.7 | 7.9 | 6.2 | 0.2 | 7.0 | 3.4 | 1.7 | 18.2 | 2.7 |

Numbers in ten thousand persons; rate = involuntary inactives / inactives
Field: population 15-64 years of age

## The discouraged unemployed: most notably housewives

Three indicators of "discouraged unemployment" have been constructed from the two sources, LFS and ESS.

The first, from the LFS, concerns the people who have not worked more than one hour in the reference week and are not on leave, nor in studies, nor tied down by household tasks. Nevertheless, they express the wish to work and although they declare that they are not looking for a job, discouraged by the difficulties in finding one "suitable"[13], they have effectively sought work in the course of the last year.

The first indicator of discouraged unemployment in the ESS sense includes those people who do not usually work and do not look for employment any more. They are in effect

discouraged by their unsuccessful searches or they have come to doubt the possibility of finding employment corresponding to their desire or their actual competence or qualifications. Nevertheless, they wish to work and declare themselves to be immediately available. A second indicator in the ESS sense includes equally those who are temporarily unavailable to go back to a job.

The portion of discouraged unemployed in the total of the unemployed, whether they are or not discouraged, is very weak. The low numbers of discouraged unemployed persons, especially in the case of the LFS, do not allow us to interpret these results. However, we can note that the discouraged unemployed are more numerous in the case of the ESS. This difference could be explained by the fact that in the case of the LFS indicator, students and homemakers are *a priori* excluded because of their status, whereas in the case of the ESS indicators it is the absence of the search for employment that allows us to identify the phenomenon of discouragement on the part of students and homemakers, who nevertheless would like to work.

We observe a significant gap between the two ESS indicators. The availability to take a job seems to play, once again, an important role and it is especially women over the age of 25, who frequently have the status of housewives, who are particularly sensitive to this question about their availability.

Table 7 - The discouraged unemployed

| | | M | F | Total | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| Discouraged unemployed by LFS | Numbers | 9 | 3 | 12 | 2 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| | % | 5.3 | 2.6 | 4.2 | 5.6 | 1.5 | 9.0 | 3.8 | 1.7 | 3.3 |
| Discouraged unemployed by ESS immediate availability | Numbers | 10 | 18 | 28 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| | % | 5.7 | 8.4 | 7.2 | 5.6 | 4.3 | 7.1 | 4.7 | 7.1 | 11.7 |
| Discouraged unemployed by ESS available | Numbers | 20 | 47 | 66 | 5 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 20 | 22 |
| | % | 8.3 | 13.5 | 11.4 | 8.4 | 6.6 | 9.5 | 7.8 | 12.4 | 17.5 |

Numbers in ten thousand persons; rate LFS = discouraged / (unemployed in search of employment in the last month + discouraged); rate ESS = discouraged / (unemployed with availability + discouraged)
Field: population 15-64 years of age

## The discouraged inactives: women and the young

These results encourage us to go deeper into the analysis of populations who find themselves in this frontier zone close to inactivity. The indicator of "discouraged inactive" (cf. Table 8), constructed from the LFS data, permits us to refine our analysis of the changing frontiers of unemployment in Japan by locating an intermediary population between that of the involuntary inactive and the discouraged unemployed, in terms of the degree of distance from the labor market. They are people who have not worked more than

one hour during the reference week and who would like to work. They do not look for employment because they consider that "there isn't any suitable employment". Finally, in contrast to the discouraged unemployed, they have not looked for employment over the course of the last year. This population, close to the discouraged unemployed, consists mostly of women and the young. The frontier between unemployment and inactivity seems to remain impermeable only for men of over 25 years of age, and in particular for those aged 25-44 years.

## Summary of categories discussed: Japan

To sum up, adult men are the closest to the labor market (Table 8) whereas young men manifest similar attitudes to young women in their distribution among these categories (except in the case of involuntary inactivity, where women are more dominant).

It is family responsibilities (household tasks and education of children) which differentiate the two sexes. If men of over 25 years constitute the hard core of the unemployed, women over 25 years of age present the most dispersed situations with regard to the labor market. There are numerous women between the ages of 25 and 44 years situated in proximity to "voluntary inactivity." Most of these women justify their absence in the job hunt by the constraints relevant to their role within the household.

The frontiers between employment, unemployment and inactivity reflect the integration of the family institution in the social construction of the labor market in Japan, where the male head of household is the principal breadwinner while the spouse retires from the labor market during the period of childhood education. The adult men entrench themselves in the statuses closest to activity (employed or unemployed), whereas adult females show a greater ambivalence: although inactive they express the wish to work, and situate themselves so between unemployment and inactivity.

Table 8 -The frontier between unemployment and inactivity

| | | | | | | Total | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | M | F | Total | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 | 15-24 | 25-44 | 45-64 |
| Closer to labor market → | LFS | Unemployed in search of employment in the last month | 162 | 113 | 275 | 59 | 126 | 90 | 34 | 67 | 61 | 25 | 59 | 29 |
| | LFS | Unemployed in search of employment in the last year | 212 | 138 | 350 | 70 | 157 | 123 | 41 | 86 | 85 | 29 | 71 | 38 |
| | ESS | Precarious workers | 33 | 41 | 74 | 25 | 38 | 11 | 14 | 14 | 6 | 11 | 25 | 5 |
| | ESS | Discouraged unemployed by ESS immediately available | 10 | 18 | 28 | 4 | 9 | 15 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 7 | 9 |
| | LFS | Discouraged inactives | 16 | 61 | 77 | 22 | 25 | 30 | 12 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 24 | 27 |
| | | Involuntary inactives | 11 | 134 | 145 | 8 | 112 | 25 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 108 | 19 |

Numbers in ten thousand persons
Field: population 15-64 years of age

Our reading of the statistical indicators in terms of social identity highlights the existence of a strong tension between the economically active status and that of housewife or student. This tension reflects the difficulty in defining in an atemporal way the situations in the labor market, the perception of the present situation being at the same time a function of a past trajectory and of one hoped for in the future.

### Additional factor that blurs the borders: atypical forms of employment[14]

In Japan, the rate of salaried employment is lower than in France, particularly among women (92% in France and 84% in Japan according to the Employment Survey and the LFS in 2002). This can be explained in part by the existence of a significant fringe in the Japanese labor market which functions on a pre-capitalist, traditional base. Nine percent of employed women are family workers, whereas in France, this status only concerns 2% of employed women. This type of factor contributes to the blurring of frontiers between activity and inactivity.

The proportion of salaried employment called "precarious", which especially concerns fixed-term contracts, temporary work, small jobs, and government subsidized contracts, in the total of salaried employment is larger in Japan than in France (respectively 12% vs. 7% for men, 17% vs. 10% for women). If in the two countries women and the young are the more affected by unstable work in Japan, the elderly, in retirement from the labor market in France on account of the system of early retirement, are also strongly represented in this type of employment in Japan.

Our analysis has not taken account of part-time work, since that would necessitate an adjustment of categories between the two countries prior to a statistical treatment. However, it would not be pertinent to associate the notion of precariousness to this form of employment in a simple way. Part-time jobs are overwhelmingly taken by women in France and Japan, but whereas this form of employment concerns all age groups in France, in Japan it is found concentrated among married women over 35 years of age.

These forms of work blur the frontiers between employment, unemployment and inactivity due to their atypical form, which involves discontinuities in the relation to work and often low remuneration and weak social protections. Moreover, often linked to the different stages of the life cycle, the meaning of these forms of contingent work can be accounted for only in a long view and they can not be understood independently of the biographical trajectories in which they are located.

## 3.3. The Metropolitan region of São Paulo (MRSP)

First of all, the numerical data for São Paulo will be analyzed in order to discuss the manner in which the frontiers between employment, unemployment, and inactivity change and to show to what extent gender is crucial in understanding such change. To study this evolution in more detail, the period between the years 1988 and 2004 will be considered. The different indicators of unemployment produced by the PED data base will be analyzed to be able to explore the contours of this phenomenon, and further, the

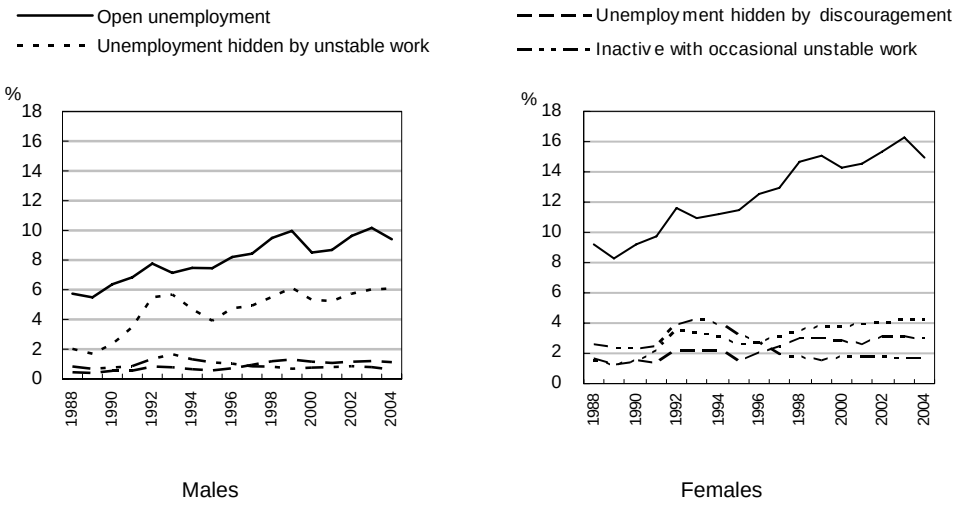
variables of gender and age will be cross-analyzed. Attention is focused on the year 2001, the year in which the quantitative data on the trajectories and the perceptions of the respondents were collected, which will be explored in the following chapter.

As previously mentioned, in the case of the PED, the criteria for defining the working age population are different from those used in the preceding analysis for France and Japan. These criteria reveal the specificities of the organization of Brazilian society, such as the early incorporation of individuals in the labor market: the PED includes among the economically active population all those between 10 and 14 years of age. In the same way, there is no superior limit, even if the number of economically active persons of over 64 years of age is small and statistically insignificant. However, for this study we limited the working age population to 10-64 years of age.

## The frontiers between employment, unemployment and inactivity

Figure 7 shows that the evolution of the frontiers between employment, unemployment and inactivity is very different for men and women. We can see how the differences evolved as regards the four situations in the labor market: open unemployment (with a reference period of 30 days), unemployment hidden by unstable work, unemployment due to discouragement, and inactivity with occasional work (cf. p.18).

Figure 7 – Evolution of frontier zones between employment, unemployment and inactivity in the Metropolitan Regions of São Paulo, 1988-2004




Rate calculated over economically active population
Field: population 10 –64 years of age in MRSP

In comparison with the second half of the 1980s, all the way through the 1990s two important changes were observed in São Paulo: the huge increase of adult male unemployment, growth of such magnitude being observed in the past only during the

economic crisis of 1981 and 1983, and the end of female movement between employment and inactivity, characteristic of most females, and their behavior to remain unemployed. Indeed, at the beginning of the current millennium, the number of female unemployed persons was similar to that of their male counterparts.[15] As for the female unemployment rate, it has always been high, a fact which goes together with the low female activity rate. Indeed, it is much lower than the male activity rate.

The analysis of the evolution of the borders between employment and unemployment according to gender shows the importance of unstable work among men.[16] Among women the unemployment rate is higher, and they are also more often discouraged in their search for employment[17] or they declare being inactive with occasional work.[18] Between these situations, going from unemployment hidden by discouragement or by unstable work to the inactivity with exceptional work, women at the margins of open unemployment are much more dispersed than men.

The relatively closer proximity to employment that we observe among women compared to men characterizes the contours of unemployment in the metropolitan regions of São Paulo. This can be explained by the numerous domestic services in which these women are engaged. These activities are considered as regular and continuous, although they are often undeclared. Conversely, the small jobs undertaken by men are discontinuous in nature. However, they are often the only means of survival, and they allow them to continue looking for better employment.

## Various aspects of juvenile and female unemployment

As for the interaction between gender and age, unemployment affects adult women, more noticeably the young and above all young women. We find numerous young unemployed women, in whatever form of unemployment considered (open unemployment, unemployment hidden by discouragement, etc.), except for hidden unemployment due to unstable work, in which case young men are overrepresented. This is because the job search differs according to gender. Whereas young men go through a combination of study and work to enter the labor market, young women, having a higher level of schooling, extend the search period to select better employment.

Unlike Japanese women, in Brazil the professional paths of adult women (25-39 years of age) seem less structured by life cycle phases. Starting from 40 years of age discouraged unemployment and inactivity with occasional small jobs become significant. These affect above all single parent female household heads who are more numerous after 40 years of age. Men of over 25 years find survival income in discontinuous odd jobs (*bico*), but pursue the search for more stable employment.

Table 9 – Different forms of unemployment, Metropolitan Region of São Paulo, PED, 2001

| | | M | F | Total | M/F | | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 10-24 | 25-39 | 40-64 | 10-24 | 25-39 | 40-64 | 10-24 | 25-39 | 40-64 |
| Open unemployment | N | 365 | 505 | 870 | 474 | 251 | 145 | 202 | 95 | 67 | 271 | 156 | 78 |
| | % | 3.5 | 7.1 | 5.1 | 10.2 | 3.3 | 2.7 | 7.7 | 1.9 | 1.9 | **13.1** | 5.1 | 3.9 |
| Unemployment hidden by unstable work | N | 220 | 133 | 353 | 132 | 129 | 91 | 88 | 75 | 57 | 44 | 55 | 34 |
| | % | 5.2 | 3.8 | 4.6 | 6.0 | 4.2 | 3.8 | **7.4** | 4.5 | 4.3 | 4.3 | 3.9 | 3.3 |
| Unemployment hidden by discouragement | N | 45 | 89 | 134 | 59 | 38 | 37 | 24 | 9* | 12* | 34 | 29 | 25 |
| | % | 1.1 | 2.6 | 1.7 | 2.6 | 1.2 | 1.6 | 2.1 | 0.5* | 0.9* | 3.3 | 2.1 | 2.5 |
| Total unemployment | N | 630 | 727 | 1357 | 665 | 418 | 274 | 315 | 178 | 136 | 350 | 240 | 138 |
| | % | 15.0 | **20.9** | 17.7 | **30.0** | 13.6 | 11.5 | **26.5** | 10.7 | 10.2 | **33.9** | 17.0 | 13.3 |
| Inactivity with occasional work | N | 34 | 61 | 95 | 47 | 14 | 34 | 26 | 1* | 7* | 21 | 13 | 27 |
| | % | 0.8 | 1.8 | 1.2 | 2.1 | 0.5 | 1.4 | 2.2 | 0.1* | 0.5* | 2.0 | 0.9 | 2.6 |
| Total | % | 15.8 | **22.7** | 18.9 | **32.1** | 14.0 | 13.0 | **28.7** | 10.8 | 10.7 | **35.9** | 17.9 | 15.9 |

Numbers in thousand persons.
Field: population 10-64 years of age in MRSP
* Statistically insignificant

To conclude, we shall note two specifically Brazilian characteristics of the contours of unemployment that we have just discussed. First of all, unemployment hidden by unstable work is clearly relevant for men, and points out the heavy responsibility of being the breadwinner, which constrains them to accept any kind of work, even unstable, to guarantee survival in the immediate future, for themselves or their family. The same socially constructed role of breadwinner pushes Japanese adult males towards a search for stable employment, even if they have to extend the job search period, as we will see in Chapter 4, whereas it compels Brazilian males to take unstable work because of insufficient social protections. Secondly, the frontier between unemployment and inactivity can take two forms, that of discouragement and that of inactivity with occasional work. In both cases, it is women, in the two opposite age groups, the youngest and the eldest, who are in this

frontier. This fact shows the importance of their family and reproductive roles which push them away from the labor market, and relegate them to the domestic space. Finally, in the case of inactivity with occasional work, besides women we also find younger men.

## 3.4. Conclusion: towards the description of complex situations in the labor market

In conclusion, it is important to emphasize two points: the one concerns the characteristics of the populations found at the margins of unemployment while the other, more methodological, concerns the limits of adopted conventions in order to measure different situations in the labor market.

In spite of the different methods used for locating and analyzing the contours of unemployment of the three regions, gender and age turn out to be relevant factors. However, their impact is different in the social construction of the labor market in each region. Institutional aspects, notably the politics of employment and, more generally, the systems of social protection, also have a strong structural impact on the labor market.

In France, among the populations which declare themselves inactive (or unemployed) whereas they are working small jobs, or unemployed when they are not immediately available or when they are not taking steps to find a job, we repeatedly find students, housewives and the elderly. The nature of work done by students and its importance in their life course, the more or less temporary family constraints for housewives, or the discouragement due to a long and unsuccessful job search by the elderly, all explain gaps between the subjective perception of situations and the official categories of employment, unemployment and inactivity. This gap leads to a blurring of situations in the labor market which, for twenty years, has not stopped thickening.

In Japan as well, it is essentially women and the young whom we find again in such situations at the frontiers of work, unemployment and inactivity. More particularly, adult women frequently express the wish to work, although they have not taken steps to look for work because of the difficult reconciliation between professional life and family responsibilities. They often live their situation of inactivity as an imposed condition.

In Japan as in France, the increase in the forms of atypical employment (i.e. temporary, part-time, non-regular) contributes to the ambiguous situations in the labor market. But although the specific politics in the area of elderly workers in France has driven them to a premature exclusion from the labor market (pre-retired), in Japan, elderly men rejoin women and the young in a precarious situation at the end of their professional life.

In Brazil, it is more commonly men, particularly young men, who live in the most unstable situations. Small jobs, unstable work, and informal and discontinuous activities permit them to survive while waiting for a better situation. These three survival modes alternate with periods of inactivity and unemployment. In addition, the measure of unemployment is very sensitive to the criterion of the period of searching for work: thus the rate of unemployment doubles where we use one of the more open (searched in the month before the survey) definitions instead of one more restrictive (searched in the week before the survey). Men are less sensitive to this criterion since, as noted above, they are pushed to take unstable work to secure a subsistence income as breadwinner of the family.

Finally, let us turn to the issue of methods and measurements and their impacts on the contours of unemployment. It is the co-existence or the alternation of statuses considered contradictory by official categorizations which characterize these uncertain situations as regards the labor market: women who try to reconcile professional life with the role of mother-spouse; the young who shift between studies and small jobs providing subsistence income; the unemployed precarious workers; elderly people who cannot live on their retirement income, and so on and so forth. When the job search does not correspond to required norms, when to accept occasional work does not allow one to leave a precarious situation, or when the status of housewife or of (pre-) retiree does not suffice to describe the situation of an individual as regards work, the delineation of the frontiers between employment, unemployment and inactivity appear more and more fossilized. In addition, the dimension of time, another factor difficult to account for by statistical categories, intervenes in the respondent's selection of status proposed in the survey, since a person always judges his or her situation in relation to life experience and to an anticipated future situation. In sum, our analysis shows the difficulty in defining in an exclusive and atemporal way the complex situations of the labor market.

These findings call for not only the diversification of statistical indicators used to capture this complex and changing phenomenon, but also socio-anthropological approaches in the study of unemployment.

Before discussing the subjective experiences of unemployment across the analysis of biographical interviews, the longitudinal study of trajectories in the labor market is presented in the following chapter, introducing the temporal dimension in the analysis of unemployment.

## Notes

[1] We thank Nadya Araujo Guimarães for her comments and suggestions on this chapter.

[2] Cf. Abbreviations and Acronyms for titles in original languages.

[3] Data used for this chapter are taken from existing national or regional surveys and not from our own surveys. The aim is not the comparison of three regions, but to describe the contours of unemployment of each region through the analysis of available statistical data.

[4] Unemployment according to the ILO criteria, as opposed to hidden unemployment.

[5] In contrast with the Employment Survey of France and the LFS and ESS of Japan, the PED is not a national survey. It is carried out in eight metropolitan areas in Brazil.

[6] We note that this "spontaneity", used by certain French economists, is a limited one since instead of an open ended answer, the respondent chooses from a list the status which seems most adequate to his situation in regards to the labor market. Hereafter we use the term "self-declared" for this choice.

[7] It is important to note as well that in the case of Japan, in contrast with France and Brazil, the respondents fill out the questionnaire, which is left at their house by the interviewer, by themselves.

[8] Metropolitan France excludes the departments of oversea territories.

[9] Both in Metropolitan France (24%) as well as in Île-de-France (26%).

[10] The activity rate for this age group according to the LFS in 2002 is 69.2% for males and 40.3% for females.

[11] The ESS was carried out every three years from 1956 until 1982, and every five years thereafter. The choice of the year 2002 for this study was largely determined by this schedule. Since the ESS was conducted on October 1st, we chose the third quarter (July – Sept.) of the LFS.
[12] People to whom one entrusts (*shokutaku*) work. In most cases, they have limited-term contracts. This category applies to elderly employees who remain working in the same firm although retired from their regular employment status.
[13] This includes: it seems that there is no work "nearby", "in my field or in my ability", "which fits my schedule or wage requirement", "in the current labor market situation or in this season".
[14] We are thankful to H. Nohara for having provided the elements for this section at the occasion of the International Colloquium entitled "Unemployment and Professional Mobility. Changes in Institutions and Individual Life Trajectories. An International Comparison between Japan, France and Brazil", which took place in Paris, February 2005.
[15] The total number of persons of all the unemployment forms in 2000 was 626,000 for men and 697,000 for women.
[16] In 2004, there were 267,000 males and 154,000 females affected by unemployment hidden by unstable work.
[17] In 2004, we count 109,000 females and 50,000 males as discouraged unemployed.
[18] The number of females in this situation was 58,000 in 2004 whereas we count only 27,000 males.

# Chapter 3
# Unemployment and Occupational Transition: Trajectories and Perceptions

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This chapter discusses the effects of unemployment on worker trajectories and labor market transitions. Despite the differences between national employment systems and welfare regimes (Esping-Andersen, 1990 and 1999; Castel, 1995; Supiot, 1999; Gallie and Paugam, 2000), and regardless of measurement procedures (Freyssinet, 1984; Maruani and Reynaud, 1993; Demazière, 1995a; Maruani, 2002), unemployment affects capitalist societies and it has reached particularly high levels in large cities. Both the scientific community and public policy have devoted a great deal of attention to understanding and intervening in this trend. Nonetheless, close observation allows us to conclude that such transformations are hardly limited to the intensified risk of becoming or remaining unemployed. It is, in fact, the very organization of metropolitan labor markets that has been affected, modifying transitional patterns between occupational situations, whether in terms of transitions from employment to unemployment or from situations of activity to those of inactivity.

In this chapter, we shall argue that patterns of occupational transition vary according to the ways in which employment and social security systems are institutionalized in different societies so that, although unemployment affects capitalist societies the world over, unemployment *patterns* differ from one societal context to another. In this sense, understanding these patterns is crucial to an accurate description of specific changes in labor market structures within different societal contexts, and it is equally important in order that we may find explanations for their particular effects upon the occupational biographies of individuals in different places. This means that unemployment plays a significant role in redistributing job positions in the labor market as a whole (Freyssinet, 1997; Demazière, 1995b) in addition to shaping trajectory patterns, as the first section of this chapter will attempt to illustrate. But it also means that different unemployment experiences affect not only trajectories but also perceptions (Demazière and Dubar, 1997; Guimarães, Hirata, Montagner and Sugita, 2004), values and attitudes towards work, determining job-seeking behaviors as argued in the second section of the chapter.

## 1. Individual trajectories under changing labor market conditions

This comparative approach to the effects of unemployment on individual occupational trajectories has challenged our sociological imagination in two important ways. In the first place, comparisons needed to be carefully contextualized so that the study's point of departure – the choice of possible societal contexts to compare – was, in itself, strategic. Secondly, the approach imposed certain methodological constraints to the research design; the need to capture individual movements within the labor market required flux analysis rather than (traditional) stock analysis, longitudinal rather than cross-sectional methodologies. Consequently, empirical evidence forcibly relied upon individual memory of previous occupational events, a formidable challenge in a situation of increasing transitions.

In consonance with our first decision, we selected three mega-cities (Paris, Tokyo and São Paulo) whose specific labor markets were embedded in three very distinct (almost emblematic) configurations of employment systems and welfare regimes. To wit, these are (a) the solid, inclusive public system such as the one founded in France, the apex of which coincides with the so-called "thirty glorious years" of capitalism during the post-war period; (b) the strong (albeit selective) private protection system established in Japan during the period of the so-called "lifetime employment model"; and (c) a recent, limited experiment in unemployment protection such as the Brazilian one, established during the period of re-democratization which occurred in the late 1980s.

In order to confront the second set of methodological challenges we decided to use three longitudinal surveys, carefully designed in order to be simultaneously similar enough to allow comparisons and sufficiently sophisticated to catch the specific features of each labor market configuration.

The first of these surveys was carried out in eight large regions of France (including the metropolitan Paris-Île de France area) and provided inspiration for the other two (in Tokyo and São Paulo). This was the "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi et marché local du travail » [Trajectories of job seekers and local labor markets] (TDE-MLT) panel[2] which focused on the occupational events of a cohort of registered job seekers at the Agence Nationale pour l'Emploi (ANPE) – the French national employment agency – between April and June, 1995; they selected a group of individuals under the age of 55 years old who were experiencing the beginning of a period of unemployment. The complex methodological design of this survey combined retrospective and prospective procedures. Retrospection referred to the years 1993-1995 and prospective panels produced information for the period extending from 1995 to 1998. In order to remain within the time frame covered by the surveys in the other two large cities, this chapter will restrict itself to analyzing data gathered from the prospective survey. The prospective panel covered 33 months of research in three follow-up surveys, taken after candidate registration with the ANPE. In the first (face-to-face) survey between January and March of 1996, 8,125 people were contacted; in the second (telephone) survey, which took place in 1997, efforts were made to keep track of 6,480 of the initial respondents; in the third (telephone) survey, which took place in 1998, 5,262 of the initial respondents remained. From this group we selected the 1,624 cases in the Paris-Île de France metropolitan region analyzed in this chapter.

The second survey took place in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, Brazil, between April and December, 2001, and covers occupational transitions during the period 1994-2001. Data was collected by means of a supplementary questionnaire (inspired on the TDE) attached to the PED ("Pesquisa de Emprego e Desemprego"), an ongoing (since 1985) monthly household sample survey of the economically active population of metropolitan São Paulo. The supplementary questionnaire was answered by roughly twenty-seven thousand of the households surveyed, and 83% of the cases were ultimately used. A significant data base was generated regarding some 53,170 individuals. At the time of the interview, 28,189 of these were classified as employed, 6,627 as unemployed and 18,354 as inactive. Data gathering duration (9 months) stemmed from the need to produce a sample that, by virtue of its size, would be representative of all segments, including the unemployed (which turned out to be the smallest contingent).

The third survey was conducted in metropolitan Tokyo and gathered information regarding the period 1990-2001. The empirical questionnaire was distributed at twelve agencies (*Hello Work*) belonging to the PESO (or Public Employment Security Office) system,[3] during the period extending from August 1 through 31, 2001, in four metropolitan Tokyo prefectures (Tokyo, Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama). Individual questionnaires were distributed to all individuals who stated that they were seeking employment when approached by the research team. Some questionnaires were filled out on the spot and others were taken home and later mailed in. Overall, 6,222 questionnaires were handed out, with a response rate of 27.1%, of which 1,685 questionnaires were filled out and 1503 were valid cases.

Prospective panels are less dependent on memory, once descriptions of events get back to very short periods of time; in TDE, for example, French interviewees were only asked to describe their occupational activity during the 12 months preceding each follow-up survey. In contrast, retrospective surveys such as the ones conducted in Tokyo and São Paulo, must contend with the selectivity of memory. We knew that the more unstable the employment relationship, the more disturbing memory features would appear to be; and the more precarious employment practices appeared to be, the greater the tendency to forget or repress negative job experiences.

Additionally, since we were not allowed to adopt the technical solution of calendar-questionnaires, given research conditions in Tokyo and São Paulo, a precise description of a minimum set of events was pre-defined as our goal. The tricky case was São Paulo, because of very high employment turn-over.[4] In the Brazilian case people were then asked to describe three occupational events from 1994 up to the moment of field research: the most recent one, the one preceding it and the most important one which had occurred between 1994 and 2001. But in a situation of intense transitions and proliferation of precarious, short-term jobs, it is crucial to select a moment of great importance in collective memory as a point of departure; we therefore chose 1994, when a successful plan for monetary stabilization (the "Plano Real") altered the principal economic references of everyday life, as one such valid moment around which respondents might recall and organize the memory of their labor market experiences.[5] Assuming that we would find greater stability in the lifetime employment system of Japan, we designed a simplified version of the Brazilian longitudinal questionnaire, which sought information

only regarding the labor market situation at that moment and during the immediately preceding occupational event. In addition to this, we extended the period of investigation from 1990 to 2001. As we shall see later, our field work yielded a few surprises.

The previous chapter presented a lengthy transversal analysis, explaining the blurring boundaries of unemployment while observing individual societal context. We shall now investigate patterns of labor market transitions and occupational trajectories, under varying configurations of employment systems and welfare regimes.

## 1.1. Paris: are the Fordist "golden years" gone?

The Paris-Île de France labor market has been affected by unemployment since the 1980s. In addition to this, a move toward various increasingly unstable forms of employment, the so-called "a-typical" contracts, became a crucial feature which has been highlighted in recent literature.[6] Both characteristics reflect a deconstruction of the previous institutional norm, based as it as on permanent (i.e., long-term), full-time and highly protected jobs.[7] Previous analysis of TDE data bases (Pignoni and Poujouly, 1999; Pignoni, Poujouly and Viney, 1998; Canceill and Huyghues Despointes, 1999 e 2003; Choffel, Delattre, 2003), dealing with evidence from three main regions in France (Paris-Île de France was one of those) underscore the emerging importance of a "recurrent" form of unemployment, concept applied to those submitted to intense and systematic transitions inside the French labor market.[8]

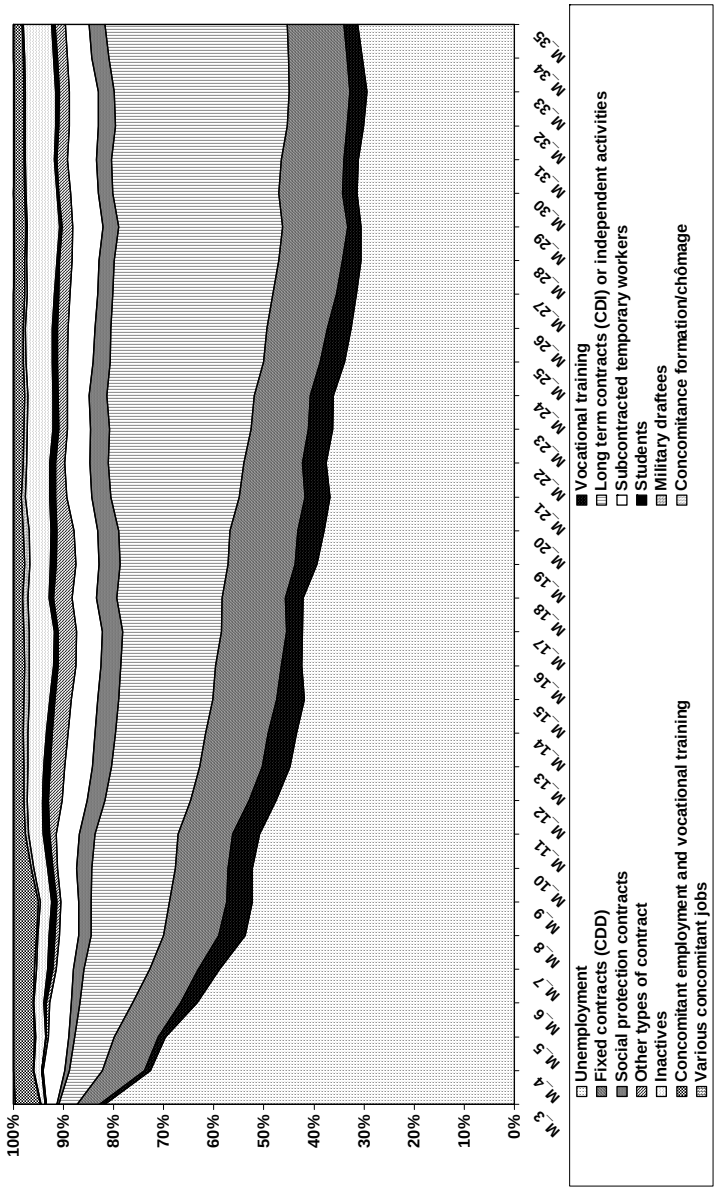
A more in-depth analysis of the Paris-Île de France metropolitan region confirmed such findings. Our first analytical step is illustrated by Figure 1. According to information provided by 1,624 interviewees we built up a calendar containing their occupational situation for each of the 35 months they had been observed between 1995 and 1998.

In order to characterize possible forms of transit within the French labor market, we established a classification according to the following thirteen situations: (i) unemployment; (ii) vocational training; (iii) fixed (mostly short-term) contracts (CDD)[9]; (iv) permanent long-term contracts (CDI) or independent activity; (v) social protection contracts; (vi) subcontracted temporary workers; (vii) other types of contracts; (viii) students; (ix) military draftees and the like; (x) concomitant employment and unemployment; (xi) various concomitant jobs; (xii) concomitant unemployment and vocational training; and (xiii) inactivity.

Thus, Figure 1 summarizes the results of a repeated cross-sectional procedure. It shows the labor market position of each interviewee along the 35 months according to the aforementioned classification. Its most relevant feature is that, despite the transit among a large range of alternatives, there is a clear predominance of those situations typifying an organized capitalist market. Were we to consider only two strata (one made up of people who had been openly unemployed and another of people who had been employed under typical long-term full-time contracts), we might see that, at whatever point in those 35 months, they would always represent the most significant parcel of the cases. Moreover, at no time was the number of individuals who remained unemployed equivalent to less than 30% of the interviewees, suggesting the persistence of the phenomenon and highlighting its importance as a likely fate once someone had been laid off. Nevertheless, it is also true

that the number of those who managed to obtain new, long-term contracts also increased over time.

Figure 1
Paris-île de France: Interviewee Occupational Situation between 1995 and 1998




Source : Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, DARES, Data basis TDE "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi".

However interesting the graph may be, it has an analytical limit, namely that it reveals nothing about fluxes, and hence nothing may be adduced regarding individual trajectories. Transversal analyses, even repeated cross-sections, prove unable to provide answers to certain crucial questions. Who are the job seekers included in this 30% of cases who may be identified (as a minimum) at any given point in time? Are they the same individuals? If so, the phenomenon might be described as true long-term unemployment. Or, on the

contrary, is this a recurrent form of unemployment? If so, there should be a significant turn-over between employment and unemployment, yet people consistently find themselves unemployed. In other words, when the institutionalized norm of long-term, full-time, highly protected contracts is challenged (which would appear to be the case in France), describing individual trajectories and occupational careers provides a strategy for assessing the prospects of labor market restructuring and the move towards new forms of its regulation.

Answering questions of this nature requires a methodological shift and time becomes an endogenous analytical element. Identification and interpretation of fluxes is then converted into the main goal. We associated two statistical procedures of advanced multivariate analysis – factor and cluster analysis – in order to identify those patterns of aggregated trajectories. Departing from the identification of individual transitions we moved toward discovering its common movements, which means, recognizing patterns of trajectories that could apply to relevant groups of interviewees.[10] Table 1 resumes those patterns of aggregate trajectories we could identify for Paris-Île de France labor market; for each pattern it indicates the number of cases included.

Table 1
Aggregated trajectories of the unemployed in the Paris-Île de France Metropolitan Region

| Types of Trajectories | Frequencies | % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 - Unemployment | 499 | 30.7 | 30.7 |
| 8 - Regular employee under long term contract (CDI) | 265 | 16.3 | 47.0 |
| 3 - Regular employee transitions between permanent and fixed [long or short-term] contracts | 248 | 15.3 | 62.3 |
| 6 - Regular employee under fixed contract (CDD) | 178 | 11.0 | 73.3 |
| 5 - Sub-contracted/temp work | 114 | 7.0 | 80.3 |
| 2 - Unemployed in vocational training | 100 | 6.2 | 86.5 |
| 7 - Beneficiary of a social protection-type contract | 88 | 5.4 | 91.9 |
| 9 - Inactive | 85 | 5.2 | 97.1 |
| 4 - In other types of jobs | 47 | 2.9 | 100.0 |
| Total | 1,624 | 100 | |

Source : Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, DARES, Data basis TDE "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi".

To be in long-term unemployment is the dominant situation (during the 35 months investigated) for a relevant number of individuals who registered with the ANPE during the spring of 1995 in hopes of obtaining employment; nearly 1/3 of the sample falls into this group. Yet, among the job seekers, there are certainly those who perform a trajectory through occupations; predominantly becoming regular employees, directly hired, whether for permanent, long-term contracts (16.3%) or fixed periods of time (11%), or moving from one type of contract to another (15.3%). As a result, the trajectory of half the sample

may easily be classified under those two typical situations in a capitalist labor market: protected unemployment (30.7%) and long-term, regular wage-earning (16.3%). And if we include individuals under short-term, fixed contracts (CDD), the novelty in the traditional, institutionalized employment norm (built up during the "30 glorious years"), we reach nothing less than ¾ the sample.

To be sure, transitions are more intense wherever aggregated trajectories refer to more "atypical" varieties of employment (sub-contracted temporary work and other such jobs). No matter how intense transitions are, it is always possible to identify a particularly dominant trajectory pattern.

Finally, the move towards inactivity, as a permanent result of unemployment experience, did not represent more than 5% of cases in the Paris-Île de France region, implying that transitions occurred mostly *within* labor market boundaries.

## 1.2. Tokyo: dissolving the "lifetime employment system"

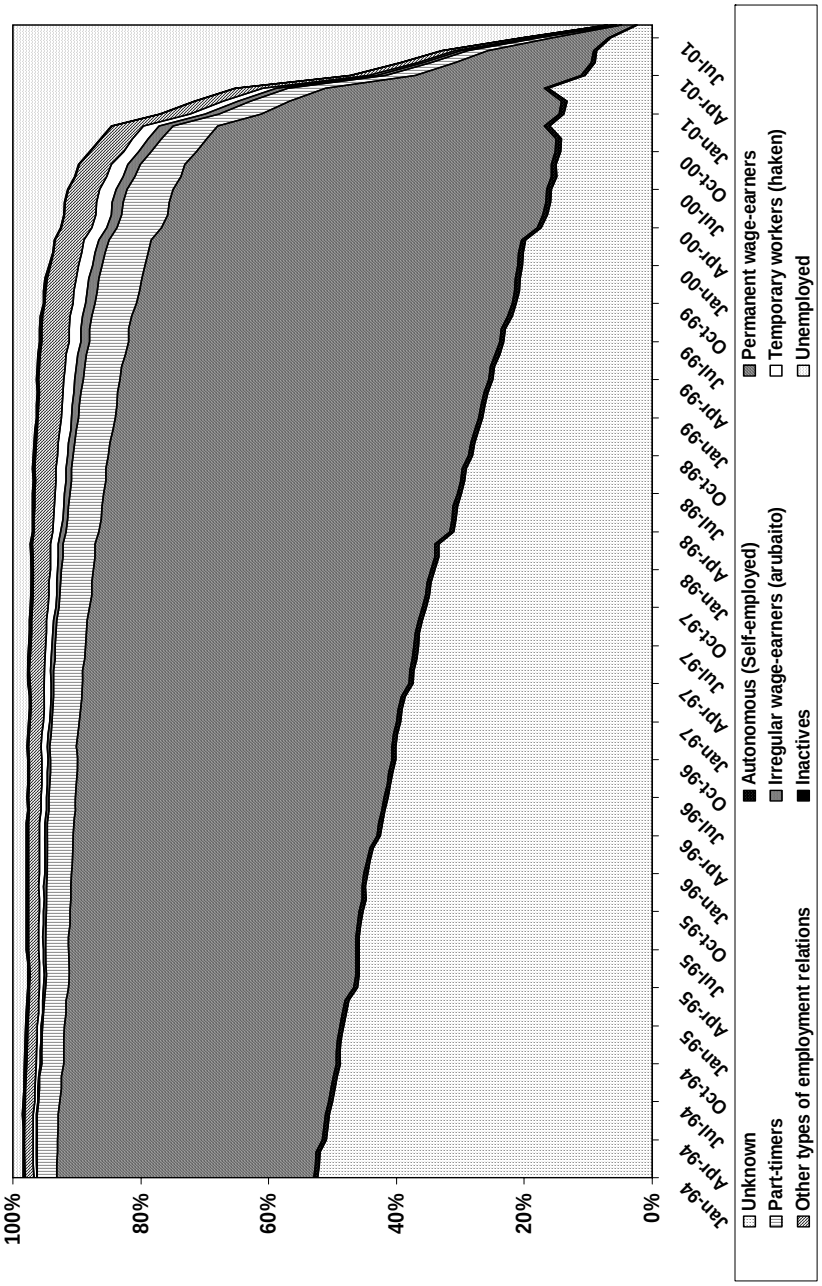
Of the Japanese case, it may be said that, unlike the survey undertaken in metropolitan Paris, in which a prospective panel tracked a cohort of job seekers after their registration with the ANPE and was able to produce an in-depth reconstitution of their subsequent transit within the labor market, the Tokyo survey gathered information from a single retrospective data collection by interviewing job-seekers at PESO (the Japanese public employment system) agencies.

These differences are certainly not random. In the French case, it was possible to design a calendar-type panel and questionnaire, given the importance of the public system founded by the ANPE which articulates intermediation, vocational training and insurance. It is important because of its coverage and effectiveness in terms of the benefits which attract more than 80% of the unemployed to register there; but also because of their forms of follow-up and assessment of the unemployed, crucial requirement in any prospective research design. Doubtless, these reasons made possible in France the exhaustive type of longitudinal design. In the Japanese case, coverage by the public system is less important than in France, although it is in progress; in any event, it proved impossible to schedule personal follow-up contacts (as had been done in France) to allow for putting together a prospective panel, whether at the interviewees residence or by telephone; resistance was both strong and culturally explicable .

Given the limitations of the data gathering, as well as the strong stability of Japanese industrial relations (despite its crisis), research partners in Japan decided to investigate a single previous occupational event for unemployed individuals job seeking at PESO agencies in the Tokyo region. In other words, only one occupational event was researched in the belief that it would be adequately descriptive of a long history of passages through the labor market, dating back to the early 1990s, making up a total of eleven years. In fact, the importance of this single, long-lasting, regular salaried job proved to be remarkable.

This is what we see in Figure 2, in which the occupational situation of the stock of 1,503 Japanese interviewees is presented month-by-month (from January 1994 to July

Figure 2
Tokyo: Interviewee Occupational Situation between January, 1994 and July, 2001




Source: Survey research in agencies of the PESO system, August, 2001, Tokyo.

2001) by means of a cross-sectional analysis.[11] In an attempt to identify forms of transit specific to the Japanese labor market, we established classifications that differed somewhat from those of the Paris-Île de France case. These are our descriptions for labor market participation of the Japanese interviewees: (i) permanent wage-earners; (ii) part-time wage earners; (iii) irregular wage-earner (*arubaito*); (iv) temporary workers (*haken*); (v)

autonomous (self-employed); (vi) other types of employment relationships; (vii) unemployed; and (viii) inactive. As in French case, we reconstructed the month-to-month local labor market situation from answers provided by interviewees. Surprisingly, as a result of this effort, we had to create a ninth form because, for many people, the further back in time we moved, the greater the need for information not supplied in the questionnaire. Because we had requested information regarding only one occupational event prior to the present unemployment situation, past situations were forcibly classified as "unknown."

This reflected an unexpectedly (and relatively) unstable system of employment relations. Under such conditions reference to a single previous event proved inadequate for describing the occupational history of a significant segment of the unemployed in Japan. The results of the dissolution of the norm of long-term – if not "lifetime" – employment are already quite clear at the beginning of the new millennium.

Nevertheless, despite the on-going dissolution process of the previous norm, its force was still remarkable. While Tokyo unemployment constitutes a minority situation whatever the month observed (the moment of data collection being the natural exception), the importance of permanent employment stands out as the situation which represents the largest number of cases. It is worth mentioning that a single job suffices to explain no less than eleven years of work history for a considerable number of current job seekers. In turn, beyond its relatively brief duration (in comparison with the French pattern of long-term unemployment, for example) unemployment cannot be characterized in terms of its recurrence. If there is any recurrence in the Tokyo labor market, it would appear to be a recurrence of long-lasting and protected employment.

As in the Paris-Île de France scenario, our analysis attempted to identify aggregate patterns of labor market trajectories that might summarize trends in the life histories of Tokyo job-seekers during the longitudinal period 1994-2001. Table 2 presents the results of factor and cluster analysis procedures conducted for those 1,498 valid cases.

In the Tokyo case, when the patterns of the aggregated trajectories are analyzed, they stand out even more clearly as typical situations of the norm of lifetime employment: prior to their unemployment, the trajectories of no less than 50% of individuals currently seeking employment in the public employment agencies were permanently linked to a single regular job. Contrary to these cases, roughly one third (precisely 38%) had undergone a trajectory which could not be represented because of an information gap in the data collection; it might be more accurately described as a situation of transit between different employment situations; that kind of labor market transition, as previously mentioned, despite extraordinary in recent past becomes currently growing, as a result of the dissolution of the old employment system in Japan.

These cases apart, all the other types of trajectories are extremely minor in terms of numbers of cases: only 2.6% came from long-term unemployment; 4.7% - mostly women - came from part-time employment; and 3.6% from other employment situations.

Table 2
Aggregated trajectories of the unemployed in the Tokyo Metropolitan Region (1994-2001)

| Types of Trajectories | Frequencies | % | Cumulative % |
|---|---|---|---|
| 5 – Regular employee | 756 | 50.4 | 50.4 |
| 1 - Unknown; impossible to identify a pattern of trajectory | 579 | 38.7 | 89.1 |
| 4 - Part-timers | 70 | 4.7 | 93.8 |
| 3 - Other types of job | 54 | 3.6 | 97.4 |
| 2 - Long Term Unemployed | 39 | 2.6 | 100 |
| Total | 1,498 | 100 | |

Source: Survey research in agencies of the PESO system, August, 2001, Tokyo.

## 1.3. São Paulo: do intense transitions challenge labor market boundaries?

As had been done in Tokyo, our São Paulo investigation explored labor market trajectories by means of a retrospective survey. Unlike Tokyo, however, we conducted a household survey, one which provided information representative of the economically active population of the entire metropolis. Again, differences in instrument design reflected features specific to each societal context. In fact, for the recent, fragile institutionalization of unemployment policies in Brazil, the network of employment agencies was unable to host our research by providing a representative sample of unemployment within metropolitan São Paulo. At the time of the survey (2001), their coverage was restricted and highly selective; minimal effectiveness in terms of benefits and even job opportunities failed to attract people, unlike the French ANPE system.[12] Besides, and differently from Japan, assessing people in their homes, entering domestic and private life to get information in a survey research is normal and occasionally a source of special interest and mobilization to the interviewee and even his/her neighbors.

Two important pieces of information are required in order that we may better understand the São Paulo context. First of all, the significant increase of time spent in job seeking doubled in ten years; its growth accelerated during the latter half of the 1990s specifically, and after 1997 in particular. Also, no matter how varied the statistics or methodologies, the search for employment clearly becomes more difficult, affecting not only individuals who were openly unemployed but also those who were seeking employment. Secondly, the rate of unemployment, both open and hidden, has risen above two digits, having reached, in more critical moments, 20% of the active population (cf. PED methodology described in chapter 2).[13]

In São Paulo the coexistence of lengthy periods of unemployment and job searching with an inefficient protective system have produced high levels of insecurity with regard to employment. This is clearly expressed by the intense transition between job market situations, which illustrate individual efforts to obtain the minimum income required for

survival, given the fragility of institutional protection. These conditions produced a phenomenon which differs slightly from what has been observed (particularly since the 1980s) in more economically advanced European countries (such as France), where the rise in long-term unemployment proved to be a challenge. The aforementioned results of the Paris-Île de France survey bear witness to this situation. In Brazil, given the absence of such an historical experience of protection, it is the intensification of labor market transitions and, above all, recurrent unemployment, which challenge our comprehension.

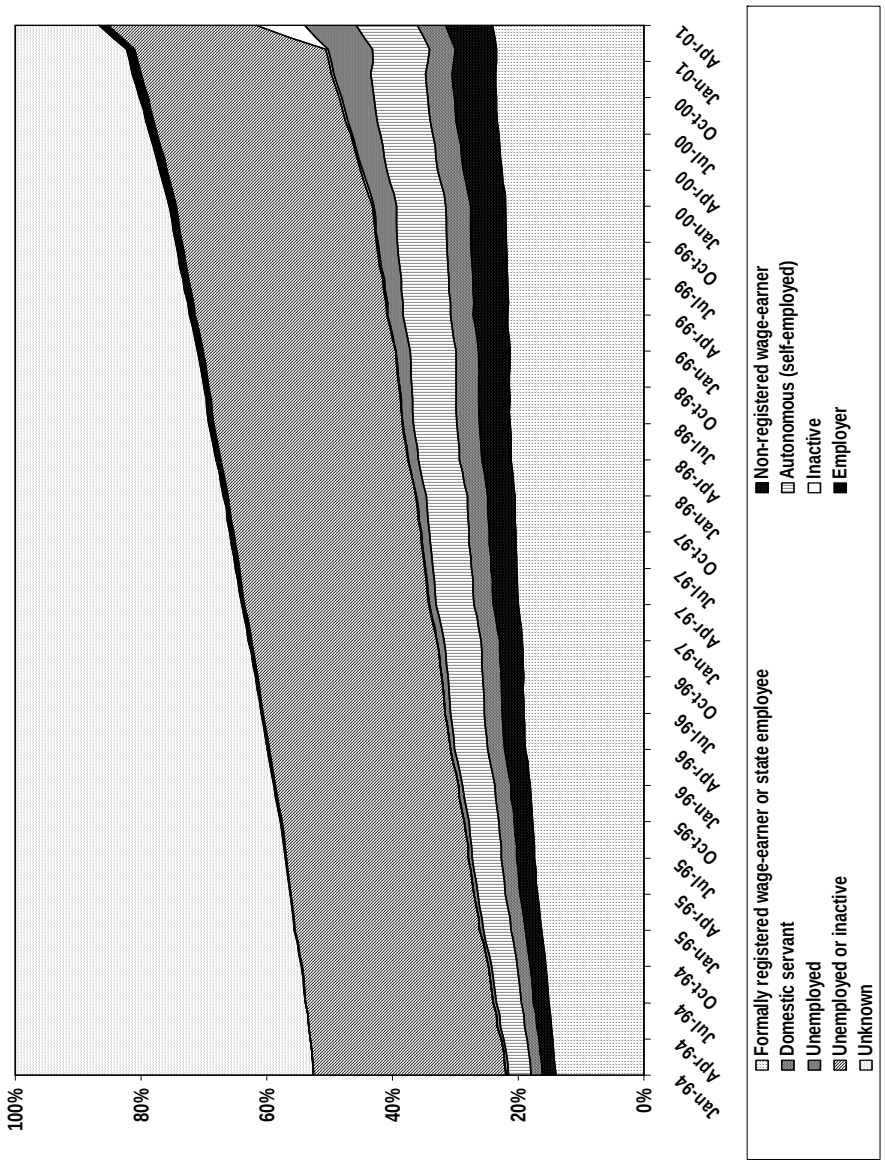
The situation appears quite clearly when we observe (by means of repeated cross-sectional analysis such as the one in Figure 3) the situation in the labor market of the stock of roughly 50 thousand individuals polled in Metropolitan Region of São Paulo (MRSP) from January, 1994, to April, 2001. Here, again, classifying types of labor market situations is a compromise between minimum convergence to support comparison but also sensibility to select a set of grounded classes that capture the specificities of the societal context under observation. In the case of Brazil, we adopted a set of eight different situations: formally registered wage-earner or state employee, non-registered wage-earner, [14] domestic servant, autonomous (self-employed), unemployed, inactive, unemployed or inactive, employer. As long as we prepare the calendar of forms of labor market insertion performed for each individual in each month during the whole period, we realized that, as in the case of Tokyo, a ninth category had to be added to the eight existing classifications – that of " situation unknown." Furthermore, we found it necessary to collect detailed information (as explained at the beginning of this chapter) regarding a set of three occupational events. In São Paulo, however, because occupational transit within certain social groups was extremely intense, this was not enough, for it was possible for an individual to leave as many as three different employment situations over a period of a few months. Figure 3 allows us to observe those intriguing and noteworthy aspects which characterize São Paulo's reality.[15] Unlike figures 1 and 2, the entire group of São Paulo interviewees includes occupied, unemployed and inactive individuals.

In examining the results of successive cross-sections in Figure 3, one feature immediately stands out; namely that its polar figures – typical in a capitalist labor market – are a minority in São Paulo. The conjunction between regular and formally registered and protected wage-earners (making up a maximum of 25% of the cases) and openly unemployed individuals (around 8% of interviewees at any given moment) excludes, on the average, ¾ of interviewees. This pair of categories, unless analytical crucial to portray a capitalist market, is clearly insufficient to describe the situation of the roughly fifty thousand individuals whose positions in the labor market we followed over a period of seven years (1994-2001). Situations often alluded to as "borderline", because they represent a sort of conceptually "gray zone" in the labor market, are numerically much more significant. To take but one example, the Reader may observe, in Figure 3, the broad layer made up (year after year) by individuals who, not being in the situation of "employed", swell the ranks of those who move from unemployment to inactivity; its presence reaches, on the average, 30% of the cases.

It is this type of finding that fuels interest in longitudinal analyses of occupational transitions. In order to document the phenomenon of recurrent unemployment precisely (as previously suggested in Figure 3), and in the same direction of the previous cases of

Paris and Tokyo, we combined a factorial correspondence analysis and a cluster analysis in order to reduce the enormous amount of unique individual trajectories to a smaller group of aggregated occupational trajectories. In earlier analysis (Guimarães, 2004 and 2005), such trajectories were identified, as much for those who, in 2001, when the data was being collected, were in situations of unemployment, as for those who were in situations of occupation and inactivity.

Figure 3
São Paulo: Interviewee Occupational Situation between January, 1994 and April, 2001




Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, April-December 2001.

And what is the most intriguing finding made about the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo? An intense transition between activity and inactivity – and not only between

unemployment and occupation – constituted itself in the most important feature of transitions between occupational situations of the individuals (unemployed, occupied and inactive) whose trajectories were analyzed for the period extending from 1994 to 2001. Table 3, as we did for Paris and Tokyo, present the identified types of occupational trajectories for those who were unemployed.

For two thirds of the cases (no less than 4,549 or 69% of them) no trajectory pattern is identifiable and course in the labor market can not be described, given the small amount of time covered by the sum of the three events investigated. For having transitioned as intensely between situations within the labor market between 1994 and 2001, this causes four out of every seven unemployed individuals to have trajectories of which all that may be said is that no regular pattern can be inferred. Seen as a group, it is slightly more predominantly male, yet balanced insofar as participation by sex and color; with regard to age, it possesses a bi-modal format; a younger sub-group (30% of the cases between 18 and 24) and another, older one (49% of them between 30 and 49); for this very reason, bosses and sons predominate. Educational levels are low and open unemployment takes on the most important form at the time of the interview (63%).

Table 3
Aggregated trajectories (1994-2001) for unemployed interviewees in 2001

| | | Frequency | % (of the total sample) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Types of aggregate trajectories | 1. Intense transitions, unknown trajectory | 4549 | 68.6 |
| | 2. Unemployed | 627 | 9.5 |
| | 3. Unemployed or inactive | 1451 | 21.9 |
| | Total of unemployed | 6627 | 100 |

Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, April-December 2001.

Is it possible to attribute substantive meaning to these findings or should it be interpreted as a simple measurement fail? We would argue that there could be an interpretation that could illuminate the Brazilian case. In the first place, it appears to suggest that the intensity of transitions between labor market situations may well be the norm in the trajectory of these unemployed – and this typifies what we use to conceptualize as "recurring unemployment". Secondly, even where a trajectory pattern is identified according to the three events surveyed, the borderline situation that is located between unemployment and inactivity is also the dominant mark. Its numerical significance makes it the second type of trajectory (roughly 22% of cases). It is typically constituted by females (73% of the cases), mostly by spouses (52%) and marked by a predominance not only of women but of white women. Their educational level is even lower than that of the previous group (it contains more illiterates and in 50% of the cases, the group includes people whose educations were interrupted before they completed fundamental). The most important form of unemployment is "unemployment hidden by discouragement."

If exit from the labor market, as a typical re-occurrence in occupational transitions, appears to be far more common than might be expected, it is not only a specific feature of unemployment experience in Brazil but a more general feature, specifying São Paulo labor market.

## 1.4. Comparing patterns and understanding configurations

Our studies have sought to emphasize the fact that patterns of occupational transition differ markedly, reflecting prevailing employment norms within their various institutional contexts. What, then, is the most analytically intriguing finding in this set of results? In the case of the largest metropolis in South America, the labor market does not demarcate – at least not with the analytical clarity that one might hope for – the borderlines which separate "economic activity" (for which "occupation" and "unemployment" constitute typically alternative situations) from "economic inactivity." In other words, inactivity has ceased to be (in Brazil at least) a one-way phenomenon occurring at the extremes of the occupational trajectory, during precise moments of the worker's life cycle, to wit: upon entry into the labor market (when youths move from a condition of inactivity to activity) and at the final moment of departure (when the elderly move from a condition of activity to inactivity). This is tantamount to saying that moments of entry into and exit from economic activity (i.e., the labor force that offers itself to the market) may be as regular as the movement from employment to unemployment. Consequently, equally probable transitions occur between all three possible individual labor market situations (occupation, unemployment and activity), and not only between the two which are most typical of the ordinary capitalist market (i.e., occupation and unemployment).

Can this be different if we compare São Paulo to other large cities in which distinct regimes of institutionalized employment and unemployment have been established? As previously mentioned, two other empirical studies, equally supported by longitudinal-type methodologies, were conducted in Paris and Tokyo, treating transitions and trajectories during moments of significant expansion of unemployment risk. In them, questionnaires applied to job-seekers at employment agencies also allowed for the identification of aggregated trajectory patterns, inferred from the multiple transitions that individuals had experienced in their labor market histories, during a preceding period.

The question that focuses the comparison precisely upon the point that interests us might be formulated as follows: considering the trajectories of the unemployed in the three large cities, and bearing in mind the flexibility in the use of labor which affects them all, how might we describe the specificity of an unemployment context of the recurring type (such as the Brazilian one) vis-à-vis a long-term unemployment context (like the other two) insofar as the types of trajectories produced by them? Could it possible that there are no differences and that Brazil is a sort of perverse preview of the future which awaits countries in which relatively solid systems of social protection have been established - whether public (as in France) or private (as in Japan) - both of which are currently beset by serious crises? Ought we to endorse hypotheses such as those of Ulrich Beck, who sees the "Brazilianization" of Western societies as a possible consequence of their transformation into "risk" societies (Beck, 2000)?

Seen from this comparative perspective, the realities of the three mega-cities would appear to suggest that, although the instability of occupational trajectories may be intensified, reasoning by model construction is a dangerous analytical strategy in this subject. It is not remotely possible to speak of a "Brazilianization" of those previously protected markets. In the French scenario, with its strong public system, the emerging picture of long-term unemployment (with its possible attendant transitions) unfolds among those who move in so-called atypical work situations, although recurrent inactivity represents no risk whatsoever to the patterns of these trajectories or the borderlines of the labor market. In the Japanese case, the transitions also take place within the labor market where, given the context of relatively reduced (albeit increasing) unemployment, it is likely that they will occur preponderantly between occupational situations, both typical and atypical, and worthy of more in-depth examination. As for the Brazilian case, the residents of São Paulo do not even have an institutional structure at their disposal which might allow them to remain long-lastingly unemployed, nor to experience a wage norm that has generalized a formal, lasting bond as experience; thus, the norm would appear to be the enormous recurrence of transitions. Whereas, during previous times (more specifically up to the 1980s), such transitions were predominantly found in the interior of the labor market (between occupation and unemployment); currently their pattern challenges the boundaries of this very same market, trivializing the exit and entrance movement of economic activity, *pari passu* with the intensification of the transitions between situations within the market which resulted from a greater flexibility of labor relations. In light of the (Japanese) recurrence of jobs, it might be possible to state the (Brazilian) recurrence of unemployment, whether in terms of its form, or its implications, as being irreducible to the type of long-term unemployment that so challenges the architecture of welfare protection regimes in welfare states such as the French one.

Given that diversity in the trajectory patterns of labor markets, how do individuals represent the situations within which they compete? Are there significant variations in their job search patterns and their representations of the difficulties of leaving unemployment? To this we shall dedicate the final part of this text.

## 2. Job-seeking: trajectories and perception

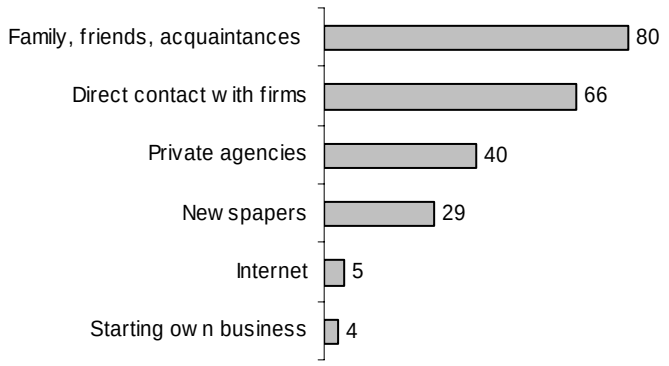
A conclusive argument would point out that, along with the varied market configurations and perceptions regarding labor, it is not only individual trajectories that vary but their representations regarding the search for work as well as patterns by which resources are marshaled to obtain employment, whether dominantly institutionalized mechanisms in employment systems and/or social networks. And, once again, different patterns are revealed in the comparative results obtained in the surveys undertaken in the three large cities. We shall organize such patterns around two themes: first, the mechanisms activated for the job search; second, the perceived difficulties in job seeking.

Investigating the mechanisms used in job-seeking is a particularly sensitive process, depending, on one hand, upon the way in which the employment system is institutionalized and, on the other hand, on how the image of unemployed individuals is normatively constructed. In employment systems in which the pattern of employment longevity is more stable (as is the case in Japan), or in which the normative regulation of

unemployment provides workers with greater protection (as in France), the meaning of unemployment and the conditions under which job-seeking occurs lead to the valorization of job-search mechanisms. This is the opposite of what occurs in Brazil, where the recurrence of transitions is linked to the weak institutionalization of unemployment. More pointedly, we shall now see how the resources marshaled for job-seeking are equivalent in three large cities, although they depend upon the context of the job search which, in turn, is determined by the configuration of the employment system and the forms of institutional recognition of unemployment.

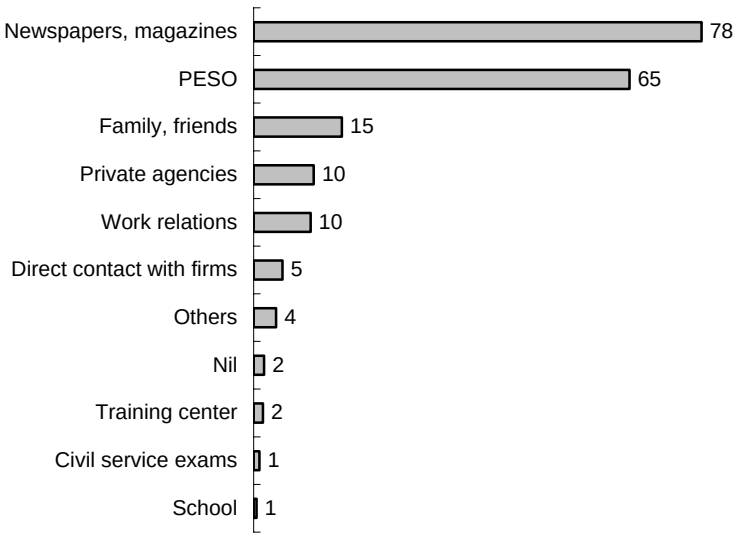
The diversity of resources marshaled by job seeking seems quite significant. In São Paulo the most frequently preferred mechanisms are the social networks (particularly strong ties with family groups and close friends, as understood by Granovetter, 1973), and the individual effort of direct contact with companies. In Tokyo, available public resources and individual efforts of job seeking directly at companies are the tactics most resorted to (newspapers, magazines and the public employment system). In the Paris-Île de France region, as much as in metropolitan São Paulo, individual prospecting of open market opportunities would appear to be the outstanding means. Nonetheless, differently from this, direct search at companies is first done with the support of the public system (ANPE). It should be noted that stronger and weaker social ties are equally marshaled, Brazil once again being the exception, where the prominent strategy is resorting to relatives and close friends.

Figure 4
Job search mechanisms in São Paulo



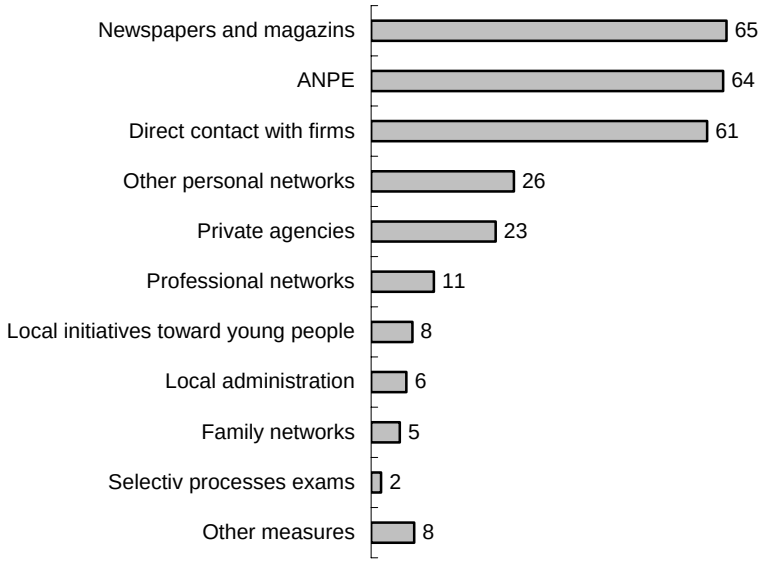

Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, 2001. Multiple response.

Figure 5
Job search mechanisms in Tokyo




Source: Survey research in agencies of the PESO system, August, 2001, Tokyo. Multiple response.

Figure 6
Job search mechanisms in Paris




Source: Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, DARES, Data basis TDE "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi". Multiple response.

In the metropolitan regions of São Paulo and Tokyo, we shall advance a bit further and investigate individual perceptions of the search mechanisms that allowed job seekers to find work. Personal networks and individual market prospecting through contact with the companies were considered the most effective tactics by Brazilian interviewees; this was as true for those who used private search mechanisms exclusively as it was for those who combined public and private mechanisms. Private employment agencies (often mentioned as a resource) were not considered effective mechanisms for obtaining work. In Japan, social networks (which ranked low among the most frequently activated search mechanisms) appear to be efficient resources for obtaining work, although public mechanisms (such as newspapers and magazines, PESO system agencies and schools) are, once again, more prominent; unlike Brazil, direct prospecting is not considered terribly effective.

Table 4
Tokyo: Mechanisms considered effective in obtaining work

| Effective resources | % |
|---|---|
| Newspapers, magazines | 25.6 |
| Direct contact with companies | 7.2 |
| Relatives and friends | 16.9 |
| Work colleagues | 6.8 |
| Private employment agencies | 1.8 |
| Civil service exams | 0.6 |
| School | 13.4 |
| Training centers | 0.5 |
| Public employment agencies | 15.7 |
| Others | 3.3 |
| None | 8.2 |
| Total | 100.0 |

Source: Survey research in agencies of the PESO system, August, 2001, Tokyo.

Table 5
São Paulo: Mechanisms considered effective in obtaining employment

| Type of resource used | Effective resources | % |
|---|---|---|
| Activated Only Private Search Mechanisms | *Total* | *75.2* |
| | Newspaper ads | 2.0 |
| | Private agencies | 3.3 |
| | Relative, Friend, Acquaintance | 36.0 |
| | Directly at Company | 25.0 |
| | Other | 8.9 |
| Activated Public and Private Search Mechanisms | *Total* | *20.1* |
| | Relative, Friend, Acquaintance | 8.0 |
| | Directly at Company | 6.4 |
| | Other Private Mechanisms | 2.4 |
| | Public Mechanisms | (*) |
| | Other | 2.2 |
| Activated Only Public Search Mechanisms | | (*) |
| Activated no search mechanism | | 4.5 |
| Total | | 100 |

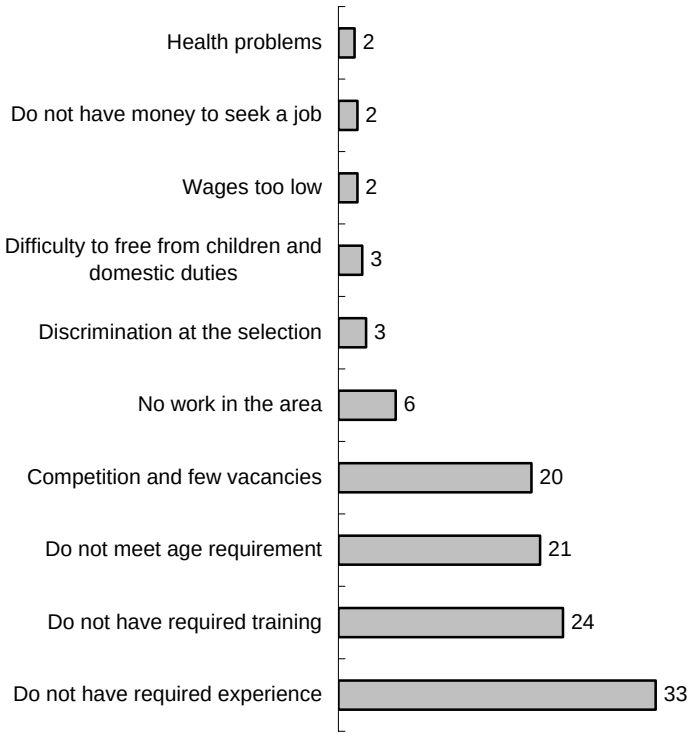
Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, 2001.

(*) The sample does not allow for disaggregation in this category.

There is a great deal to be said of individual perceptions of obstacles to finding gainful employment. Evidently, in a city as large as São Paulo, where short-lasting previous employment situations are the norm and there is intense recurrence, such perceptions will surely be distinct from cities in which it is the long duration of previous employment situations that typifies the job seeker's employment history.[16] Market competition conditions (whether resulting from a shortage of opportunities or from any discrepancy between employee profiles as expected by employers and the characteristics of the unemployed worker) are among those that stand out most clearly in the case of São Paulo.

Figure 7

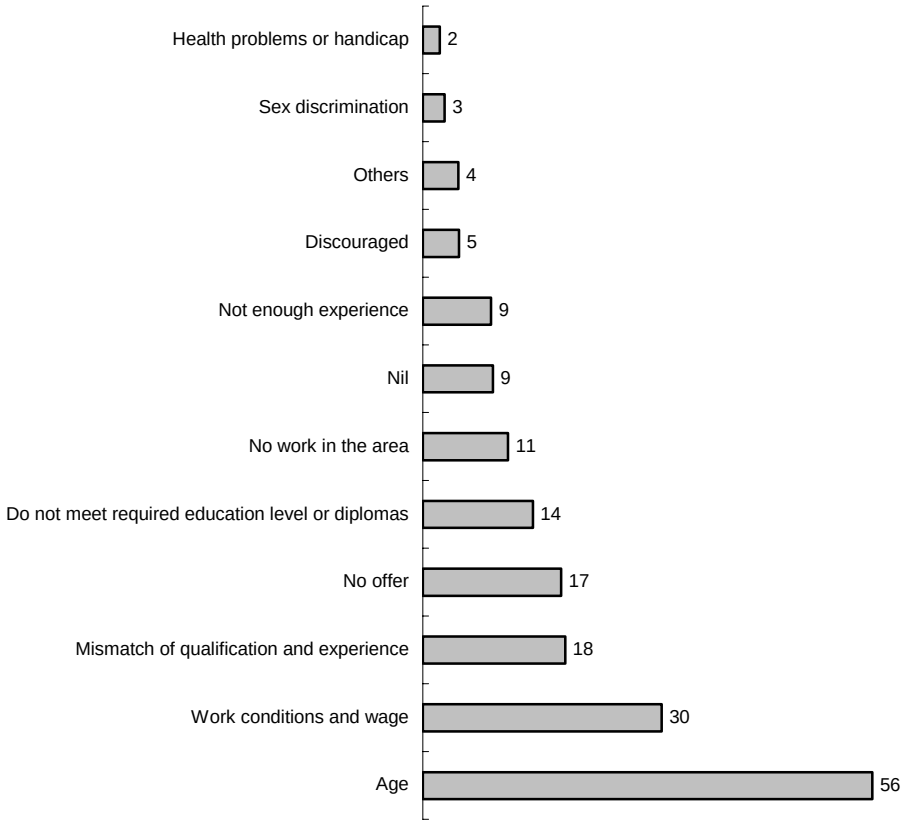
São Paulo: Principal difficulties in job searching




Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, 2001. Multiple response.

Insofar as Tokyo's metropolitan region is concerned, obstacles to obtaining employment differ somewhat and include age-inappropriateness to company requirements (56%) as well as working conditions that are unacceptable to the job seekers (30 %). These two are, by far, the most significant difficulties; the absence of available positions (17%) and inadequate qualification or experience (18%) come next; followed by a third order of factors pertaining to inadequate educational background (14%) and job shortages within the search region (11%).

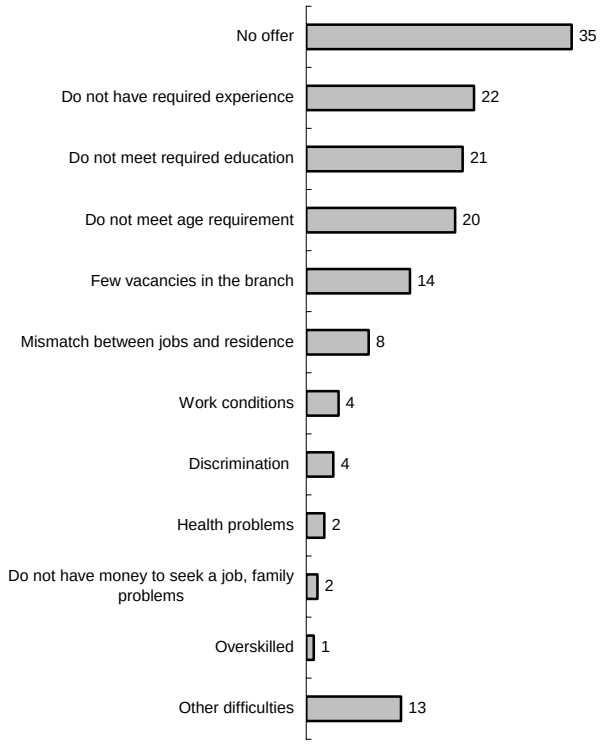
Figure 8
Tokyo: Principal difficulties in job seeking




Source: Survey research in agencies of the PESO system, August, 2001, Tokyo. Multiple response.

In the Paris scenario, perceptions regarding the difficulty of obtaining employment point to factors strongly associated to the workings of the market. The most important of these is the absence of openings (mentioned by 4 out of every 10 interviewees); if we associate to this a strong perception that there is a shortage of openings in the interviewee's professional field specifically, it becomes obvious that a dearth of opportunity was overwhelmingly the factor challenging this particular group of unemployed individuals. Given recruitment policy preferences, whether stemming from lack of experience (22%), from inadequate educational backgrounds (21%) or from age-inappropriateness (20%), it was closely followed by a group of factors associated to difficulties in market inclusion. There can be no doubt that the overall picture is quite distinct from the one previously described in the Japanese scenario.

Figure 9
Paris: Principal difficulties in job seeking

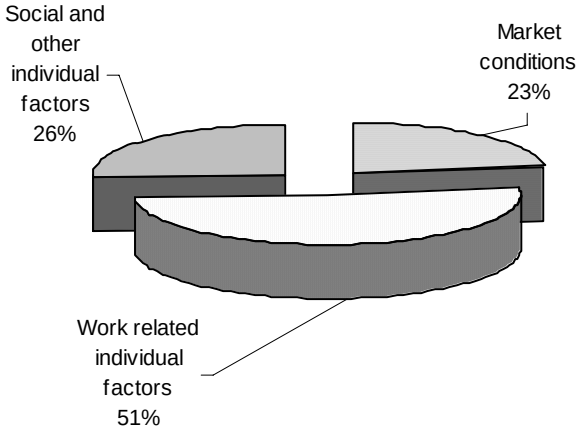



Source: Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, DARES, Data basis TDE "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi". Multiple response.

When one organizes the information differently, it is possible to see how perception of what is considered "difficulty" varies. In order to make this clear, we grouped the above-mentioned factors into three principal orders according to their link with the operation of the market: those which reflected difficulties in offering work opportunities; those that reflected inappropriateness with regard to the worker's professional profile (qualification and experience); and those which reflected the importance of other features, attributes of the worker that (dis)qualified him/her from competing in the market (age, sex, physical health, etc.). Are opportunities, qualifications or other attributes the dominant barriers in the access to employment?

In so doing, it is possible to see how, in the case of metropolitan São Paulo, individual vulnerability regarding competition within the market is much more evident and generalized. The problem of an inappropriate professional profile is perceived by São Paulo residents to be by far the most serious (53%) problem; followed by the shortage of opportunities (23%); the latter perception is certainly based on actual fact, for the survey was conducted during a crisis period of acute unemployment. Yet this was also verifiable in Japan, where such a perception was much lower (16%).

Figure 10
São Paulo: Opportunities, qualifications or attributes?

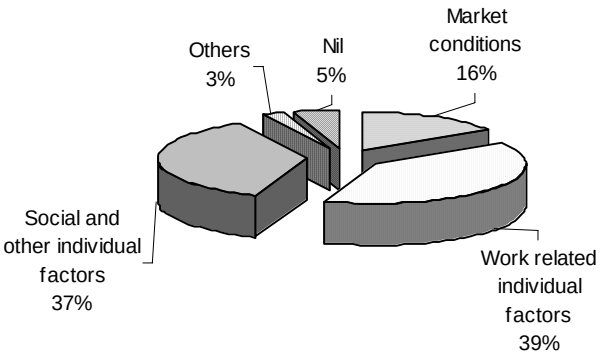



Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, 2001. Multiple response.

In Tokyo, it is the barrier that stems from other attributes (in this case, inappropriate age), that disqualifies the worker for a given job position as much as the inadequacy of his/her professional profile of qualification and experience (39%).

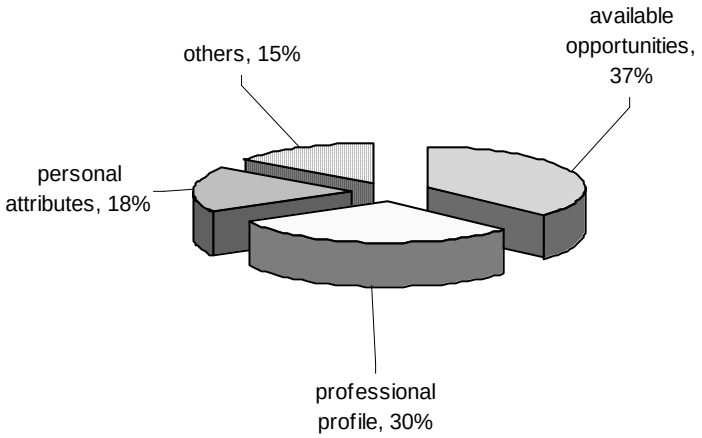
In the case of São Paulo, seven out of every ten workers understand that it is the adversity of the market, as expressed through competition for scarce positions and the hurdles that prevent access to available ones given inadequate profiles of qualification and experience. And if there are other important characteristics, they are far less so than in the Japanese scenario, in which nearly four out of every ten workers complain that employers do not sufficiently value their qualifications, and pointedly consider advanced age as an obstacle.

Figure 11
Tokyo: Opportunities, qualifications or attributes?




Source: Survey research in agencies of the PESO system, August, 2001, Tokyo. Multiple response.

Figure 12
Paris – Île de France: Opportunities, qualifications or attributes?




Source: Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, DARES, Data basis TDE "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi".

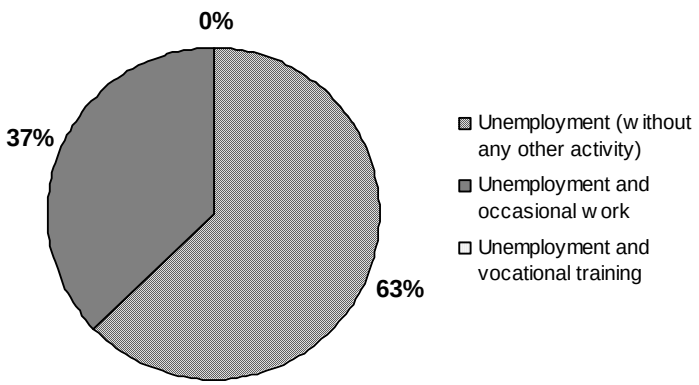
In the case of Paris – Île de France, it is the situation of the labor market, then the inadequacy of professional profile which are perceived as major obstacles.

Thus the contexts within which employment is sought significantly influence both the resources that are marshaled in order to locate opportunities, and the difficulties experienced during the search. In closing, it is not without reason that the dominant situations of the unemployed may vary greatly from one metropolis to another, as evinced by the final statistics for Paris and São Paulo. In the former case, the search for employment may have taken place within a situation of open unemployment that was typical for 8 out of 10 French job-seekers. Remaining for increased periods of time (and in such high numbers) in a situation in which only the search for work has a place – and where work (albeit temporary work) is infrequently to be found – is only possible when a system of institutionalized unemployment relocates the worker into the sphere of public support. They are unemployed – both self-recognizably and institutionally recognized as such – and, for this very reason, supported by the public employment system.

Figure 13
Paris: Strongly institutionalized unemployment

Source: Ministère de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité, DARES, Data basis TDE "Trajectoires des demandeurs d'emploi".

Figure 14
São Paulo: Mildly institutionalized unemployment




Source: CEM, PED supplementary questionnaire on "Occupational Mobility", São Paulo, 2001. Multiple response.

In the following chapter we shall intensify our analysis of perceptions and representations in a detailed investigation of individual discourses regarding the unemployment experience as provided by a selected set of extensive biographical interviews. Those we have been analyzing here, departing from their institutional classification as "unemployed" will then be called to express themselves by means of their

own categories and discursive constructions. Understood here as a highly significant experience over the course of a long-term trajectory, and interpreted in terms of the convergence of individual patterns into aggregated (and representative) destinies, unemployment will be examined from other perspectives (both subjective and discursive).

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## Notes

[1] My thanks to Paulo Henrique da Silva and Marcus Farbelow for their support in the preparation and processing of the data presented herein. The analyses in this chapter have also benefited from discussions with and suggestions from Kurumi Sugita and Maria-Teresa Pignoni.
[2] This survey was designed and conducted by DARES.
[2] *Shokugyô antei sho*.
[3] Evidence gathered using PED data bases showed that, every 12 months, roughly ¾ of Sao Paulo labor force changes jobs within the metropolitan labor market (Guimarães, 2003).
[4] This proved to be valid in the pre-test.
[5] See Demazière (1995, 1995-a), Demazière and Dubar ( 1987), Freyssinet (1984 and 1997), Friot and Rose (1996), Gautié (2003), Maruani (2002) among others.
[6] The so-called CDI ("contract à durée indeterminé").
[7] According to its operational definition, recurrent unemployed is the one who fills two main characteristics: (1) had a previous job experience before enrolling for the first time ANPE (before April-June 1995) and (2) has had at least two unemployment experiences during the research period.
[8] CDD means "contract à durée determiné", fixed term contracts.
[9] Departing from a matrix of 1694x13x35 positions, factor analysis summarizes patterns and cluster analysis identifies the groups performing those patterns.
[10] Despite the fact that the Japanese survey provided information for 11 years (1990 to 2001), we decided to base comparisons on a compatible time frame; because the French survey covered the period 1995-1998 and Brazil's information referred to the period extending from 1994 to 2001, we reduced the scope of the Japanese data to a similar period, and adopted 1994-2001 as our timeline boundaries.
[11] At that point in time, the disintegration of the main functions of an employment system (intermediation, vocational training and benefit) was so visible that it was possible to collect insurance benefits without officially registering with the intermediation system, a fact which allowed individuals to remain virtually invisible to public employment agencies.
[12] For a more detailed description of these new unemployment trends, see Guimarães (2003), especially chapters 3 (by Montagner) and 4 (by Guimarães, Hirata, Montagner and Watanabe).
[13] In Brazil, non-registered wage-earners are workers without formal (registered) work contracts ("*sem carteira assinada*").
[14] Since PED methodology considers individuals aged 10 years and older as active, the supplementary questionnaire used in Sao Paulo had to restrict itself to respondents who were at least 16 years old in 2001, seeing as only they would have an occupational history that might possibly extend as far back as 1994, the starting point of our retrospective survey.
[16] In metropolitan São Paulo, six out of every ten interviewees had spent less than a year in their previous jobs, and three out of ten had not succeeded in remaining employed for even three months. The exact opposite occurs in Tokyo, where the employment situation of six out of every ten unemployed workers had lasted three years or more; for four out of ten, this duration extended for more than a decade; and only one out of ten had been employed for a period of less than one year.

# Chapter 4

# Unemployment as a Biographical Experience

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The aim of this chapter is to account for the ways that unemployed persons live their experience. More exactly, it is an effort to grasp that experience and clarify their interpretations and definitions of the situation. That is what is behind the notion of biographical experience here: stressing the need to comprehend the meanings people attribute to their situations as they are going through them, rather than describing their living conditions, though these cannot be completely left aside, since they influence people's interpretations.

A tradition of sociological research that goes back to the 1930s (Lazarsfeld *et al.*, 1932) has constantly pointed out the diversity of reactions in the face of job deprivation and the consequent differences in the life stories of the persons concerned. In this sense, the category of unemployment – which differs from professional activity in that it implies being deprived of that activity, and from professional inactivity in that it implies actively seeking employment – can sustain a variety of interpretations: the people categorized as unemployed attribute various significations to their own situation and adhere to different sorts of identifications. Since sociologists invariably propose typologies, each type of interpretation is a variant of the "correct" way of being unemployed in a given society, and indicates the degree of approximation separating the person from that reference, or norm.

Our analysis is based on a different hypothesis: the diversity of the experiences of unemployment described does not express how near or far the "virtuous" unemployed person is from the social norm. This diversity is rather a sign of the radically problematic nature of the situation, which forces those living it to improvise solutions outside the

institutional programs (Douglas, 1986). This way of seeing the question is based on the fact that unemployment tends to lose its institutionalized significance, because the program that sustains it (*i.e.* a quick exit from temporary job loss made even quicker by an active job search) is not working well any more. Individuals can therefore no longer find sufficient resources in that rationale to make their situation meaningful. They must work out their own interpretation and invent new meanings.

The reason for this state of affairs is that unemployment is markedly different from both inactivity and employment. These two can be considered as social status. In contrast, unemployment is a problematic situation rather than a social status (Schnapper, 1989): it is by definition transitory and thus of necessity must cease. It also bears the stamp of deprivation and can only be defined by the negative, is deemed inferior and demands reparation, is affected by devaluation and calls for a change. Thus, being unemployed *ipso facto* means being turned towards the exit, and commanded to find a way out. Becoming unemployed means wanting to be unemployed no longer, having to stop being unemployed. No social obligation or inner pressures characterize the opposite situations represented by employment and inactivity. For contrary to these, unemployment is not a reference. This is exactly why it poses a problem.

This characteristic is widely shared by the three countries examined here, because in each, work – understood as the paid participation in the production of goods and services – is the main lever in the distribution of wealth, albeit the codifications of labor relations and workers' rights and benefits are very disparate.

At the same time, current labor laws in France, Japan and Brazil are quite different, whether we look at the typical work contract, the range of forms of legal contracts, the relative importance of atypical contracts, the spreading of formal labor relations, etc. Such diversity is no less prevalent in the legal categorizations of unemployment, among the institutions responsible for handling it, in defining the system of indemnities and assistance for those who have lost their job, in a word, in the construction of a social status for the unemployed, together with rights and obligations.

On this score, if one sets out to evaluate to what extent unemployment has been institutionalized – by the existence of unemployment insurance schemes, the number of mechanisms in place to help a person get back to work, the readiness to register in an employment agency or the networks of social protection – it seems clear, as we have already pointed out, that Brazil is where such an institutionalization of unemployment is the feeblest, and in France – where unemployment has durably settled – that it is the strongest and most ancient, while it is more recent and less developed in Japan. But even in the French case, such considerable institutionalization implies a fragile and problematic situation for the unemployed, a fact that is even more pronounced in the other two countries.

For indeed, support and protection are granted for only limited and shorter and shorter periods of time, compensation systems are deteriorating both from the point of view of the sums allocated and of their duration, accessing the mechanisms of aid and assistance are invariably selective, controls and penalties are getting more severe. The trend over the past decades has always gone in the same direction: administrative action for the unemployed has included a larger and larger degree of control and the legitimacy it

derives from that control has been reduced proportionally to the financial costs incurred for the national and local communities. Therefore, even in the context presenting the most favorable conditions for the unemployed, being out of work remains marked by a series of salient traits that are not equivalent to a real status: the unemployed person's condition is defined negatively, it appears inferior and worthless, affords only conditional rights while multiplying obligations, is subject to a social and moral control; it is a shaky situation and whatever benefit one derives from it can be cancelled by an administrative stroke of the pen (Demazière, 2003).

A major consequence of the problematic nature of being unemployed is that it implies the individuals concerned must involve themselves in specific occupations intended to find a way out of the situation, *i.e.* to invent a new future, project oneself into a different situation, into employment.

For that reason, the job search is the key factor in being unemployed for it is only by obtaining employment that one can escape unemployment. The job search is also at the heart of the representations characterizing unemployment: *looking* for work is generally considered more apposite to the state of being unemployed than not *having* work. It is more or less institutionalized according to the social context, but is nearly always part of the exchange systems involving the unemployed, as the counterpart of the compensations they receive, an inescapable obligation.

The fact that looking for work is crucial is not devoid of paradox since everyone knows that in spite of the proverb, it is not enough to search in order to find. For proof we need only refer to several statistical studies that demonstrate the relationship between the intensity of the search and the speed with which unemployment becomes a thing of the past, or to the many interviews carried out with unemployed people whose period of unemployment stretched out inexorably even as they told of the many steps they took to come out of it as quickly as possible, or yet again the number of books written by the unemployed, testifying to the obstacles they encounter and their repeatedly thwarted attempts to get a job.

In this sense, the job search is not only a rational investment in a strategy to end the period of unemployment, but also a magic symbol meant to reduce the insecurity that brands all unemployment. By searching, one is simply proving that one is not a prisoner of unemployment, that it is but a transitory state, meaning that insecurity can be exorcized.

More than a way of living a social status, the experience of unemployment means confronting that uncertainty, and leads one to develop ways of getting rid of it. Looking for work is one of its most obvious manifestations. This point of view echoes the conclusions of other investigations, which repeatedly bring home the fact that unemployment is a private and personal tragedy, destabilizing identities, breeding guilt and upsetting one's world-view, and which, on top of all the foregoing, distends social links, throws one's life off balance, disrupts established solidarities, and leads in many cases to disaffiliation (Ledrut, 1966; Schnapper, 1981; Castel, 1995).

The accumulation of concurring results, at least in France where the sociology of unemployment has considerably developed over the last two decades, is quite remarkable (Demazière, 1995). Still, the trails blazed by a conceptualization in terms of ordeal have not all been explored as yet. For an ordeal does not only mean having being caught

unawares by a brutal and unexpected occurrence, nor only imply the series of misfortunes that bog down individual lives. An ordeal is also the obstacles in people's way, hampering their progress, throwing them off their course, which they must overcome, pass over, circumvent. In that sense, unemployment is not only a traumatic experience, even if typically it is that for sure. It is also a test implying action, *i.e.* implementing acts that might correct, repair, withstand the situation, of which the job search is doubtless the most obvious example. To put it more precisely, this ordeal is a complex process, made of the unemployed person's initiatives, meeting others, leaving oneself open to self-exposure, to confrontations with the judgments of others; it is, in other words, a series of trials which may appear more or less minor and harmless, but during which the employability of the unemployed person is being played out over and over again.

The phenomenon thus possesses a meaning, or more exactly a double meaning, since it spreads out in a certain direction that becomes clear little by little and may (or may not) approximate employment, and since it takes on meanings that also transpire more or less rapidly. Depending on the direction and signification it is given, the job search will occupy a different position, either central or marginal, and other reactions may also be observed. In all cases, however, unemployment may be considered as the locus of a biographical elaboration, both reflexive, because it mobilizes the relation between a subject and his or her experiences, and relational, because it is linked to the actions of others.

That is the biographical experience we wish to explore here. Our hypothesis is that this experience is wrought of insecurity, instability, uncertainty, and that these elements must be limited, contained, reduced. According to the society considered, various institutions, regulations, mechanisms, contribute to the process and play the role of shock absorber. But that does not erase the insecurity that in any case remains the crucial part of the experience of being jobless, dialectically connected to acts of revolt and resistance. Thus – and that is one of the consequences of our hypothesis – the biographical experience of unemployment is frought with tension and ambivalence, as may be seen in the biographical interviews carried out with unemployed persons.

To explore the unemployment experience, we carried out surveys by in-depth interviews with about one hundred unemployed persons in each of the three selected metropolitan areas. We will start by describing the conditions that prevailed during each survey, the methodological decisions that were taken and the protocols governing the way the biographical interviews were then exploited. Three parts follow for each country, in which we show how the diversity of interpretations of unemployment is clearly discernable in the interviews, as is also the shambles the situation has become, besieged as it is with conflicting and contradictory meanings. In a fifth part we will explore the proximity and the distance between the results obtained for each country and suggest a theoretical interpretation concerning the concepts of configuration and basic social relations.

## 1. Methods: interviewing the unemployed

Though carrying out surveys on unemployment by in-depth interviewing is far more common in France than launching a questionnaire, the same cannot be said for Brazil and Japan. Such differences in ways of doing research bear the stamp of specific scientific

dynamics and of the intellectual and institutional histories of sociology in each context. For instance, the survey method has been dominant in sociological investigations in Japan, where very little fieldwork using the type of interviewing we adopted here has been done in that discipline. In Brazil, though in-depth interviewing was current in sociology as early as the 1960s, less attention is given to the status of people's words and to linguistic data generally, compared to France. But these differences in research also translate the discrepancies that affect the place occupied by unemployment in each society. In France for example, the persistence of a high rate of unemployment over several decades, together with a high level of institutionalization (despite the fact that the cracks in the edifice are widening), has led to the development of approaches aiming to get to the bottom of its subjective significations. For in this country, unemployment has become such a common experience that there is no absolute rupture, on a personal experience level, between the employed persons (who might become unemployed, or who may have been unemployed) and the unemployed persons. In a society based on salaried employment and riddled with unemployment, the latter has been analyzed on the personal level as being an ordeal that breaks with the common human condition, as an experience marked by insecurity and thus discriminating with respect to the security that was typically a part of salaried employment (though henceforth less and less assured).

We can explain our choice to conduct surveys through in-depth biographical interviews with unemployed persons in France as well as in Japan and Brazil by the fact that the insecurity hypothesis, and even more so the uncertainty hypothesis, combined with unemployment, appear to be something quite general, even though each national context displays different ways of managing, answering and confronting that uncertainty. This, then, invites us to explore the biographical experiences of the persons faced with the loss of their professional activity in order to apprehend the meanings they confer to that dilemma. At the same time, the biographical interview method must be implemented following particular modalities, because speaking about oneself and expressing what one is going through, especially the most difficult moments, have a different status validity and significance in each of the three countries. It is therefore necessary to clarify the methods we applied and describe the surveys we carried out in detail.

## 1.1. The status of words: interpretations or representations?

In-depth biographical interviewing authorizes the collection of speech that, contrary to data gathered by questionnaire, is often characterized as being freer, *i.e.* less corseted and constrained by a yoke of directive and endless questions; more open, *i.e.* less standardized and more dependent on a relationship of trust between interviewer and interviewee; deeper, *i.e.* less superficial as the result of an ever-more introspective, reflexive course; more heterogeneous too, *i.e.* more uneven, reflecting each interviewee's specific mode of expression.

The comparison is pertinent so long as we do not allow it to fuel the temptation to classify and organize the different methods according to a hierarchy, either to vaunt the richer nature of the material contained in the interviews and its capacity to give us more insight into the phenomena under study, or on the contrary, to deplore its more subjective nature and the biases it introduces with respect to the same phenomena. On the other

hand, a comparison does show that the biographical interview method, particularly when it is most open and in-depth, thus less guided by a detailed grid, corresponds to specific objectives: to describe the itineraries and situations of the unemployed, not by applying predefined research categories, but by informing those itineraries and situations with the categories proposed by the unemployed persons themselves, the ordinary or indigenous categories that they themselves use to interpret and make sense of what they are experiencing.

In order to better apprehend what such interviews contribute to our questioning, we must go still one step further and characterize the linguistic data they provide, we must specify the value and epistemological status of the *parole* produced, and indicate how and in what way the words of unemployed persons speaking about themselves have a heuristic value.

People telling a researcher about their life can be considered as subjects expressing their convictions, beliefs and "definitions of true-to-life situations." This means that an interview can never deliver the facts exactly as they occurred (no more than a questionnaire, which by means of the question-and-answer method is in fact picking and choosing among them); the interview is an account of experiences as produced by the speaker. The account itself is – how could it be otherwise? – partial and incomplete. For no one can completely describe their itinerary, even if only its professional dimension, not only because the number of episodes and details of how they occurred dissuade any effort at reproducing or describing them completely but also because each can be rendered from a multitude of points of view. The discourse collected is therefore naturally deformed and unfaithful with respect to the way the events recounted by the interviewee actually took place.

Not only is a faithful rendition impossible, it is also an illusion, because a second source of deformation exists: the speakers themselves pick and choose the information they supply, since there is no closed and directive questionnaire to do it (*i.e.* by asking the same questions of all the interviewees), and above all because picking and choosing is necessary to produce meaning. For telling the tale means making sense of the world one lives in, past and present, the world one believes in, which is also "one's universe" (Berger, Luckmann, 1966). Telling about one's itinerary means talking about certain situations one has experienced and keeping silent about others; it means mentioning certain personal events and leaving others unsaid.

It is through this series of choices and how the episodes are strung together (an organization in which the interviewer inevitably participates by his/her attitudes and follow-up questions), that the itinerary progressively takes on direction and meaning.

The story told is personal, not only because it is autobiographical, but because it is a statement about what has happened, a specific appropriation. It is not an objective or faithful account, using impersonal categories, it includes a "seeing as how," a "given that." The subject composes an itinerary and embroiders on his or her biography, telling one of several possible tales, using the ingredients that made up the events he or she remembers living. The narrative is therefore an ephemeral reconstruction that may vary depending on the conditions of enunciation, new experiences, or when the retrospective glance is asked

for. It is a temporary crystallization of the ongoing production of his or her own history, produced in precise and given circumstances.

Against this background, the subjectivity of discourse is not like a curtain hiding the entrance to a past reality; it is rather the opposite, a means of getting there. For the way a subject is involved in his/her discourse, the interviewee's implication in the interview, are two conditions that found the heuristic value of their utterance. It is even necessary to go one step further and reject the posture that attempts to establish the degree of authenticity or deformation of a biographical account with respect to "facts" as they really occurred. That makes no sense unless one conceives of discourse as being the traces of representations bearing on such and such a facet of "reality," the labor market, for example. But giving such discourse the status of a representation is tantamount to according greater importance to the descriptive or informative function of language, as representing a reality that pre-exists independently of the way it is categorized. From that perspective, language always injects opacity and uncertainty, since one can never be certain that what is being said corresponds to what actually happened. One then becomes prisoner of a moot question, which must logically lead to doing away with the method of face-to-face interviewing.

But the role of language can also be defined in other ways. Language possesses a paradigmatic function, consisting in giving rise to a universe, categorizing it and assuming ownership for it. In this perspective, it is no longer a matter of evaluating the fidelity of a narrative compared to "facts," but of comprehending the logic of its production, its internal coherence (and contradictions), its social significance. Seen in that way, language is "a process whereby the real becomes a 'milieu' in the unity and plurality of its meaningful activity" (Cassirer, 1923). It is, of course, a system of signs, a "chain of symbols," but it is also and especially "a shaping activity," a matrix for the "production of different forms of conceptions of Self and the World" (*idem*). In other words, what belongs to the realm of society takes shape in and through language and it is through the word (*parole*) that human subjects become social beings by appropriating those forms. Language is no longer considered here merely as a vehicle for a more or less faithful description of "external" facts, but as a way of building a universe.

That is the perspective with which we planned the interviews carried out with the unemployed. During the interview, each person was to take stock of his or her professional life, personal situation and itinerary and produce a narrative implying transactions with oneself (who am I exactly or who can I claim to be?) and with the significant others, past or present (who do they say I am or could be?). The interviews do not insist on the descriptive or chronological restitution of what actually took place. For telling the tale means making things coherent, discovering the plot of one's professional itinerary, producing its meaning.

The interviews are meant to lead the subjects to tell about their itineraries as well as about their circle of relations and their environment. The subjective meaning in question here is thus elaborated at the crossroads of their biography (more or less affected by unemployment) and the labor market (more or less marked by unemployment). The interviews aimed to explore the frames of reference related to work and employment, acquired during their previous itineraries and through the individuals' relational networks:

what, for them, really constitutes work, what is an employment, a good job, what is an opportunity, what is a dead end? In short, what are the symbolic conceptions at the root of the decoding and encoding of the environment (transformed as it is by the arrival of unemployment), how are the episodes of their professional biographies justified, explained and discussed, what are their views on the professional world, their beliefs concerning the way the labor market operates and the norms that prevail there?

The discourses collected are the narrative of experiences that the speaker has reworked (with the help of the interviewer) in order to describe, evaluate and interpret them, and in so doing produce the meaning of the itinerary and the definition of the situation. We will therefore attempt to identify the terms that were used (*unemployed* or others), the way they were qualified (*almost, quasi, somewhat, partly* …), the meanings they were given (*looking for work*, *despair*, *opportunity* …), what articulations were implied (*going from bad to worse, following through with a project, changing horse in mid-stream*…).

Naturally, such questions cannot be directly put; they are research scholars' questions formulated in the theoretical terms specific to scientific research. But those are the questions that lurk beneath the interviews bearing on people's real-life situations, on their very concrete experiences. The interest of practicing in-depth and open-ended interviews is precisely that they allow people to tell their story (or parts of it) by selecting what *they* consider important, connecting the events as they see fit, arguing to discover the meaning of it all, in short, producing interpretations by expressing their preferences, their beliefs and their opinions concerning their own history.

## 1.2. Which unemployed persons should be interviewed? Defining the significant groups

The populations affected by unemployment do not make up a single social category, for though the probability of becoming unemployed varies considerably according to the level of education, professional training and status, age, sex, ethnic attributes, etc., it is still true that unemployment affects all the different categories. This fluctuates according to the country being considered and inequality in the face of unemployment also varies in each, but in every case, the unemployed make up a multifarious ensemble, as we have seen above. This characteristic raises difficulties when carrying out a survey by interviews, because it is difficult to make room for such diversity in a small sample.

To reduce that dispersion, we decided to focus on a small number of specific categories. They were defined in such a way as to take into account a certain number of variables which, in the three countries, stood out in the basic statistics concerning the rate of unemployment, its duration, and the rate of finding employment as factors of variation. Thus, given the importance of variables such as gender, age and professional category in the selectivity caused by mass unemployment and by the forms of employment, and in the processes of identifying unemployment, we gave precedence to these criteria in order to target four sub-populations, defined around combinations of traits that specify their position in gender relations, life cycles, and the division of labor:

- Youth: young men and women recently out of school and whose training exposes them to recurrent difficulties when trying to integrate the working world.

- Women with children living alone or in couples but having quit their job to raise their child(ren) and actively looking to work again or more intensively in their field.
- Stable industrial workers aged 45 to 50, heads of household confronted by a crisis in their sector implying the loss of numerous jobs.
- Middle-class men and women having worked in the service industries in middle management capacities, who had experienced upward mobility but whose careers were interrupted by changes in the norms of job management.

These definitions were readjusted and adapted to each country, particularly because in each there are important differences in terms of school levels, the stability of professional itineraries, and the cycle of female activity (See the Appendix for specific tables concerning each of the three countries). Seventy-eight interviews were conducted in France, 112 in Japan, and 60 in Brazil, where the individuals were questioned twice at one-year intervals. Each target group represented 25% of the sample.

## 1.3. Carrying out an interview and its implementation in the field

The aim of the interviews was to listen to the unemployed in such a way as to grasp what they think of their itinerary and what lessons they have learned from it. That sort of objective supposes active cooperation and involvement in the interactive process on the part of the interviewee. For it is not a matter of answering a list of preordained questions, but of being able to produce a narrative, a story, irreducible simply to one's curriculum vitae or to the information contained in the file of an employment agency. But why should one talk about one's situation when it is depreciated and belittling, as is the case with unemployment? Why should one talk to strangers anyway, who calls themselves sociologists but may just as well have been sent by some official organization? How can one be sure that what one is going to say will remain confidential and not be turned against one? The unemployed person requested for an interview wonders about all these points and others too which, though they represent methodological problems for the sociologist, are of vital concern to them. The question is therefore how to do things in such a way as to allow an indispensable climate of trust to be created, in a relationship whose obvious inequality is clear for all to see.

These questions directly influence not only how an interview will unfold but also the first contacts and how the contract of communication will first be established. That first contact is the moment when the representations and beliefs of the two interlocutors concerning what is at stake in the interview and its objectives are formed. A multiplicity of questions crops up here. How can one be sure that the objective of the research has been well explained and understood and that the agreement is sincere? How is one to present the significance of the interview and the use that will be made of it? Should one mention the use of the tape-recorder? How is one to justify the choice of interviewee (why did we not pick somebody else)?

Each interviewer was equipped to present the survey as concretely as possible, precisely in view of that first contact, to be able to answer any questions the interviewee might have.

The preliminaries were deliberately prolonged because we felt it was the most decisive phase if one wished to establish a relationship based on trust. The interviewer was to touch on a series of points aimed at reassuring the interviewee while at the same time negotiating the conditions of the interview: the interviewer's personal identification and his/her official credentials, the objectives of the research (to refine our knowledge about individual professional itineraries, particularly the turning points, the reactions to unemployment and visions of the future), making sure all information remain anonymous (including a presentation of the sample population and an explanation of the lottery that presided over the choice of participants), explaining the conditions of the interview (not a questionnaire but a conversation around a few points raised by the researcher and freely explored together), the fact that the interviewee's way of thinking and seeing things is of utmost importance (he or she is the one who is living the situation, who knows what it is all about and that is exactly why he or she is being interviewed), and finally, negotiating the use of the taperecorder (a must if one wants to avoid deforming or simplifying what was said).

The practical details of that first contact varied according to the country, especially with respect to the way the quantitative surveys had been carried out (see Chapter 3). In France, participants were picked out of the employment agency's file by the Agency (ANPE) itself. But they were then contacted by the research team, first by letter, then by telephone. Interviewing was done at the person's home. In Brazil, individuals were chosen among the respondents classified as unemployed in the PED survey, for at the time of our survey the registration at public employment agencies only concerned a very small part of the population affected by unemployment. Interviewing was carried out at the person's home by two interviewers, the researcher and an assistant. In Japan, the sample could be drawn neither from a statistical survey nor from an administrative file. Therefore, interviewees were chosen, contacted and questioned directly within the five agencies of the Public Employment Security Office (PESO), after a Union delegate, in cooperation with our research project, had announced that a survey was to be carried out among job seekers having come to register, check in or validate their rights.

Differences in the way the surveys were implemented are the result of a series of various factors. Some represent constraints with which we had to make do: the fact that a previous statistical survey was or was not available, the possibility of cooperating with the producers of data or bureaucratic organizations. Others translate the multiplicity of research strategies, with an eye to adapting them to the context and particularly to the place given to unemployment, which, for instance, led us to either choose or reject the home as the best place for the interview, according to whether or not doing so seemed right or acceptable. Lastly, others point to the differences in the institutional definitions of unemployment: the place occupied by, and the diffusion of, the public employment agencies, the administrative coverage of job deprivation, and as such had to be included in our protocol.

For the aim of all these methodological inflections was, each time within the infrastructure of the specific constraints, to achieve the best possible conditions to build up a trusting survey relationship that would incite the person to tell their story. However, the very situation of a biographical interview varies according to the country, in particular

because the meaning of intimacy changes, so that the possibilities of speaking to a stranger about the suffering caused by unemployment vary. That is why we differentiated the manners of broaching and building up the survey relationship.

In France, the fact that an interviewer comes to your home is not perceived as particularly problematic, all the more as it was already suggested to the person when the appointment was made on the phone. We observed that, as usual after the idea of granting an interview was accepted, the interviewee's home was nearly always seen as the most adequate, obvious and practical place for it. What is more, the proposition to be interviewed about one's professional itinerary and present situation was not perceived as improper or off-limits, no doubt because interviewing in the biographical mode is omnipresent in the public actions aimed at the unemployed. In this context, the most important thing in France was to explain the particular aims of the interview compared to those that accompany the assessments or evaluations carried out by ANPE which most likely represented, often implicitly, the reference situation for the interviewee. From that point of view, going to their home, as opposed to being summoned to the window of the Employment Agency or sitting in the office of some advisor or trainer, was for the unemployed person part of defining a different situation and relationship.

In Japan the situation is quite different, first of all because the home is much less open and accessible, so that it hardly appeared as the most adequate place for an interview. Next, because unemployment is less widespread and frequent, less established too, so that it is experienced as more of a stigma. Finally, because being interviewed about one's professional life is not a routine in the official management of the unemployed. Those factors make it less easy, acceptable or right to get involved in a biographical interview such as the one we were asking them to give us. In those conditions, a direct contact, a face-to-face negotiation followed by the actual interview without a previous appointment made things easier. The same may be said about the choice of carrying out the interview in a room at the PESO, for though that option was not without consequence for how the interaction developed, it was also part of the survey system and thus coherent and appropriate in the Japanese situation. It must also be added that the interviews carried out in Japan were usually, though not always, shorter and more concise (especially when compared to those carried out in France). That discrepancy testifies to the fact that the French are more accustomed than the Japanese to being interviewed, while the latter appear more passive. We might risk a hypothesis according to which the very fact of speaking is more rarely perceived in Japan as part of the power play. The place occupied by speech in a society invites us to reconsider the apparent passivity of interviewees in Japan: the fact their speaking style appeared less active or aggressive does not necessarily mean they did not feel subjectively involved in the interview.

In Brazil, the survey relationship was yet of another color, which we must also attempt to describe. The immense majority of interviews were carried out with individuals with very low standards of living and slight cultural resources. They were particularly deprived and poor, so that the social distance with the interviewers was far greater than in the two other countries. Thus in the Brazilian case, the first hurdle to overcome was the class barrier, visible in the mode of transportation used (private car or taxi), in the style of dress (even if very simple), of talking, sitting, in the tape recorder used, etc. Listening to the

interviews confirms that this barrier was lowered somewhat whenever the interviewers showed they were able to pick out from their own experience the factors that would be of equal significance to the person being interviewed, thus giving rise to a complicity based either on gender, generation or regional origins, which showed through a shared style of speech or using one's knowledge about the group being surveyed. The interaction then depended on the pertinent cognitive or symbolic foundations that made sense to the interviewee. The distance separating the symbolic worlds had obviously more significant and visible effects on how the interaction developed when the differences and inequalities between social groups in the society as a whole were greater. And in Brazil, the social and symbolic distance between the poor people from the periphery of Sao Paulo (to whom the majority of the interviewees belonged) and the middle class living in the more residential areas of the city (which was where most of the interviewers came from) was particularly significant. That distance was noticeable in people's self image on the cultural and symbolic level but also in their physical appearance (the color of their skin, for example). That is why carrying out a second interview had a decisive methodological impact on the discourse collected, which took on a greater consistency. Besides, in the one year interval separating the two interviews, the persons were given the photographs that had been taken during the first, thus consolidating their first contact.

Consequently, it was evident that the interviews could not and should not be carried out in the same conditions in each of the three countries. Conditions had to be differentiated but also controlled. We therefore had to create specific conditions each time, and the best possible ones, to allow each person to explore their past experiences, their present situation and future perspectives, according to what counted the most for them personally. We nevertheless kept a certain number of structural elements common to all the interviews, without which a comparison would be impossible or non pertinent.

These common elements are, first of all, the introductory sentence, which was the same for everyone, albeit in different languages of course. In particular, we eliminated the possibility of starting the interview with an instruction concerning "unemployment," considering that the term had meanings far too different in each country due to the fact that its institutionalization differed in degree, shape and form, but also because the risk was to shut the interviewee in a too-narrow definition of his or her situation (short and involuntary job deprivation framed by controllable norms of behavior). Aware that in the preliminary phase of our survey, when it was first presented to the interviewee, the term "unemployment" had been used several times, we decided to use a term whose meanings were more general, less precise and less discriminating. We chose the term "work," within a formula intentionally left vague and open to interpretation: "I'd like you to talk to me about your present situation, especially concerning your work and your experience with it."

The other point all the interviews have in common is the protocol itself, which did not develop from a grid of pre-arranged questions but from follow-up questions by the interviewer concerning elements raised by the interviewee. Of course, our centers of interest corresponded to dimensions that had the potential of structuring the meanings attributed to the situation, especially the person's activity, how they spent their time, but also how they envisaged their future, what their aspirations were, their anticipations, their

fears; or again how they judged their previous itinerary, what verdict they pronounced on it, what lessons they derived from it, how they viewed it generally; or yet again, what their life was like today, what their resources were, their contacts, their difficulties. In spite of all these angles, there was no set grid or instruction to follow: the dynamics of the interaction is what shaped the interviews and the interviewers' task was to support and help the interviewees by adjusting their remarks to what had just been said.

## 1.4. Analyzing the interviews: understanding what was said and reconstructing the meaning

In this sort of non-directive, in-depth interviewing, the researchers enter into a dialogue centered on the speaker and stimulate him or her to divulge feelings, judgments, arguments, which, they are aware, possess a subjective meaning though they don't know exactly what that meaning can be. Catching that subjective meaning, which cannot be reduced to its linguistic signification, supposes one analyzes the language used, for what is being said during an interview is not self-evident, and can hardly be considered transparent. To understand means to take what the speaker says seriously, without hiding behind some pre-established grill or introducing a list of themes that would signify that the discourse is being reorganized according to an external system.

Taking what people say seriously means not only knowing how to listen but also identifying the categories underlying their words, extracting the narrative code that communicates their experiences. To comprehend the sense that work, unemployment, inactivity have for an interviewee, it is necessary to reconstruct the set of social categories adjacent to their speech. For instance, what does each person consider to be real work and in what terms is that unit of meaning expressed? Does it mean a craft, a career, success, a permanent job, a safe position, being hired, having a contract, employment, etc.? In the same vein, how does each person describe his or her situation? Does he or she use the received vocabulary to designate positions that are quasi-statutory, such as unemployment, retirement, precarious employment, trainee, etc.? Or does he or she resort to more composite expressions that indicate a difficulty in finding the *mot juste* to describe their present situation, as for instance in the phrase "I keep busy in the meantime," or in "I'm angry, desperate," "I've got to manage somehow," etc.?

These expressions taken from our survey show how subjects create categories (a vocabulary, an argument, a statement) when describing their situation and their itinerary and, by so doing, progressively build up a relatively coherent symbolic edifice and paint a universe that makes a certain sense. They sketch a world view that is theirs alone, it is their universe in their own words, but nevertheless it is also shared by others since it is a universe structured by social categories. Therefore, to make sense of these discourses, reconstruct their meaning and identify their diversity, to bring together the various significations in such a way as to be able to account for their heterogeneity, our analysis had to be carried out in several steps.

The first step consisted in scrutinizing each interview with an eye to identifying and listing the most significant passages concerning the definitions of the situation. With this in mind, we considered the answer to our initial question to be a clue: the way an interview got under way was considered to contain a synthetic definition of the situation,

which was then elaborated upon, discussed, explored, nuanced, reiterated, corrected, etc. We counted on the analysis of that opening sentence as well as on its further developments, in which the interviewees sought, with more or less difficulty and laboriousness, to convey their situation, to define it and say what their reality is today. Several dimensions of this discourse must be taken into account. First, the vocabulary: the words chosen by the interviewee (it is not the same thing to say "I am depressed," "I'm unemployed more or less of my own free will" or "I'm looking for work in my field, " nor is it the same to say "I'm still looking for work," "I'm in the middle of looking," or "I've got to look").

Our aim was to describe, beyond the reasons put forward to justify the sense of their situation and of the path they had chosen, the terms used by the interviewees to "speak" the various phases of their itineraries, the principal events, the contacts that had counted for them. But an isolated word, like a single letter, is meaningless on its own. Thus, in order to identify the significations, special attention must be given to the elements presented as important and those presented as worthless, and more generally to the comparisons, differentiations and discontinuities that give the discourses their shape. In that way, one can isolate and reconstitute, for each interview, the categories and beliefs concerning labor (which covers employment, unemployment and inactivity). Scrutinizing each interview permits us to identify the logic behind the words and underlying the narrative, *i.e.* the structure of the significance that puts what the interviewee meant to say in a nutshell. It is not a question of producing more or less unauthorized interpretations, or interpretations commanded by the researcher's desire alone, but of taking seriously the way the meaning was put into words (and producing the lexicon of the terms employed, studying the oppositions structuring their discourse and the implication of the speaker in certain arguments more than in others). The challenge is to find the thread that determined how the interviewees constructed their narrative, the thread that synthesizes its coherence and supports the beliefs and values concerning their biographical itinerary.

The next step consists in comparing these partial and temporary results in order to progressively discover the attractions or similarities and the repulsions or differences between the interviews that compose the corpus. The technique of comparison, differentiation and classification is done by coding and recoding, the codes being more or less temporary, since they will be modified, sharpened, eliminated or stabilized thanks to a double approach: on one hand, by comparing the individual cases, and on the other hand, by opposing the categories that emerge as we go along. The latter must account for the different, though transversal – since they run across several interviews – ways that people speak about unemployment, the ways the situation is put into words. Thus, for each country, we identified ten or so typical interpretations of unemployment. Each definition of the situation, of those identifications, tells us something about the significations attributed by the interviewees to their situation, condenses the arguments that explain it and accounts for the adjacent itineraries, including the past and the anticipated future.

Thus, it is not the individuals we are classifying, but symbolic forms, and first and foremost those contained by language, which have a double contingency: cultural space and biographical time. Belief in the socio-historical relativity of categories and in the intersubjective validity of a person's words in a situation of dialogue – here a research

interview – is in fact coherent with a theoretical and methodological posture that concentrates on the speaker's mode of expression, choice of words and on the emergence of categories that give form to their own praxis and to that of their "subjective fellow-subjects". Inciting a subject to communicate his or her symbolic universe, seeking to penetrate it, encouraging him or her to acknowledge it as their own, means (on the part of the research scholar) making it possible to analyze and interpret a subject's words after the fact as being the symbolic assemblage of a certain sort of meaning, *i.e.* of a relatively coherent universe also shared by others. We must try to handle at the same time the two somewhat contradictory ends of a thread that leads us to the knowledge of subjects: show absolute respect for the speakers and the uniqueness of their expression, and remember the fact that this unique *parole* is anchored in a social universe shared by others and structured by commonly held symbols.

The third step consists in delving more deeply into the analytical procedures, with an eye to positioning the categories in respect one to the other. This phase usually ends up by producing a typology, *i.e.* reducing the diversity of individual cases to a small number of typical points of view, organized around key interviews that condense and accentuate a certain number of ways of presenting the situation.

We did not choose that option, however, because it seemed to us that the discourses collected were marked by strong tensions between several magnetic poles, by recurrent and even structuring narrative ambiguities, by possible pendulum shifts, so much so that it would have been an oversimplification to link them to such or such a pole in a typology. These complex traits run parallel to the problematic dimension of the unemployed person's situation, that makes it difficult to account for in only a few words, using tried and tested categories. We therefore defined a double objective for ourselves. First, we will show that those categories are neither fixed nor watertight, but caught up in taut relationships and marked by ambivalence. Next, we draw up the cartography of these significations (cf. schemas at the end of the Chapter), by identifying the dimensions that organize their interplay, allowing each interview to take its place in a structure that covers all the possible different interpretations of what it means to be unemployed. Once again, we proceeded in a progressive and persistent fashion to clarify the proximity and distance between interviews, which allowed us to advance in the identification and nomination of the structuring categories. The latter no longer condense ways of speaking *about* unemployment; rather they trace the matrix that will structure the definitions of the situation.

We have tried to account for this analytical procedure when presenting our results. The next three sections thus illustrate some of the definitions of the situation identified for France, Japan and Brazil, basing our argumentation on concrete cases and on excerpts from the interviews. Finally, the last section is dedicated to identifying the categories that structured the interviews and the comparison between the three countries, a comparison that places them dialectically between proximity and distance. As we go along, we will reintroduce the eventual differentiations, according to the target groups, both those that cross national differences and those that mark the internal divisions within the population of the unemployed, which are also subject to variation between the countries.

## 2. Interpretations of the unemployment experience in France

In France, as in the other countries, the experiences of job deprivation are extremely varied. We established previously that the standards of living, the living conditions and lifestyles of the individuals and populations concerned also vary considerably. However, the interpretations of the situation are what vary most. For the ways that job deprivation is experienced, and the significations attributed to it, combine to define such heterogeneous, if not downright contradictory situations, that the single term of unemployment seems far too limited to cover them all. However, what is centrally at stake, and in a way vital for the persons concerned in the attempts to define a situation of which they are victims and that is definitely not of their own making, is the future and the way it is anticipated. That perspective, open or closed, depending on the way they see it, channel the meanings they can attribute to their present situation, codified as "unemployment". How can they find a way out? That is the main question, and the variety of possible answers and uncertainty that accompany them, mould the real-life situation at the time of the interview and shape the course of the reconstitutions of their former itinerary. Without being able to run the whole gamut of these definitions of the situation, we will present five in detail, selected because they illustrate clear-cut differences. The variety of interpretations is presented succinctly in the schema of figures of unemployment in France, from which the five cases have been extracted (see schema 1 in Appendix at the end of the Chapter).

### 2.1. "I can't stand it anymore, everything is black."

The definition of the situation is marked here by the dead end in which the individuals are trapped as if paralyzed, while (as that state endures and stretches out inexorably) simultaneously and imperceptibly contributing to alter their interpretative models. Thus, the reference to the job search colors the discourses, but is connected to an overwhelming discouragement that leaves no room for any sort of alternative.

The feeling of being trapped deepens as attempts to find employment systematically fail and which, on top of the rest, are traumatic because of judgements considered arbitrary, penalties considered unfair and selective procedures denounced as disgusting. These repeated occurrences end up by making it impossible to anticipate a future in which one would be employed once again, and worse yet, by making the future appear so threatening that talking about it at all becomes (practically) impossible. One's path seems irremediably split in two, torn between a past where work was easy to find and one could change jobs at will, and a present marked by the opposite features. The nostalgic remembrance of a past long gone is etched into a collective history that confiscates the individual destinies and against which it is useless to struggle. For proof, third parties are brought into the picture: former colleagues, neighbors, friends, and family members, who are all going through similar situations and are also apparently victims of the same scourge. Since they have tried everything to get out of unemployment, it is clear that all escape is impossible except if one possesses the resources they are precisely lacking, such as a diploma, youth, or again useful relations and connections. In these discourses, the reference to professional activity is omnipresent, but it is systematically referred to as an irretrievable past or linked to things they don't have (such as a diploma).

They mention no alternative, particularly not the possibility of a paid inactivity. This reflects the difficulty of coming up with a solution for a situation which is only half alluded to, referred to by contrasting it to other situations. One's situation is totally permeated by an unemployment that seems impossible to get rid of and which threatens to destroy lives, people, and identities, something impossible to find words for.

Typical of this figure is the interview done with Fabrice, a textile factory worker aged 48 who started work at 14, became the leader of a small team of less experienced workers and apprentices, and was made redundant in the end because his company shut down. At the time of the interview, he had been unemployed for eighteen months, receiving an indemnity (he still had two years to go), but extremely disappointed by his fruitless attempts to find another job. His wife does not work, their three children live at home and one of them is fairly regularly employed in temporary jobs.

From the very start, Fabrice's interview sums up his itinerary by dividing it into two totally opposed periods: the beginning of his working life, when "there was work," and the present, characterized by exactly the opposite terms: "there's no more work." The remark is cut and dried, disillusioned and irrevocable; it lends a pessimistic tonality to the whole interview and provides a thread to follow as it unfolds. All the more as Fabrice immediately provides several arguments that consolidate his point of view: given he had started so early, nobody can accuse him of not wanting to work; he accumulated a long experience of looking for work and knows what it's all about ("I can go and cry on everyone's shoulder, I've already done it"). A seemingly inevitable, logical, and obvious conclusion ends his extremely concise and concentrated narrative: "I can't stand it anymore, everything is black."

"How can I put it, you know, I started to work when I was 14. At the time there were jobs, so they put me to work after my *certificat d'études*.[1] Now, I'm sorry to say, I can go cry on everyone's shoulder, I've done it already. I've already done it, but there're no more jobs. I'm not saying I don't want to work, I began working at 14. I'm not complaining. But now it's different, I can't stand it anymore, everything is black" (beginning of Fabrice's interview).

The first words of his interview indicate Fabrice's difficulty to imagine a future that would allow him to emerge from this state of unemployment. A future completely swallowed up by "blackness" is a recurrent theme throughout the interview. On one hand, this bears witness to the fact that it is impossible for Fabrice to call himself unemployed, because this would signify a permanent condition, and on the other hand, it shows that no alternative exists. Thus, little by little, unemployment is presented as the product of an injustice, and that sentiment of injustice is reinforced and illustrated by recalling things that happened in the past, whether during his working past or during his past as job seeker.

The passages of the interview that retrace his professional itinerary are sprinkled with expressions that place it in a temporality quite distinct from the present, as being situated in a past long gone: "at the time," "at that time," "it wasn't the same." That itinerary is characterized by the fact that finding work and changing jobs were easy ("at the time, if things weren't going well, you could change factories, O.K., so you changed"), and by the pride in having been professionally recognized, which became a reality when he was given new responsibilities and especially when he was called upon to transmit his skill as

ribbon-maker ("I began as an apprentice, then I was a worker and then little by little I was put in charge of a team, with young guys to teach them the job").

The moments of the job search following his redundancy (for economic reasons), give off a totally different sound, because they pit his personal efforts to find work against the hard fact that he didn't get any results ("I can say I did everything I could. But in the end I didn't have anything to show for it"). His repeated failures are explained in a variety of ways which invariably denounce dysfunction or injustice: hiring done according to obscure criteria in which favoritism plays a major role ("when there's an opening, if you don't have anyone up your sleeve, it's not even worth trying, you won't get it. That's the way it is now, you have to know somebody or else you don't get anything"), public agencies such as the French National Employment Agency (ANPE) are ruled out because they don't provide the support one should be able to expect ("At the ANPE they know how to ask you if you want to work but they're unable to give you any"), and the services supposed to facilitate reemployment are in the end a hopeless illusion ("these training periods, they're gimmicks you know, they're worthless, don't bring you a thing").

Finally, Fabrice repeatedly demonstrated his incapacity to find new employment, as well as the solitude of the long distance runner in trying to attain that objective. The combination of all these factors pushed him into an impasse, that he describes as a situation without a solution, that can only bring despair, and the fact it is shared by others like him, because they are neighbors or former colleagues, is small consolation: "It's the same for one of my pals at the factory, everything he did was useless. He told me he doesn't believe anything anymore," "when I see two of my neighbors, three years they've been desperate for a work, I think, the same is going to happen to me. That's what I tell my wife, we're all in the same boat."

Thus, when Fabrice declared at the outset that he saw everything "black," it is that future he was talking about, a future he can clearly imagine through the fate of his friends and acquaintances, whose itineraries resembled his though they got under way a little bit sooner. Which is why certain passages of his interview bear witness to a despair and fatalism which, in spite of everything, Fabrice cannot completely resign himself to: "I've been swallowed up by now, I don't see how I can come out of it. Maybe I should become a revolutionary, I don't know." He cannot manage to find any alternative to this situation, or even more simply any way of vanquishing his passivity; discouragement is uppermost, barely softened by knowing he is protected from the most serious material problems because he received a large sum of money for having been made redundant ("luckily I invested my premium, so from that point of view at least I can wait and see"). He constantly compares his present situation with professional activity, and since that activity is now out of reach, what he imagines is the eventual drift downward into squalor, a risk that for the moment he refuses to confront.

## 2.2. "I've got my plan for finding work."

The definition of the situation here is organized around the job search and the interviewee's ability to control the situation. It is thus pointed towards the idea of obtaining employment, presented as the logical and expected result of a strategy of conquest. In such a case, looking for work is not conceived as an obligation that weighs on

the unemployed person, or as a set of activities only allowing one to pass the time, it is presented as an set of competences and know-how which increase the chances of success and, beyond that, are the podium on which a specific professionalism rests, which is not linked particularly to unemployment but concerns all workers generally, whether presently employed or not.

The job search is solidly structured, sustained and organized by previous experiences which represent a good preparation: obtaining recent diplomas, with the result that the job search can now focus on a new specialty, a craft, a professional nook; undergoing professional assessment tests that allow one to identify competences that can be cashed in on in the labor market; registering in periods of training that guarantee mastering techniques reputed to be relevant. In this perspective, the person claims they are being quite professional in the job search, basing their claim on their ability to aim in the right direction, to build up networks, put oneself and one's competences in the best light, etc. That way of seeing the job search does not guarantee one will not sometimes fail, as the situation of joblessness of the interviewees demonstrates, but at least it leads to interpreting those failures as constructive experiences which allow one to learn something and get on with it.

The job search is a pivotal point in the interviewees' interpretation of their situation: it is their main activity, the one that defines the present by anticipating the future, which places the present in the future, erasing it with an employment that is not only hoped for but above all expected as one's due. This logic causes the description of oneself as unemployed to be thrown out and explicitly denied, in the first place because of its negative charge, in the second place because of the will to set oneself apart from that common and flabby condition which no longer appears convincingly connected to the job search.

A typical interview of this sort of figure is Chrystèle's, a woman of 39 and mother of three, who interrupted her professional activity for six years and is now looking to go back to work. After a period of training that allowed her to update her competences, she has been looking for a position as assistant manager for approximately one year.

From the start, Chrystèle steered her interview towards the job search, first to put across her disappointment ("it's harder than I thought it would be") but perhaps also her embarrassment at being interviewed, since she has to admit that she hasn't yet succeeded as she had thought she would ("it's a bit hard going right now (…) I thought it would be easier"). But as of her third sentence, she goes off on a different tack which allows her to forcefully and clearly expound on her own point of view. The personal pronoun "I", subject of the action and of the enunciation, is used repeatedly (seven times in six sentences). At the same time, the repetition of the expression "one must" (four times) can be considered as the sign of an external subject of the enunciation speaking through Chrystèle's discourse, in this case to formulate or recall norms of behavior ("one must know what one wants," "plan ahead," "not be a victim"). The job search is described and defended in this vein, around a set of precepts condensed in a few formulas ("the most important is knowing where you're going"), and shows at what point Chrystèle feels she has arrived, and what the reality of her own case is ("I try to stick it," "I've got my plan for looking and I'm sticking to it").

"For me it's a bit hard going right now, it's tough to get results, it's harder than I thought it would be. To be honest, I thought it would be easier. So I think that the most important thing, I think it's not to be a victim. One must know what one wants and do what's needed to get there. One mustn't count on luck, well that counts too, of course, but the most important is knowing where you're going. And for that, you've got to plan ahead, not let yourself become a victim. And I can tell you that is exactly what I'm trying to do, and I try to stick it. I've got my plan for looking and I'm sticking to it." (Start of Chrystèle's interview)

For Chrystèle, who decided to go back to work as an assistant manager, succeeding means going through a training period, requested and obtained from the ANPE after having undergone a professional assessment which was supposed to tell her what was the most appropriate activity for her: "before starting the second phase of my professional life, I wanted to get more training." Aside from updating her skills, that training period provided her with methods for looking for work that she liked: she learned that the job search must be well organized, carefully planned, which corresponds to her "methodic temperament," that it must be directed towards and concentrated on her specialty so as to have the best chances to "sell my skills." Probably repeating formulas she had heard and absorbed during that training period, she declared she was carrying out her job search like a "commercial sales campaign," by "targeting her clients" (the companies most likely to hire her), and by an attitude consisting in offering her services rather than applying for a job ("I consider I'm not asking, I'm offering what I know how to do, that's very important").

Several arguments speak in favor of mastering the job search, especially means put into action, particularly the capacity to anticipate the hiring procedures by discovering which companies are looking to take on personnel. From that point of view, answering ads does not seem very productive; though they are not completely ignored, spontaneous applications are preferred and even more so the construction and extension of relational networks: "contacts are always a positive point because you're anticipating their need and they already know you, so you've got to go all the way, and remain active in that sense." Also important are managing the rhythms of the job search and mastering its different phases: "there are three phases: first you start the ball rolling, then there's a short waiting period, then a few more serious things, like appointments, tests maybe, eventually a few assessment sessions."

Looking for work thus appears as a quasi-professional activity in its own right, to the extent that it demands a certain professionalism, without which the time and resources invested would be a pure loss. That is the reason why Chrystèle does not see herself as unemployed, nor even as a job seeker: she is going through a phase of her professional itinerary which, though naturally problematic, is an integral part of the employment she is bound to find in the end ("I always tell myself I'm getting ready for my new job. As far as I'm concerned, I'm working at my job, I'm in it already"). The job search thus allows one to escape unemployment and casts one in an anticipated manner into one's future employment.

Naturally, as the period of being jobless lengthens and the vain attempts at finding work pile up, such a definition of the situation becomes tenuous. But the ways these failed

attempts are interpreted are themselves an integral part of such a conception of the controlled job search. That control also concerns the emotions and should permit avoiding "raising false hopes by imagining yourself already in the job" or "getting depressed when it falls through," and the failures should end up by being a "positive" lesson so that one remains "always active." One can clearly see here how much the job search can take on an emblematic signification for one's identity, since sticking to it means remaining constructive, *i.e.* more like the employed persons, those who are actually working, than like the unemployed.

## 2.3. "I've reorganized my life."

The definition of the situation is marked here by a displacement towards activities that are increasingly a source of satisfaction in and of themselves: though these activities are not completely disconnected from work, they bring little remuneration and take on meanings that make them a far cry from any professional occupation. Their logic is based on arguments that insist on the difficulties to find employment, encourage one to turn in another direction and involve oneself in alternative and compensatory activities and, by so doing, to reorganize one's lifestyle and way of life.

Developing such activities signifies, more or less rapidly and ostentatiously (depending on the individual) that the center of gravity of job deprivation has shifted: the initial investment in the job search converts into involvement in alternative activities that constantly become more essential. Such activities may be unpaid, volunteer work in an association, or even militant, and bring the individuals personal satisfaction, recognition and a symbolic remuneration that they often consider far superior to what they earned in their professional past. Therefore, although they don't pay, these activities are esteemed practically on a par with work, demanding stringent time schedules, loyalty towards others, training, etc. At the same time, they possess their own very distinctive characteristics: they are not thought of as a preparatory phase for accessing new employment but are, on the contrary, conceived as an alternative way of accessing a status of remunerated *inactivity*, such as retirement. Such activities therefore insure a less traumatic transition than the state of pure job deprivation between the period of professional activity that has come to an end and the period of legitimate professional inactivity yet to come.

The situation is a compromise between an apparent conformity with the obligations pertaining to the condition of paid unemployment, and a position one can fall back on, *i.e.* activities considered as contradictory or alternative to these obligations. This combination is not the sign of a two-faced duplicity but the product of a conversion strategy allowing one to overcome an ordeal that is in fact a dead end and to anticipate a change in status.

Typical of this figure is Eric's interview. He was a manager in an electronic supplies company, and his career in the industry was made up of a series of promotions, having learned computer science on the job. Fifty-three years old, he had been made redundant a year and a half before the interview, as part of a plan to reduce the number of employees. Though he actively continued looking for work in his field, he had started to get more involved in his city's town-twinning activities and was considering running for City

Council in the forthcoming elections. At the time of the interview he was living alone and both his children were married and working.

From the very beginning of his interview, Eric voiced the standard opinions pertaining to unemployment: he spoke of his job search but also of the difficulties he encountered, rapidly concluding that "it was no use." He then steered his interview in a different direction, starting with the contradiction which defined his situation ("blocked somewhere in between") because, though he sought, he could not find. He then painted a very concise picture of a conversion in which he himself played a part ("you start imagining things," "I continue"), as did others ("I've had contacts, first contacts"), ending by regaining control of his own inextricable ("blocked") situation: "I've reorganized my life." That announced inflexion is significant, since it leads him to a redefinition of his situation, albeit a hybrid one ("half unemployment, half work, you know"), whose meaning was to become clear in the course of the interview.

"First of all, I noticed the difficulty in finding anything at all. Everything I did was to no avail, that's all, I'm not saying it's good or bad, it's just a fact. But I was blocked somewhere in the middle. Looking, looking, without finding anything, that can't go on forever. You start imagining things and then, from one thing to the next, I've reorganized my life. I had contacts, first contacts and finally it worked out, so I continue, say, somewhere on the margins, half unemployment, half work, you know." (Start of Eric's interview)

We understand that Eric doesn't feel completely or exclusively unemployed, since precisely he has reorganized his life. But he explains that as soon as he lost his job, he anticipated difficulty in finding another one, and rapidly verified the truth of that prediction: he had never studied computer science so that he has "nothing in common with qualified computer scientists with diplomas," he works in a field where his age is a handicap, since in his previous job people made him feel he "was already too old," and his job search was hardly of a sort that could change his mind about that ("I can look until I'm blue in the face, nobody wants me anymore").

Simultaneously, he goes on doing "small favors" in computering, as he had done when he was still active, both for his entourage and neighbors but above all for a variety of associations where he doesn't receive a salary but where he knows one manager or another. Progressively this sort of activity became more frequent, particularly in an association connected to the municipal administration in charge of town-twinning with cities in foreign countries. His competence in English and his talent at organizing are appreciated and he plays an increasingly greater role in the association: "I started to do more there and it's true that when we received the delegation from Y (a Scottish town), well it was me, really, and it just happened, we hadn't planned it that way").

Progressively, Eric began considering his extra-professional activities as an important aspect of his situation and his point of view changed, all the more as he was asked to play a more steady role, then to travel abroad, which brought him the recognition he could not find on the labor market: "I discovered that I could be useful there, it's silly to say, that I had competences that could be valuable. And it set me to thinking, because it was becoming more and more important."

The connection between these activities and job deprivation has clearly evolved for him: though they are never considered by Eric as being a possible source of income, they

are nevertheless what counts most for him today ("I discovered that my real investment was there"), to the point that he is thinking of reinforcing that investment by running for office in the future City Council. Of course, Eric has not definitively given up the idea of being professionally active once again, but it would be dictated by necessity, which he thinks is not very likely ("on the financial level, I think I can come out ahead. I'm alone, I own my house and I've some money on the side"), and besides, he can only imagine it in self-employment, which he doesn't think is very likely either ("if I had my back against the wall, maybe a small service company, I'd have to see, but I'm a bit leery about doing something I've never done. I've never been a boss").

Eric's situation is thus a hybrid, and his interpretation appears uncertain because it is irreducible to unemployment, and cannot be limited to his volunteer activity either. Several times during his interview he returned to the split personality aspect of his situation, which he had suggested by saying "part unemployment, part work." At other moments he said: "I have one foot in retirement and one foot in unemployment, and the third one doesn't know where it's going," or else "I have a lot of activities but I don't really know where I'm going, am I going to get to retirement age like that or will I work again?" Unemployment, work, retirement, activity, these multiple possibilities and combinations clearly indicate that defining his situation is problematic and can absolutely not be summed up by the sole category of unemployment.

## 2.4. "I'll work again later."

The definition of the situation here translates as inactivity, without that fact constituting a real shift or eviction from the labor market, however. The discourses pull in every direction, and are sometimes torn apart, between stating that one is looking for work – and several clues uphold that declaration – and one's temporary inscription in a domestic and familial status connected to the presence of small children or a baby on the way.

The tension at the heart of the interviews here becomes the subject of a variety of developments and arguments, which all aim at maintaining an uncertainty and indetermination concerning the real-life situations, and especially at preserving or protecting the person from being either thrown out into the orbit of inactivity, or imprisoned in the domestic sphere of the family. Thus, asserting the attractiveness of a professional activity means stressing even more adamantly the fact that one refuses the exclusive role of wife or mother, as well as welfare and social benefits disconnected from employment. Anticipation of the future is described totally separated from the present situation, and drawn around clear professional perspectives and a planned entry into the labor market. If the definition of the situation is more complex than the projections into the future, it is because it must juggle with a set of constraints that counteract, slow down, and postpone professional activity, in spite of the fact it is passionately wished for: attempts at finding work give out very few positive or encouraging signals; the institutional supports one applied for only reveal the bureaucratic procedures, rules and deadlines associated with obtaining the expected compensations; and eventual reemployment raises the phantom of new expenses (childcare especially) which dampen the financial attractiveness of a professional activity.

Here, the real-life situation is polarized, as if torn between a desired but absent professional activity and inactivity which is actual but voluntarily toned down. The interviewees try to resolve this tension, this contradiction even, by declaring and defining themselves as unemployed, which allows them to avoid being locked into inactivity. When the situation is identified as an official status, which is temporary by definition, such as a parental leave, the tension seems to ease up, things are more peaceful.

Armelle's interview is typical of this sort of figure: she is thirty-one, married, and gave birth to her second child a little less than two years before the interview. After dropping out of school, she worked, often for a few weeks at a time, in various restaurants, and had to stop when she was pregnant without being entitled to a pregnancy leave. She is now looking for work, thinking she will be able to work more regularly when her son enters kindergarten.

Armelle immediately underlines the particular nature of her situation, because it is "hard" for "everybody," but for her, "it's worse." And she has no problem identifying what makes her situation worse: her son, since with him she is "somewhat stuck." By saying this, she is pointing to a parameter of her personal and family situation that directly affects her status, in the classic register of having problems reconciling it with her professional life (in the "restaurant business"), but also because it makes it difficult to stay in the labor market, since "it makes it complicated even to be unemployed"). From the outset, she stressed the tension that she then analyzed throughout her interview, without being able to reduce it completely: the decision made with her husband ("I'll work again later") could have calmed that tension, by letting Armelle concentrate on her family for the moment, but then she says something which is contradictory with this temporary retreat, since it implies the job search ("I continue to look").

"Right now it's hard. In any case, it's the same for everyone, even when you work, it's always hard, you always try to come out ahead. For me it's worse, I'm somewhat stuck with my son. It makes it so complicated, even to be unemployed, and everything, it makes everything more complicated. As to being available, in the restaurant business, that's hard. So with my husband, we decided that I'll work again later. But I continue to look, I still think it's possible." (Start of Armelle's interview)

Armelle will start (working) again later but she continues (looking). The question here is not anticipating the amount of time needed to look for a new employment, but the tension that defines Armelle's situation, of which she gives us the main elements during her interview.

First of all, she didn't choose to interrupt her professional activity when she was expecting her son because her pregnancy had not been deliberate ("he was an accident") and she began to work again in the restaurant business after he was born, until she realized it wasn't worth it financially: "then I stopped everything, when I saw I was paying that much for a baby sitter, so it just wasn't worth it." But she never could resign herself to "stay at home and raise them myself": the decision to stop was probably the result of negotiations with her husband, since he had made it clear ("my husband told me if he wasn't working it would be different, but that way it just wasn't worth it"); and she had gone to the administration to get information about training periods, but there they opposed her with the argument that she had family obligations, whereas she herself

reasoned the other way around ("I asked about training because it was a good opportunity, what with the baby. But they told me I should let him grow up first. So if I can't even take advantage of a training period which is easier than getting work, isn't it... At least, that's what I thought").

Thus, Armelle is seeking every possible solution to preserve a professional activity for herself, even if only through provided schemes, such as training periods that seem less demanding to her than a job. She cannot make up her mind that her principal occupation should be caring for her children: "I'd sure prefer working than staying at home. I find that having kids is alright in the evenings, that's O.K., and on weekends." She is even considering working, "like her sister," in a kitchen, a company kitchen because the hours are better ("no evening work"), rather than in the restaurant business where she had worked up to now. Besides, she is counting on her sister to help her get going again, which is a supplementary reason to feel reassured about her perspectives of working again, perhaps even sooner than planned: "my sister already put a word in for me. If there's work, she'll tell me. Even a short-term contract, a stand-in. I'm ready, I'll jump at it right away. I'll make arrangements with a baby-sitter. Even if I don't earn anything in the beginning, I'm raring to go."

Armelle's job search is neither very convincing nor very active, and from that point of view she is not conforming to the normative expectations one could project on her situation as a person registered at the ANPE. But she does multiply the strategies that indicate her will to work, especially by imagining and negotiating, with no success so far, situations that might be compatible with her family obligations. In so doing, she's fighting against being thrown back into inactivity, which she fears, given what she already lived through: "when you have little kids, you always have a problem. Even at the ANPE I saw that, let's say I didn't get my training period because of that."

She thus puts a lot of effort into maintaining herself in an intermediate situation, between activity and inactivity, and since she cannot obliterate the signs that push her on the side of inactivity, no more than she can claim a professional situation that would counteract that tendency, she emphasizes she belongs to unemployment ("I'm still looking, that's what counts, I can say I'm unemployed, that's really where I am at, I look and I hope. I know I'll work again later, no doubt about that"), which is one way of saying that, even if one has no job, one is not idle.

## 2.5. "It's something that's becoming important."

The definition of the situation here depends on enhancing the value of an activity in which the interviewee is already caught up on an emotional and affective level. The interviewee considers it sufficiently important to mention right from the start, justifying it with a certain number of arguments, and including it in the description of his/her past itinerary. The activity occupies a central position in the discourse, and its inscription in the itinerary is perfectly specific: it is both the pivot of one's present situation, the support of the anticipation of the future, and the mark of a break with a past tainted by job deprivation.

The activity in question can be compared neither to employment nor to unemployment, but allows the interviewees to project themselves into an elsewhere, a condition difficult

to qualify. For this activity marks a turning point in the narrative, indicating the distance from the condition of unemployment, both because practicing it means filling the emptiness that comes with unemployment and giving a positive meaning to one's situation, and because engaging in it means abandoning the job search and the obligations attached to being officially unemployed. However, though that activity is not considered a target in the job search, or a possible occupation, it is nevertheless directly linked to professional work and employment: it allows one to receive a relatively modest income, but that could improve in the future; it is the source of various forms of apprenticeship and specializations, even though it remains on the fringes of the labor market; it fills up the horizon of employment because it lies within the more or less slim probability of becoming a profession.

Thus, this substitute activity for unemployment is a mix, something between leisure and work, a semi-professional activity. Its hybrid feature explains the difficulty to find words to describe it, since the activity and the meaning it holds for the interviewees do not fit the existing official or administrative social categories: it is no longer unemployment, nor is it exactly work, but perhaps a future employment.

Typical of this figure is the interview carried out with Martin, a young man of twenty-five, who, after having failed his *baccalauréat*[2] held several short-term jobs in a variety of fields. Although he loved his experience as camp counselor, he also had some disillusioning experiences there that led him to drop that activity. At the time of the interview, he was living with his parents, had only a very small income thanks to some free-lancing in live shows, and is especially involved in theater.

Martin immediately and explicitly expressed the difficulty of naming and qualifying his situation ("hard to say"), and his argument is to show how "confused" that situation is. But it is not his own chaotic itinerary that is concerned here. Rather, it is – as he declares enigmatically in his very first sentence – "the way things have been for some time now," which he explains further on by saying: "I'm in theater." It is precisely around that activity that he proposes to define his situation, and he has to fish for his words since it does not fit in with the official terminology: "it's more than a leisure activity, it's something that's becoming important." In so saying, he throws into special relief and enhances an activity whose status is uncertain, that cannot be automatically assimilated to employment but that nevertheless does away with unemployment, an activity that counts for him ("because I've found myself").

"The present situation isn't… It's the way things have been for some time now. It's very confused, the present situation. I don't know how to put it, I'm in a situation, hard to say. Because I've found myself… I mean, I've been in theater for some time now. For me that's what counts, it's more than a leisure activity, it's something that's becoming important, you see. Yes, that's right." (Start of Martin's interview)

The status of that activity appears therefore indeterminate, or at least mixed. It nevertheless becomes important and takes on a certain consistency, when Martin starts arguing about his professional itinerary and his future perspectives.

First of all, he indicates how disparate his previous experiences had been ("a whole mess of rather short-term stuff"), and those "small jobs in different sectors" finally caused him to reject them as "revolting, sectarian, crazy rhythms, throw in the towel." He felt those

negative experiences very keenly, following his failure at the *baccalauréat* which gave him "the impression of being destroyed by the system," of having had his "wings cut." The only experience he still values is his work as camp counselor, which is "far from a full-time job," but very "nice with the kids." However, when he noticed that the BAFA,[3] in which he had put his whole heart, was "given to everybody," he was "disgusted and gave up being a counselor." In fact, he sums up his itinerary in a totally negative manner, "terrible, compared to my aspirations," "forced to kowtow" whereas he would have liked to go to college, "paralyzed, disillusioned," and he had finally fallen into a state that "is medically known as a nervous breakdown" for two years.

The last period ("for some time now") has been totally different, thanks to the theater, which for him began when a friend took him along to a night course, and which he then pursued by a trimester with a professor who "encouraged me" at the *Théâtre de Chaillot* (which he gave up for "financial reasons"). That activity has thus played a key role in his itinerary, and more deeply still in forming his identity: "since I discovered the theatre, I have the feeling I saw the light again, a tiny light. I'd like to do that, allow myself to do nothing but that, be able to live from it. That's what it means to me, now, that's very clear." It is "something that's becoming important," "dictated by a personal quest," both a "passion" and a "therapy."

Supported by his parents and having obtained small parts in television serials, having been a stand-in in two short films and because he had "an agent for six months", he "hopes to be able to live from it," he "would like to do nothing but that." But that perspective is still very shaky, since he is thinking of renting an apartment alone next year and looking for "any odd job" to pay for it. But towards the end of his interview, he confided that his dream is "to become a professional actor," "not famous, but able to make my living in it." In this way, his activity in the theater, that he found so difficult to name at the beginning of the interview, when he was looking for the *mot juste*, had in the end turned not only into "work," but even into a "craft," implying at the same time that one can derive an income from being in theater, find one's own way and become lastingly involved in it: "my aim is to earn my living with it, because one's got to live, but above all to find myself in it. I mean my work should be a craft acquired due to my own efforts, my experience, the people I meet, it should become a craft and satisfy my aspirations. It's important for me, it's a craft, meaning it's something you can acquire, really acquire, that takes a long time and needs a great deal of personal investment. That, to me, is a craft." His nagging uncertainty about the status of that activity is thus on the way to being resolved, because of the individual investment he has dedicated to it and which has participated in turning it into work, first, into a craft, next and finally, into employment.

## 3. Interpretations of the unemployment experience in Japan

We will proceed in similar fashion with the Japanese interviews, presenting six cases of particular and contrasting figures in detail. The diversity of the interpretations of unemployment and of the meanings attributed to it is succinctly presented in the schema of the figures of unemployment in Japan (schema 2).

## 3.1. "I'm desperate, furious. I can do nothing."

The description of the situation here is marked by feelings of injustice and anger, helplessness, or yet again by a fatalistic acceptance which remains nonetheless painful. The impression of being imprisoned is all the stronger as alternative activities, with or without monetary compensation, are practically unthinkable and the future remains opaque. The reference to one's age as a complicating factor in finding a job is common to all the interviewees whose discourse fits into this figure. Among them are those who had held very long-term employment, while others recall the period when near full employment in Japan permitted people to change jobs with relative ease. Opposing past and present, together with an obscure future, is a shared characteristic of the corresponding narratives.

Yûzô's interview has been chosen to illustrate this figure. He is 45, lives with his wife, his mother and three children, the oldest of who is 21 and the youngest 15. The eldest son works. His wife is a nurse and works part-time. Yûzô was made redundant nine months before the interview, following the closure of the company where he had worked for 22 years, since they had hired him right out of university. He headed a computer department in the apparel industry. However, that qualification turned out to be worthless on the job market, because it had been a computerized system peculiar to his company. At the time of his interview, he only had 38 days of unemployment insurance left, and their bank account was in the red.

At the beginning of his interview, talking about his job search, he remained quite passive, until suddenly he started talking about a private employment agency.

"The private … how are they called … there are companies, aren't there, of intermediation … But I'm not registered. Because I have nothing to sell!"

His entire discourse is characterized by the feeling of being a piece of merchandise on sale in a public and anonymous marketplace, of being dispossessed of his employability, and by a strong loss of self-esteem. Compared to previous experiences, he is now looking for an under-qualified job, either in office work or in transportation.

"I'm thinking of taking a job as a driver. My driving license is the only qualification I have!"

Yûzô has had four intermediations at the PESO, and answered an ad he found in the papers. What disgusts him is to see he was eliminated on the basis of a file, not to be able to even get an appointment.

"Sometimes I'm eliminated just on paper. I could still stand it if I weren't taken after an interview. But…"

Several interviewees described their sense of failure when the file doesn't make the pre-selection and that their CV comes back. For, in fact, the subject does not even manage to get to the point where the least exchange or negotiation was possible. The feeling of failure is doubly hard to bear here: besides seeing oneself judged and rejected, these events do not allow for any kind of analysis that might help one understand and adapt, that might carry some hope, however small, of a future positive denouement. A series of such events induces feelings of being helpless and trapped, that destroys all personal initiative and slams the door on the future. Only the interminable present, in which the subject is reduced to a state of inertia, continues.

The description of daily life is monotonous, with no sign of any social or emotional investment. Besides looking for work on the Web, the only activities that fill his day in any regular fashion concerns accompanying his youngest son: Yûzô takes him to the station, to and from football practice in the evening.

Yûzô does not know how much his wife earns. "I don't know what she makes. I never asked … never asked, but… I suppose… how much?… she doesn't earn much … probably less than 200,000 yen." Lack of interest in the spouse's income is a common trait of many of the men in the Japanese survey. The possibility of basing the family's livelihood on the wife's income never comes up, which is partly justified, given the wives' low income level and the rarity of full-time job offers available to married women with children. But Yûzô's wife is a nurse. That qualification opens up the possibility of a full-time job. That eventuality seems far removed from Yûzô's problem, however. In the great majority of cases, the fact there is an income in the family (a wife's or a child's) does not represent the likelihood of an alternative life style for the male head of household, whereas, as far as the wife is concerned, such a possibility is altogether conceivable. The fact that men develop a strong sense of responsibility, combined with the weak level of social protection in Japan, plunges these men into hopeless despair.

Towards the end of the part of the interview that concerns the job search, and as a last resort, Yûzô mentions the eventuality of registering in a private agency where someone he knows works.

"I may register in a private intermediation agency where I have a contact. Up to now, I've managed alone, but maybe I'll apply to him. That's what I think I'll do now. I should have done it sooner, probably … But I didn't want to get into debt."

The Japanese interviewees frequently mention this reticence to use their contacts for the job search. What is more, when they speak about their relations, the few contacts they have are restricted personal relations that do not form a network. We never came across the case of a network of relations being deliberately created in order to help with the search for employment. But this fact does not mean that Japanese society is devoid of networks. On the contrary, dense networks, especially based on professional relations, do exist. What Yûzô is saying, like several of the other interviewees, is that when one appeals to one's contacts, one enters into a cycle of favors and obligations that is difficult to break, and that often interferes with one's freedom of action. Yûzô did communicate his situation to members of his extended family and to his friends, but he was careful to say he was not appealing to them to help him find work.

One activity that injects some color into his existence is football, and the relations that come with it. He possesses an umpire's diploma and is in charge of organizing matches between teenage boys. The friends he sees are those who share his football activities. Aside from that circle, Yûzô keeps up no other relationships. A shrinking network of relations is often the result of having strongly internalized the stigmata that induces the unemployed to stay away from their friends, especially their previous professional relations. Yûzô has kept his football friends. Nevertheless, it is only an activity that adds a little bit of spice to his monotonous existence, nothing more. It is not presented as being important enough to restore meaning to his life, or as representing a possible alternative to working life.

## 3.2. "The company doesn't choose me. I choose the company."

This is a case where looking for work is described as a controlled and dynamic activity with great confidence and self-assurance. Hiroshi is a young man of 26 with a university degree. He lives with his parents, a grand-mother and an aunt. His younger brother and sister live away from home. At the end of his university studies, Hiroshi visited 320 companies before making up his mind. He was the one who decided, not the employer. When he was being interviewed for the position, he had several run-ins with the Executive Director whose management strategy he disapproved of.

"(When scouting around for my first job) I checked up on the management's vision of the future. But the fact is that most companies are content with the *status quo*. I questioned the Executive Director and other directors (about that)… And also about customer satisfaction … In a word, to see (to find out) if Management had a professional conscience… That's when I often got in a fight with them."

Hiroshi finally entered the company he had worked in until one month before meeting us, not because he found it satisfactory but because there was no other companies left to visit and also time had run out. The Company then started to decline, and when it could no longer pay out all the salaries, he quit. Hiroshi is the only man among our interviewees whose discourse was entirely built around his professional career project, using a vocabulary one finds in the media, "*life plan*," "*career plan*," "*work style*," "*career up*," "*skill up*," corresponding to the competitive model of career management which we more frequently heard in fact in the discourse of young women.

Hiroshi waves aside the PESO as useless as a resource in seeking employment. He doesn't say that relational networks are a resource either. For him, the Web sites and private intermediation agencies are the only and best ways to look for work.

"I've looked on the PESO computer. But I didn't find any company that would allow me to advance my career (*career up*) (...) Only private agencies and Websites…., I use the recruiting service. There are a lot of high-level companies there. There are a lot more, hum, competent and dynamic people who register on the Internet."

He deposited his CV on the Internet, and regularly receives interesting offers. At the time of his interview, he had 130 offers to process. The private agencies told him he had excellent experience.

Hiroshi's discourse does not hint at any tensions or ambiguities between his different declarations and statuses, as is often the case with the other interviews. In appearance, everything is crystal clear for him and he knows exactly what he is doing. He has mastered the job search and has every hope of being able to pursue his professional career. Yet it becomes rapidly evident that some unspoken dilemma exists, *i.e.* the fact that the company in which Hiroshi had entered was a failure. But that was the fault of the "stupid" direction. It was not because he didn't know how to choose.

However, what finally reveals Hiroshi's vulnerability is, in the midst of his aggressive achiever discourse, the story of his illness. He was hospitalized twice, the first time during his second year in the Company, with the right side of his body paralyzed. Two weeks later he was back at work. The second time, the hospitalization lasted a full month, with the same symptoms, diagnosed as stress, followed by six months of convalescence. Since then, he has been under psychiatric treatment. During our interview, he was still

receiving treatment and was having a bout of depression. While he brags about all the offers he gets through the Internet, he tells us that he was rejected three times because of his health problem.

In Hiroshi's narrative, this ambivalence is not put into words, and his suffering remains unspoken, but they transpire through the story of his illness. His aggressive discourse takes on a particular significance when it is set next to what he says about his health: the competitive and dynamic self-image conveyed by Hiroshi is above all a defense mechanism in a situation of vulnerability that he is less and less able to control.

## 3.3. "I'm in a waiting period, training, resting up and recharging my battery."

The discourses grouped around this figure reveal a high awareness of career management and praise the value of professional mobility. A period of unemployment between two jobs is normal and there to be managed. The sharp awareness of the time they put into climbing the professional ladder or at least into maintaining their employability in the job market is the main feature they have in common.

We will use as an example the case of Fumiko, a 36 year-old woman. She lives with her husband, who is a civil servant. After a short (two years) college curriculum, she entered a bank as a regular employee and stayed there for nine years and six months. She quit because she could not do the work she wanted. She registered in a computer course and also took training in accounting, which she paid for herself. She spent one year looking for work and accepted a temp staff position in the accounting department of a company. Fumiko had registered in a temporary employment agency that belonged to the bank where she had worked before. After three months, she had a contract. Fumiko left after three years. One month later, following the suggestion of one of the chiefs in the bank where she had worked, she entered the company where she held her last employment. She stayed there for a year and three months. At the time of the interview, it had been a month since she had left her last employment. Fumiko began her story in the following manner:

"I'm looking for work again. I haven't begun answering the offers yet, but it's not because I made a mistake in the choice of my last firm, I want to examine them carefully and choose a company where I'll be comfortable working, so I'm looking for one that seems convincing even if that takes time. I'm already married, so if it's an offer with a lot of overtime, I won't be able to do it, that's a handicap and I have to remember that as I look." (Beginning of Fumiko's interview)

"Looking for work" comes first. Fumiko mentions that fact immediately when defining her situation. Next comes the time dimension ("choose well," "takes time"), followed by the evaluation of her difficulties, "married" therefore "handicapped." Her narrative shares with some of the older workers the fact of taking the time to find a good job offer, but her choice is not motivated by the perspective of retirement as is the case with the aged workers. On the contrary, Fumiko is plotting the course of her professional future, her career.

"If I had some extraordinary aptitude, I suppose I'd get offers from the recruiting officers of many companies, but I'm not at that point. So I must improve, don't you think, and try

to *career up*, if I don't, the doors of the firms I want are going to get smaller and narrower, I'll get older and older, and the doors will get even narrower. So I must study, train and improve... yes, that's my opinion."

The resemblance with the interviews of the older workers is due to the fact that their biological attributes, age or sex, have a social significance that puts them at a disadvantage on the labor market. But whereas in most of the older workers' interviews age is seen as the major drawback in finding work again, in Fumiko's interview, the discourse on age is ambivalent. Getting older certainly limits her chances of finding an interesting position, but paying people according to their age without taking their performances into account contributes to paralyzing the market and works against women, judged according to their biological and social traits (the status of housewife and mother), rather than for their competences.

"For women... married women, Japan is very tough. For instance, they say that if a woman goes on maternity leave, she won't find her desk when she returns. If they were more tolerant, if we could take our maternity leave without worrying, if such a system were put into place... I'd appreciate it. After all, they only count on single women. Once she's married, a woman really feels the pressure, it's hard to stay on, it's as if they came to suggest to you nicely to quit. You could live on what your husband earns, why do you stay? (...) There are many competent married women, but they won't get hired, no married women, no women with children. Ah, (…) when they're hiring, I'd like them to examine each case, to really look at us..."

"Concerning the status of a job, the salary should have nothing to do with age, it should depend on... competence or on the work you actually do. It's not fair that a middle-aged person should be well paid simply because they are old."

As we can see from these excerpts, for Fumiko, the female condition in Japanese society is the principal factor that a woman managing her career must take into account.[4] Becoming conscious of women's social situation, as we noted in the other narratives of our female interviewees, seems to spur a go-get-it or even an aggressive attitude concerning their future professional itinerary. Among the older male workers, it is rather discouragement that dominates. What is more, the feminist discourse is more socialized and collective, while the problem of discrimination due to age is much more recent and still strongly individualistic. The Japanese women's discourse is a result of the feminist movements that gained a place in society, and seems quite well-established and substantial. The unemployed persons grouped around this figure – all women – rarely express feelings of inferiority. This is doubtless at least partly due to having integrated the feminist discourse.

Fumiko's speech is marked by the perspective of personal progress ("level," "get better," "*career up*," "*grade up*") which, thanks to training, will become a real possibility. And in fact, in her description of the situation, training is placed squarely in the middle, where it takes on an ethical or even ascetic hue, for she uses the term *migaku*,[5] which means that training is seen as belonging to the register of self-improvement rather than as the apprenticeship of some technical know-how. Compared to Hiroshi, for whom the dynamic and activist aspect of the situation is connected mainly to the job search in its most immediate sense, Fumiko is waiting actively, investing in training, and her dynamic

pursuit of a professional career has become the trademark of her own personal and meaningful trajectory.

## 3.4. "Meanwhile, I'm looking to work part-time."

We will give as an example of this figure the case of Noriko, a young mother of 32. She lives with her husband and small daughter. After university, Noriko entered a firm in the apparel industry where she was in charge of sales in a department store. She worked there for six years, and was promoted to assistant manager. Being part of the hierarchy, Noriko had to submit to extremely hard and demanding working conditions, especially from the point of view of her schedule and the fact she had very few days off. Because of fatigue, she had a miscarriage, and decided to quit when once again she was pregnant.[6] During our interview at the PESO, Noriko came with her one year-and-four months old daughter and had been looking for work for the last four months. She carried out her job search through the PESO and the Websites.

This is how she answers our opening question:

"Now I'm looking for work. My daughter is only a year and four months old. So I have to put her in a nursery... take her to a day nursery... but it's hard to find a good nursery." (Beginning of Noriko's interview)

Thus, right from the start, she clearly declares her status as job seeker and stresses the difficulty in finding a day care center (she says "nursery" three times in five sentences) so as to be free to work. As the interview unfolds, her narrative contains references to a variety of statuses, from full-time employment to inactivity, but constantly returns to part-time work.

"I'm married and now I have this child. I must have my weekends off... I'm looking for work in graphic design... I went to a school."

"If we had enough money, I'd have preferred to stay at home and be a housewife but our house, for instance, we have to enlarge it, and there's my daughter's education to pay for, and so on. When I think of the future, I say to myself I must work."

"(…) until my daughter goes to elementary school, meantime I'm looking to work part-time, then when she goes to elementary school, full-time... that's what I'd like."

What her narrative and the other interviews in this group have in common is the ambivalence between activity and inactivity. Like Noriko, the other persons also describe their situation as being a passage during which they feel pulled apart, from the time they get married to the moment their child will be independent, tugged this way and that, as if they were floating, oscillating between looking for part-time or full-time work, and deciding to stay home, either for good or with the idea of going back to work later. There are nuances among those who have this perception of the situation, however: some individuals lean more towards inactivity and others towards working, still others speak of activities that lie outside the professional sphere. One of them speaks enthusiastically about her professional past, others speak of nerve-racking professional experiences, or talk about their past with detachment. Some vehemently declare they find the idea of staying home distasteful, while others defend the status of housewives and mothers.

We should note that in Japan, these individual experiences fit into a partly-formalized status of housewife-mother-worker. The weakness of the role of the State in the realm of

social protection explicitly signifies that personal services and health care are incumbent on the family and particularly on its female members. Various social and public measures have encouraged women to give priority to their role of housewife and mother, and to complete that role by working in some atypical employment[7]. Part-time employment for women is thus part of a configuration of the labor market that integrates the family institution. On the level of individual itineraries, such a social construction of the labor market contains potential disharmony between the statuses of housewife-mother and worker.

However, such tensions vary depending on the life cycle. Among our interviewees, the older women with grown children are those who expressed the greatest desire to be working. Since the children are independent, there is no more social sense in wanting to work part-time. But there are no job offers for full-time work for women that age. Those women are practically the only persons in our corpus who positively declared being unemployed, for inactivity has become totally senseless and women forced to accept it feel abandoned, disaffiliated. Women of Noriko's age, though, are, like she, more ambivalent.

## 3.5. "I don't really need to work."

Akira, a 45 year-old man, whose interview will be given as an example of this figure, lives with his wife, parents, uncle and three children. He had quit his last job a week before his interview. Here we have a narrative in which the relative passivity noted in the salaried employee is in lively contrast with his hyper-activity, engaged in something that is all at once physical, social and moral in his neighborhood community. After stopping school at 18, Akira worked in a gas station for three years. He then entered a storage company connected to the airport. He was promoted to a low-management position but then lost his job when the company closed. He finished paying his mortgage but still has his two children's education to pay for (the eldest goes to university, the second is in third year of high school and the little one is in elementary school). Financially, the family is not well off, but Akira's redundancy compensation and unemployment insurance allow him to take the time to find a suitable job. In fact, his situation of temporary unemployment does not bother him too much, because he was going to accept an important function in his residents' organization and had thought of quitting anyway if the company didn't appoint a substitute assistant to help him. For Akira, fulfilling his obligations to his neighbors comes before his professional ones, so that this denouement actually came as somewhat of a relief. What with all his local functions, to which he adds agricultural activities, his days are well filled.

"And besides, eh… at my age, it's my turn to take care of the local committee. So it's a good thing (to be unemployed now). It's my turn. This year it's my turn. There are a lot of things to settle, and I've often been forced to take time off from work… sometimes they couldn't give it to me, in a way I had a conflict there, so it's a good thing. This way (by being unemployed) I won't lose face in my local community.[8] So that's not bad (…) Next year I won't have that function any more, I'll be free to work again, there'll be no more problem. I live in the country. During the elections (for City Council), the members of the local committee have to take care of everything. We are the ones sent to the front (of the election campaign), we're obliged to take a week off. So I was on bad terms with my boss. I

said that if they didn't give me somebody to take my place, I'd quit. But finally the company shut down. So for me it's not the same as losing my job when I had nothing else to do but work."

What he does aside from his salaried employment is not described as being a refuge or a substitute activity. It is not something that people decide to do after a long and fruitless job search, to fill the empty place left in a life entirely built around work. Quite the contrary, Akira was even ready to drop his job in order to do his part in the neighborhood community. Such activities are vested with an importance that represents a certain competition with regard to salaried employment. In fact, these residential community networks have a long history. The smallest units were composed of from five to ten households and their main function was mutual assistance, of which the last manifestations were the organization of funerals. Community functions were hampered when salaried employment and the commercial services became massively widespread. As Akira's interview testifies, working conditions do not allow salaried workers to take time off in order to fill their various obligations within their local communities.[9] These networks nevertheless continue to exist, especially in the countryside, but also in certain large cities, and, as Akira's narrative shows, are integrated into local politics. However, whereas these networks are effective in many other domains, they do not function as a resource in the job search. Indeed, like Yûzô, Akira had many reservations about soliciting his acquaintances to help him find work.

"Yeah… if I ask them, there'll be a lot of consequences … if it's possible, the best thing is to join a company where you don't know anybody. (…) for us, it's the storage, the clients, the customs officers, and so on. I've met lots of different people (…) and I also have personal contacts. As a last resort I should perhaps ask them for their advice, but if it's possible, I'd like the same sort of work, but without any old connections. That would be the best solution."

The other discourses that fit in with this figure allude to alternative resources that permit them to manage financially without their salary. But the interviewees also describe their efforts to find work, or say they'll start working again later. What keeps them going, both as a financial resource and as an activity, is agriculture. And for Akira also, the activity he is doing in his community will only last one year. It is not a long term, alternative solution. In the end, and as a financial resource, Akira has the choice between starting a new job and becoming a full-time farmer. Even if he returns to being employed, Akira would like to work nights, for instance, which would allow him to continue working the fields. Akira has never felt so whole as since he quit his job, for he can fulfill his local obligations and work in the fields every day, while before, he could only do it on weekends.

Nevertheless, it must be noted that not only Akira, but two other interviewees as well, for whom agricultural labor was also an alternative resource, continue to look for employment with a certain detachment. The fact they have the possibility to practice an alternative activity does not incite them to quit the labor market definitively. Their attitude reflects the absence of a clean break between the peasantry and salaried labor in the industrial or tertiary sector. Like the women torn between their status of workers and housewife and mother, they hesitate between the status of farmer and employee.

## 3.6. "Work is not my entire life."

The interview that illustrates this figure was carried out with Yuriko, a young woman of 23 living at home with her parents. On the eve of our interview, Yuriko found a job a month after since she quit her last job.[10] At the end of her two-year university curriculum, Yuriko entered a company as a trainee. She stayed there for two years and five months. She left because of the bad working conditions (too much last-minute overtime). Before leaving her first employment, Yuriko had found her second job in a newspaper ad but had quit after a week because she felt that the accounting there verged on the fraudulent. In her interview, she grants little time and importance to the job search. It is true that she had not remained unemployed for very long. However, Yuriko talks at length about her interest in training. Contrary to Fumiko, Yuriko feels that training is an aim in and of itself, independently from searching for a job. After our opening question, her interview began as follows:

"I don't know if one can consider that work, but I'm going to computer school to get a diploma. As for the rest... I do what I feel like doing... How can I put it... it's my private opinion... Work is only to be able to live, one needs money. That's why I work. There are things I want to do and I need money to do them. That's why I work. It may not be correct thing to say, but if I had lots of money, I wouldn't work. What I'd like to do, but for the time being I'm not brave enough, I'd like to do volunteer work abroad." (Beginning of Yuriko's interview)

The vocabulary that characterizes the beginning of her interview contains: "school," "diploma," "feel like," "private opinion," "work for money," and "volunteer work." Yuriko has no compunctions about making her personal statement ("private opinion"). Her description of the situation is an attempt to free herself from the shackles of the values of a society of salaried employment, by toppling work from its pedestal and giving it only the status of a necessary evil ("work," "money"). It is interesting to point out here that wanting to free herself from those values is not the result of some traumatic lengthy period of unemployment. The values around which she is trying to build the meaning of her life are "feel like (desire)," "pleasure," "like" or "what I'm interested in." Concretely, it is about acknowledging the fact that training and apprenticeship can be legitimate activities, on one hand, about volunteer work on the other.

"For the moment, nothing is important or particularly meaningful to me. Right now, what counts is getting pleasure out of life. I try to take advantage of being alive. The reason why I'm going to computer school is because I like studying. When I finish, I'm going to try to get other diplomas. I'd like to try accounting and get a diploma as management consultant in social security and personnel."

"I make it a point not to spend money while I work. I save up, then I spend, when my savings are gone, I get another job. While I work I never spend! Books, for instance, I read at the library. I save up. Even after having worked, I don't spend easily. This time, I spent all my savings to register in the computer school. I like traveling. I try to travel with a minimum of spending. (...) I have absolutely no intention of getting married or founding a family. I'm very egocentric, so I prefer to live alone. I don't want diplomas in order to find a job. It's because I'm interested in learning things I don't know."

There is no trace in this discourse of aspiring to a professional career, and Yuriko is not even interested in long-term perspectives. What is at stake is being able to earn when necessary and spend less. However, this logic is not the same as the one that concerns managing with the odd jobs one is forced to do, and her discourse is dynamic and even aggressive rather than defensive, and tainted with optimism. It is neither a refuge or substitute activity, nor a better-than-nothing alternative. We might add that, among our interviewees, several of the aged workers also described their professional itinerary as having been, until the present crisis, marked by frequent job changes, also without any future perspectives but accompanied by optimism. What makes Yuriko's discourse different from theirs is her sharp awareness of the constraints of salaried employment and her attempts to free herself from them. But we must note she is still young (23), and that at that age, she can find work with relative ease. Moreover, she is living at home with her parents. It would be interesting to see how her discourse will have changed when she is older and has more difficulty in finding the right job that allows her to make a living and be independent. Besides, Yuriko has not yet found an alternative for the work ethic. The training she desires belongs to the universe of work and volunteering is still a very vague and abstract notion. For the time being, she puts across her way of thinking forcefully, but behind this façade Yuriko's situation remains delicate and uncertain.

## 4. Interpretations of the unemployment experience in Brazil

To define their situation in the labor market, the persons interviewed in Brazil brought into play a diversified vocabulary, and several different categories and structures. Identifying them allows us to show that unemployment takes on a great variety of subjective significations and is vested with many different definitions of the situation. We are going to explore that diversity by analyzing six cases, represented by six stock phrases borrowed from the inventory of figures of unemployment in Brazil (schema 3). The phrases were selected either for their density, *i.e.* their wealth of meaning, or because of their aptitude to resume and synthesize many different perceptions. Each stock phrase will therefore be examined by detailing the variants of what they contain and describing the interviewees in whose discourse those ideas were found. Such an analysis supposes a three-step procedure. The first step consists in studying the lexical constructions used by the interviewees when describing their situation: the answers to our opening question provide the clue. The second step reveals that the arguments put forward during the interaction with the interviewer serve to back up the construction used at the start of the interview, and how those arguments reveal, clarify or confirm that initial structure. The third step puts the accent on the key tension points in the discourse that seem to have organized the entire argument.

### 4.1. "I'm looking for a bonafide opening in my field."

This first discursive structure seems to be above all a refusal to acknowledge the unemployment situation and insisting on the job search, but not a search for just any job: the person claims to want a qualified position in the specific sector where he or she has already had professional experience. This discursive structure is most likely to be found in

the interviews of individuals whose professional histories comprise the following traits: certain continuity in their previous itinerary, the recurrence of long-term jobs, negotiations prior to leaving a post, and only short periods of unemployment. This way of living a situation of unemployment is typical of those persons whose professional itinerary was stable and "virtuous," interrupted only because of an unexpected lay off in times of economic crisis. The individual concerned does therefore know what long-term job deprivation is like, but the ordeal comes to an end with finding a new job more or less in the line one was looking for. The case of Emiliano, a former logistics executive who had occupied his position for 15 years, is a good example of the way this sort of discourse is built.

Two interconnected elements give us the key to this first typical case: the fact that Emiliano's present situation is defined by referring to the labor market and the way he expresses his desiderata in view of that same market. Induced by our introductory question to talk about his situation today, Emiliano answered very objectively – and that is significant – by mentioning his *curriculum vitae*, presently navigating in the virtual world on the lookout for a job. "My CV is on Internet," he says. Is there a more impersonal, a more distant and disincarnated way to speak about oneself and the experience we have classified as the unemployment situation? Only afterwards does he speak of himself, to say that he does not in fact have work, but that he is in the process of looking for "a bonafide opening," one that corresponds to "my specialty."

Later, during the interview, the word "unemployment" finally makes its appearance. But even then, he uses a verbal construction that reiterates his refusal to even consider himself unemployed, or as a person in a state of unemployment. Which is why he says "I put myself on unemployment," a grammatical form that might seem absurd in the sense that it gives the subject an active role whereas in that situation he is of necessity passive. In fact, Emiliano had not quit his job "asking" to be made redundant, which would be the grammatically correct form, but he "had been fired," or, to use the negative word, "I was put on unemployment." How did Emiliano manage to build up an argument using the active form ("I got myself fired" says he) for an action that can only sustain the passive form ("I was fired")? To do this, he summoned two types of argumentation. In the first place, being laid off had been unexpected; secondly, when faced with redundancy, he chose, at least at the beginning, to accept a job offer only if it was in his field and guaranteed a certain professional status. Only when he speaks as an executive, *i.e.* as someone who has the power to fire *other people*, does Emiliano speak curtly of himself as somebody who "was fired:"

"Firing somebody is a terrible thing. Being fired is also (he laughs). I myself had never been, eh! But firing somebody... good Lord! To fire somebody is dreadful."

Once unemployed, he couldn't bear doing the housework and watch his wife leave every morning for the firm that had fired him. He forced her to quit her job and take care of the house. At first, they lived off his unemployment compensation, then, since he could not find anything in his branch, he began to do consulting freelance at the request of the former president of the company where he had worked and who had started up his own business. But for him, this was not "real" work, because it was not steady and didn't generate a regular income.

"So I started consulting freelance. But in reality, that isn't what I want, sometimes there's work and sometimes there isn't and I have several mouths to feed."

Towards the end of the interview, we finally hear that the unemployment condition is weighing him down. But there again, he uses words that set him apart from the mortal, ordinary unemployed:

"When he (his former president) sent an E-mail to those guys (those who had signed the contract with them both) he used the title "Master of logistics". He said: "See the work done by our Master of logistic!" I said to my wife: "an unemployed Master of logistics!" (He laughs). Those guys don't know! God damn it, it's not possible I can't find something."

We can sum up the elements that characterize this first situation as follows: it centers on one specialization or skill validated by a professional past; the professional objective includes self-fulfillment that depends on know-how and a certain professionalism allowing one to survive in spite of the instability (the individual builds up networks that help him survive or search for a job and starts looking for alternatives by resorting to modern means such as the Internet). If at times he fails, he feels he can overcome it and remains active despite his angst; he refuses to call himself unemployed; losing his job is presented as an accident that he can handle even if it drags on longer than expected.

We identified at least four poles of tension that structure this way of living the unemployment situation: first, the tension between survival (and the breadwinner role) and professional fulfillment; secondly, the contrast between his former executive status and the inadequate job offers he receives; thirdly, the tension between his anxious job search and holding on to a professional identity (logistics) and status (executive); finally, the opposition between having been made redundant, described as accidental, and the fact that the state of job deprivation endures.

## 4.2. "I make do while I study."

Here, the person's personal project occupies a central position, but contrary to the structure described above, it does not justify refusing job offers judged inadequate; on the contrary, the personal project aims to support every attempt to enter the labor market, in the sense that it permits filling in the gaps (especially with training programs) and preparing one's "true" entry into the market. That is what certain of our young interviewees (such as Di, Mar, Kel) are doing, applying strategies in which precarious or seasonal employment is only a way of covering the cost of one's studies and/or one's personal expenses, but without losing sight of one's professional horizon. Most of these young people do not see themselves as unemployed and sometimes they don't feel as if they were already in the labor market, even though, like Di, they are already in it. They project themselves into a future of "really" entering the market and making their project come true.

Di is a 17 year-old boy just finishing high school. On the three occasions we met, once with the team of the PED through a questionnaire, the other two times with our team of interviewers, he said his income came from street vending, selling meat on the spit (*churrasquinho*), a business run by his father and an uncle. Speaking about his present work situation, he unhesitatingly uses the most current lexical form employed by the Brazilian precarious worker: "I make do" ("I get by"). As our relationship becomes more

trusting, during the second interview, Di apparently feels more comfortable and goes a bit further in verbalizing the situation; on a note of near intimacy, he confides to the woman doing the interview what his answer would have been if a peer, a fellow-student at the University where he will be going, asked him the same question:

"(When at University) somebody asks me "what do you do," I never say I work, I say: "Well... I help my father... He sells *churrascos*, that's his job, eh? Well, it's my job too, I think that... today I'm studying so I can get work."

What composes the argument that supports this particular way of talking about one's professional activity and about oneself?

"I'm with my father now, I work, I even get a small salary which is enough for me. I'm waiting to have finished school to put … to put my CV on the net."

During our second interview, school was over. Di had entered University and put most of his energy into preparing his career as a biologist, while still peddling in the street. He doesn't feel unemployed. As a matter of fact, as we saw, he doesn't even consider himself to be working.

As in this typical case, at least three poles of tension seem to enter into the definition of the situation. The first lends meaning to the others. Its territory is one's self-image. He who is addressing us is indeed already a worker (he has a regular, albeit precarious, activity) but his personal identity is organized around a different social status, the status of college student. The second point concerns the personal project. It continues being, if not unrealistic, a risky proposition that may never get to be implemented. And in fact, after our three meetings and nearly two and a half years, in spite of having entered University and having elaborated a plan for a training period, Di continues helping his father as street vendor. Finally, a third pole of tension concerns – and seems to harness – the elaboration of Di's identity: daily he has come against the permanent reality of precarious employment, but he believes a horizon exists, a window that opens wide on professionalization, on a "job in my field of study."

Di's argumentation echoes Mar's, another young man of 19 who, while still at school, had helped his father in his café with a work permit since he was 14. That work permit makes him a *fichado* worker, a situation that, as we will see, represents a dream for some, but is nevertheless not enough for Mar to consider himself as anything but a student. At the time of the interview, he was taking a course on tourism at a prestigious State university and had just succeeded in joining the police force. Mar declares:

"It's pretty hard to find a training period in first year... it's badly paid.... I'm in the process of trying out that sort of work (in the police force). Afterwards, I'll look for something in my field."

In other words, he puts on the same footing "I help my father" in his café (with a work permit), and his regular job in the public sector (in the police force); both are only insignificant jobs, antechambers in which to await what comes next and what he will try to make come true, *i.e.* "something in my field."

But sometimes, the professional horizon is not very far away, in which case the difficulty to access the labor market, the "real" labor market, is more clearly perceived. For instance, Kel, a 19 year-old girl, was induced by her present project to carry out a systematic search for work in her field. She showed the same unwillingness to call herself

unemployed: her self-image is not that of a non-working woman but of someone looking for work in their own field. To quote Emiliano, Kel is also on the lookout for "real" work. But differently from Emiliano, Kel feels another sort of anguish that – and we can sense it in the undercurrent of her discourse – challenges the elaboration of her identity: Will I be able to get a job? But, even if she doesn't admit it, like Di and Mar, Kel has *always been* in the labor market, she worked every year during Christmas time and nearly every weekend in a company that cultivates flowers belonging to friends who are neighbors of hers; she took care of children on a regular basis; she also worked as a salesgirl in a stationary store.

Yet, even though she had been looking for a job for over a year at the time of her first interview, Kel does not call herself a worker or see herself as being lastingly unemployed, no more than Di and Mar do. We kept their interviews in our study because they corresponded to the profile of our target-group of young adults, *i.e.* having an average amount of schooling and being on the lookout for a first employment. But their interviews are eloquent on this point: they have occupied many activities in the working world, often since childhood, but do not consider that they fit into the repertory of what they call "work." Consequently, according to them they cannot be unemployed; they are simply looking for a first job.

## 4.3. "I've got to make do somehow."

The third discursive structure is built around the urgency of "making do in any possible way," which gives meaning to the situation with regard to the labor market. Thus, an active and pointed job search aiming at a certain type of employment disappears in favor of any activity that might guarantee the survival of the individuals and their family.

This also implies that another organization of the social fabric (family or professional) exists in Brazil, or another way of relating to the full range of workers' rights (the indemnity has already been spent or the work contract did not include any; and there is little likelihood to be eligible for one of the government transition or assistance programs). For either or both of these reasons, the discourse about oneself is molded around the persistent image of a "fighter" (*que está na batalha*), an "honest worker," someone who "has always worked." Does this mean that they don't acknowledge their status as unemployed? Often, they do. But they are not looking any more to find the same activity they had before, or even to restart in the same field or start a new career. Sometimes, they no longer even believe there may be a way out of their present unstable and precarious predicament.

This discursive structure is the one that includes the largest number of cases, which goes to show how frequent it is that the job search must be carried out parallel to any sort of occupation that gives the possibility of continuing to look for a better one, *i.e.* a regular and better paid job with a work permit while "making do" in the meanwhile ("*se virando, de alguma maneira*"). This figure also covers the greatest diversity of age groups, sexes, and professional itineraries: former managers or forewomen, former workers, mothers. A few examples will illustrate this.

Astrud, a former executive, is 39 and never got her university diploma:

"No, I'm not working, I'm looking for work but I'm already old …they hire *young* people and even they (...) So I've got to make do one way or another, because I still have two young children in school and everything. From time to time I get depressed, I stay

home, I stop looking. Because you go somewhere where you're sure … but then no, they don't give you the job. I go home defeated, I start to cry and I think I'll never look again, let God's will be done. I collect and keep tin cans to sell, I write tele-messages[11] for my neighbors, to buy my stuff, that's how I live (...) that's my situation, but I think it's not only mine, it's the situation in Brazil."

Maria, 52, dropped out of elementary school; she used to be a forewoman, supervised the cleaning department in a large building company:

"I don't have work, I don't have work. I'm looking, I'm looking, but it's hard because of my age and also because my level of education is very low. You get very sad with all that, because you feel a little lost, don't you? So that's it, they fired me and until now sometimes I do an odd job, sometimes I do nothing."

Prestes, 42, a former metalworker in a large assembly factory:

"I worked on a production line; so ... you do... you work... a little bit of everything... canalizations, sewers, that sort of thing. (...) How I manage? I manage to scrape a living, but it's meager, very meager... I lost my job in 94. (Since) 94, I haven't been able to find a job with a work permit so I just make do... with a little help from my friends, an odd job here and there, you see? That's how we work. As for eating, sometimes the church helps."

This type of discourse, built around an uncontrollable present that one can't do anything about, – but which does not mean that one has to accept it – can be found among women too, those who belong to the group of mothers, such as Gina (42, university graduate). She had stopped working to raise her children and take care of her family. She is now trying to get back to work, unsuccessfully however, even after having obtained, at high personal cost, a university diploma:

"Am I unemployed? I am. But I've always worked (...) I've always worked, since I was a little girl (...) Now I work at home; but these days, working at home... Sometimes I cut hair, sometimes nothing. I took a course to be a beautician, now I'm specialized. But that's not what I want to do. I want to work outside, because I think that at home I can't earn what I deserve (...) Unfortunately, I only got my university diploma a short while ago. I've sent out several CVs, I don't know how many I sent, but I didn't find anything. I just finished taking the competition at the City Council for a job teaching, but they mostly take people with experience. So the newcomers are left behind. But I sent so many CVs, even to a hotel to be a chambermaid, can you believe it? Well, I did, but I didn't get anything back, not even an answer, nothing. (I wrote) to all sorts of companies, first in my field, then for anything at all."

This difficulty also crops up in the narrative of a young girl like Car, 19, who is still finishing high school. She talks about unemployment using many of the same terms as the adults:

"(Unemployment) is a terrible thing, isn't it? Because at home you have no money and pretty soon you have nothing at all and you start feeling pretty desperate and... it's hard to stay home with no money. Obviously, money isn't everything. But without money, you want to buy something... and it's impossible. So it's dreadful to fall into unemployment. I started working a little (she refers to her present job as waitress in a company restaurant). I'm asking a girlfriend to send out my CV, just in case."

The discourse of all these individuals is earmarked with ambivalence. Compared with what they used to be, with what they've dreamed of or desired being, they feel and declare they are "unemployed." But in the face of the necessities of daily life, or survival, "they make do," "they fight," *i.e.* they are "working," are "workers." All this makes them feel they are up against the same destiny that affects a large part of the Brazilian population who lost their employment at a bad time in the economic cycle (job offers are few, hiring has become more and more selective), and/or in their own life cycle (they are the wrong age, for example). That ambivalence, however, does not assuage a strong sense of solitude and disenchantment compared with their dreams, their lives; they are resigned in the face of a present they cannot transcend, that keeps them down in an undesirable but necessary job. Keeping up the talk about the importance of continuing the job search, even if only by spurts and fruitlessly, remains for them a way to express their energy: it is a way of declaring that, although their job search is not very active, job deprivation remains a fact as well as their desire for an idealized professional occupation. The present situation is marked by the necessity to survive and they keep busy in erstwhile and precarious activities. Survival thus becomes the key category here, even more so than work, revealing the mechanism by which the subjects make sense of their situation.

## 4.4. "Aside from professional work, I do things that fulfill me."

This sort of discursive structure is organized around an activity that may eventually generate some income but that is above all the basis of a project that makes sense of the individual's situation. It is never presented as an activity that must be done (and consequently recognized symbolically or concretely) in the official market. Yet, the individuals concerned do not feel unemployed and *a fortiori* are not looking for work. Their project is set in a different perspective, it stems from a different motivation, which also enters into the way they speak about themselves.

The activity is sometimes volunteer or charity work. That is Lélio's case, a former manager and freelance corporate consultant with a successful career. It can also be offers of magical-religious support to people who feel the need for it. Georgete, formerly a worker, was forced to retire because of a physical incapacity following an industrial injury. She discovered in the Guarani cultural traditions the origins of her own family and the crux of a whole new self-definition[12]. Lelio and Georgete have serious physical problems themselves that permanently prevent them from working. But they have completely rebuilt their relationship to the working world and have dedicated themselves to helping others through acts of solidarity, charity, help and care. This is what Lélio told us:

"My employment situation is not a problem. I'm not looking for work. Of course, I'd need a job, but I know I won't find it. In Brazil if you're over 40, or as soon as you're 40, you can apply for a sort of death certificate as far as working goes. No, I'm not looking for work, I'm fed up with it. But if someone made me an offer: 'listen, I'd like you to.., would you..?', ' It's cleaning up in the rear of the house, '' Sure, I'll do it.' You understand? But if the guy says: ' I want to take advantage of your experience,' that I won't accept, that guy's trying to take me in (…) What would I like to do professionally speaking? I don't know. Aside from my professional work, I already do things (...) it's very satisfying (he is referring to the work he does as a volunteer, writing letters for illiterate people) and in my

case that's very important. The day he came to tell me that (he is referring to the thanks he received from a young black man, an illiterate from Nordest region who, thanks to the letter written by Lélio, had been able to get in touch with his mother again) I never felt as useful in all my life as at that moment. Well, and on top of that we're active, and..."

Devoting oneself to those who are in need, or frail, either permanently or temporarily, for physical or emotional reasons, can also take the form of throwing oneself into a relationship with a friend or relative that makes the situation meaningful. That is the case with Dalva and Marlene.

Dalva is a former textile worker, proud of what she did in the factory she had worked in since she left the Nordest region for Sao Paulo a long time ago. When the company shut down the production plant where she was working, she negotiated her departure. At the death of her alcoholic husband, she took it upon herself to care for a handicapped child (Down's syndrome).

"I've done nothing but work all my life, since I was 10 (...) I made do. In the North, I babysat, I cleaned houses, to be able to have something to wear, something to eat. Now, in Sao Paulo, I didn't want that anymore! I wanted the big companies. Not work for the poor, no, only for the rich! ( ... ) I worked for the T. textile factory for about twenty-two years or more. I didn't even want to go on vacation, only work (...) I stayed home for two weeks (She continues on the subject of her retirement) Oh, I cried for three days without stopping. Because when I retired I still worked one more year for the company. (...) And if it hadn't gone, I'd still be there today. (...) It wasn't really possible, because my mother was taking care of my son, but she passed away."

Marlene too had been a worker in a handbag manufacturing factory before she was laid off. She turned to a niece to whom she was close, since that niece had witnessed her life with her husband, including his murder a week after their wedding.

"She (her niece) lived here in the same street and we were always together, she was accustomed to us and when he died, he was holding her in his arms, he had just put her in her crib when the thug came and shot him; he killed him by mistake (...) I was married for 29 days. I'm unemployed, never went to school, so it's no use looking for work. I went out to look, but I didn't find anything so I gave up. No schooling, and now everything is computers... impossible, I don't have any. (I survive with) a rental and my pension, it's my husband's (...) I don't have any plans, it's God who makes the plans. If there is, I work, if there isn't, I'm not going to go crazy, am I? I can survive on my pension."

Dalva and Marlene are both on retirement, either on their own account or as a widow. Both of them, as opposed to Lélio and Georgete, would accept a small job if it turned up, because their pension is not very good. Yet neither is systematically looking for work, they still define themselves as unemployed. Each of them is involved in an alternative activity structured by a strong emotional tie with someone close.

As in the previous case, we have here the recognition that both employment and professional ambition are lacking, but without this leading to a job search. Rather, talking about looking for a job has a metaphorical function, expressing their dissatisfaction with the way things are. But that dissatisfaction does not lead to being imprisoned by some urgent and precarious activity representing their only means of subsistence. Instead, the particularities of their biographical itineraries and personal histories make it possible to

give yet another interpretation of the present state of affairs, through their involvement in alternative projects, whether personal or other-directed.

## 4.5. "I think I'll start working again; later, who knows?"

This type of discourse is marked by a tendency to shake free from the labor market, but it is not a real or definitive exit from it. In fact, the withdrawal is accompanied by reiterating one's desire to work and insisting on the great value of professional activity. Yet the job search is not the decisive element in the person's identity or daily behavior. On the contrary, these are still inscribed and enclosed in the domestic family universe, even if there are no more small children left to care for.

This sort of discourse is exclusively feminine, and the women repeatedly stress how much pleasure they get out of working, if only because it gets them out of the house, into an extra-familial world. More than the features of the job itself, the activity, or the status, what counts most is the fact one has an occupation. Even the women who were middle or high-ranking executives before, hardly claim a professional identity for themselves, and many of them talk about having been promoted to their managerial position as being an extraordinary event rather than the crowning of their career.

"Since I was very young I always wanted to learn things, everything. I, I tried, but not the homely things like knitting, crocheting; those things are not for me. My thing is being out of the house (…) I think that every woman wants to work outside. To see what life is like outside, to see what it's like, living with other people (...) So I think, they really want to see, or they want to try out if they're able to do something else (...) If you stay home, you think of so many things. You live, fortunately you manage. But me, I wanted to have my job, my money, I wanted to see what it was like to hold my salary in my hand and say: my God, this is it, I worked, I earned it." (Nara)

Hardship in finding work is mentioned over and over. And it is often put down to age (in particular by the managers), or to lack of experience and/or a low or inexistent level of education. These women systematically resort to public employment policies or social assistance measures (in Brazil this means government programs such as the "Front for Work" (*Frente de Trabalho*) or "Start again" (*Começar de Novo*)), or to public agencies (such as the unemployment agencies run by the Administration or the Labor Unions). The mothers, especially those who are heads of household, even poorer than others, use this type of strategy most. But it often turns out to be useless because no answer is forthcoming (from the agencies) or because of insufficient financing (the case of aid programs that only last a short time or are unable to satisfy a large demand).

"If I was able to work, if there was, I'd work; at least I'm in the middle of looking for service. Day before yesterday, I even filled out a card in the schools that have the "Front for Work." I look, I get information from people to see if can get something; I don't know if I will, but I'm looking (...) because it's a bit heavy (to reconcile an eventual occupation with household work), with three children to take care of all alone, but if I manage to get something, I'll try." (Mara)

"The situation is difficult; the last employment I had was in the "Front for Work." But then, finished. (…) I do laundry, I iron when there is ironing, don't I? You run after it, you find with a lot of hardship, a lot of expense." (Ema)

Living conditions are extremely difficult, marked by urgency, as is brutally put by those women who say they are "at the bottom of the abyss." Facing the limited efficiency of the institutional mechanisms of social protection, they manage to preserve their personal identities thanks to three elements which converge in their narrative: withdrawing within the family, feeling protected by relatives and, even more frequently, by neighbors backed by friendship networks (*os irmãos de fé*) and/or by religious institutions, in particular the new Pentecost sects through whom the aid transits. True, these are fragile solutions and their limits can clearly be seen in the sobs and tears that interrupt the narratives, even in front of the foreign lady interviewing them.

"Inside the house, you know, not having employment is a serious problem because you miss out on one thing, you miss out on another, what are we to do? You're the household head, you're desperate, you're often desperate, because when it comes time to eat, they want to eat, they don't want to know where it's coming from, they're hungry. So it's a little piece here, a little piece there, but only the main things, the rice, the beans, that's all, there is no more (...) Today I cried a lot because we're often very nervous, in this situation... (Ema weeps). And there is the church, isn't there? And I don't even go to church; it's my oldest son who was baptized and all. So the church comes, they help with the staples; not a very big bag, a pack of rice, two liters of oil, but it helps. After that, they help with shoes, that's good, isn't it? My friends give, don't they? They help, because they see my situation. And that's where I am at, I make do with that." (Ema)

In these circumstances, unemployment tends to be experienced not only as an individual problem but as the problem of the entire family. Children, neighbors, relatives, everybody is looking for work. These cases are thus less a description of individual situations of job deprivation than of a whole context of deficiency, "true territories of unemployment". In this sense, individual failure translated by the incapacity to find employment becomes the failure of the closest social group, a failure aggravated by the sensation that politics are unable to find a solution for poverty. As to the women who had occupied managerial positions, or the mothers with husbands, their isolation within the family seems to be a point of arrival: they are under pressure from the lack of employment and from the responsibilities that society places on mothers' shoulders and that they have taken to heart. Yet, though the need to work can be said to be urgent and necessary, it means other things too, such as autonomy with respect to one's husband, being able to use one's own money, to satisfy private needs independently. Isolation within the family cell, in turn, is only the extreme form of a woman's being a prisoner of the gender roles in society. The narratives of those who had worked in important positions are eloquent accounts of curtailed careers, often broken or endangered because of their own sense of responsibility for the family. Even when they occupied a high position, they were obliged to enter and leave the labor market, not so much because of the birth of a child but far more because of the pressure exerted by their husbands, who thought they were capable of supporting the family. Which is why when the husbands disappeared (through alcoholism, separation, or death), the women went back to work, even if their children were still small.

"She (her eldest daughter) was pregnant when she got married, you see? And her baby was born and only lived twenty days; and she died too. So I was really stressed out, you know? In, in our heads. Worrying about work, worrying about the children, I was very

worried about my daughter because of the first child, you know? Me too, very ... wrought up: the first grandchild we had waited for so long! All that really got to me. So I thought it was better for me to leave the firm, take some time off, you see? Rest, O.K.; put my ideas in order, first, so that later I can go back to doing something else, you know?" (Nara)

Finally, the Brazilian survey shows that the experience of job deprivation, for these women, was not the same as the experience of not working. The mothers and wives who were ex-managers, once isolated in their families because of having lost their job, have days that are even busier than working women. Not only do they take care of their homes, they take on whole series of activities that can bring in money and that they can do at home (jams, cakes, meals, make-up, hair-dressing...) or away from home, at the relatives' or the neighbors' (watching the grandchildren, cleaning house, mending clothes, even if very irregularly, in exchange for a little money). Their availability for these extra chores is great. True, they are unemployed, but simultaneously and paradoxically, overworked.

## 4.6. "I'd rather die …."

In other cases, however, not having a job does indeed signify not working, for men particularly. Sometimes that lack is temporary and the (also temporary) solutions demonstrate very clearly the extent to which different expectations tend to shape gender relations. Two male interviewees illustrate this eloquently. Hildegardo, who lost his job, forced his wife to quit hers so that he would not have to do the housework while she left for work. Roberto had accepted to take care of the children while his wife did housecleaning during the day; however, that situation cost him so much emotional stress that "his head filled up with crazy ideas". But both men thought it possible that their unemployment situation would come to an end: their professional past and their aptitude for hard work let them hope they would be reintegrated. Without minimizing the tension and suffering that long-term unemployment caused in both their cases, Hildegardo and Roberto have nonetheless managed to preserve their emotional integrity and continue believing in their chances to find a way out of their predicament.

That is hardly the case with José or Antonino, whose interviews will illustrate our last discursive structure. Theirs are extreme situations in which the absence of work, persistently and subjectively acknowledged as insurmountable, casts doubt on their self-esteem. The situation makes them sharply aware that they have failed as breadwinners, the symbol of their masculinity. The way they talk about their life reveals broken self-images. This is visible in their words, their silences and even their tears (so rare) – men weeping in front of women (wives, daughters, female interviewers).

Let us risk a hypothesis: the fact of being isolated within the family cell (described in the preceding case), attaches the women (the preceding configuration is exclusively feminine, as we have seen) to the domestic sphere, thus in a way protecting them from the most extreme emotional breakdown. Even when they were out of work and excluded "from life with other people," as Nara put it, these women were sure of being anchored in other domains, *i.e.* caregiving to both old and young; organizing family routines; making up for an insufficient income by doing the housework for free and by doing small chores that bring in a little money. Even though it is a heavy and oppressive set of chores, housework rekindled their sense of being useful, and made them also, in their own way,

breadwinners. The situation is not the same for the men. For Hildegardo and Roberto, their place is not the domestic sphere; working in it humiliates them and can only last a very short time. When the time starts stretching out indefinitely and, even worse, when they see no way to escape domestic isolation any more, the ideal of Self falls apart.

José and Antonino are former workers who jealously hold on to their role as breadwinners.

"I have two granddaughters, there are... my, there's my wife, must help my father, he's already old and can't anymore either, there are men who are also sick. What can I do with all that? It's not even possible to buy enough rice for the month... And then, he (his ex-boss) said, you know... he said: what do you want... I don't owe you anything anymore." (José)

"You can believe me, it's difficult. If a person is over... over 36, he won't find work anymore, over 35. Now, imagine this if you can, a person over... over 35, 40 or more, obliged to work, because he's got a family to feed, doesn't he? He's going to stay unemployed. That's not right, is it? Don't you agree, aren't I right?" (Antonino)

They find no employment on the market, not even an odd job. And, a circumstance that makes things worse, José lost his retirement pension and lives, like the mothers who are heads of households, in utter poverty. He was unable to finish the interview and hid in the kitchen to cry, crying like many of the women, out of sight of his wife who kept interrupting, ceaselessly correcting his mistakes and his memories.

"There comes a time when you, you can't, you no longer want to work. You're no longer the same, isn't it so? Do you agree? (…) So there comes a time when you have to manage to get supported (*se encostar*), don't you?" (he is referring to the errands he did to obtain his pension) (Antonino)

"The situation for me is very difficult, really very hard, because ... I had an accident several years ago, and I was retired, and six years ago they stopped my pension, six years. So... they made me "hang around" (...) they chased me here and there, and no way of finding a job. Then an odd job here, an odd job there, but no employment. Sometimes the person pays you, others pay a little bit at a time, and then it's finished and you're the neediest in the world. There are times you'd rather die" (José). "Sometimes he is so nervous! He shouldn't be like that, should he?" adds his wife who was present during the interview.

José and Antonino talk about having no activity, no work "in the street." For them, the contrast between "work at home" and "work in the street" is very painful because it means emptiness, the absence of activity, the visible incapacity to exert their masculine role of breadwinner, and all this without having the least solution in sight. They live in emotional turmoil. The interviews bring to the surface problems of alcoholism and the temptation to put an end to one's life.

## 5. Proximity and distance between the three countries

Carrying out an international comparison founded even partially on biographical interviews, as ours is here, confronts the researcher with daunting problems, due to the many various and heterogeneous elements the corpus contains. First, a comparison is exposed to the classical difficulties connected to the way the biographical interviews are

used. If one can admit that the subjective meaning of a discourse is not reducible to its linguistic significance, clearly then it is not enough to be able to understand a language in order to grasp what a person meant to say (Demazière, Dubar, 1997). Within a single linguistic universe, meaning does not boil down to the words employed, and the sociological analysis of an interview cannot simply consist in noting similarities in vocabulary. If one is to take seriously what people say, one cannot reduce this diversity too quickly, by moving on to cross-analytical categories, which have every chance of betraying the discourse they are supposed to account for.

Those difficulties are even greater when several languages are involved, as is the case here, since interviewing was done in Brazilian Portuguese, French and Japanese. How can these corpora of discourses recorded in different languages be compared at all, given that each already contains considerable internal variation? How can one decide that the signification attributed to the situation of unemployment in a Japanese interview is close, or even similar, to the one expressed in a Brazilian or in a French discourse? Of course, for the same reasons as mentioned above, it would be perfectly vain, and even beside the point, to try and build tables of equivalences, in the style of specialized trilingual dictionaries.

These obstacles in the research scholar's way justify that we describe in detail the methods we used to compare the three sets of interviews, and to account for the main steps in the comparative approach. Our first remark concerns the great variety of figures of unemployment that apparently exist in each of the countries. Unemployment breaks up into a myriad of varied interpretations that are not reducible one to the other: what does an unemployed person who, throughout his or her interview, insisted on the personal project that will guarantee getting a good position in the labor market, have in common with the one who clamors that professional horizons are totally obscured and that life is hardly worth living, or again the persons who handle the difficulties to go back to work by giving meanings to alternative activities with ambiguous status, or yet again those who are actively searching for work and convinced their efforts will be crowned with success in the end? A situation coded in an identical manner ("unemployment") is thus categorized in very different ways by the individuals who have to face it in real life.

This diversity, which is a characteristic of all the situations, invites us to delve further into the questions that will guide our comparison: do these heterogeneous elements have certain traits in common, do they share certain polarities, are they structured in a similar fashion? We will try to answer these questions. That will be the first step bringing us closer to the main objective of our research, namely to identify how this complexity is organized, what the poles that structure the identifications are, and then, what the differences and the resemblances existing between the three national contexts, but also between the target-groups in the three countries, may be.

## 5.1. Cross-analytical categories

The figures of unemployment we uncovered fit into a very broad spectrum, because in each of the three countries the ways people interpret their own situations are very diverse. But is that diversity each time specific to the social context, or are there proximities and similarities that cross national boundaries? For the moment, we will explore that question

by considering the proximity hypothesis, which will be further refined and partially readjusted further on. After having identified certain cross-national figures, which show that the verbal expressions of biographical experiences of unemployment are not incommensurable from one country to another, we will isolate the lines of tension that structure and organize the differences observed.

### 5.1.1. Shared regularities and significations

The proximity hypothesis can be borne out by placing side by side and comparing those discourses collected in each of the countries that might, beyond the differences of language, have the same signification. We will present a few examples to show how we proceeded to do this.

Such attempts to pool the discourses together can be illustrated by presenting and discussing all those definitions of the situation (of unemployment) that hinged on the *job search*. That interpretation of unemployment is found in interviews in the three countries, even though similarity does not mean there are no subtle differences. In these discourses, the job search is related as being the person's main activity, giving meaning to their real-life situation, occupying all their waking hours, and leads to their vision of their future employment. It is a discourse that dilutes unemployment in the activity of searching for work and in the competition to succeed. It also presents a few specific traits according to the country.

For instance, in the French case, the emblematic terms and colloquial expressions were "I've got my plan for finding a job," "I know where I'm going," "I've understood one needs to hang on," "I don't ask, I offer what I know how to do, it's very important;" in Japan, we found rather the following: "I'm looking for a company that will allow me to further my career," "I must protect my career plan," "according to private agencies, my experience is excellent," "dynamic and competent people are registered on the Internet, like I am;" while in Brazil, one finds: "my CV is on the Internet," "that's how I see myself," "I've put myself on unemployment," "it's not possible that I can't find anything." These short excerpts are naturally not interchangeable. However, one can immediately note that, associated to action verbs, the subject is, if not systematically present, omnipresent, whether explicitly or not. [13] The subject of the utterance is staged in a position of mastery, in control of his/her situation and itinerary. Sharing this characteristic does not erase the particularities of the discourses, but it does make them strongly specific, compared to the rest of the corpus.

Thus, it appears that in France, the outstanding point is the claim that the job search is being carried out in a professional manner, sustained by the belief that sooner or later there will be results, and by experiences guaranteeing that one has gone through apprenticeships and acquired certain competences. This refrain is linked to the massive apparatus, mainly public, that provide assistance in the job search, whether through professional assessments, training periods, guidance interviews, or lessons on techniques of searching for employment: such help and assistance have become the vehicle transmitting the norms of behavior that socialize the unemployed, and are the vectors for spreading a compelling model that puts them under pressure.

In Japan, seeking employment is presented as a very rational act, planned and somehow optimized, and what is more, aimed at a clearly defined objective: not just finding a job but promoting one's career. The job search is thus the continuation and anticipation of one's (past and future) career, and mastering it somehow obliterates the interruption caused by unemployment. This structure reflects the continuous and upwardly mobile model of the professional career. It suggests the implicitly normative injunction to remain competitive and dynamic (or become competitive and dynamic once again) that does not lead, however, to socializing mechanisms capable of supporting the unemployed during their job search.

In Brazil, looking for work also gets people on their feet, and aims at picking up the threads of an interrupted professional itinerary. Defining oneself as a job seeker means first and foremost explaining one's situation as being the result of a personal decision, not one that had to be passively endured, which takes the bite out of being called unemployed. It must be added that projecting oneself into the future, into a well-defined professional future, is very prominent here: searching for employment means both having an aim suited to one's past experiences and being able to maintain oneself in the formal labor market, even if for the time being one only manages to find an odd job (*bico*).

An ensemble of similar significations emerges around the refusal to define oneself as unemployed and the production of an argument focalized around the job search. It seems to provide a sort of escape from unemployment, a resource enabling one to define oneself otherwise. Searching actively, or at least claiming to do so, means defining oneself as an active person, far removed from the common fate of the unemployed, and resembling, when all is said and done, the employed persons, those who have work. It also means positioning oneself above the mass of the unemployed, keeping aloof and feeling somewhat superior to the ordinary unemployed person, by reasserting more or less explicitly and bluntly the principle of competition that structures the labor market, and showing a certain self-confidence stemming from the idea that one is still competitive in the job hunt.

Our approach can also be described by taking off from another figure, corresponding to definitions of the situation built around what we have called *discouragement*. This interpretation is common to a certain number of interviews carried out in the three countries. In this case, the definition of the situation is permeated by fatalism, coupled with the incapacity to change the situation, build a future, and get a job. As the vain attempts to escape unemployment pile up, job deprivation is experienced as being more and more unbearable and insurmountable.

When put side by side, the expressions used in the three countries are very akin to one another; all reflect powerlessness and despair. Thus one can find, in France: "I see everything in black," "can you believe that nothing is to be done any more?" "I've tried everything but in the end I've got nothing to show for it," "I've been swallowed up, I don't see how I can get out of it;" in Japan: "I can't do anything," "I have nothing to sell," "I can't stand it any longer," "I've lost my sense of direction, I don't know where to go from here," "I cannot want to move anymore;" in Brazil: "I'd rather die," "I don't even have a job in the street," "what can I do." All these phrases also place the subject in the center but differently: the subject of the enunciation is still very much present, but not staged as an

active subject, on the contrary, rather as the object, the one that must bear all the devastating and destructive effects of the situation, and feel how hemmed in he or she is with respect to his/her capacity to act. The interviews tend to be shorter than average, choppier as well, as if putting the situations into words were more painful here.

In France, the corresponding discourses are strongly marked by a blow-by-blow description of the job search and more particularly of the repeated failures. The numerous setbacks are so intrusive, insurmountable and threatening that they actually become the source of the definition of the situation. Above all, these setbacks are denounced as unfair, arbitrary, revolting, and the employers are made responsible because they hire applying some obscure, mechanical favoritism or illicit and discriminatory criteria. In this framework, getting back to work appears more and more unlikely, or even impossible, no alternative whatever having emerged that might allow a person to escape from the slow descent into pauperization, in some cases mentioned explicitly.

In Japan, discouragement is also compounded by the difficulties encountered during the job search. The sense of injustice is not absent from the ways of speaking of these difficulties, but the expression of a personal helplessness is more prevalent than the denunciation of any external agents, such as the companies, in particular, that could be held responsible. The interviews illustrate a process whereby the narrator is progressively and quite ineluctably hemmed in and reduced to a state of inertia. It appears quite evident that, according to a reflex mechanism that makes the individual responsible for his/her situation, the causes for their failure have been considerably internalized, even if in some cases the economic context is given as an explanation.

In Brazil, discouragement is strongly manifested by the very great difficulty to put things into words: the discourses are brief and not very developed, as if verbalizing one's situation were unbearable, to the point that the narrative may be interrupted, sometimes definitively, by sobs and tears. We nevertheless found the same basic equation as in the other countries, *i.e.* that the individual's super-human efforts were put on a parallel with puny or non-existent results. The effect of this impasse is an identical helplessness, which may lead to a question of life and death.

A whole set of cross-national significations emerges, based on the deterioration of the situation, caused by the accumulation of failure in the job search: first, the individuals stop searching, for that activity has become subjectively senseless, then they feel trapped in a dead end, and can no longer even imagine an alternative future that might allow them to avoid seeing their situation go steadily downhill. In this case, unemployment is so intrusive and omnipresent, it has saturated the situations and the temporalities to such a point, that the individuals feel completely lost and uprooted. They can no longer involve themselves in acts or conceive of perspectives that might allow them to find a way out. The only conceivable exit is the probable further deterioration of their situation: an eviction from the status of unemployment, in the worst possible way, which is already so advanced and worrisome that they no longer even want to call themselves unemployed.

A third example will allow us to continue elucidating our comparative analysis of the interviews collected in the three countries. It concerns those discourses that also stress forms of *withdrawal* from employment, but this time by giving value to activities that, though they are numerous and varied, all have in common the fact they support a sense of

social utility and provide a basis for redefining the situation: they erase unemployment, lastingly if not permanently, by eclipsing the job search and filling all their spare time. Beyond this, they are considered to be work of a sort, different from their previous professional activity, and thus representing a sort of reconversion.

Though the nature of such activities differs considerably from one country to the next, the expressions used to characterize and qualify them are quite similar and contribute to giving them nearly the same tonality. We find in the French interviews phrases such as "with time, I got reorganized," "part unemployment, part work, you know," "I'm sort of on the margins now," "do small favors for people," "do a little bit more, but it wasn't planned," "it became more and more important," for which the corresponding expressions in the Japanese interviews were: "I have obligations in the community," "I'm involved now," "for me it's more important than the job I had," "I don't really need to work," and in the Brazilian interviews, "I feel self-fulfilled," "never felt so useful before," "I saw I could be more useful," "there are people who need me, I can feel it."

In France, the activities that give rise to this sort of experience share the fact they generate hardly any sort of income or monetary resource to speak of, but are the source of a sense of social utility and recognition. Whether they are engaged in them as volunteers, members of an association, or militants, the persons feel integrated in a community that pays out symbolic retribution in exchange for their dedication. They also provide an escape from the difficulties encountered on the labor market and give rise to alternative universes of self-investment. These activities become all the more attractive as the persons concerned are able to consider definitively retiring from their profession in the not-so-distant future and as they benefit from minimal material security. The activities then are put on a par with work, and are considered a positive alternative to the employment lost.

In Japan, such activities are also positioned outside the field of employment and concern individuals who declare they don't need to work, who can survive without a salary. These activities are partly linked to accepting responsibility for certain roles within the local community and partly to domestic agricultural production with an eye to becoming self-sufficient. They illustrate an at least temporary withdrawal from professional activity but are sometimes associated with an active and persistent, albeit discontinuous, job search. They sketch the contours of a problematic and hybrid situation, characterized by an investment in alternate occupations that marks an attempt to escape unemployment, rather than a renunciation of employment.

In Brazil, these activities are, in similar fashion, a resource permitting people to combat the specter of unemployment and define their situation more positively. They are also more clearly substitutes for employment, in a social context where work is often less codified and formalized than in the other two countries. These activities are defined as being useful to others but sometimes resemble service relations that do not exclude a mercantile dimension. They can then be considered like real work and stand in for the employment that was lost.

Beyond certain differences, to which we will return later, a set of cross-national significations appears, pointing to the fact that such alternative activities allow the person to reduce the tension between employment and unemployment. First, they correspond to a set of relatively long-term and long-lasting altruistic practices, fit into an organized

ensemble of division of labor, and are the vectors of an enhanced social standing. They restructure the daily lives of the people involved, because they frequently correspond to a serious reorganization of their private universe. They also appear as a totally new way of life when compared with their previous existence and often compete with their professional activity. These alternative activities are thus both subjective and social resources allowing a person to anticipate the future as disconnected from employment and, above all, set job deprivation aside and *de facto* withdraw from the unemployment situation.

### 5.1.2. A common matrix and a schematization

The three figures we have just described have permitted us to exemplify our comparative approach by treating and bringing together the biographical interviews that were carried out to clarify the experience of unemployment. Each figure condenses a particular signification attributed to job deprivation: the first attaches value to the job search itself and rejects identification with the unemployed; the second meets up with discouragement due to the competition in the job market and ends up by withdrawing from the category of the unemployed; the third invests in alternative activities that mark and assert one's positive retiring from the situation of unemployment. Each interpretation is thus a declension of a typical and specific figure of unemployment. All have as their common denominator the attempt to cope as well as possible with the intrinsic insecurity accompanying job deprivation and to trace definitions of the situation irreducible to the category of unemployed.

These figures were identified when we compared certain interviews picked out of the three corpora. But putting some of the elements of the interviews side by side is only an intermediate step; the final objective is to compare the corpora as a whole. As it stands, our analysis was based on forty interviews from each country. A method often used in comparative research consists in building a typology that whittles the diversity of the discourses down to a small number of (typical) figures, thus restoring the main lines that share and organize that diversity. In one sense, our approach up to this point opens on such a method. But we decided to follow a different path, that, given the purposes of our research, we consider more adequate and less oversimplifying than a typology.

Our choice was not dictated by theoretical considerations but fostered by the necessities of the empirical approach, for analyzing the material rapidly showed that the interviews were not easy to distribute among univocal categories, even ideal-typical ones. These interviews were efforts to put into words and make sense of a problematic biographical experience, and discourses aimed at finding a way out of the unemployment dilemma cannot be reduced to projections into employment or clear-cut anticipations. Each individual is holding up as best they can under a negative ordeal and trying to come up with a difficult and necessarily improvised response in order to survive, *i.e.* in order both to access an alternative and more respectable social status, and avoid being blocked and reduced to that problematic situation. It is thus obvious that the discourses are filled with a tension and ambivalence, simultaneously translating the need to escape unemployment and the uncertainty of being able to do so. Such factors cannot be transformed into univocal, fixed, watertight, analytical categories, as ideal-typical ones might be.

Rather than attempt to identify and isolate fixed points that crystallize a set of significations, we preferred to signpost and outline a space of meanings in which the discourses can expand and sort themselves out. With this in mind, we built a matrix of significations (not a typology), in order to account for the diversity of the ways this biographical experience is put into words. In other words, we proposed to unfold the variety of figures of unemployment rather than condense them into a few typical figures. What is at stake in our approach is the way the two sorts of categories work together: the *indigenous categories*, which are the raw material of the research, and the *analytical categories*, that allow putting our results into a sociological form. Therefore, though translating the ones into the others implies a series of reductions, it seemed essential to us to account as far as possible for the discursive dynamics and tensions noted in the interviews. To achieve this, we had to adopt an approach letting the figures of unemployment unravel progressively, *i.e.* preserve the diversity observed, identify the differentiations and discrepancies, and account for the expansions and displacements. That is why we undertook to draw a matrix of meanings, indicate its components, and identify its structure.

Describing the characteristics of the common matrix that organize a space where the biographical ordeal of unemployment can be deployed, means grasping what constitutes that ordeal, what goes into building, modulating and redirecting it, what can eventually reconvert it. We proceeded progressively and repeatedly, confronting and comparing the interviews taken from the corpus of each country, to allow the categories to emerge. But we were less interested in accounting for apparently similar subsets of interviews than in explaining the relations of differentiation and opposition existing between subsets. Explaining the relationships of proximity or distance permitted us to uncover and name the categories structuring the matrix as it emerged from the mass of data. From this viewpoint, analytical categories no longer condense ways of speaking about unemployment but design the matrix that organizes the definitions of the situation.

As a first step, we sought to identify and progressively name the oppositions, which not only contrasted ways of defining situations of unemployment but also outlined opposed, inverted, and contradictory interpretations. Thus, some of the interviews are structured like action narratives in which the subject is intent on doing things, while others resemble barren narratives, in which the subject is trapped in job deprivation and paralyzed. In the first case, unemployment is part of a group of activities that engulf it, making it just one element among others of the situation, while in the second case, it is experienced exclusively as being a deficiency and a deprivation and has become the major, all-pervasive element of the situation. When involvement in other activities dominates, unemployment appears as an *overwhelming ordeal*, and is challenged by the other conditions, even other statuses, that could emerge from these activities. When job deprivation dominates, unemployment appears as an *ordeal of emptiness*, which must be eliminated either by employment or by accessing some other status.

Other interviews are structured like narratives in which the subject accesses employment and concentrates on obtaining a paid job, while still others appear as withdrawal narratives in which the subject is on the lookout for an alternative and bearable situation. In one case, unemployment was seen as a position in the labor market,

and the subject concentrates on retrieving a previous professional occupation, in the other, unemployment is defined as an expectation and resembles the waiting room of non-professional situations. When the projection into a future position (professional and remunerated) dominates, unemployment is an *ordeal to overcome* and the subject's orientation is towards highly valued positions. When withdrawal from the labor market dominates, unemployment is an *ordeal to avoid* and is redefined by appealing to other more or less accessible conditions or statuses.

Four poles were thus identified:

- Setting up, participating in, and creating what may be called social activities, which cover diverse practices (unemployment as an overwhelming ordeal);
- The heavy burden of job deprivation dominates and tends to eliminate every other element of the situation (unemployment as an ordeal of emptiness);
- The attraction for a professional occupation, corresponding to a status of employment and a variety of logics of accessibility (unemployment as an ordeal to overcome);
- Projecting ways of withdrawing from activity, which can be very diverse, temporary or definitive, paid or unpaid, hinging or not on a recognized social status (unemployment as an ordeal to avoid).

These four poles do not cover all the significations of unemployment, as ideal-types would. They don't even exhaust all the possibilities, but at least they organize a space in which to inscribe them. However, even this is not sufficient, for each of these poles is itself full of tension or ambivalence, which lend it differentiated if not contradictory meanings. That is what the second step of our approach allowed us to demonstrate.

Classically, the interviews connected to one pole or another are placed at varying distances from its center of gravity. Thus, all typologies include nuclear units and more peripheral ones, even if each type is an attractor that presents a strong internal coherence and consistency, which is an outcome of this very process of construction of types. In our treatment, we observed that the interviews associated with one of the four poles we had identified could have sharp differentiations between them, as if they corresponded to various and contrasting declensions of the same polar signification which they shared. We therefore undertook to examine the structure of signification of each pole, starting with an analysis of the corresponding sub-sets of interviews. This allowed us to establish that, though each pole is homogeneous from the point of view of what opposes it to its symmetrical vis-à-vis (activities *versus* deprivation, professional occupation *vs.* withdrawal from activity), it is also marked by an internal ambivalence which we were able to identify, describe and name as we went along, according to a reiterative approach as previously applied.

- Thus, those non professional activities that turn unemployment into an overwhelming ordeal can be invested as resources to prepare one's progressive withdrawal from activity, putting employment at a distance, or else as means to implement a professional project. Their signification is somehow slippery, sliding either towards a transformation of those activities into official and remunerated professional

employment, or towards being progressively converted into occupations which are substitutes for work.

- Similarly, being deprived of the possibility to work, which marks unemployment as an empty ordeal, can deteriorate into feelings of being trapped and paralyzingly resigned, or else into an intense or even exclusive investment in a job search that becomes an obsession. Its signification can espouse the form of a mobilization turned towards competition in the labor market, or, on the contrary, of a discouragement leading to or preparing a withdrawal from activity.
- The perspective of obtaining employment that formats unemployment as an ordeal to overcome, can take the shape of a personal project enlarging or transforming one's personal investments in certain activities, or of a reasoned strategy for prospecting in the labor market, a discipline more or less learned during the period of unemployment. Its significance extends in two directions: the elaboration and realization of preferences based on one's previous itinerary or the practice of certain activities, or, at the other extreme, bringing up to date and settling into a role defined by the job search.
- Finally, withdrawing from activity that makes unemployment into an ordeal to avoid, can be prepared by investing in occupations that progressively appear like supportable alternatives to employment, or may be the continuation of a spiral of discouragement that leads to giving up, as if one were somehow forced to. Here again, its signification forks in two directions, since it can either turn towards a reconversion giving increasing importance to peripheral activities, or towards an eviction from the labor market after a series of failures.

These tensions or states of ambivalence authorize connecting the different interpretations of unemployment thus described, in such a way as to organize a space of meanings in which each interview can be situated. That is what we have done in the schema presenting the matrix of significations of unemployment (schema 4). What immediately stands out when observing this figure concerns the way the interviews occupy the matrix; they are completely spread out, and this dispersion concerns all three countries. However, the interviews are not disseminated in exactly the same way in each corpus – Brazilian, French, Japanese – and, the framework for the analysis having now been decided once and for all, we must pursue our international comparison and identify the differences and similarities that mark the biographical experience of unemployment in the three countries.

## 5.2. Differences: models or configurations?

Our questioning here will concern the differences, and resemblances, between the countries. For the time being, we will put aside the internal heterogeneity of the interpretations that were brought to light when identifying the contrasting figures of unemployment and for which explanations will be offered later. Decomposing the proposed schematization into three national diagrams, *i.e.* accounting for the positions of the interviews of each country within their common matrix, directly allows us to

formulate a few comparative observations (see schemas 5 for France, 6 for Japan and 7 for Brazil).

In the French case, the squares (each representing an interview) are concentrated on the left and right-hand sides of the schema, and occupy each time both the high and low positions. In the Japanese case, the triangles fall almost exclusively into the lower part of the graph, on the left as well as on the right-hand side. In the Brazilian case, the distribution is also unbalanced, but following other modalities: a very dense cluster of circles can be seen in the upper, central part of the graph, while a smaller cluster occupies the lower right-hand corner. The distributions are thus specific to each country. But in the three cases, a significant number of interviews are concentrated in the lower right-hand angle of the graph, where one makes out a very dense and very international cluster. In that small perimeter one can count (see schema 4) 9 French, 13 Japanese and 9 Brazilian interviews, *i.e.* nearly a quarter of the number of interviews examined. What are the outstanding traits of that perimeter? Without a doubt, the zone covers what we have baptized by the name of discouragement. The corresponding interpretations of the unemployment situation are those earmarked by inactivity in the sense of withdrawing from, or even dropping everything connected to unemployment, such as a job search or any alternative activity that could help liberate oneself from that status. The persons concerned feel trapped in a dead end from which they cannot imagine any way out or any relief. They are, so to speak, crushed by a ubiquitous unemployment against which it has become impossible to fight and which, for the same reasons, has become more and more painful, absurd and unjust. They are up against processes of deterioration of their situation that threaten them with degeneration and social exclusion. The most extreme form of such an interpretation, marked by despair and misery, consists in the mention, sometimes only insinuated, of a fateful ending, such as suicide or death.

This form of experience appears as the most extreme way to live unemployment, as an exacerbating way of interpreting the situation, in the same tone and always returning to the same meanings. It also corresponds to the most negative modulations among the ensemble of discourses collected during our survey. It brings to the surface the most brutal consequences of job deprivation. It echoes, too, the teachings of the oldest sociological investigations on unemployment, which stressed how much that condition meant loss of status, humiliation, social decline, withdrawal from all participation in collective life. In this sense, it paints the picture that has been considered typical of the unemployment situation, as being its objective truth (Schnapper, 1981). But at the same time, that form of experience is not all-pervasive and does not exhaust all the discourses we heard from unemployed persons, nor does it define the totality of our corpus of interviews, far from it.

The observations accompanying the schemas lead us to hypothesize that this form represents the negative pole of a universe of significations proper to each country, that it represents the reverse of each country's dominant experience, crystallizing the non accomplishment of a social and normative reference specific to each. The differences between the countries can then be studied following the tensions between the variable referential poles (specific to each country) and that one identical negative pole. If our hypothesis is correct, each national context is marked by specific tensions, which translate the problematic and uncertain nature of the unemployment experience. But in conformity

with our theoretical orientations, those references must not be reduced to subjective experiences, or, on the other hand, to the cultural models which frame those individual experiences. They must be considered as the joint product of both institutional structures and subjective experiences, of the strategies of individual actors and collective regulations, of subjective worlds and normative constraints. For the frames of reference of professional life, activity and work are the result of interaction between structural dynamics and subjective logics, and consequently so are the significations of unemployment. We must therefore now go into those frames of reference, and, returning to our data, attempt to explain them by considering them as configurations rather than national models.

### 5.2.1. In France: socializing the responses

Broadly speaking, the French interviews fall into two main sections, situated on the margins to the left and right of the schema (schema 5). The greatest number gathers close to the pole we have called professional work, corresponding to a categorization of unemployment as an ordeal to be overcome. In this area, unemployment is in a relation of proximity to employment. That proximity has several different significations: it means all at once the projection into future employment and the anticipation of coming out of the state of unemployment, the personal mobilization in activities connected to the job search, and involvement in processes and techniques limiting the distance that separates one from work. A plurality of ways of being present on the labor market, therefore, which concretely means going out to look for work, carrying out a professional project, accessing transitory statuses (training, short-term contracts, etc.). The definitions of the situation are framed by the employment/unemployment pair, while being irresistibly attracted towards employment, mainly because of one's involvement in practices that may jell into intermediate positions, in complete contrast with discouragement. On the opposite side, but in the upper part of the schema, a considerably smaller number of interviews are drawn towards the reverse pole, *i.e.* withdrawal from activity, and towards its modulation of alternative occupations. That situation corresponds to taking one's distance from unemployment, but in an opposite direction: withdrawal from the labor market, supported here too by the possibility of obtaining one of the substitute occupations contained in a more or less codified status.

This goes to show the extent to which the subjective logics aimed at avoiding unemployment (by inactivity), or on the contrary aimed at overcoming it (by obtaining employment) are supervised and validated by the institutional norms in France. In the French context, public policy in the battle against unemployment multiply the particular and intermediate statuses between standard employment and unemployment: training periods or assisted contracts cause unemployed people to settle into positions that cannot be reduced to unemployment but that do not assimilate them in the workforce either. Parallel to this, but pointed in the contrary direction, a good number of systems aiming at anticipating the withdrawal from professional life (early retirement, being exempted from the job search, a more favorable system of indemnities for the oldest unemployed) sketch potential alternatives and bestow legitimacy to aspiration towards the end of one's professional life. More generally, the already ancient presence of an imposing network of local public employment agencies and, above all, the repeated campaigns of follow-up of

the unemployed and the intense service distribution which goes with them (scheduled interviews, assessment sessions, assistance with the job search, personalized follow-ups, orientation and definition of professional projects, aptitude tests), contribute to lending a specific consistency to the unemployment situation, filling in the space left empty by job deprivation. In short, the unemployed are not left to themselves as if plunged totally alone into the fray. They are supervised and accompanied and often invited or even summoned to participate in the measures and systems set up to help them reintegrate the working world. That strong institutionalization of unemployment lends a specific texture to the experience and channels the ways the situations are interpreted.

Institutionalization is instrumental in tightening the links between employment and unemployment, explicitly declared to be the principal objective of the program helping people to access employment, and moreover, it formats the entire experience of unemployment. Firstly, because the latter becomes a shared experience, an object of public discourse and action, which thereby is not attributed solely to the individual's responsibility. Next, the measures included in the recently named Active Employment Policy carry normative demands that influence the unemployment experience. For instance, requiring the unemployed person to define a personal project, considered a factor in obtaining work, and assimilating the job-seekers' competences, especially in their investment in relational networks, participate in the definition of modes of conduct marked by individualization but also, and simultaneously, backed by the organized distribution of resources. In a complementary manner, institutionalization also functions according to a logic of selection that more or less firmly eliminates certain unemployed people from the labor market, particularly the oldest ones. But here again, that eviction is socialized, *i.e.* backed up by protective and compensatory statuses.

In such a structural framework, the French unemployed are not left to face their ordeal alone, whether to overcome it or to avoid it. They are inserted in a complex set of public institutional measures, rights, codified statutes, whose official objective is to speed up the exit from unemployment, and whose actual consequences are to significantly transform the unemployment situation itself. This does not exclude the fact that unemployed people may inexorably slide towards the pole of discouragement, particularly because the mechanisms have not been effective enough in preventing the rise and persistence of long-term unemployment. Nevertheless, those mechanisms support a referential signification of unemployment, which is that the ordeal is alleviated by the institutions and accompanied by statuses and compensations many and varied, to adapt it as well as possible to the individuals and shorten its duration. The importance of this normative model explains why most of the interviews conducted in France fall into the first cluster, drawn towards the pole of professional work and stretching out vertically, and into the second one, attracted towards the pole of withdrawal from activity and also stretching out vertically. Discouragement here thus reflects the failure of a two-part institutional program: one part seeking to accompany the unemployed towards reintegrating the working world while educating them for the job search, on one hand, the other part giving access to a status of inactivity connected to social protection (invalidity or social assistance) or indicating the end of professional activity (early retirement), on the other hand. We met a few cases that do not fit into this picture and will return to them later.

### 5.2.2. In Japan: individual and personal responsibility

The distribution of the Japanese interviews is very uneven, since nearly all of them crowd into the lower part of the schema (schema 6). That signifies that they are drawn towards the pole of job deprivation, the pole of activities acting as a foil. To be more precise, the force of attraction of job deprivation, corresponding to a conception of unemployment as an ordeal of emptiness, scatters the interviews over the entire continuum, from the job search to discouragement. The latter thus acts as the negation of the former, which appears as the referential norm: being unemployed in Japan means first of all starting to look for work, getting involved in that activity and focalizing on the quest for new employment. It is an eloquent statement on the fact that the employment/unemployment pair is the reference that frames the subjective significations that a person might elaborate on and express. That is the reason why they cannot define their situation from the viewpoint of activities, not even from strategies of investing in alternative occupations (the nearly empty upper right-hand corner of the schema bears this out).

Such subjective constructs are supported and reinforced by the institutional norms in Japan. Thus, aside from the role of housewife and mother, which lends validity to a woman's at least temporary withdrawal from the labor market – and even that only tacitly – there is hardly any alternative status to unemployment (and to employment) that might represent a resource with which to elaborate other interpretations of the situation. In the same vein, the situations are codified in a sufficiently rigid and formal manner to make it difficult, or even to prohibit, any improvisation of the intermediary situations that could be invented and designed by persons faced by unemployment.

Given this configuration, what are the outstanding traits of the reference experience of unemployment in Japan? The combination of job deprivation with the job search is its basis, and it is also an exclusive framework in the sense that socially legitimate alternatives are practically non-existent. This normative context is made even more severe by the rarity of collective responsibility for unemployment, which forces individuals to face it quite alone, makes them responsible for the unfortunate transformation of their own situation, causing them to internalize all the weight of unemployment. Many factors enter into the birth of this configuration: the fact that unemployment is relatively recent in Japan and the weak responsibility on the part of the State, now trying to replace the large firms which regulated the surplus of manpower internally, the lack of public measures to ease and accompany job deprivation, the weakness of the indemnities system and social protection. To all this must be added the fact that it is not considered advantageous or even decent to use one's relational networks for the job search and their relative ineffectiveness when looking for work: advertising work offers, especially atypical ones, goes mainly through the press, to the detriment of the diffusion of information through networks, the obligations and indebtedness created by having recourse to social networks are degrading for the person who asks for the favor. Furthermore, once cut from the professional environment, unemployed persons are isolated from social networks, and their families are left alone to manage their financial difficulties resulting from unemployment.

In such a structural framework, the Japanese unemployed are to a large extent left to their own devices. Of course they are not completely cut off from the public system, reticulated supports, or extended solidarities, but these measures of accompaniment are not sufficient resources to solve the problem of unemployment, at best they function as active shock absorbers. They cannot erase the referential signification of unemployment, according to which that ordeal must be overcome by a personal effort, the only factor capable of bringing success in the competition on the labor market. The weight of this normative model explains why most of the interviews carried out in Japan seem to be aligned between the pole of job search, corresponding to the referential program that every unemployed person is supposed to follow, and the pole of discouragement corresponding to the inability to realize that program and to the various and powerful processes that cause their situation to decline. Naturally, a few cases do not fall into this scheme and we will return to them below, but this structure nevertheless has a strong magnetic pull.

### 5.2.3. In Brazil: an organized making do

The distribution of the Brazilian interviews appears quite haphazard, in the sense that the cluster of circles occupies practically every possible position on the fringes of the matrix (schema 7). Two concentrations nevertheless clearly appear: one in the lower right-hand corner, corresponding to discouragement, the other in the top central part, near the pole of activities. This pole of attraction is particularly significant, since over 40% of the interviews fall into its orbit. The cluster of circles is very dense, indicating that those activities remain at a considerable distance from the logic of alternative occupations. These activities therefore correspond only very slightly to the statutory categories of employment and inactivity, and unemployment as well. They suggest rather an intermediate zone in which those categories are fuzzy and mixed. They create a buffer zone in which their pertinence appears problematic. Thus, in the Brazilian case, the experience of unemployment seems strongly shaped by the practice of activities of an indefinite nature, that are not reducible to the statuses habitually used to describe the positions occupied in the labor market.

The orientation of the definitions of the situation towards the valorization of activities is both favored and restricted by the structural context and specific institutional norms in Brazil. A multiplicity of mechanisms that directly contribute to the construction of the meanings of unemployment is at play here: the factors regulating the forms of employment, the system of social protection, the family structures, the reticular organizations, etc. The way the Brazilian labor market is structured promotes the multiplication of intermediary situations characterized by a weak statutory codification. This concerns in the first place the forms of labor, which – less so than in the other countries – are not totally comprised in the notion of employment. For in fact remunerated labor covers a large spectrum, spanning from formal, official, supervised, statutory employment to more informal, unstable, fragile activities, from the non-declared workers hired in industry and commerce to the odd jobs of street vendor, through all the various forms of subcontracting, unofficial business, lending a hand, etc. The fuzzy contours of employment have their counterpart in the situations of unemployment. The

institutionalization of employment is feeble: public employment agencies are not very developed and bureaucratic accounting of the unemployed remains relatively rare, financial compensation is limited to a part of those who were formally employed, and measures to help people get back to work are practically nonexistent.

Given the foregoing, protection against the consequences of unemployment and against the threats it represents for personal survival, depends less on the institutional measures taken by the State than on the structures of local community relations. In this respect, the family is the basic unit for managing unemployment, more exactly for developing the strategies to drain monetary resources. The interdependence that exists between the members of this basic economic unit favors a distribution of participation in economic activities that procure an income. Broader community networks such as the extended family, neighborhoods, and religious groups also provide information and resources stimulating the participation of individuals in activities whose status is uncertain but whose economic and monetary dimension has been proved. Proximity solidarity thus contributes to framing the unemployment experience: it orientates it towards the practice of remunerated activities (with very variable incomes) as a response to the deprivation of income inevitably brought on by unemployment. That solidarity also creates and consolidates systems of allegiance, obligations, reciprocity and indebtedness, that clearly leave their mark on individual situations.

This state of affairs further debilitates the institutionalization of unemployment and also of employment, because the result is that the social stigma of unemployment is not very serious, so that it is not the fact of having lost one's job that can organize its meanings, but other sorts of interpretation, founded on activities. In the Brazilian context, the unemployed are included in relational networks that convey the meanings and can procure them corresponding resources. Thus, the reference experience, both as it is lived by the individual and collectively supported, is structured by the act of mobilizing resources capable of restoring an income, and consequently orientated towards the participation in a variety of forms of labor. It stands out as a model of organized making do, which carries considerable weight, since a good number of the interviews carried out in Brazil fall into the zone of the pole of activities. The complementary pole of discouragement crystallizes the cases where this self-management has failed, that can only lead to very rapid pauperization. A small number of other cases do not fit in with the above; we will return to them later.

We were thus able to note large gaps in the distributions of the interpretations of unemployment in the three countries: in France, what dominates is a socialized and accompanied job search, in Japan, the internalization of job deprivation prevails, and in Brazil, an organized making do carries the day. These three reference experiences have been analyzed at the intersection of subjective logics and institutional norms, which all shape the significations of unemployment. The three configurations that shape unemployment and represent so many differentiated ways of responding to it, are articulated, when these responses fail, to a counter-reference which in the three countries takes a similar form, *i.e.* discouragement. These results, which indicate diversity in the logics of action in contrast with a similarity in the logic of inaction, fit in with our hypotheses about the existence of national configurations. In fact, our approach can

describe significant differences between the countries, while at the same time respecting the contents of a large number of the interviews. However, all of them do not fit in with this schematization, clearly indicating that these configurations are not as inflexible as national models can be. We must now examine the internal diversity which was also apparent in the three countries.

## 5.3. Configurations and basic social relations

Examining that internal heterogeneity will be guided by the methods already developed when carrying out the survey by interviews, in particular thanks to the sampling strategy. It consisted in interviewing the unemployed who fit into one of the four contrasting profiles: adult manual workers confronted with economic redundancy, women with children looking to resume their employment, boys and girls with low or middle levels of education, and low- or middle-level executives and managers (men and women) whose careers had been upwardly mobile. We defined those profiles so as to account for the importance of sex, age and professional position in the selectivity of employment practices, as socio-economic statistics show to be the case. We also wished to test the hypothesis that these variables influence the processes of interpretation of unemployment.

We will therefore analyze the diversity of the biographical experiences of unemployment by comparing the distributions of the interviews relating to each profile. The method will be applied to each country in succession, enabling us to ponder the results and evaluate, from a transnational point of view, the effects of gender relations (positions in the sexual division of labor, differentiated here through the data we have on mothers), age (positions in the life cycle, considered here through the situation of the young people), and social class (position in the division of labor, opposing workers and managers). Finally, this perspective in terms of social relations will be called upon to enrich our theoretical approach, consisting in analyzing and theorizing national coherences in terms of configurations, articulating subjective logics and normative contexts, marked by the tensions between those two components and traversed by the processes of social change.

### 5.3.1. The French case

Schema 8 restores the arrangement of the French interviews in the matrix, while connecting each of them to the profile to which the interviewee is referred (workers, mothers, young people, managers). It shows that each sub-population occupies a specific position, respectively more or less concentrated or dispersed.

Two groups take up their position next to the reference situation (socialized and accompanied employment), *i.e.* the young people and the managers. The first are very concentrated and tightly clustered, indicating that for the most part, young people's experience with unemployment is very close to employment, on the mode of anticipating and preparing for professional work. This considerable homogeneity of experience reflects the influence of the public policies of aid to professional integration and the fact that they specifically target the juvenile and under qualified groups of the unemployed, exactly corresponding to the profile of the interviewed group. The most obvious exception

concerns a girl who is considering having a child and thus anticipates withdrawing temporarily from the job market, although she declares she wanted to nevertheless remain looking for employment.

The second group, executives and managers, is clearly more dispersed, but strongly oriented towards obtaining professional work. The job search occupies a large place in these narratives, which put forward rationalized strategies backed up by tried and tested techniques or structured by following up on their personal project. Some of them thus claim to be experts or professionals in the job search. According to the same logic, a small fraction of them depends on a certain type of activity to define their situation, an activity which may nurture a personal project, particularly to set oneself up as self-employed, and create one's own firm, or marginally, at the other extreme, which may support a withdrawal leading to alternative occupations and/or to inactivity. The latter circumstance corresponds to a very specific profile, associating an age not far removed from retirement and an income level that allows the person to make the transition. One exception can also be noted here; it concerns a manager positioned close to the pole of discouragement. This is the case of a self-made man, whose career depended on promotions within his firm, was discouraged by his vain efforts to restore his professional situation, and even destroyed by the overwhelming disillusionment.

Aside from two exceptions, young people and managers occupy the top left-hand part of the schema, indicating that they tend to make good the institutional program defining unemployment as a period of a socialized job search. Besides, they have characteristics of employability that make it easier for them to circulate among the statuses, and particularly to find ways out of unemployment, the more so as public policies of reemployment (for the young) or specialized employment agencies (for executives and managers) back up such processes. By contrast, the two other profiles, workers and mothers, are practically absent in this area.

The lower right-hand part of the schema is consequently mainly occupied by workers, and by mothers whose professional experiences make their situation resemble that of blue collar or low-level while collar workers. The group of mothers is quite spread out, occupying almost all the possible positions from alternative activities to the job search. Some of them subscribe to logics of withdrawal, giving as a reason their family obligations or valuing an activity of a quasi-domestic micro-production which earns them hardly anything. Such withdrawal is always coined in ambiguous language, presented as temporary, and in the last analysis, appears as a protection, a way of escaping discouragement. In this sense, gender, particularly when it implies being a mother in a family, plays the same role as age (allowing a rational anticipation of retirement): *i.e.*, offers socially acceptable if not subjectively wished for positions or even back-up statuses. Besides, the discourses of certain mothers are firmly placed on the side of the job search and of the reference experience, but this concerns those with the highest diplomas, namely the two university graduates who define themselves as near-managers even though they never occupied that sort of post, as did their husbands.

Workers are relatively concentrated near the lower right-hand corner, in an area between job deprivation and discouragement, *i.e.* where the experience of unemployment is considered to be an ordeal of emptiness. Confronted as they are by serious difficulties in

finding employment, they are exposed to disillusionment, see their future closing in on them without being able to react. They are the ones who seem most vulnerable and subject to demoralization, depression, exhaustion. Only three of them appear to be somewhat protected, one because he is highly qualified in a craft where manpower is rare so that interim work is an immediate possibility, even though it is not the ideal solution, the two others because they are hoping to benefit shortly from protected statuses: in one case, a minimum income guarantee before retirement, in the other, a handicap which will entitle him to the corresponding pension.

In the French case, the unemployed subscribe variously to the signification that best refers to their own social characteristics. The figure of a socialized and accompanied job search is widely adhered to by the young and managers, who are the best placed in the competition for obtaining employment. Conversely, the groups whose employability is most problematic are prone to discouragement, which threatens mothers, and workers even more. A second reference figure, supported, like the first, by the construction of intermediate or alternative statuses, acts as a shock-absorber by offering positions of protected and paid withdrawal, which make the most sense for the oldest individuals (workers but also some managers), and to a lesser extent, for those women who have family obligations.

### 5.3.2. The Japanese case

Schema 9 also shows how the Japanese interviews are arranged within the matrix, associating each to the identity of the group to which the interviewee belongs (workers, mothers, young people, executives and managers) and the distributions specific to each of the four groups.

A similarity with the French case is immediately perceptible: the young people and managers tend to be fairly close to each other, quite differently from the zone where the workers and mothers squeeze in. At the same time, the attraction of the reference pole (individual responsibility in the face of job deprivation and of the job search) appears a less distinguishing factor, since interviewees from all the groups can be found in the corresponding zone (lower left-hand corner). However, the clusters stretch out from that commonly shared zone in various directions depending on the profile.

The majority of young people are positioned in the left-hand part of the schema and vertically aligned. This means that their experience of unemployment largely escapes the ordeal of emptiness, marked by slow reactions, feeling all is meaningless, and near-discouragement. It is supported by the signs that one is still present in the labor market, such as an active job search and accepting temporary jobs that keep one in touch with steady professional employment. A fraction of the young people is an exception to the rule as they slip into logics of progressive withdrawal: this concerns especially the young women with children or expecting, and whose definition of the situation comes close to the one that dominates among the mothers.

The group of managers concentrates in the left-hand part of the schema as well. Managers' discourses place the strategies for accessing employment squarely in the middle, along with arguments proving their proximity to obtaining employment. The reference experience is endorsed and internalized, but rather on the mode of positive anticipation,

probable success, and coming out on top. What looks like a strategic will is not devoid of weaknesses however, since several discourses express that mobilization in the past tense, and are marked by traces of discouragement and progressively giving up. Such a circulation between the referential pole and its foil (non-achievement) points to the fact that the model that attributes and imposes the responsibility for his/her situation and its transformation on the individual offers meager protection. Finally, as in the French case, a small fraction of the managers claim withdrawal strategies, understandable at their age (they are the oldest of their group) and encouraged by the enhancement of occupational activities that progressively appear as resources to redefine their situation and make it possible to stand up under the ordeal of unemployment.

In contrast with the two foregoing groups, workers and women occupy zones situated more to the right of the schema. Most of the workers line up along the bottom edge, clearly leaning toward the side of discouragement rather than the job search. Their narratives are punctuated by attempts to find a job, presented in an uneven tension between the amount of effort furnished and the accumulated failures. They reveal individuals who are more and more isolated, impecunious, bereft of any efficient resource, caught up in the ordeal of the job search. They mark the internalization of the dominant Japanese normative model of what it means to be unemployed and give way more or less rapidly to discouragement or disillusionment in various degrees. There exists therefore, as the managers' case suggested above, a real continuity between fulfilling and not fulfilling the referential program. We find exceptions here too, corresponding to two sorts of figures: an alternative withdrawal associated with age and the effectuation of occupational activities on one hand, and proximity to employment kept up by a strong will to acquire new competences despite one's age, on the other.

Lastly, the mothers split up into two groups. The first group, the majority, gathers on the side of withdrawal from activity. This indicates that the unemployment experience tends to have a specific tonality for women with children. And indeed, in their discourses the tension is great between the orientation towards wanting to work and the difficulties to maintain oneself in the labor market, between the obligations connected to the unemployment status and those linked to one's domestic role. The discourse is strongly marked by a conflict between aspiring to activity and aspiring to inactivity, and by the hardship of reconciling the desire for professional employment and the reminders of one's housekeeping and childcare obligations. The mothers who manage in spite of everything to give priority to the attraction of a professional activity have a profile that makes them similar to the managers.

In the Japanese case, the referential signification of unemployment is capable of attracting persons belonging to all the different groups. However, the relationship between each group and the figure of individual and personal responsibility in managing unemployment varies. The young and managers are those who have the most positive attitude and find in it the resources and cues that justify their proximity to employment. Conversely, the workers meet up with greater obstacles in the job search and are particularly exposed to discouragement, all the more as there are few protective and alternative statuses available. As to the mothers, they undergo supplementary pressure due to their domestic functions and are caught up in conflicts that mostly they cannot resolve,

except by arguing about ambiguous compromises which push them to the side of withdrawal or leave them on the margins of employment.

### 5.3.3. The Brazilian case

Schema 10 presents the characteristics of Brazilian interviewees (four target groups) and the distribution of their interviews within the common matrix. It shows the differentiations between groups, but also some overlapping.

As in the two other countries, we observe a differential distribution of the groups according to similar patterns: the young people (mainly) and the managers (less unanimously) principally occupy the left-hand side of the schema, the mothers and workers the right-hand side. But a second important element modulates this first observation: the reference pole (practicing various activities and organized making do) brings together interviewees belonging to the four groups. This corresponds to the characteristics of the configuration, which is based on membership in neighborhood networks, efficient community solidarities, systems composed of relatives or neighbors, all of these collectivities bringing together populations of all sorts at least from the point of view of sex and age.

The young people's group spreads out quite regularly between the pole of activities and the job search, pointing to a relationship with unemployment built around work rather than job deprivation. Depending on the case, work takes the form of very irregular and badly remunerated informal activities or else of activities that are more consistent even if they are not codified by a work contract, or yet again of periods of temporary employment in a formal company. These modulations of labor do not have the same signification, but at least they are interpreted as keeping unemployment as an ordeal of deprivation at arm's length. Contrary to the young people in the two other countries, this standpoint rarely relies on investing activities connected to the job search, which is an even more eloquent statement on the importance of the informality of employment, and relativizes the very notion of labor market.

Approximately 50% of the managers occupy positions comparable to that of the young people. There again, their narratives reveal the weight of doing activities not codified as employment in the significations attributed to unemployment. Moreover, the proximity between activities and employment is declared outright, either because the first are experienced as being a quasi-employment, bringing in their wake income and consideration, or because of the possibilities of transforming these activities into formal employment. Another important fraction of the managers are on the side of withdrawal from activity, most often near the discouragement pole. This positioning concerns those who had lost all hope of finding a formal occupation and who are hit by the processes of pauperization and disillusionment unalleviated by any involvement in alternative prestigious activities, with only one exception, positioned on the side of alternative occupations.

Industrial workers and mothers occupy positions that in many respects make them resemble the managers, in the sense that both groups are distributed among two clusters, one near the referential pole, the other between job deprivation (usually the workers) and withdrawal from activity (more often the mothers). Like the other groups, Brazilian

workers share the conception of unemployment based on the practice of activities and centered on organized making do. Part of them value activities that fill up their time, integrate them in exchange networks and provide them with some income. As with other groups, these represent productive activities that reveal the importance of the systems of informal community solidarity. These activities provide a refuge against unemployment which in their country is hardly protected or compensated at all. But some do not manage to find any such activity and are then confronted with the emptiness of job deprivation or fall victims to discouragement. Compared to the other groups, workers appear more vulnerable to these forms of the unemployment experience.

As in the other two countries, the group of mothers' greatest affinity is with the workers. But the distribution of the female group is here clearly split in two: while one fraction concentrates on the side of withdrawal from activity, an equivalent fraction is on the side of activity. In other words, at least part of the mothers react to unemployment in ways that are not differentiated but join the reference experience of organized making do. The latter relatively protects them from the pull of inactivity, which is here less strong. Some are nevertheless attracted towards this pole, arguing according to the logic of often temporary and forced withdrawal, the role of mother not representing a very valuable status in their eyes.

In the Brazilian case, the referential figure of unemployment, characterized by organized making do, is significantly present in all the groups. The groups are differentiated less with respect to that reference than through the complementary or alternative ways they interpret unemployment. The young are positioned in line with this signification and multiply the arguments that assert their proximity to labor, oscillating between employment and activities. Part of the manager group expresses a similar logic, while the other part steers towards a withdrawal from activity. The split is even more evident among workers and mothers, since part of the first are in job deprivation and others are in discouragement, while part of the second alleviate the weight of unemployment by considering it as at least temporary withdrawal.

### 5.3.4. Permanent features and variations in the importance of social relations

The results presented up to this point bring to light differentiated tendencies that specify the forms of the unemployment experience in each country around one dominant configuration. But though that configuration has become a reference, it is not all-pervasive and does not erase the heterogeneity that characterizes the unemployed populations in each country. The variety of the biographical experiences of unemployment proves the importance of those fundamental social relations based on sex, age, social class. What cross-national conclusions can be drawn concerning each of these social relations (schema 11)?

The importance of gender relations can be gauged in each of the three countries by isolating what makes the mothers' discourses specific. They are mostly pointed towards the pole of withdrawal from activity. But since that withdrawal is but a modulation of unemployment, the logic that underpins it is ambiguous and ambivalent. The interpretations are largely the product of the desire for a dual-participation: in professional

employment, on one hand, in the domestic universe of the home, on the other. They do not signify a will to actually retire from all activity, but are a way of accommodating the difficulties of returning to work with the constraints of family roles, compromises that are the result of the sexual division of labor. Besides, there are practically no substantial, protected, or assisted statuses to which they can apply. Therefore, sliding towards discouragement and being ensnared in unemployment with no way out is a threat for women that must be seriously taken into consideration.

These specifics of the mothers' relationship to unemployment are diversely modulated according to the country. They are obvious in Japan, where reconciling professional life and raising small children is difficult, to the point that the combination between professional activity and inactivity through part-time employment seems like the only possible solution. The situation in France is quite similar, although the interpretations of unemployment are more diversified, especially in the forms of alternative occupations supported by protective statuses. In both countries, the mothers who distinguish themselves most from the diverse logics of withdrawal are those who claim to be actively looking for work and those with traits resembling the managers', as if those social characteristics alleviated the weight of gender relations. Finally, the specifics of mothers' situation appear more attenuated in Brazil, in the sense that many of them also produce interpretations of unemployment based on involvement in informal productive activities that follow the pattern of organized making do. In this, they contribute to reinforcing the importance of the referential biographical experience.

The weight of social relations based on age can be estimated by observing the positions occupied by the discourse of the young people, but also by contrasting these with the points of view of the older unemployed, workers or managers. The young are very evidently those who are best protected from discouragement. More generally, they are less present in the lower right-hand part of the schema that links alternative occupations and job deprivation. And in fact, their interpretations of job deprivation rarely point to a withdrawal from activity, a perspective that, besides, does not receive much support in the way of protective statuses. The exceptions concern mainly the girls, concerned with planning a maternity or already having young children, which makes them resemble certain mothers. Unemployment is not lived by young people as an empty ordeal of job deprivation either; rather they are massively positioned on the side of professional work, between the job search and activities. The proximity with labor, subjectively experienced, is supported by systems and institutions which differ according to the country but which contribute to framing this type of biographical experience of unemployment.

In France, a powerful and long-established focalization by the public policies of reemployment on youth, carries with it several intermediate statuses between unemployment and employment, and that process is relayed by the development of forms of precarious or intermittent employment that concern mainly that same population. These situations give way to a variety of interpretations but they tend to place young people in the proximity of salaried labor. In Japan, certain atypical forms of employment are also aimed at the young and favor a two-way circulation between employment and unemployment. But the rarity of public accompaniment there causes the interpretations to slide towards job deprivation or even discouragement. In Brazil, informal activities that

provide variable income levels have a specific attraction, supporting definitions of the situation that mix plural combinations of work, activity and employment.

In contrast with the young, the older fractions of the unemployed (workers and managers) seem particularly exposed to letting themselves go or giving up the job search. That specificity is anchored in a discourse on disqualification, pregnant everywhere, even if the age limits mentioned vary (as of age 35 to 40 in Brazil). Perspectives and solutions vary, ending with marked forms of discouragement or strategies anticipating a withdrawal from activity. These strategies, especially among the managers, are kept afloat by investing in alternative occupations that allow the unemployment experience to be redefined, at least relatively, positively. Such strategies are also supported, marginally and especially in France, by the expectation of protective statuses.

The relative polarization of the experiences of the young, on one hand, and the older unemployed, on the other, also reflects differences between the employability and attraction of these categories of the workforce, which can also be observed in the gaps between managers and workers.

As to the weight of social class relations, it may be evaluated by comparing the spatial distributions of the interpretations of unemployment produced by the managers and those produced by the workers. The workers experience unemployment as bounded by job deprivation and discouragement, *i.e.* belonging to the zone where its signification is reduced to a painful and traumatic, ordeal of emptiness. This tendency, very clear, reflects the dynamics of marginalization and exclusion, that puts employment so far away that all exits seem blocked, closed, impossible to even imagine. The oldest workers attempt to overcome that source of suffering by projecting themselves into definitive inactivity, or, especially in France, into the protected niche of certain statuses. Moreover, it is fairly significatively moderated in the Brazilian case by investment in activities that fill the time, represent social utility and provide some income.

Managers' definitions of the situation are distributed very differently. They are the most scattered, but two-thirds occupy positions close to those of the young people, *i.e.* within the magnetic field of professional work, with variations according to the country and according to the corresponding reference situations. Nevertheless, a significant part of the managers' discourse is organized around the development of alternative occupations, considered as resources that can erase the difficulty of finding employment, while others come closer to the discouragement pole.

Consequently, social class relations do contribute to the construction of the biographical experience of unemployment. But they interact with the social relations based on age, that appear sufficiently powerful so that the older managers are pushed towards the various forms of withdrawal from activity for lack of being able to negotiate a return to paid employment.

Finally, our approach shows that the ways of experiencing unemployment meet at the crossroads of two sets of processes that must be analytically kept separate: on one hand, referential models which differ in each country, but entertain a relationship of tension with a cross-national counter-model (discouragement); on the other hand, social relations based on sex, age and class, which differentiate the definitions of the situation in each of the countries following fairly similar modalities. It also shows that biographical

experiences can only be described and theorized on condition they are inserted in national configurations, which cannot be reduced to cultural models but must be interpreted between the pull of the normative and institutional contexts which are the result of national histories (social statuses, public policies, functioning of the labor market) and the pull of the subjective logics associated with the social characteristics (sex, age, and class) of the persons concerned. It is to this concept of configuration that we will now turn in our concluding chapter.

## Notes

[1] Certificate given to those who have successfully completed primary education of 8 years (at 14 years old).
[2] Diploma given to those who have successfully completed 12 years of education, at the end of lycée, allowing access to university education.
[3] "Brevet d'aptitude aux fonctions d'animateur de centre de vacances et de loisirs" (Certificate of aptitude for counselor of holiday and leisure centers) This is a diploma destined to allow, non-professionally and occasionally, supervision of children and teenagers at holiday and leisure centers.
[4] We should note that, as is clear in Fumiko's discourse, working conditions in a regular, full-time position make it almost impossible to reconcile a professional life and the status of mother-wife. We should also note that, while Fumiko's discourse denounces the condition of Japanese women, there is no criticism of the general working conditions. About this, see also note 6.
[5] Which means "to practice," "to improve," but also "to polish."
[6] We should point out that a considerable number of young mothers with whom we met declared they would continue working full-time if the hours were more regular and if there was less overtime required. In fact, it is the working conditions of a regular employee that make many of them give it up.
[7] A woman can declare she is a family member supported by her husband and be exempted from paying income tax if her income is not over 1,030,000 yen *per annum*. She is also exempted from paying social insurance as a dependent family member if her income does not exceed 1,300,000 yen.
[8] It seems important to note that while, in most cases, the fact of finding oneself unemployed represents a social stigma, for Akira that situation saved him from the worse one of not being able to fulfill his obligations in his local community. This confirms the force of community values, which challenge the value of salaried employment.
[9] Nowadays, many people buy the services rather than appealing to the community. Some prefer to stay away from community networks that they feel to be very restricting.
[10] She was therefore not unemployed at the time of the interview. We have nevertheless decided to keep her interview in our sample because of her subjective involvement and the sort of arguments she put forward.
[11] A service to send congratulation messages by telephone on a required date.
[12] "Healer", "witch", "fetichist" are all names that people gave her, as she says, depending on the subjectivity of the person speaking, *i.e.* the person she is caring for or helping (customer), her rival (doctors) or those she lives with (neighbors).
[13] In Japanese in particular, and to a lesser extent in Portuguese as well, the subject is not always explicitly present in a sentence, although the context permits identifying it.

# APPENDIX

## Definition of the target groups

### Workers

| | Age | Sex | Household position | Previous work | Current situation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **France** | 35-55 years | Male | Head | Manual worker 3 years and more | Made redundant; Seeking job |
| **Japan** | 40-59 years | Male | Head | Manual worker | Made redundant; Seeking job |
| **Brazil** | 35 years and over | Male | Head | Manual worker 5 years and more | Made redundant; Seeking job |

### Mothers

| | Age | Household position | Children in Household | Previous work | Current situation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **France** | 25-45 years | Spouse or Head | Yes, young children | Yes | Seeking job, inactive more than 2 years |
| **Japan** | Any age | Spouse or Head | Not necessarily | Yes; left work because of children | Seeking job, from inactivity or unemployment |
| **Brazil** | Any age | Spouse or Head | Yes, at least 2 years old | Yes; left work voluntarily | Seeking job, from inactivity |

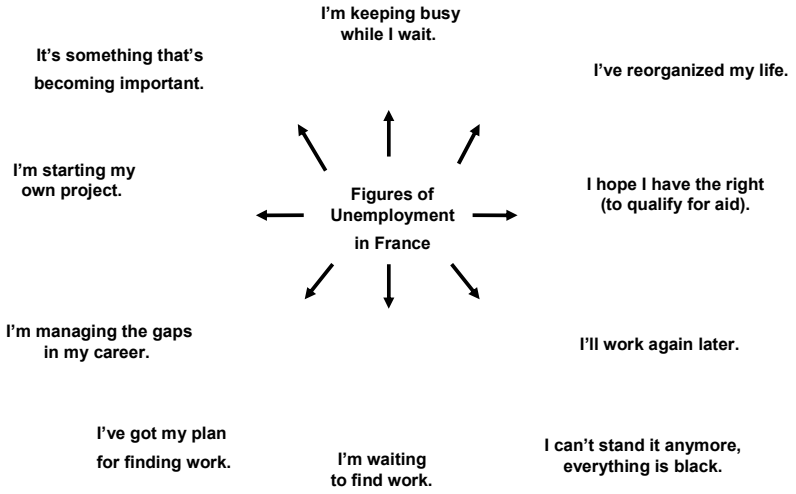
## Young People

| | Sex | Age | Education level | Current situation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **France** | Male and female | 20-25 years | Less than BAC (pre-high school graduation) | No (or very little) work (non-government aided employment) for a year |
| **Japan** | Male and female | Up to 29 years | All levels | Seeking job |
| **Brazil** | Male and female | 16-24 years | Primary-Secondary (8-11 years) | Seeking job |

## Managers

| | Age | Sex | Previous work | Current situation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **France** | 25-55 years | Male and female | From technician to manager, Tertiary sector | Made redundant; Seeking job |
| **Japan** | Up to 59 years | Male and female | Lower to middle management ; Tertiary sector | Made redundant; Seeking job |
| **Brazil** | 30 years and over | Male and female | Lower to middle management ; Service sector | Made redundant; Seeking job |

## Schema 1

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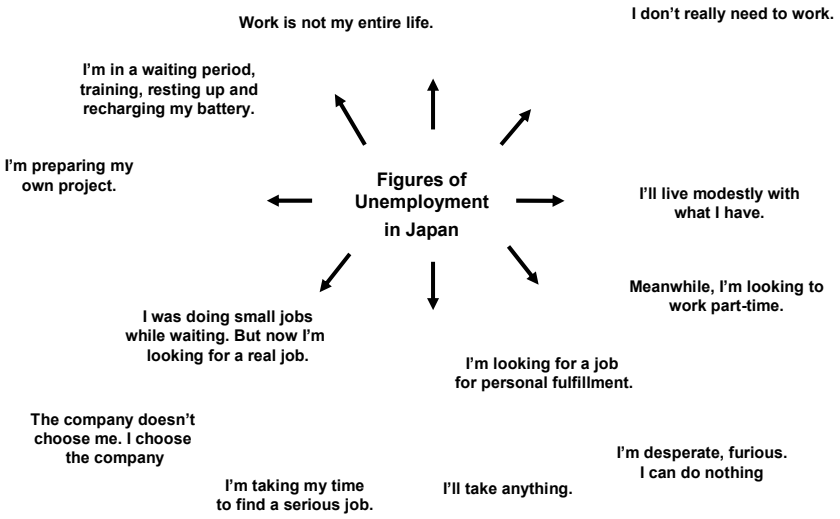
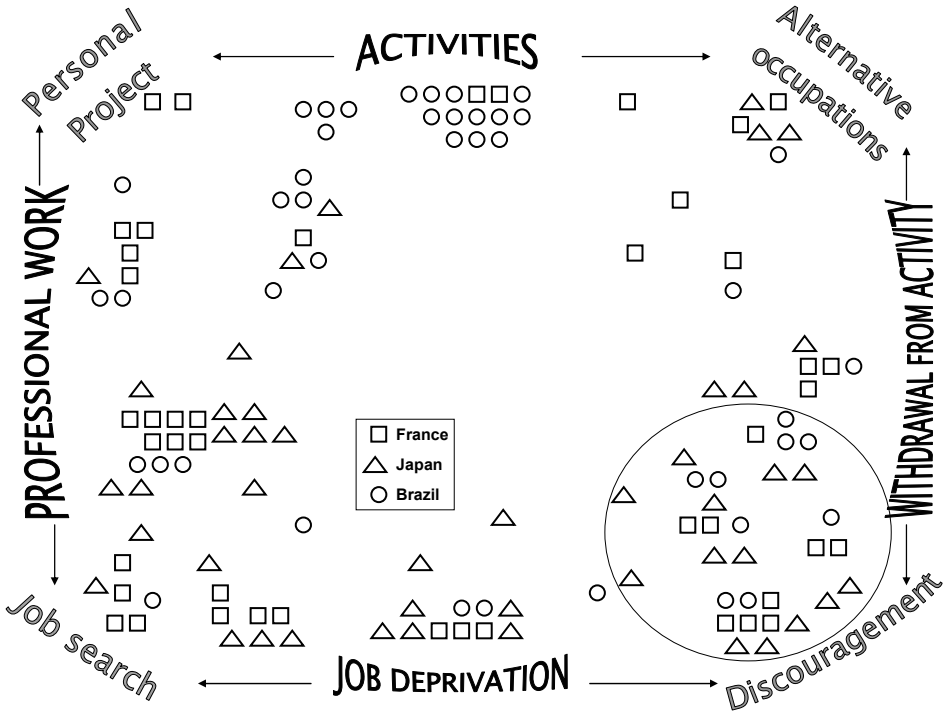


## Schema 3

## Schema 4



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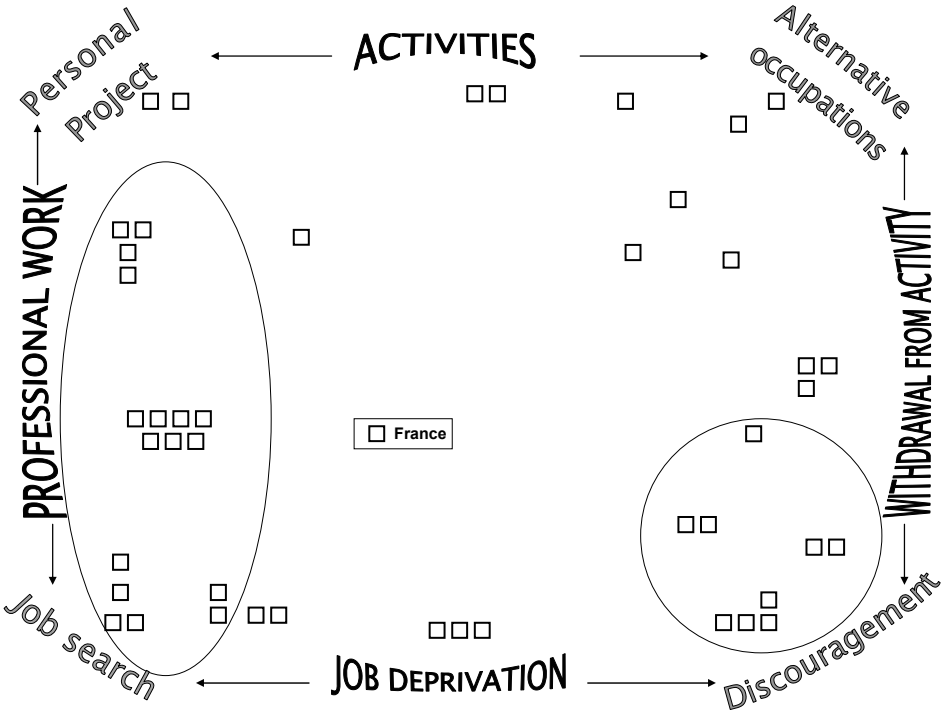


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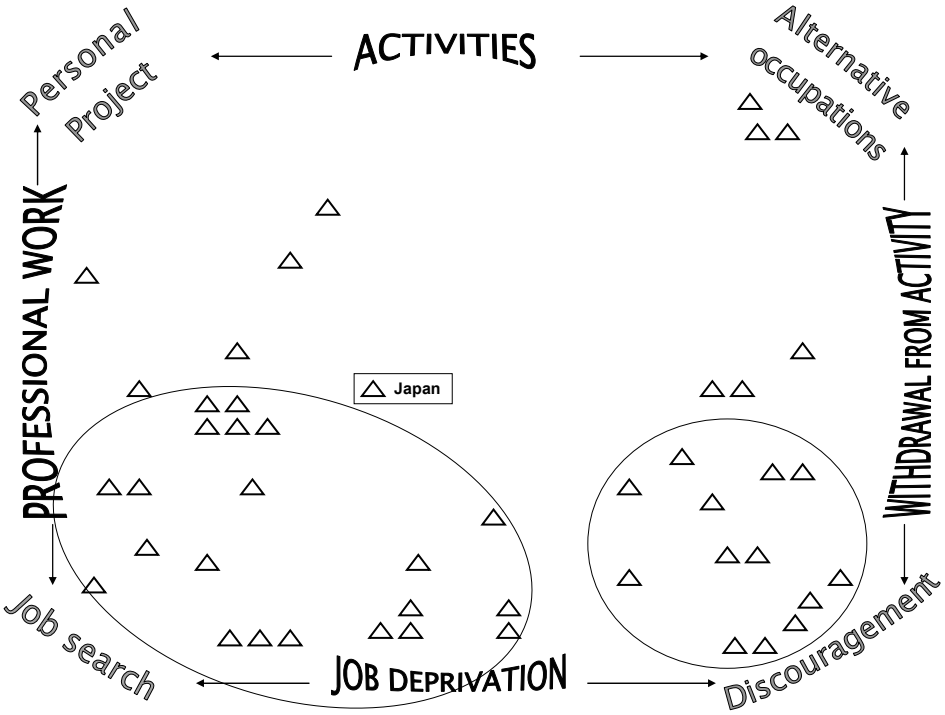

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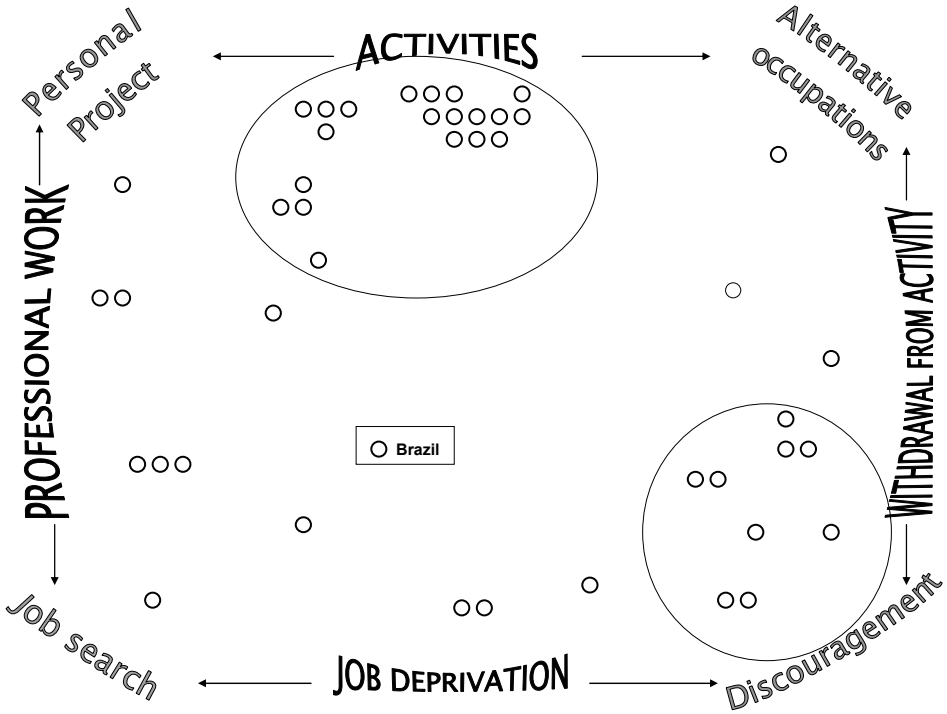
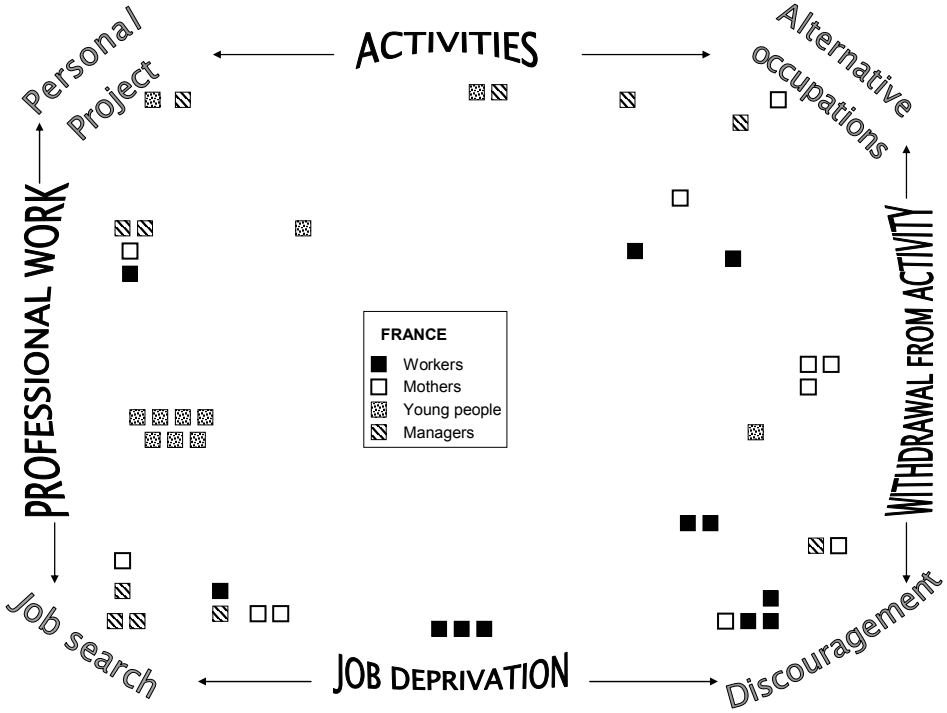
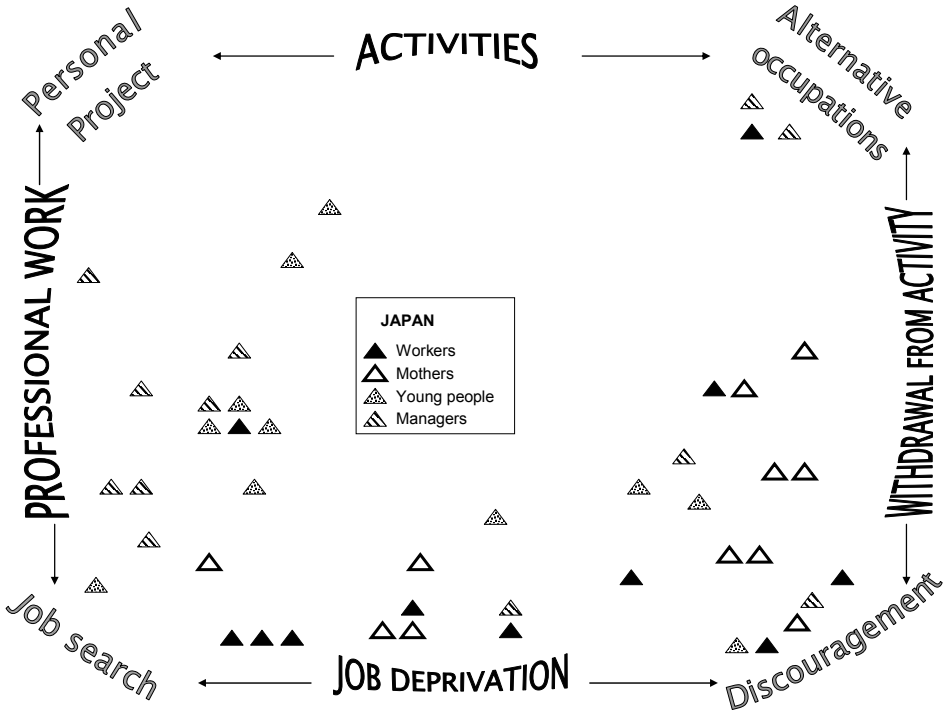


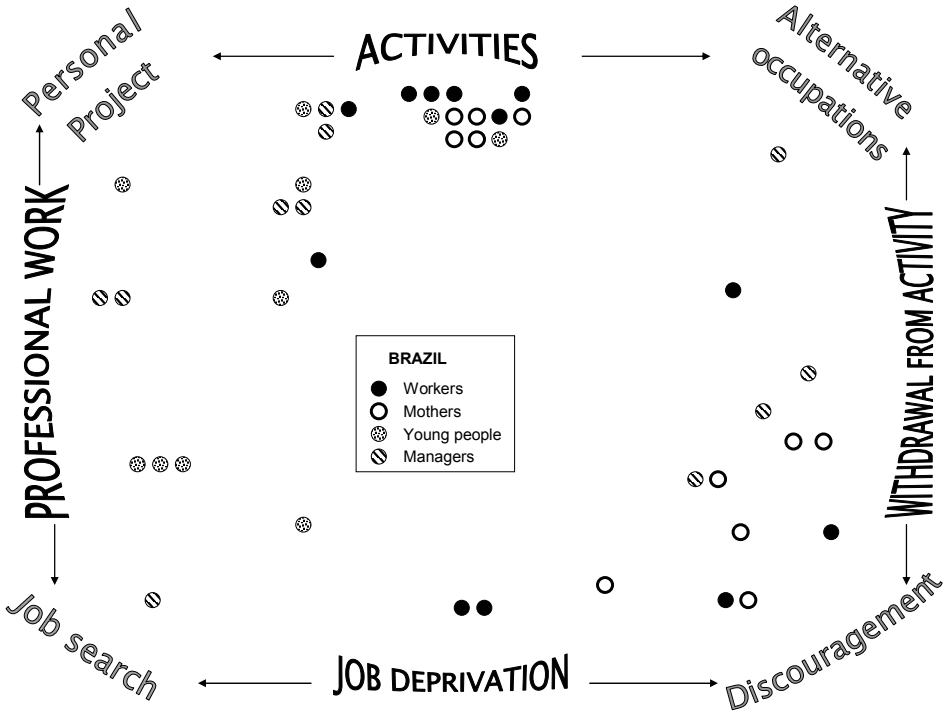

**Schema 8**



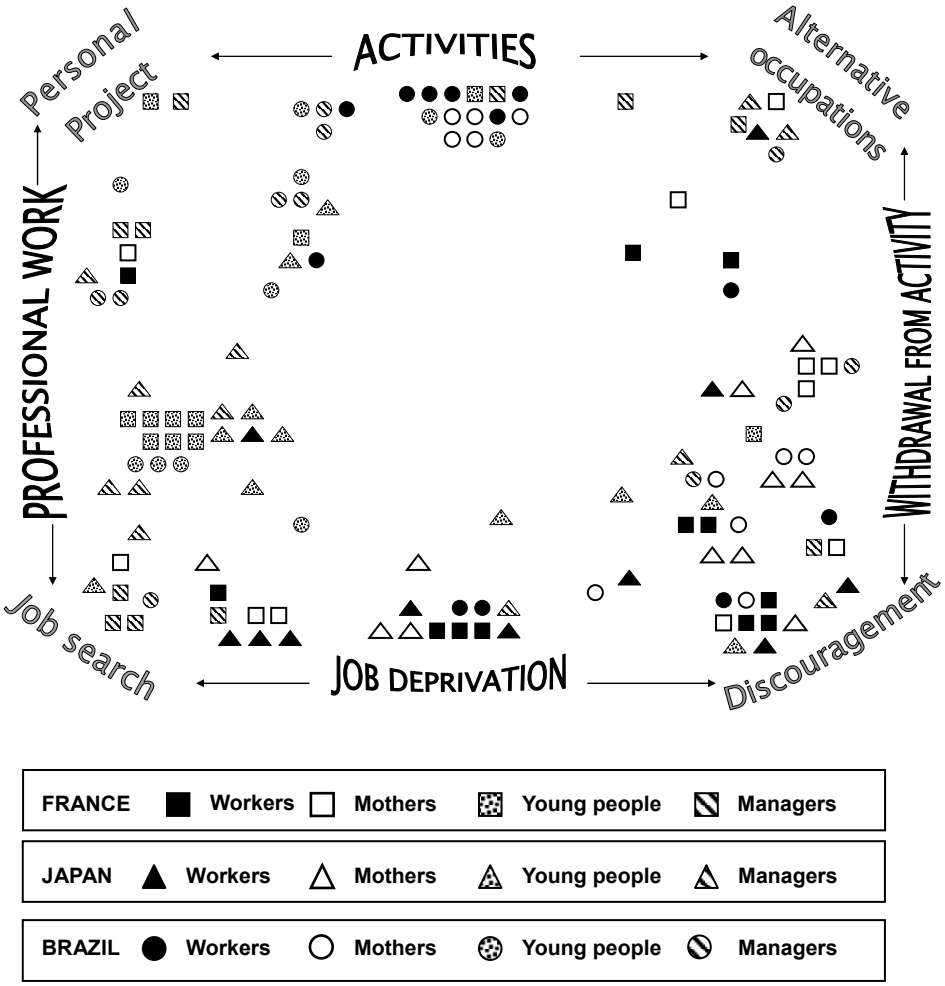
**Schema 9**




**Schema 10**



**Schema 11**


ACTIVITIES
Personal Project
Alternative occupations
PROFESSIONAL WORK
WITHDRAWAL FROM ACTIVITY
Job search
JOB DEPRIVATION
Discouragement
FRANCE Workers Mothers Young people Managers
JAPAN Workers Mothers Young people Managers
BRAZIL Workers Mothers Young people Managers

# Chapter 5

# National Configurations of Unemployment: Empirical Results and Theoretical Implications

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One of the aims of our work here was to demonstrate the significance in comparing unemployment in three countries with very different histories, institutions and places in the international division of labor. Comparing France, Japan and Brazil implied a risk in the sense that these three societies are rarely considered in the same framework, even more so when studying a phenomenon such as unemployment. From juridical, economical, social, institutional and subjective viewpoints, unemployment in the three countries takes such contrasted forms that usually one tends to consider these forms as clearly incomparable. We hope to have made it clear that our choice of the three countries derives from the theoretical position that does not consider unemployment as a codified and standardized measurable entity, but rather as a phenomenon to be apprehended qualitatively through the articulations between institutional logic and biographical experiences, at the intersection of normative dynamics and life paths, at the crossroad of a system of rules and universe of beliefs, in short as a coherent and composite configuration which is both structured and dynamic. Taking such a position required maintaining the contrasts between the survey fields, while continuously conducting a strictly defined survey protocol.

The results of the surveys have not only confirmed a number of initial hypotheses made on the basis of previous research on the three countries, but also went far beyond. We have started with the idea of great heterogeneity of unemployment situations between the countries and within each country. Thanks to the combination of various methodological tools (the exploration of the codification of unemployment in the three countries, the inclusion of social and institutional contexts, the longitudinal analysis of individual trajectories, the constitution of target-groups, the use of in-depth biographical interviews, and their analysis including linguistic aspects, etc.), the field survey has shown us how this

great diversity is constituted, and how in each country this heterogeneity is configured. The initial hypothesis about the importance of public policies in France, of enterprises in Japan, of family solidarity networks in Brazil, is largely confirmed, while other points came to be added on the list. For example, the weakness or strength of family ties, social networks and institutional resources appear to be very different according to the country, and the result was often surprising. The material importance of churches and religious institutions in unemployed persons' everyday life in Brazil, and the weakness of both family networks, that is to say between the members of an extended family[1], and neighborhood solidarity in Japan illustrate such surprise.

Once again, one can point out the complementarity between a qualitative research plan oriented towards the subjective and biographical experience of unemployment, and an institutional research plan taking into account the historical and social construction of public policies and the institution of unemployment. The national specificities in highly contrasted missions and practices of employment agencies in the three countries, for example, could be elucidated by fully putting into play these two complementary methodological tools.

Additionally, from the point of view of methodology, we have succeeded in using a survey protocol of open and in-depth interviews in the countries where they are very rarely employed (in Brazil and Japan). Indeed, in France, qualitative biographical analysis centered on unemployed persons' life experiences and the way they regard their situation is widely utilized. Its realization in Brazil and Japan was the foundation for comparative approaches in qualitative surveys, more precisely for the attentive stance of the analysis of discursive practices of interviewees, considered here as vectors of expression of significations of unemployment. That the ways of telling one's situation in relation to work and non-work, employment and unemployment, economical activity and inactivity can be comparable, was a very risky initial hypothesis, given linguistic and societal diversities.

The formalization of these discourses in the cartographic schemas represents, even in relation to the accumulation of French research, an important methodological innovation. It avoids the juxtaposition of national typologies, while assuring at the same time a rigorous and structured comparison which is also supple and dynamic. One of the interesting outcomes of this comparison, namely the symmetry of the "negative" pole in the three countries (discouragement, depression, see "black") and the extreme variety of the "positive" pole (different ways to face unemployment), remain to be developed further. In this perspective, an analysis of the target groups is an interesting track to follow. The importance of the dimensions of sex, age and social class is fully captured in these schemas. They graphically show a complex interplay between national differences and common characteristics: the interconnection between these dimensions appears to be different according to the country, but it also reveals certain regularities from one country to another (for example, the similarities between women and workers on the one hand, and managers and young people on the other hand).

## 1. Some social properties of the category of unemployment

The most outstanding empirical result of our research, which has strong theoretical implications developed below, is that unemployment appears to have contradictory properties. Now we know to what extent unemployment, as other components of social reality, is a product of a construction process. The most obvious aspects of this construction can be found in the definition of standardized indicators, the production of voluminous statistics and the creation of specialized institutions; however, they can also be identified in the formulation of discourse on unemployment, and in the evident connotation which goes with this term "unemployment" for everybody, in short, a shared and common meaning which has not fallen from the heavens. Thus unemployment appears without any doubt as a codified phenomenon, having a precise and shared meaning. At the same time, it appears also as an elusive phenomenon, afflicted with problematic and unstable significations. This tension, contradictory only in appearance, is amply brought to light by different methods of the research. The measurement of unemployment is fraught with the necessity to fix the precise boundary to be able to count the phenomenon of unemployment statistically, while at the same time with the constraints to make the adopted conventions visible to readers, and cause an increasing widening of the traced frontiers to appear. Likewise, the analysis of individual trajectories underlines well to what extent unemployment is a forceful marker of biographies, and shows as well how the succession of sequences in which an episode of unemployment is included is crucial in understanding the signification and the weight of unemployment in the trajectory. Finally, the analysis of in-depth interviews shows to what extent unemployment is a powerful category of identification, even being a potentially destructive negative experience, and at the same time an object of multiple interpretations leading to alternative definitions of situations.

Unemployment is, after all, a social category not only flexible and malleable, but also weak and fragile. To understand this weakness we contrast unemployment with employment and inactivity and see how new definitions and the destabilization of the norms of employment, for example, weakens the category of unemployment. Employment and inactivity, which constitute two alternatives of unemployment, share also the same flexibility. This is obvious in the case of employment. We only have to think about the multiplication of unheard-of or renewed forms of labor and their remuneration to admit that the frontiers of employment are broadening and moving towards an ever looser definition, to such an extent that international organizations conceive new concepts such as "decent work." For inactivity the movements are not similar, but nevertheless comparable in so far as this category is mobilized in an authoritarian way or with the consent of the persons in question, to requalify the situations of unemployment - by definition, situations of economical activity, which stretch in time and are accompanied by discouragement.

However, in relation to unemployment, employment is a more solid and consistent category. The changes occurring in the norms of employment, whose degree varies

according to the country as we noted above, are accompanied by a rise in diverse forms of employment and, by this fact, broaden the territory belonging to employment. We are witnessing the historical process of the displacement of the dividing line between employment and unemployment which should not be considered as a mere problem of statistical artifact. For this displacement is clearly visible in the biographical trajectories, which are very often marked by intermediary situations considered as signs of getting out of unemployment or stages of a journey towards more typical forms of employment. This displacement acquires an increasing legitimacy for the individuals concerned, also noticeable in biographical interviews, even if it is only because it helps the individuals escape from unemployment and its typical threatening form of an overwhelming emptiness.

As for inactivity, in the statistical construction it corresponds to the balance resulting from the subtraction of the economically active population from the total of the working age population. As such, it used to have an unsubstantial character. In the historical process we are discussing, even this category acquires consistency and stretches its territory against unemployment. Indeed, inactivity is not only a situation which comes after activity when individuals arrive at the end of their professional life (entering into retirement). It is also a way out from unemployment, in many cases. For certain categories of a population, especially women and the elderly, it appears as a socially legitimate alternative to unemployment. In this sense, inactivity constitutes a threat to their status of unemployed, therefore economically active, all the more so that requalification of the status as inactive is always accomplished under strong social constraints.

The development of informal activities is found at the intersection of these historical processes of displacement at the two borders of unemployment in relation to employment and inactivity. Indeed, these informal activities are, according to each case, interpreted as "real" work, because they are remunerated or help prepare for a professional project, or as an occupation because they allow people to spend time or provide them symbolic gratuity. Thus, they come close to employment or to inactivity, and constitute in both cases a threat to the qualification of the situation as unemployment: either it is the individual himself who redefines his or her situation, or it can be a result of an institutional policy of requalifying into inactivity because of the individual's unavailability or insufficient job search, or even fraud (illicit work, for example).

## 2. Distinct yet relative national differences

Finally, in this research, we have defended the following idea: a sociological and comparative approach should go beyond the knowledge provided by statistical conventions which are supposed to measure identically a rigorously defined phenomenon. It should privilege the analyses anchored in national contexts, in a way to apprehend how unemployment is constructed, put in form and interpreted, according to different and specific norms. In this perspective we have rejected two theoretical positions which

frequently support comparative works: universalism and singularism. The former considers that the same variables and the same analytical categories are appropriate for different countries, as if the same word or the same concept designates an identical, universal phenomenon. It neglects the national normative systems embodied in specific institutions, which orient the subjective meanings that those who experience job deprivation give to their situation. The normative systems also have an impact on these people's ways of reacting and on their strategies put forward to face the situation. They contribute to define the alternative statuses and the rules to access them, and influence the anticipations of the future. The latter position, singularism, considers that each country has its history, institutions and culture which form a contingent, coherent and stable ensemble, in such a way that analytical categories relevant for each country must be specific and particular. It provides national characteristics with a structuring force which pushes away the possibility to define supple transversal analytical schemas, which can take into account comparable processes opening into specific contexts such as the destabilization of referential norms of employment, professional trajectories and activities, the displacement of frontiers of social statuses, the polarization of significations of job deprivation, and so on and so forth.

Our theoretical posture is based on the idea that unemployment is a social construction that an analysis must describe and reconstitute in each context to be able to articulate the identification of common processes and elucidation of specificities, and thus to account for the singular variations of transversal mechanisms. This position was put in work in three directions, discussed in chapters two, three, four and summarized above.

By putting into play these different levels of analysis, we clearly demonstrated that the individuals confronted with job deprivation are not a mere canvas on which this downgrading social condition is painted. They are not engaged in the monitoring of institutional programs which dictate their activities strictly following the definition of the status attributed to them. Of course unemployment is a codified status, although it is institutionalized in a different way according to the country, but the meanings that individuals give to it are extremely varied, as is the place occupied by unemployment in their biographical trajectories. The emptiness cannot describe the entire experience of unemployment. For this experience can also be an investment in nonprofessional activities, planned preparation of a professional project, or more or less forced retirement in the margins of activity. These declensions can be observed in each of the countries, even if there are many variations with particular coloring. In parallel, unemployment is not only a transition leading to employment or allowing preparation for a competition for employment, but also can occupy many other positions in the trajectories. It can be a never ending long-term experience, imprisoning people and even leading to exclusion. It can be a repetitive passage in a cycle of unstable professional activities, or a partial component of informal or part-time job situations, and so on, and so forth. Here again this range varies in each country and its distributions are quite different.

These results demonstrate the interdependence between biographical trajectories and life experiences on the one hand, and social structures and normative frameworks on the

other hand. By the latter we mean labor market regulations, forms of sexual division of labor, characteristics of professional life, institutional modalities of treatment of the unemployed, devices of their follow-up and control, etc. They are the mechanisms which contribute in molding individual situations, without going as far as determining them. In return, subjective logics, taking more or less distance from normative programs, take part in modulating these mechanisms. This articulation allows us to draw up national coherences: the socialization of responses to unemployment for France, visible in the diversification of government assisted employment statuses or in the institution of minimum income with social protection, as in the anticipations of the future and strategies of management of job deprivation; the weight of individual and personal responsibility for Japan, which can be seen in the importance of individual strategies in the job search and prospecting in the labor market; the importance of organized making do for Brazil, that we observe in the weight of informal activities or fragmentation of biographical trajectories.

In each national situation, unemployment (and activity, inactivity, employment and work) is analyzed as an interdependent chain between institutional actors and individual actors, as a combination of structural processes and subjective processes, as an intricacy composed of collective regulations and individual strategies, institutional norms and subjective worlds, codified rules and life experiences. These coherences can be considered as national configurations, rather than as models, because they are both structured and dynamic, precisely because permanent tensions are present between structural phenomena, themselves submitted to macro-social changes (globalization, individualization, the shrinking of the safety net, the progress of meritocracy, the promotion of self-employment, etc.), and subjective phenomena, which are in their turn submitted to micro-social changes (integration of individual responsibility, becoming more autonomous as an individual, assuring the position of actor, monitoring projects, etc.). These structural and subjective processes do not necessarily converge. Their respective movements are the agents of change in the configuration of unemployment. Nobody knows if it will bring the countries that we studied closer to each other or on the contrary move them further apart. However, we do hope that we have demonstrated with our theoretical framework a new perspective in comparative study.

## Note

[1] In this regard, the strongest solidarity can be observed between a couple unless, on the contrary, the relation breaks down into divorce. Parents, while they often let their children live under the same roof, are very absent in their job search, more due to the discrete nature of the parent/children relationship than indifference.

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# 第Ⅱ部

## 失業対策の国別特性
## ―失業の個性との照応関係―

# 第１章
# フランスの失業対策における失業者

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## はじめに

本誌で紹介されるフランス・ブラジル・日本３国の失業（者）カテゴリーの社会的形成に関する比較研究はまず、従来の公式の失業定義・カテゴリーだけでは今日の失業の現実をとらえられない、と見る。労働市場の変容・大量の失業の出現・不安定雇用の拡大とともに、失業の「質」も変容を遂げている。また、失業者カテゴリーの作成は公権力の独占的作業ではなく、公権力から相対的に独立した社会（人間共同体）においても、公式定義に影響を受けながらも失業は独自に解釈され、その意味が組み立てられる、とする。こうした仮説を検証するために、３ヶ国のそれぞれの「核となる失業者」（公的に認可された失業者）を対象にして、「人々の側」から形成された、失業（雇用喪失･剥奪）の社会的意味を問い､その比較を行っている。失業者と面接し、職歴を中心としたライフコース・求職活動の実際と姿勢や態度・失業状況の定義などを尋ね、そこで展開された失業者の言説から、彼らの失業解釈、解釈に至るプロセス、そして失業の社会的意味が構築されるメカニズムも比較するものである[1]。

３ヶ国での調査結果を見る際には、それぞれの国で失業者たちの置かれている社会環境やその地位の相違をまず理解しなければならないだろう。失業者の言説を展開させる要素やベクトルは、３ヶ国では違う（この際立つ相違のために、３国が選択されたのである）。３国間で、または２国間での失業者が同じような失業解釈を行ったとしても､その意味は全く正反対の場合がある。例えば､失業において｢求職活動の断念｣（｢キャリア・アップ｣の場合も）が支配的な状況であっても、そこに至らせるライフ

コース、そして雇用可能性などの内容は、各国で異なり、それによって失業の「求職活動の断念」という意味は異なる。失業者の態度は、彼らが置かれた状況のさまざまな要素が重層した結果である。また、そもそも、調査対象が同じ「失業（者）」という基準で切り取られたといっても、その概念は3ヶ国では一致していない[2]。失業者への社会保護制度や失業対策の施策そして専門機関と、その役割を定める公的な失業（者）定義は異なっているのである。公的な失業者支援の目途は雇用（再）確保であっても、雇用・職業基準が異なっているために、職業紹介・職業配置の内容も方法も違う。さらにインフォーマルな社会関係網、家族形態・関係もそれぞれの特徴がある。

フランスは、30年前に完全雇用は崩壊し、大量失業社会に入り、「行うべきことは全て試みられた」と言われるほど失業対策の施策は膨大な数にのぼり、失業は「制度化」されている（失業は認可され、諸制度において失業者の場所・ステータスが据えられている）。さらに公的機関だけでなく、失業（者）に関連するインフォーマルな市民組織、そして失業者自身のアソシエーションも無数に存在している。しかし、大量失業、そして長期失業は固定的な状況になっており（平均失業期間は10数ヶ月、1年以上の長期失業者は4割を占める）、人々の側でも失業の現代的な質的変化が（一定程度）認知されている。ブラジルを見ると、失業は断続的なものとされ、実際、失業者は家族･近隣社会の援助によって「小さな仕事」、そして生活の糧を得ている。失業者への社会保護は、こうしたインフォーマルな支援を前提として非常に限定されている。他方、日本では制度上の失業は、あくまで「完全失業」と「短期失業」に限定されており（この傾向は今日、強化されているように思われる）、また失業からの脱出･解決には家族･インフォーマルな人間関係は大きな役割を果たさなくなっている。そして労働市場､またその周辺では「フリーター」･「ニート」などの新しいカテゴリーも、周知のように登場しているが、彼らは、失業者とは「別の」存在とみなされることが常である。

さて、本稿で紹介･検討するのは、フランスの失業対策であり、その対象とされた公式の失業（者）カテゴリーと、その変容を示していく。失業対策の内容は、失業者の言説を理解するための不可欠な要素であり、また第一部の英文論文で詳しく分析されているフランスの失業者自身の失業解釈と、公的な失業（者）定義を比較していただくためである。また加瀬論文で示される、わが国の失業対策とも比較検討し、両国の失業者言説の一致、または相違を生じさせる、一つの（大きな）背景として扱っていただきたいと思う。わが国で知られることの殆どないブラジルの状況こそ紹介が必要ではあるが、筆者の知見は乏しく、割愛させていただく[3]。

## Ⅰ．失業の社会的認可と統計上の失業者カテゴリー

フランスは、1970 年代末に「大量失業社会」に入った。76 年にはわが国の完全失業者に相当する ILO 定義の失業者（無業・求職活動・即就労可能）は 100 万人台となり（失業率 4.5％）、80 年代早々に 150 万人（同 6％）、そして 80 年半ばには 250 万人で 10％の失業率が定着した。大量失業の出現には、停滞した経済成長・労働市場の悪化という背景があるが、フランスでは失業を潜在化させないメカニズムがあり、失業は統計数値にはっきりと現れた。

### （１）「雇用を剥奪された者」そして「求職者」

フランスの第二次大戦後の労働行政は、「完全雇用」を目標にし、雇用基準はフルタイムかつ無期限労働契約という雇用保障と社会保障（社会保険）に守られた労働とした。この雇用基準のもとで雇用は義務から、労働契約に基づく権利となり、法によって雇用の権利の体系化が行われた。同時に、失業とは単に労働のない状況ではなく、労働契約が切断された状況とされ、失業者は保護されながら、雇用基準はもちろん、かつ自身の職歴・職能に合致しノーマルな賃金の「適切な雇用 emploi convenable」を求める権利が認められたのである。この時代では ILO 定義の失業者カテゴリーが用いられ、失業とは「前職から次職までの通過的な状況」であり、失業者とは「雇用が、予期せず（非自発的な）一時的に剥奪された労働者」（労働法典）と社会的に合意され、こうした失業（者）カテゴリーの下で、公的かつ社会的な支援体制が構築されていった[4]。実際、労働人口の拡大のなかで無期限労働契約・フルタイムが支配的な雇用形態となり、失業は一時的な状況であり（60 年代半ばには被用者において無期限労働契約・フルタイム雇用は 95％を占め、失業率は 1％台にとどまる）、完全雇用制が成立・定着したと見られていた。

今日の失業対策（とくに雇用政策）において中心的な役割を果している国家雇用庁（ANPE（アーエヌペーウ））は 67 年に創設されたが、ANPE に求められたのは求人先企業に適切な労働力を組織的に（再）配置することであった。ANPE は、従来の職業紹介事務所 bureau de placement に替わって、その地域事務所（ALE）を小さな町にも張りめぐらし（およそ 700 ヶ所）、潜在的な求職者も掘り起こし、組織的に求人先に配置していった。こうした ANPE による労働力の中央集権的管理にともない、「雇用のない者」は ALE に出向くことを習慣化していくが、まずは恵まれた失業給付の受給可能な解雇者、次に疾病保険に未加入の無業の世帯主（求職者として登録すれば疾病保険制度の自動的な加入という特典などを付与）、さらに新規求職青年や主婦も ALE を訪れるようになったという。彼らは求職者として ANPE に登録されたが、労働力の

適切な配置を目途としたANPEでは、「雇用のない者」だけでなく、現職はあるが他の仕事に転職したいという人々も積極的な求職者とみなして「失業者」としていったのである[5]。これがANPE登録の「月末求職者Demandeur d'Emploi en Fin de Mois:DEFM」という、新しい失業者カテゴリーである。以後、統計においては「ILO定義失業者」（国立統計経済研究所:INSEEの「雇用調査enquête Emploi」）と、「月末求職者」（ANPE調査）の２つの大きな失業者カテゴリーが定着していくのである（マスメディア、さらに失業関連の文書でも何の解説もなく「失業者」と記されているが、それは「ILO定義失業者」ではなく「月末求職者（DEFM）」であることが頻繁であるので注意が必要である）。

雇用施策は、ILO定義の完全失業者に限定せず、転職希望の就業者・パートタイム・短期雇用のフルタイム労働者を含む「月末求職者」を、その対象としていく。彼らは登録後に、月一度、「求職活動の実行」を電話・郵送（今ではインターネットでも可能）で通知しておけば（この通知－確認はpointageと呼ばれる）、それぞれの条件はあるが、求人紹介・求職活動の援助・職業養成・補助雇用などのANPEのサービス、そして失業給付（労使運営の全国商工業協会連合：UNEDIC（ウネディック）の管理による社会的制度）、さらには公共交通費の補助・余暇文化施設の利用などで優遇されるようになった。ANPEは求職者に、「失業者」という権利ある社会的ステータスを付与する機関とも言える。

### （２）「月末求職者」の８つのカテゴリー

ANPE登録の「月末求職者」[6]は、いくつかのカテゴリーに分類されている。当初のカテゴリー基準は求職する雇用形態であったが、95年以降は、まず前月の就業時間（78時間以下か以上か）で分けられ、つづいて求める雇用の労働契約（有期限か無期限か）・就労形態（パートかフルタイムか）・即就労可能か否かによって、8つのカテゴリーとなっている（表1参照）。ILO定義の失業者と対応される「月末求職者」は、無期限契約のフルタイムを求職している第1と第6カテゴリーとされ、彼らが「核」となる失業者となっている。さて、わが国の文献では例外なく、こうした失業者カテゴリーに頓着せず、フランスの失業保険の受給率は失業者の5割などと書かれているが、その母集団は「ILO定義失業者」（完全失業者）ではなく、即就労不能の第4、第5カテゴリーを除く6つのカテゴリーが中心なのである[7]。

さて、現在の失業者数を見ると、97年の半ばから2001年半ばまでは好況のため顕著に減少したが、以降再び上昇して、05年5月ではILO定義の完全失業者数は278万人、失業率は10.2%へと回帰し、即就労不能の2つのカテゴリーを除く「月末求職者」は392万人にも昇っている[8]。フランスの全人口は日本のおよそ半分であるから、膨

**表１　職業紹介所登録の「月末求職者」のカテゴリー**

月 78 時間未満就労の求職者

カテゴリー１：無期限契約のフルタイムを求職、即就労可能

カテゴリー２：無期限契約のパートタイムを求職、即就労可能

カテゴリー３：有期限契約雇用を求職、即就労可能

カテゴリー４：即就労は不能（職業養成中・主婦・疾病者など）

月 78 時間以上就労の求職者

カテゴリー５：即就労は不能（職業養成中・主婦・疾病者など）

カテゴリー６：無期限契約のフルタイムを求職、即就労可能

カテゴリー７：無期限契約のパートタイムを求職、即就労可能

カテゴリー８：有期限契約雇用を求職、即就労可能

大な量の失業者である。

## Ⅱ．失業対策における失業者カテゴリーの特定とその揺らぎ

ANPE の創設以降、労働行政では「月末求職者」が対象とされ、失業者の行政上のカテゴリーは「雇用のない者」から「求職者」に移行したが、求職者カテゴリーの「中味」も変容している。施策が対象とする者の輪郭は頻繁に変わり（安定していない）、さらに特定層に的を絞った施策が出現し（典型カテゴリーの特化）、さらに失業と対比される雇用、すなわち想定される失業の脱出先も変化している。

### （１）1970 年代までの失業者カテゴリー

雇用政策は、1960 年代半ばまでは専ら労働力不足に対処するものであり、雇用のない状況とは「通過的な状況」とした。労働力不足のなかで、労働行政は、女性の労働市場への登場を歓迎し、外国人労働者の流入（移民）を奨励し、そして女性と同様に労働市場に大量に登場するようになった新規学卒青年へは職能を与える職業養成措置を広げ、求人先に配置していくことが何よりも追及された。

**①強制的失業保険制度：「解雇失業者」**

長年にわたって、失業が国家的課題にならなかったことは、強制的失業保険が戦後に、そして社会保障制度（新しい社会保険）の創設から 10 年以上も経た 58 年に、ようやく創設されたことからも分かる。58 年以前は労使の共済金庫と、（一定の）市町村での公的扶助 aide publique 金庫が局所的な失業に対応していた。失業保険が、公

務員を除く全産業労働者に拡大されたのも67年であり、失業者への社会給付制度の展開は他の先進資本主義国に比べ非常な遅れをとった。60年代末にはアルジェリア戦争後の帰国者そして衰退産業（製鉄業・造船業など）における解雇の増大が見られ、失業保険はまずは産業再編による経営理由の解雇失業者、そして成長産業への移動が困難な高齢失業者を優遇したが、当時の失業保険受給者は10万人程度にすぎなかった（ちなみに失業率は2%）[9]。

なお、フランスの失業保険制度は、労使の代表者（「社会的パートナー」と呼称）が管理運営する、全国商工業協会連合（UNEDIC）による社会的制度であり、労使で締結した協約[10]を政府が認可して、新しい制度になるという独特な手続きを経る。ただし、失業給付基金は労使の保険拠出金だけでなく、国庫負担も当初から3分の1と非常に高い割合を占めており、国の関与は決して小さくない。

**②完全雇用回帰策：摩擦的・通過的な失業カテゴリーの保持**

1970年代には2度の石油ショックを経験して、失業率は73年の2.7%から70年代末には6%にまで上昇したが、この期でも「経済減速と失業は一時的な現象」と見られていた。失業対策はあくまで完全雇用への回帰が目標であり、失業者数の増加を食い止める「積極策」を中心としながらも、失業の影響を緩和し労働者を保護する「消極策」とともに、「高い水準」で失業から脱出させるという意図があった。

「積極策」を見ると、求職者を独占的に管理することになった雇用庁－職業紹介所（ANPE）は、労働能力・職能・労働意欲を測定し、雇用可能な「真の意味での失業者」を選別して、職業の（再）配置をおこなった[11]。成人失業者（解雇失業者）については、前職・従前賃金にふさわしい雇用へ再配置し、他方、学卒青年には、雇用確保までの多くのトランジットの職業養成を設け、失業回避のために職能を付与していった。この時期の積極策は、もちろん成長産業へのスムーズな労働力配置という経済政策・産業再編成策の一つでもあった[12]。

「消極策」である失業保険給付については、それは賃金の代替的給付とされ、高い補償率と長期の給付期間が設定されていた。雇用を剥奪された労働者において社会権を保障し、かつ再確保する次職の質を守るための労働者保護と位置づけられたからである[13]。とくに解雇労働者への特別手当は、従前賃金のおよそ90%、給付期間も事実上無期限の給付であった。

「消極策」で忘れてはならないのが、「労働市場からの引退を代償として、退職に近い年齢に雇用を喪失した被用者に支給される一種の失業手当」[14]である、早期退職年金préretraite制度である。早期退職年金は、当初は60歳以上の高齢者、つづいて年金受給開始年齢の早期化により55歳以上、さらに解雇者だけでなく辞職（自発的退職）者にも適用され、その受給者は80年代初頭では70万人近くになっていった。

84 年には早期退職年金は、その年齢層の失業給付の支給総額を上回る事態をまねき、新規受給者を認めず事実上廃止されていくが、その代償として 55 歳以上の失業者には失業保険の要件から求職活動を免除することにし、今に至っている。早期退職年金そして求職活動免除は、高齢失業者への社会保護であるが、同時に労働力人口の拡大を抑止して失業率を抑制する策であり[15]、さらに青年層･次世代への雇用の提供＝「世代間連帯」という新しい社会契約にもなった。こうして、早期退職年金や求職活動免除策によって、高齢者においては、失業者カテゴリーと非労働力カテゴリー（無業だが求職活動なし）との境界が曖昧になったのである。

### （２）1980 年代の失業対策

1980 年代に入ると、失業者は 200 万人の域を越え、さらなる増大が明らかになると、失業対策の流れははっきりと変わった。「完全雇用」は諦められ、大量失業は大目に見られるようになり失業者への「特別雇用政策」が独自領域を形成していく。

#### ①国庫補助雇用：「長期失業者」・「学歴の低い青年失業者」の特化

成人の解雇失業者に対する社会保護（扶養）は引き続き重視されてはいたが、失業対策の標的は 1 年以上の長期失業者、そして職業教育の不十分な 25 歳未満青年失業者たちへと移っていった。長期失業者はカテゴリー 1 の求職者において、その比率は 82 年で 36%、87 年で 45%、また青年の失業率は 82 年以降 20%台となっていた。彼らは「雇用確保が困難な失業者 chômeurs en difficulté」と分類され、一時的・短期的状況という失業の普遍的性格は修正された。そして、彼らには「適切な雇用」へ直接配置するのではなく（不可能とみられ）、雇用庁（ANPE）が管理する特別就労・雇用が提供されることとなったのである。民間企業における青年への実習（85 年職業生活誘導実習：SIVP）、公的そして非営利セクターでの賃金補助雇用（その端緒が 84 年の公共的有用労働：TUC、そして 88 年の連帯雇用契約：CES への再編成）、民間企業の人件費コスト軽減（事業主社会保険拠出の免除）で雇用創出を誘導する補助策（88 年の雇用復帰契約:CRE）など、現在に続く補助雇用の原型が出揃うのである。とくに、公的セクターの補助雇用では雇用確保が顕著に困難な青年失業者や長期失業者を引き受けていくのである[16]。

国庫補助雇用は有期限･パートタイム就労であり、従来の完全雇用すなわち無期限契約・フルタイムという雇用モデルとは異なる「特殊な雇用形態」が失業対策によって登場し、80 年代末には延べ人数で 100 万人を超えて定着していった。補助雇用労働者の増大とともに、失業（失業者）と雇用（労働者）の明確な線引きができなくなった。なぜならば補助雇用は、失業者の雇用確保力 emploiyabilité を維持させる参入政策 politique d’insertion の一環であり、あくまで一般雇用を目標としたステッ

プと位置づけられたからである[17]。ただし、他方では補助雇用の受給者のステータスは、法定最低賃金（SMIC（スミック））・社会保険が保障される「労働者」となり、その「労働契約」期間は2年、さらに5年間と期間は延長されていった。すなわち、補助雇用受給者は一般労働市場において雇用確保が期待される失業者であり、同時に労働者なのである。そして、補助雇用の期間は長期化し（労働契約の更新・他の補助雇用への移行）、または失業への回帰となり、「参入」は失業からの退出段階ではなく固定的な「状態」になっていった[18]。

**②失業保険における権利の個別化：失業者間の不平等の拡大**

失業保険も80年代になると、大きな変更を余儀なくされた。失業給付は就労意欲を削ぐとの批判も登場し、赤字財政もあいまって権利の低下が続くのである。

まず82年に、失業の理由別の給付5つは、拠出期間（前職経験期間）に比例した給付期間の手当となり、同時に受給権が生じる最低拠出条件も強化された。失業給付の権利は、失業という社会的な、そして失業者集団への共通の権利から、保険原理（給付―反対給付）を強化して、失業者の個別的な権利へと傾いた[19]。

また、79年以降は失業保険に付加されていた市町村の任意の扶助給付を統合して、全国商工業協会連合（UNEDIC）の管理・運営による単一の制度となっていたが（給付で保険給付と公的負担の給付を混在させた）、84年には使用者団体の強い圧力によって、労使拠出の制度（保険制度）と国庫負担の制度（連帯制度＝扶助）の2つの制度に再度分離され、今に続く二元的制度となった（ただし、両給付とも労使運営のUNEDICの制度である）。保険と扶助の分離は、保険制度の拠出条件が強化され、失業者全体の社会的権利を低下させるとともに[20]、低額な扶助受給者に陥る失業者が生みだされた。とくにその被害を被ったのは、長期失業者・初職を求める青年・短期就労（補助雇用など有期限雇用）と失業を繰り返す失業者であり、彼らの多くが保険給付から失業扶助（特別連帯手当：ASSと参入手当：AI）へと追いやられることになった。この時期は、失業給付だけでなく家族給付などの社会給付の条件も厳しくなり[21]、社会保護制度は失業者の、とくに長期失業者や青年失業者の貧困化を防げないようになるのである。

**③第3の失業給付・参入最低限所得（RMI）：「新しい貧困者」**

失業給付の圧縮とともに、「失業給付の欠如した失業者 chômeurs non indemnisés」（「権利終了の失業者 chômeurs en fin de droit」とも言われる）も増大しつづけ100万人にものぼり（この数はANPE登録求職者のうちの数である）、彼らの状況は労働市場の変容に起因した「新しい貧困」そして「排除」の典型的な状況として、社会問題化した。彼らの窮状は市民運動を動かし、政府をして「第三の失業給付」と言われる参入最低限所得（RMI）を創設させていった。

RMI（エレミー）制度は[22]、88 年末の国民議会においてほぼ全会一致で採択され、即施行された。RMI は、国家による、低所得・貧困世帯への「生活扶助（社会ミニマムと呼称）」の一つとして成立したが、その眼目は失業扶助（連帯制度）の受給できない失業者に所得を与えることであった。失業扶助である特別連帯手当（ASS）は支給期間には制限はなかったが、過去 5 年間の前職経験が要件とされ、また参入手当（AI）は初職を求める青年などへの 1 年間のみの扶助だったからである。こうして今に続く、失業保険―連帯制度（失業扶助）－ RMI という、失業者の所得保障制度が体系化された。

ただし RMI の創設は、すんなりと運んだわけではない。フランスでは貧困者というスティグマを付与する扶助 assistance については、とくに元気な失業者に無条件に提供することには抵抗があったからである（したがって失業扶助の正式名称も「扶助」は回避され「連帯制度の手当」と名称され、また求職活動の実行が条件である）。それでも失業者を対象とする RMI が認められたのは、RMI が「参入政策」に組み込まれたからである。前述のように、参入策の典型は国庫補助雇用であるが[23]、失業者は RMI 手当を受給した後に、参入措置・補助雇用などの就労を受け入れることが期待されたのである。しかし、RMI の参入支援においては、失業保険・失業扶助とは異なり求職活動は義務ではない。RMI 受給者の義務は、福祉事務所（CCAS）などのソーシャルワーカーとの面接による健康・家族環境・教育水準・職業能力などの能力の測定―可能な社会活動をおこなうという「参入契約」に署名することであり、ANPE 登録（求職活動）・雇用の確保も可能ならば「参入契約」に盛り込むという、留保つきである。さらに、「参入契約」の署名も受給者の半数程度にとどまり、RMI は事実上一般的な（無条件の）給付となり、20 代から 30 代の元気な、そして「非常に貧困な失業者」において普及していくのである。RMI 受給者（世帯主）は発足 1 年後には 40 万人を数え、他方、同時期の失業保険受給者は 148 万人、失業扶助は 45 万人である。

このように RMI の登場によって、（一定の）若い失業者において求職者という性格は曖昧になった。また、従来社会制度において失業者と貧困者のカテゴリーは厳然と区別されていたが、RMI によって、この線引きも困難になったのである[24]。

**④失業給付と就労収入の併給策：「就労する失業者」の認可**

失業者への社会的所得は出揃ったが、失業者全てに共通な給付制度は崩壊した。失業保険では権利の認定がより厳格になり、保障水準は個別的かつ格差・不平等が顕著となり、他方で扶助給付の役割が大きくなっていく。しかし、失業扶助や RMI 手当は一人当たりでは法定最低賃金（SMIC）の 2 分の 1 であり、「ノーマルな生活の最低限保障ではなく、著しくアブノーマルな状況から脱出させるという役割だけをもつ」

[25]。「適切な雇用」を待機できない、少なくない失業者は補助雇用、そして労働市場で急速に拡大していた「特殊な雇用形態」を受け入れざるをえなくなった。この動きを加速させるのが、失業保険・失業扶助・RMI の「小さな就労 activités réduites」という「利益供与 intéressement」策であった。

86 年から導入された失業保険制度の「小さな就労」措置は、一時的な就労からの賃金と、失業保険給付の一部の「併給」を認めた。従来は、失業給付制度（UNEDIC）においては、雇用―失業の対立した二項しかなく、両者の中間の状況は認められず、就労の再開イコール失業給付の終了であった。たしかに、不況産業における労働時間の削減という「部分失業」に対する国家給付もあるが、この場合には労働契約は継続しており、失業者への社会給付とは性格が異なる。失業給付制度においては失業の輪郭は明確だったのである。

「小さな就労」は、失業給付を就労へのインセンティブを高めるために活用する活性化（アクティベーション）策である[26]。それを支えるロジックは、一時的な就労・不安定な就労であっても、雇用の完全な剥奪よりも好ましい。そして / または、短期雇用であっても、それを通じて安定的雇用に繋がる可能性もある、というのが第二のロジックである[27]。80 年代半ばには有期限雇用・派遣労働・補助雇用の不安定雇用に加えて、パートタイム雇用も拡大して「雇用の特殊形態」は全労働者の 1 割を超えるようになった（85 年で 14%）。そして、特殊な雇用から安定雇用に向かう動きは小さく、そこから失業に至る（回帰する）経路が太くなっていたのである。70 年代半ばには、解雇という失業理由 3 割、辞職は 2 割弱、派遣労働を含む有期限雇用の終了から失業に至るものは 2 割強であったが、80 年代後半には失業理由の 4 割を超えるものが有期限雇用の終了となり、その割合は高まりつづけ、「雇用の特殊形態」は雇用の再開であるとともに「失業のプレリュード」[28] ともなった。

さて、失業給付と賃金との併給の認可は、失業給付の圧縮とは異なった動きのように見えるが、そうではなく失業給付水準の全般的な低下とともに行なわれたのである。とくに、前職がパートタイムであった失業者では、彼らを優遇する、従前賃金との高い置換率が同時に廃止された。給付の縮小に見舞われた失業保険受給者は、失業からの確実な脱出ではない「小さな就労」を受け入れるようになる。「小さな就労」でも行なえば当面の所得が増え生活が改善する、そして一時的な就労とはいえ新たな拠出期間が加わり給付期間の延長が可能になる、あるいは、再度失業給付にアクセスできるからである。91 年には全失業給付受給者の 7%であった、就労再開者＝併給者は 90 年代末には 17%を占めるようになった[29]。

その後「小さな就労」の基準は頻繁に見直され、労働時間や賃金の規制が緩められ、今では、フルタイムに接近した労働時間での、従前賃金の 7 割までが認められている

[30]。「小さな就労」は、「小さな賃金（低賃金）」になった。こうして再雇用時に賃金水準低下という動きを抑制し、失業を経た後の雇用の質を守る、すなわち「高い水準」で失業から脱出させるという、失業給付の役割は低下した。ただし、「適切な雇用」というモデルは消滅したわけではない。賃金と失業給付の併給期間は 18 ヶ月と限定され、しかもこの間もよりよい雇用を求める求職活動は義務付けられているからである。しかし、失業者の「適切な雇用」を再確保する権利を揺るがして、失業者と就業者（不安定労働者）の境界をさらに曖昧にしていった。

92 年には失業扶助（ASS）そして RMI においても「小さな就労」措置は、採用された。ここでは、併給期間は 1 年間が限度であるが、扶助給付は前述のように極めて低額であり、雇用の質のさらなる悪化をすすめ、「不完全就労」の拡大が追認されていったのである[31]。こうして、「失業者」・「不安定労働者」・「貧困者」というカテゴリーは侵食し合っていった。

### （３）1980 年代末から 1990 年代後半までの失業対策

この時期は、短い景気回復サイクル（89 ～ 91 年）と、そして湾岸戦争後の、戦後で最も深刻な経済危機（93 年）をむかえた時期である。

好況時には失業者において求職活動の点検がより強化され（91 年のオブリ労働大臣による職業紹介所：ANPE の登録者リストの見直し）、長期失業者の削減計画（92 年のいわゆる「長期失業者 90 万人」計画）が発動された。しかし、失業者は若干の減少を見せ、ANPE において長期求職者の登録抹消数は増加したが、1 年以上の長期失業は皮肉にも 90 万人で固定していくのである。

91 年末に経済成長は再度停滞し、失業者は再度急増した。93 年 10 月には ILO 定義失業者は初めて 300 万人の大台にのり（失業率 12%）、またフルタイムを求める月末求職者は 330 万人にも昇り、「恒久的失業 chômage permanent」[32] 状況と見られるようになった。さらに、この時期には、今まで失業の脅威に晒されることの少なかった高学歴層そして管理職層の失業率も上昇していき[33]、失業者とは単一の均質集団ではないことも明らかになった。

#### ①失業保険給付の逓減による失業脱出策：公的失業者カテゴリーに反抗する失業者

「恒久的失業」に直面して、最初に着手された社会的措置は失業保険制度の見直しであった。92 年以降の新しい制度は、従来の諸手当を「単一逓減手当（AUD）」に一本化し、給付期間が長引くにしたがって給付水準を低下させた（従前賃金を基準とした完全給付の期間と、その後 4 ヶ月毎に減額が行われる期間の設定）。AUD は赤字財政の建て直し策であったが、同時に保険給付を最終的には社会的ミニマム（失業扶助や RMI）に接近する額まで低下させていき、「兵糧攻め」といもいうべき失業脱

出策とみなせるだろう。

55歳以上の失業者を見ると、5年間の給付期間は維持されて年金受給に繋げることは変更されず、多くの場合完全給付の支給は15ヶ月または27ヶ月の縮小にとどまった。問題は50歳未満の失業者、とくに長期失業者であり、失業前2年間に少なくとも14ヶ月拠出した者も、完全支給の手当給付期間は9ヶ月だけとなり、逓減給付期間が21ヶ月にされてしまった。6ヶ月しか拠出していない者では、完全支給の期間は4ヶ月、逓減期間は11ヶ月である。

そして、短期就労と失業を繰り返す青年・不安定労働者・パートタイム労働者では、失業保険のアクセス・受給資格取得そのものが、さらに制限された。資格を得るための最低拠出条件は、それまでは失業前12ヶ月内で3ヶ月であったが、前8ヶ月内に4ヶ月の拠出とされたからである。またアクセスできても受給期間は4ヶ月だけとなり、保障額も従前賃金との置換率では57%と固定された。この最低要件の厳格化と逓減給付の実行で、保険手当の受給者比率（母集団は、即就労不能の者を除く求職者と求職動免除者）は91年の49%から、97年には42%に低下した。

多くの保険受給者が、失業扶助と生活扶助（RMI）に追いやられた。しかも、青年の新規求職者そして短期の就労経験しかない者は扶助の受給さえも困難になった。特別連帯手当（ASS）は無論だが、RMIは25歳未満の単身青年の受給権を認めなかったし、92年からはもう一つの失業扶助・参入手当（AI）は、新規求職青年を対象からはずし難民・外国人失業者に特化した手当になったからである。青年失業者では社会保護の欠落状況が広がり、彼らの生活悪化は顕著となった。

失業者への社会保護の脆弱化、そして「小さな就労」の柔軟化によって（「小さな就労」措置は失業給付の低額化を正当化する、という懸念が当たった）、失業者は低賃金・不安定雇用をより早く受け入れるようになった。

失業給付の圧縮・不安定雇用への排出・生活の貧困化への直接的なリアクションが、97年冬季の、全国組織をもつ4つの失業者組織のイニシアティブによる、失業給付事務所（全国商工業協会連合：UNEDIC（ウネディック）の地域事務所である商工業協会：ASSEDIC（アセディック））の長期占拠という、空前の失業者運動であった。彼らの要求は「不安定雇用を拒否できるだけのASSとRMIの引き上げ」、そして「失業者組織の、失業者集団の代表性という地位の認可」（労組と同様の集団交渉権、UNEDICの運営委員会での席の確保）であり、失業者に安定した居場所を与えず、絶え間なく流動化または浮遊化させる動きを食い止めようとする要求であった。公的な失業者カテゴリー、すなわち求職活動にまい進し、どのような雇用でも享受する失業者というカテゴリーに抗議し反抗する失業者が登場したといえよう[34]。

**②企業の労働コスト低下の一般化：「余儀なくされたパートタイム」と「貧困な労働者（ワーキング・プア）」**

97 年の失業者の大運動には、多くの不安定雇用労働者が参加しており、雇用の不安定性・低賃金の拡大は失業者の表象も変えていかざるを得なかった。90 年代には、雇用の質の悪化は、失業者に直接関連した施策だけから招かれたものではなく、企業の要請する労働コスト低下の一般策によってすすめられた。その理由は国際競争力のため、そして「失業の解決」である。後者のロジックを見れば、大量失業の要因をフランスの高い労働コスト、とくに法定最低賃金（SMIC）が労働市場を硬直させ大量失業を固定化しているというものである。しかし、労働者保護･権利の土台である SMIC の廃止は認められるはずもなく、SMIC の攻撃には毎回大運動が展開された。そこで、人件費コストの削減は SMIC ではなく、高い社会保険事業主拠出（労働者拠出の 2 倍強の負担）をもってした。ただし、労働単位当たりの平均的労働コストが高いという証拠も示されなかったために、社会保険事業主拠出の軽減策は低賃金・低職能の労働者に限るという方向をとった[35]。

企業の人件費削減策の端緒は 92 年のパートタイマーへの（新規雇用の際の、または労働者の同意を得たフルタイムからパートタイム転換）社会保険事業主拠出免除であった。以後、軽減の域は急速に拡げられ、93 年では賃金が SMIC の 1.2 倍までの労働者（ジュペ政権の「雇用 5 ヶ年計画」）、95 年には SMIC の 1.33 倍までの労働者に関して減免され、さらに事業主拠出が軽減される特定地域（44 都市）も指定されていった。なお、軽減された拠出分は国庫によって補われた[36]。

この結果、企業ではパートタイム求人を増加させ（低賃金労働者の多くはパートタイマーであった）、パートタイマーの急増という事態になった。85 年には 179 万人、全労働者の 10％弱であったが、95 年には 340 万人、17% 強、2000 年では 370 万人、18％弱にまで上昇した。もともとフランスではわが国とは異なり同一労働同一賃金が原則であり（もちろん社会保険も当然保障される）、また無期限契約パートは（前述のパート数も無期限契約パートのそれ）「選択された雇用」として、有期限雇用・派遣労働・補助雇用などの他の「雇用の特殊形態」とは異なり、「不安定雇用」とはみなされていなかった。しかし、この期のパートは、「もっと長く働きたい」「フルタイムを探している」という余儀なくされたパート（比率は 97 年でパート労働者全体の 39％）、すなわち「求職者」の急増となった。余儀なくされたパートタイマーの多くは女性であるが、98 年には彼らを中心に勤労者の 6％、130 万人がワーキング･プアと確認されている。貧困は労働市場からの排除（雇用の剥奪）からだけではなく、雇用に起因する貧困が拡大していったのである[37]。

### （４）1990 年代末からの活性化策：「雇用のない者」へのスティグマ

1990 年代末から今日までの雇用政策・社会政策は、97 年に復帰した社会党政権、

そして2002年に再登場した右派政権において、従来以上にめまぐるしく変わっていく。

大きな動きとしては、経済のグローバリゼーション、労働市場の構造改革・雇用のフレキシブル化の動きに呼応して、（新）自由主義的傾向を明らかにした国際機関の意向、とくにOECDの失業対策の活性化提言（94年、95年）、そしてEUの「ヨーロッパ雇用戦略」（97年）であった。それは、かつての「完全雇用」を目指す活性化（アクティベーション）ではなく、雇用基準（賃金・労働条件）の引き下げの懸念もある「完全就労」に向けての活性化といわれる[38]。

フランスの失業対策も、そして社会保護制度全般についても、活性化をすすめる雇用政策との境界が不明確になっている[39]。失業給付と、職業紹介所（ANPE）における雇用復帰支援・再配置システムとの結合（失業給付支出の活性化）、家族政策・年金政策では女性・高齢者など非就業者の就労促進（55歳以上高齢者の就労促進プラン）、さらに「排除された人々」を包摂するための参入支援の強化などである[40]。

ここでは、社会党政権と保守政権の雇用および失業対策施策を対比して叙述し、労働者保護・社会保護の権利が低下し新自由主義的性格が拡大するなかでの、失業者カテゴリーと失業者の位置を見てみよう。

**①法定労働時間35時間制、その後の労働時間の弾力化**

97年に政権に返り咲いた社会党政権は、10年ぶりに訪れた好調な経済成長サイクル・失業者の顕著な減少（97年初頭から2001年半ばでは、ILO定義失業者で80万人以上の減、第1と第6カテゴリーの求職者では110万人減）という有利な環境のもとで、法定労働時間の削減に着手した。オブリ二法（98年、2000年）は、従業員21人以上の企業から週35時間・年間1600時間制を敷いた。35時間制は雇用創出のワークシェアリングを目指すものであり、実際民間セクター（一般労働市場）において35万人分の雇用（フルタイム換算）が創出され、さらに労働時間の削減による労働者の賃金への影響は、若干にとどまったという（ただし低い職能の労働者については賃金引き下げに繋がった者もあり、状況は混在している）[41]。

ただし、35時間制も、企業の要請する労働コストの削減・事業主の社会保険事業主拠出の軽減が伴われていた。35時間制移行への援助として、35時間制採用の企業において平均賃金に満たない労働者では事業主拠出が軽減された（これにより92年のパートタイムへの事業主拠出免除措置は廃止）。

35時間制は、2000年暮れからの景気後退・失業増、そして02年5月のラファラン右派政権への交代によって変更を余儀なくされた。02年からの20人以下の企業における実施は凍結され、他方で残業時間の年間上限を130時間から180時間に拡大され、20人以下の企業では残業手当の割増率が25%から10%となった。さらに、05年3月

法により、法定労働時間として35時間原則は維持されたが、労働者は雇用主との個別的交渉によって労働時間の延長（所定内労働時間と残業時間を合わせ1820時間、週39時間）が可能となった。35時間制の見直し・柔軟化を支えるロジックも、企業に有利な環境は経済活動を活発にし失業者の減少（具体的には05年末までに1割減）を可能にするというものである。

社会保険事業主拠出についても、労働時間制とは分離され、35時間制の採用いかんにかかわらず最低賃金（SMIC）の1.7倍までは軽減されることになった。平均賃金はSMICの2倍程度であり、1000万人近くの労働者にかかわる措置となった[42]。くわえて、02年度のSMICの据え置き、そしてSMICのスライド制から賃金基準をはずし、物価基準のみの採用とした。

**②「青年―雇用」、そして「（民間）企業における青年契約」**

高い失業率を示す青年(25歳未満の失業率は90年代初めに10数%まで低下したが、90年代末には20%を再び超えた）を対象とする雇用政策についても、社会党政権と右派政権では際立つ対照が見られる。

97年のジョスパン政権において、早々に導入された新しい「青年―雇用 emplois-jeunes」プログラムは、従来の低学歴の青年失業者に特化せず、より広範な青年（16歳から30歳未満）への一般的とみなせる雇用政策である。「青年―雇用」は、雇用への補助金という伝統的な補助雇用であるが、公的セクターと社会的経済セクター（非営利アソシエーション）において、新しいニーズに応える職種を開発し（正規職員を脅かさない)、35万人の新規雇用を創出するというものである。しかも労働契約は5年間と長期であり、協約賃金でフルタイムも認め、職業養成や短期雇用を繰り返していた青年の職業サイクルにも大きな影響を与える内容であった。実際、常時30万件近い契約で、大学入学資格（BAC）取得者以上のものが75%を占め、フルタイム雇用も6割強を占める等[43]従来の不安定な雇用とは異なり好評を博し、02年末ではなく08年末までの継続が決定されたのである。

しかし、「青年―雇用」はラファラン政権の登場とともに、即廃止され（新規の契約を認めない)、替わりに「民間企業における青年―契約 contrat-jeune en entreprise」の導入となった。これは低学歴青年（大学入学資格：BACのない16歳から22歳まで）に特化し、民間企業の職業養成の義務を伴わない、半日労働以上の労働契約、そして企業の人件費コストの軽減（賃金・労働時間に応じた補助金と社会保険事業主拠出の免除）策に回帰したのである。03年1月には、サービス業･飲食業を中心とする中小企業により4万人が求人され、8割がフルタイムではあるが、多くは最低賃金（SMIC）での雇用だという[44]。

**③扶助受給失業者に特化した補助雇用の登場―「雇用らしきもの」への脱出促進**

ラファラン政権は青年への補助雇用にとどまらず、補助雇用全般の再編成をすすめていった。その特徴は、第一に「青年―雇用」を「青年―契約」に置き換えたように、公的セクターから民間企業の補助雇用にシフトさせ、前者の対象者を減少させていった。そして04年からは補助雇用の単純化を計るとともに、全体としてより短期の雇用に変えている。

特殊雇用政策における大きな改革は、扶助受給の失業者に限定した補助雇用、すなわち低額な社会所得に対応できる、低賃金で質の劣った雇用・「雇用らしきもの」の登場である。

RMI制度は地方分権化される（参入支援だけでなく国庫の手当を県権限に委譲）とともに、1年以上の長期受給者には「参入契約－最低限就労所得（CI-RMA（エレマ））」を促すようになった。RMAは失業扶助（ASS）の長期受給者も対象に加え、社会的ミニマム（生活扶助）受給者を雇用する民間企業では社会保険事業主拠出免除だけでなく、初めて賃金の最低賃金（SMIC）の拘束を取り外した。RMAの仕組みは巧妙であり、扶助受給者を雇用する企業に、雇用された受給者が受け取るはずの扶助手当を給付する。そして、企業はRMI受給者に法定最低賃金と同額の「報酬」を支給する。つまり雇用主が負担する賃金は、SMICから扶助手当（SMICの半額）を差し引いた金額だけとなった[45]。

RMAと比べて、従来の補助雇用（連帯雇用契約：CESなど）は扶助受給者に特化しなかったし、利益供与として最低限手当とSMIC遵守の賃金との併給で、最終的にはSMICを上回る所得を保障している。しかし、05年1月の社会的排除に抗する「社会的統一（コエジョン・ソシアル）プログラム法」によって、公的セクター・アソシエーション領域においても、長期扶助受給者のみを対象とする、「未来契約contrat d'avenir」というRMA方式の公的雇用が施行されることになった。

RMAそして「未来契約」は、扶助給付を事業主補助とするもので新自由主義的な活性化（アクティベーション）の最たるものであろう。そして、扶助受給者に特化した雇用創出は、雇用の確保が困難な人々に関心を寄せると称しながら、就労のインセンティブを削ぐとして彼らの低額な社会給付をもって（あるいは攻撃して）、どのような内容・質であっても仕事に駆り立てようとするからである[46]。

**④個別的雇用復帰プラン（PARE）―求職能力に基づく失業者カテゴリー**

参入政策の一般化とも言うべき措置も採用された。参入政策は、前述のように雇用（「適切な雇用」）への直接配置ではなく、失業者の雇用確保力employabilitéを保持し、一般雇用につなげる策であった。しかし、一般雇用の確保への途は遠のき、その限界とともに参入に結びついて雇用の悪化が広がった[47]。同時に、参入政策はもう一つの側面として失業者援助の「個別化individualisation」方法を広げて、失業対策も変

容させた。「個別化」とは、当初は、地域の青年相談窓口（82 年創設の地域青年担当局: mission locale や PAIO など）での、個々人の困難―雇用だけでなく医療・住宅など全般に応えるための面接・相談方法であったが、後に長期失業者も含めて、職業紹介所（ANPE）における面接・能力評価・雇用復帰支援のシステムになった。そして個別化援助によって、失業は、社会的性格（企業閉鎖・解雇・雇用の減少）よりも、個人的な問題―失業者の職能や雇用確保力の欠如・心理的な問題・求職意欲や計画の欠如に帰される状況がみられるようなったという[48]。

個別化策は、90 年代ではまだ特定の（困難な）失業者に限定されていた（例えば 98 年の「反排除基本法」による、経済的困難・住宅問題をかかえた青年への 18 ヶ月の「青年のための雇用アクセス援助（TRACE）」プログラムなど）。しかし、2001 年７月からは、「個別化」は失業者（求職者）全体に普遍化された施策となり、失業対策の活性化の中心的な施策となった[49]。失業保険給付の改善とギブ・アンド・テイクされた「雇用復帰援助プラン（PARE（パール））」における、求職者の「個別化活動プログラム（PAP（パップ））」である。

PARE は、単一逓減手当（AUD）を新しい雇用復帰支援手当（ARE）に替え、受給資格の拠出期間条件は緩和され、給付の逓減措置も廃止して保障水準を高めた。そして／しかし、ARE 受給のためには、求職者は職業紹介所（ANPE）との間で PARE に署名する義務が課せられ、ANPE の専門カウンセラーとの個別的な「親密な面接」において、能力測定―地域に現存する雇用の確認―求職活動の具体化という「個別活動プログラム（PAP）」が作成され、実行されることになった。PAP 後の６ヶ月後に雇用が見つからない場合には、再度６ヶ月間の PAP を作成するという。

PARE は、失業者カテゴリーとして求職者という性格を再定義するとともに、面接・PAP の能力測定において、求職者を４つのグループに分類している。分類の基準は学歴・職能のヒエラルキーでも「適切な雇用」への距離でもなく、「求人」に対応できる自主性・自治能力 autonome であり、①求人や職業養成への応募に、またパソコン・インターネットなどの手段の活用に援助が必要のない、完全な自治能力のある者、②通常自治能力はあるが、職能測定や履歴書の作成、求人先との連絡や面接などに際し、カウンセラーの時々のサービスが必要な者、③労働市場において、すなわち雇用確保に困難があり、カウンセラーによる密接な同伴サービス accompagnement の必要な者、④雇用確保だけでなく生活・健康・住宅などの問題をかかえ、市民アソシエーションなどの社会福祉的同伴活動が不可欠な者の４つのカテゴリーである。ANPE のサービスは「求職者の求職活動における自主性の低下」に注意をはらうことであり、求職者自身が定めた求職活動の実行を見守ることとされたのである。なお、失業保険の受給権のない扶助受給者も、PARE への署名は義務ではないが、ANPE に求職者

登録している限りはPAP作成と同伴活動の支援を受けることになった[50]。

失業給付組織（UNEDIC）は失業給付だけでなく、ANPEの雇用復帰支援（面接・PAP）サービスの財政負担を引き受けており、PAREはまさにフランス版の失業給付支出の活性化（アクティベーション）策である。ただし、失業給付自体も相対的に高い水準と、それによって受給率も求職者の6割まで回復させており、好況で労働力の不足した領域に労働力をスムーズに配置する意図とともに、PAREは「高い」位置で失業から脱出させる策とも言える。PARE創設から1年半後の受給者パネル調査では、PARE・PAPへの評価で、カウンセラーとの個別面接は概ね評価が高く（「ANPEは失業者の問題をよく知ろうとしている」「6ヶ月毎ではなく、頻繁に面接は必要」）、PAPについては「雇用確保に有効な手段」というものと、求職活動への「コントロールのより強化」というものに分かれる[51]。またPAP・カウンセラーの同伴活動を経て雇用を再確保できた者は、再配置のミスマッチングが少なく、失業への回帰は相対的に少ないという分析もある[52]。

PAREは明らかに好況期の策であるが（策定のUNEDIC労使協約は2000年7月）、PAREの施行時（01年7月）には経済の減速傾向が明らかになった。そして、失業者の増大から失業保険財政は再度赤字が累積するようになり、PAREは見直されることとなった。そこでは、PAPは残して失業保険給付のみの圧縮となった（02年12月のUNEDIC協定）。04年1月からの新しい雇用復帰支援手当（ARE）では、50歳から57歳の失業者において失業前36ヶ月内に27ヶ月の拠出があれば36ヶ月、57歳以上では42ヶ月の給付という以外は、7ヶ月か23ヶ月の給付しか残さなかった（前者は過去22ヶ月に6ヶ月、後者は24ヶ月に14ヶ月という拠出条件）。最も多い失業保険給付受給者は、14ヶ月以上拠出した後の受給者であるが、彼らは以前ならば30ヶ月間受給できたが、改革後は23ヶ月間となり7ヶ月も短縮されてしまった。PAREでの「高い水準」からの失業の脱出という意図は修正された。さらに、従来55歳では年金受給の60歳まで5年間の給付を受けられたが、新制度では彼らは58歳から、所得要件をクリアして、失業扶助かRMIに移行せざるをえなくなった[53]。フランスの失業給付制度における高齢失業者優遇という伝統は、活性化政策によって（一部）浸食されたのである[54]。

04年1月には26万5000人近い人々が失業保険から退出せざるを得なくなり、その3分の1が、失業扶助（ASS）の受給となり、75万人近くが給付額の削減となった。しかし、失業給付の突然の、そしてドラスティックな圧縮に対して、失業者はPAREの契約違反とみて裁判闘争を展開して、そして彼らは勝利した。100万人分の失業保険給付を再計算させ、不足額を失業者に返還させることに成功したのである[55]。また、失業扶助（ASS）給付期間も2年間に縮小される予定であったが、これも大きな反撥

のなかで従来どおり無期限に戻った。

## Ⅲ．まとめと今後

失業対策の変遷のなかで、失業者カテゴリー定義を示してきたが、それは「雇用のない者」を核としながらも、求職活動の実際（そして、その期待）をもって失業者としてきた。「求職者」という定義は、労働力不足のなかでの適職配置という要請から始動したが、大量失業の顕在化・雇用（再）確保の困難、そして「雇用の特殊形態」の広がりのなかで、「求職者」の輪郭は広げられ、ある時は緩んだ求職意思の引き締め（求職者の登録リストの再点検と登録抹消）、ある場合は求職活動を免除される者もいる（高齢失業者）。今日の状況はといえば、新しい活性化政策によって失業状況へのスティグマを増大させながら「求職者」という性格はより強化されているように思われる。

「求職者」定義の採用とその推移は、フランス国家による強い労働力管理を確認できる。しかし、それは専ら労働市場の要請にそったものではなく、労働市場への規制も前提に据えられていることも、見落としてはならないだろう。大きな規制の一つは労働法の「適切な雇用 emploi convenable」であり、求職者は提供される雇用が適切ではない場合は、たとえ「雇用のない者」であっても拒否する権利が存在することである。「適切な雇用」とは①過去の職能や教育に対応し、②自身または家族生活から見て地理的移動が可能で、③その職業や地域での実際のノーマルな賃金水準が保障される雇用とされる。たしかに、現実はすでに見たように、失業対策も不安定な雇用を黙認･追認し、「適切な雇用」条項は浸食されてきた。それでも「適切な雇用」は消滅しておらず、少なくない失業者たちは提案された雇用を拒否しており、無視できない役割を果していると思われる[56]。また、失業者への国庫補助雇用も賞賛されてはおらず、国家が「適切な雇用」を提供できないのであるから、「仕方のない faute de mieux」雇用というのがせいぜいである。さらに、もう一つの失業対策である失業給付も厳しい圧縮は続いているが、それでも相対的に長期の給付が保障され、求職者における失業給付・社会給付の高い受給率も[57]、「適切な雇用」の（再）確保という目標が完全に放棄できないからと見られる。

失業者カテゴリーの第二の特徴は、「求職者」においても、多様なサブ･カテゴリーが形成されていることである。それは、単なる属性･状況ではなく、また就労時間・求める労働契約による８つの統計カテゴリーだけでなく､夥しい「失業とのたたかい」の施策で対象規定された公的カテゴリーである。学歴・職能を基準とした管理職の失業者から職能の低い失業者まで（なお、女性の労働力率の高いフランスでは、失業は

男女別よりも、まず学歴･職能基準を見るほうがよい)、年齢・職業経験を基準とした青年失業者―成人失業者―高齢失業者、１年以上の長期失業者や２年以上の非常に長期の失業者、そして障害失業者、実習生・研修生・補助雇用労働者・就労している失業者、さらにはPAREによる求職能力による４分類の求職者も加わる。失業給付制度も、保険原理が浸透し、職業経験・職能・従前賃金によって補償格差が広がり、失業者は多くのグループに分割されていった。

しかし、求職者としての失業者カテゴリーの拡大と強化、そして分割も、決して失業からの強制的な脱出策を伴ってはいないし（実際、失業保険給付の圧縮も失業扶助やRMI受給者の増大につながり、失業者数を低下できていない)、むしろ雇用（再）確保・求職活動への支援サービス、そして支援する職員数を増加させている。そして、施策・サービスを増加させても失業者自体を減少できない「悪循環」は、「失業対策のパラドックス」といわれる状況である。求職者カテゴリーの問題は失業者を減少できていないことではない。それは、労働市場で「適切な雇用」がますます減少しているもかかわらず、支援サービスはまともな雇用を見つけ出せないにもかかわらず、PAREで顕著なように失業者個人の求職活動に関心を集中させて、そして雇用の（再）確保を個人の求職態度・能力に帰す傾向が増していることである。さて、05年５月に成立したドビルパン政権は、この８月の省令では提案された雇用を失業者が拒否する時は、失業保険給付を削減し、最終的には支給停止の方向も示している。失業者に、提案できる雇用があるのか、すなわち「懲罰」が実行できるかは疑問だが、「懲罰」規定は、失業者・求職者へのスティグマを強くすることは確実であろう。

［注］

[1] 失業の社会的意味を明らかにする社会学研究の問題意識については、本研究の中心的人物であるDidier Demazière, *Sociologie du chômage*,La Découverte, coll.《 Repères 》, 1995, 拙訳書『失業の社会学』法律文化社 , 2002年所収の原著者による＜あとがき＞「今日の失業と社会学研究―日本語版への補論」、とくにpp. 194～199､そしてDidier Demazière,*Le chômage. Comment peut-on être chômeur*,Belin,2003を参照。また、ライフコースに関する面接調査で展開された、調査対象者の言説の分析方法は、Didier Demazière, Claude Dubar, *Analyser les entretiens biographiques: L'example de récits d'insertions*, éditions Les presses de l' université Laval（Québec, Canada）, 2004, ―原著はNatan（Paris）, 1997―を参照。

[2] 調査対象となった３ヶ国の「失業者」の選定については、第一次調査（量的調査）の報告書、D.ドマジエール･杉田くるみ他「失業の国際比較：日本・フランス・ブラジル」、法政大学『日本統計研究所報』NO.29, pp.101～104において記されている。

[3] ブラジル、そして調査場所であるサンパウロ市の労働市場などについては、前掲書p.111において若干説明されている。

[4] 第二次大戦後の雇用基準そして失業の体系化についてはD.Demazière,*op.cit.*, 1995, 邦訳, 第１章１に詳しい。

[5] 「雇用のない者」、次に求職者が職業紹介所に習慣的に登録していくようになった状況については D.Demazière,*op.cit.*, 邦訳 pp.16 ～ 18 を参照。

[6] 98 年以降は失業手当管理運営組織（ASSEDIC）に登録し、登録ファイルが ANPE に送られている。

[7] 失業保険の母集団には、1 ～ 3 と 6 ～ 8 の 6 つのカテゴリーだけでなく、求職活動が免除されている 55 歳以上の高齢失業者も加えられている。「求職活動免除」措置を受給している高齢者も、失業給付の受給が可能だからである。

[8] ILO 定義失業者･失業率、月末求職者数などの推移は、http://www.travail.gouv.fr/etudes/etudes_f.html で見られる。

[9] 強制的失業保険の成立過程と推移については Christine Daniel, Carole Tuchszirer, *L'Etat face au chômage. L'indemnisation du chômage de 1884 à nos jours,* Flamarion, 1999 を参照 。なお、この文献はフランスの失業保険制度についての最初の科学的かつ体系的な書であり、90 年代末までの状況が分析されている。

[10] 全国商工業協会連合（UNEDIC）の運営者となる労組は、政府に認可された複数のナショナル･センターである。UNEDIC の協約は、ナショナルセンターの過半数と使用者団体の署名によって成立する。

[11] 雇用庁・職業紹介所（ANPE）の創設、その業務・役割の推移については、Martine Muller, *Le pointage ou le placement de Histoire de l'ANPE*, L'Harmattan,1991 を参照 .

[12] 雇用庁（ANPE）では、「積極策」のために、63 年に従来の雇用関連基金を統合した全国雇用基金（FNE）を積極的に活用した。

[13] Carole Tuchszirer, L'impact de l'assurance-chômage sur les normes d'emploi et de salaire：inéluctable dérive vers les《activités réduites》in *La Revue ds l'IRES, n°33*, 2000, pp.35 ～ 36.

[14] Nicole Kerschen, Anne-Valérie Nenot, La fin des préretraites ou l'éternel recommencement in *Droit social, n°5* , 1993, p. 470.

[15] その他、労働力人口・失業者数を抑制する主要な措置としては、70 年代末の外国人労働者の帰国奨励策もあげられる。ただし、移民労働者そしてその家族の帰国策は充分な財政保障を行わなかったためその効果は乏しく、外国人における失業率は高まっていった。

[16] 雇用政策、そして特別雇用対策・補助雇用については、DARES : Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques, *La politique de l'emploi*, La Découverte, coll.《 Repères 》, 1997, *Les politiques de l'emploi et du marché du travail*, La Découverte, coll.《 Repères 》, 2003. そして D.Demazière,op.cit.,1995 邦訳 pp.98 ～ 100 の一覧も参照。

[17] 新たな失業対策としての参入政策については D.Demazière,op.cit., 邦訳 , pp.104 ～ 108. また「参入」の起源、「参入」が単なる方法から大きな政策になっていった状況については Jean-Claude Barbier, Bruno Théret, *Le nouveau système français de protection sociale*, La Découverte, coll.《 Repères 》2004, pp.83 ～ 84. ただし Barbier たちの、「参入は…アメリカ合衆国においてワークフェア―就労の義務とひきかえとしての扶助支給―の名で発明され、イギリスで模倣された政策の、労働の義務という懲罰的な方向に代わる途」*ibid.*, p. 83 という指摘もフランス流の政策を理解するために重要である。

[18] Castel Robert,*Les métamorphoses de la question sociale. Une chronique du salariat*, Fayard,1995, pp.418 ～ 435.

[19] 失業保険の保険原理の強化・権利の個人化については C. Tuchszirer, *op.cit.*,2000, pp. 37 ～ 38.

[20] ただし失業保険制度においても 55 歳以上の高齢失業者は優遇され―求職活動の免除もある―、彼らの失業保険給付は早期退職年金に近い給付となった。

[21] この期には社会保障・社会保護の全般的な見直しが見られ、失業給付制度の後退もその一つである。その背景は、社会党政権の、社会保護重視のケインズ主義から、緊縮財政・「強いフラン」を目指す「競争戦

略下での脱インフレーション」政策への転換であった。J.-C.Barbier et B.Théret,*op.cit,* pp.27 ～ 29 参照。

[22] 「失業給付の欠如した失業者」の窮状から RMI の創設に至る推移、そして RMI 制度の内容と実態については拙書『フランスの貧困と社会保護―参入最低限所得（RMI）への途とその経験』法律文化社，2003 年を参照。

[23] その他の雇用・就労政策における参入施策としては、脆弱な雇用確保力と住宅問題など生活困難が合併した、貧困な失業者に対する「経済的活動による参入 insertion par l 'activité économique」施策もある。その内容と事例は、小玉徹・中村健吾・都留民子・平川茂『欧米のホームレス問題（上）』法律文化社、2003 年，Ⅳ編 4 章．および拙稿「大量失業に直面した、われわれの課題―フランスの失業対策を参考にして」非営利・協同総合研究所『いのちとくらし』第 12 号 , 2005 年を参照。

[24] RMI 制度の創設に大きな力を果したのは貧困者支援アソシエーション（慈善団体または人道的アソシエーションとも呼称）であるが、彼らが援助する人々も、従来の高齢者・障害者という貧困者カテゴリーに加えて、失業者と区別できなくなった、「新しい貧困者」そして「排除された人々」となっていった。

[25] Antoinette Lorenzi, Catherine Salès et al., *Enquête sur le revenu minimum d'insertion*, édition Coporur,1990, p.117.

[26] Jacques Freyssinet, Un réforme de l'indemnisation du chômage en France, in *La Revue de l'IRES n° 38*, 2002, p. 7 .

[27] C.Tuchszirer, *op.cit.*,pp.46 ～ 47.

[28] Margaret Maruani, Emmanuèle Reynaud,*Sociologie de l'emploi*（2e édition）；1993, p.60. また、失業理由の変化については Jacques Freyssinet, *Le chômage*（11e édition）, La Découverte, coll.《 Repères 》, 2004, p.37 ～ 38 に詳しい。

[29] C.Tuchszirer, *op.cit.*,p.48.

[30] 「小さな就労」基準は、当初は月 78 時間未満と賃金は従前賃金の 47%未満であったが、現在は月 138 時間、70%未満である。

[31] RMI 受給者において補助雇用を受け入れていく状況については前掲拙書 , 2000, pp.185 ～ 188 参照。

[32] J.-C.Barbier et B.Théret,*op.cit,* p.91.

[33] 93 年の雇用調査によれば、社会職業階層における失業率は、上級管理職 4. 9%、中間管理職 5. 8%、また大学入学資格（BAC）取得後 2 年間の高等教育を受けた者 7. 0%、3 年以上の教育を受けた者も 5. 7%を示した。この時期の失業における選別状況については、D.Demazière,*op.cit.,*1995 邦訳 pp .54 ～ 56.

[34] 97 年―98 年冬季の失業者団体の大運動については Didier Demazière, Maria-Teresa Pignoni, *Chômeurs : du silence à la révolte. Sociologie d'une action collective*, Hachette, 1998, D. ドマジエール・M-T ピニョニ著 , 拙監訳『行動する失業者－ある集団行動の社会学』、法律文化社、2003 年を参照。

[35] 社会保険事業主拠出削減策の背景については J.-C.Barbier et B.Théret, *op.cit,* p.34.

[36] 社会保険事業主拠出免除策の拡大とその実際の効果については DARES, *op.cit.*,2003, pp.81 ～ 89.

[37] フランスのワーキング・プア travailleurs pauvres とは現に就労中で、過去 1 年間で最低 3 ヶ月職業があり、その世帯収入の消費単位が、所得中央値の 2 分の 1 の貧困基準に満たないものとされる。ワーキング・プアの世帯員を含めると 17 歳以上の者で 200 万人、17 歳未満の子どもは 83 万人といわれる。詳細は Christion Lagrenne, Nadine Legendre, Les travailleurs pauvres en France, in INSEE, *Economie et Statistiques, n°335*, 2000.

[38] OECD の活性化政策については、J.Freyssinet, *op.cit,* pp.101 ～ 108. そして *EU* の雇用戦略については、濱口桂一郎「労働市場の改革」、田中友義他『ヨーロッパ経済論』ミネルヴァ書房 , 2004 に詳しい。

[39] 社会保護制度と雇用政策との境界が次第に曖昧になっていった（いる）状況は、J.-C.Barbier et B.Théret,*op.cit,* pp.92 ～ 97 を参照。

[40] 新しい活性化政策は税制にも登場した。アメリカの就労所得税控除（EITC）ほど普遍的な制度ではないが、03 年には「雇用への報奨金 prime pour l'emploi（PPE）」と言われる、就労所得のある世帯に限った所得税控除策も登場した。DARES, *op.cit,* p.78.

[41] *ibid.,* p.95.

[42] *ibid.,*p.100.

[43] 「青年―雇用」の適用職域・職種・労働契約の実際については、D.Demazière, *op.cit.*, 1995, 邦訳, 2002 年, 原著者による「日本語版への補論：今日の失業と社会学研究」p.200［訳注２］参照。

[44] DARES, *op.cit,* p.63.

[45] RMI の地方分権化、「参入契約－最低限就労所得（CI-RMA）」の内容については、拙稿「フランスの参入最低限所得保障（RMI）をめぐる論議」、『月刊自治研』46 巻 2 号、2004 年参照。

[46] Jacques Freyssinet, Les contrats d'avenir s'inscrivent dans une vision libérale, in *Alternatives Economiques n °231*, 2005.

[47] Serge Paugam, *La disqualification sociale :essai sur la nouvelle pauvreté*, PUF,1991.

[48] D.Demazière, *op.cit.,* 1995, 邦訳 pp.108 ～ 112.

[49] DARES, *op.cit.,*2003, p.75.

[50] PARE そして PAP の詳細な内容、そしてその分析は Carole Tuchszirer, Reforme de l'assurance chômage du PAP au PAP/ND. Le Programme d'Action Personnalisée pour un Nouveau Départ, in *La Revue de l'IRES*, n°38, 2002. を参照。

[51] 12 万 7 千人余の ANPE 登録求職者を母集団として、2900 人弱の電話、200 人余の面接調査の結果。DARES,*Premières Synthèse n°45. 2,* ― La PAP après six mois de chômage, 2003. しかし、ANPE 労組や失業者団体も加わるシンクタンクによる評価は、UNEDIC の PAP の財政保障は不十分であり ANPE 職員は不足し過重労働を招く結果となり、親身な面接相談ではなく、PAP 作成・支援ではカウンセラーと求職者との要求の齟齬が頻繁であるという。Fondation Copernic, *Pour un《 Grenelle de l'Unedic 》 Refonder l'indemnisation du chômage*, 2003, pp. 85 ～ 86.

[52] Centre d'Etude de l'Emploi, Un bilan de l'accompagnement des chômeurs, *Connaissance de l 'Emploi n°20*, 2005.

[53] 政策意図は、年金の支給開始の延期－就労促進と思われるが、それは困難を極めよう。労働市場の状況からも、早期退職などによって男性でも 55 歳から 64 歳までの労働力率は実に 4 割を割っており、その慣行を覆すのは非常に難しい。

[54] Carole Tuchszirer, La colère des《 recalculés 》de l'UNEDIC, in *L'état de la France 2004*, La Découverté.

[55] 失業保険「再計算」をめぐる失業者たちの裁判運動とその根拠などについては拙稿「フランスの公的扶助―その仕組みと新しい動き」、『季刊 公的扶助研究』195 号 , 2004 年 ；pp.40 ～ 41 参照。

[56] 例えば失業扶助（ASS）や RMI の受給失業者が、職業紹介所（ANPE）などで提案された雇用を拒否する理由は、過去の労働経験・相対的な経済効果（賃金と手当との比較）、そして無期限契約などの「希望する雇用」ではない、というものである。Yolande Benarroch, Les trappes d'inactivité：chômage volontaire ou chômage de résistance ? in *Travail et Emploi,n°95*, 2003.

[57] 次表は、失業保険の支給期間短縮前の 2003 年 12 月と、ILO 定義失業率（完全失業率）が再び 10%を超えた 2005 年 5 月の失業保険･失業扶助･ RMI の受給状況である。短縮措置後の今でも ILO 定義失業者（完全失業者）278 万人を上回る人々が社会給付を保障されている。

## . 失業者数および失業給付など受給の状況

| | 2003 年 12 月 | 2005 年 5 月 |
|---|---|---|
| 完全失業者（ILO 定義失業者） | 271 万人 | 278 万人 |
| 月末求職者数のカテゴリー１～３＋６～８ (1) | 376 万人 | 392 万人 |
| 求職活動免除者（２） | 40 万人 | 40 万人 |
| 失業給付受給者 | 270 万人 | 255 万人 |
| 失業保険 | 228 万人 | 212 万人 |
| 失業扶助（ASS） | 42 万人 | 43 万人 |
| 失業給付受給率（%）（３） | 63.6 | 60.4 |
| 失業保険 | 53.7 | 50.2 |
| 失業扶助（ASS） | 9.9 | 10.3 |
| RMI 受給権者 ( 世帯主のみ) | 112 万人 | 123 万人 |

（１）職業紹介所（ANPE）登録求職者で「即就労は不能の者」を除く者
（２）55 歳以上高齢失業者
（３）受給率＝受給者 /（カテゴリー１～3，６～８求職者＋求職活動免除者）
出典：統計調査局（DARES）、研究評価統計局（DREES）、および全国失業給付組織（UNEDIC）資料から作成

# 第２章
# 日本の失業対策
## ―国際比較と歴史的背景の視点から―

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## はじめに

本稿は、失業問題・失業対策の国際比較の中に日本を位置づけることをめざして、日本の失業対策の今日的特徴とその歴史的背景について整理することを課題としている。その際、第一部における国際比較の視点を考慮して、主としてフランスの失業対策との対比を念頭におきつつ[1]、日本のそれを整理していきたい。

失業対策は救貧法以来の長い前史を有しているが、政府が責任を持つ近代的制度としては1911年のイギリスの国民保険法の制定以降、その制度化が進んだ。第一次大戦直後の国際労働会議の開催と国際労働機関の設置によって各国の失業対策が促進されたが、日本においては職業紹介所網の整備と失業救済事業（公共事業によって失業者へ就労機会を付与する方策）が実施された一方で、失業保険の制度化は戦前を通じて実現しなかった。労働能力を有する者を生活保護制度の対象にしないという原則も維持されていたし、失業救済事業の規模の制約によって救済事業に就労できる者も限られていたから、失業者は親族の扶養に依存するか、零細な自営業に従事しつつ貧困の中に沈殿せざるをえなかった。このように戦前日本は、ほぼ1920年代以降に給付行政を含む失業対策の諸施設を制度化した欧州諸国とは段階的に異なった道を選択したといえる。

敗戦によってこの状況は大きく変わった。まず戦後改革の中で1947年に失業保険

が制度化され、加えて労働能力保有者も生活保護の対象者となり得るように生活保護制度が整備されたことによって、日本の失業者給付制度は形式的には欧州水準に達したといえる。しかしながら、戦後経済の復興期においては失業保険は厳しい給付制限の下にあって実質的な機能は限られていた。また、失業者のうちで失業保険の給付を受ける資格のない生活困窮者が自動的に生活保護を受けられたわけではなく、生活保護の対象者となるためには貯金を含む個人資産が全くないこと、親族が扶養能力を有しないこと等を証明しなければならなかったから、事実上、戦前の状態と大きな相違はなかった。実質的な失業対策が、公共事業での就労を内容とする失業対策事業を中心に構成されていた点では、1950 年代末までは戦前期と同質的であったのである。

これに対して高度経済成長期には旺盛な労働需要によって企業にとっては人手不足が顕著であり、失業率は低くなった。このため失業対策は労働市場の縁辺部にある下層労働者や衰退産業労働者への対策が中心となり、基幹的労働者、新卒求職者については失業対策の仕組みはほとんど整備されずにすんだのである。この時期には失業保険は黒字で、掛け金率が引き下げられるなど、制度の拡充は求められない状況にあった。

こうした状況の後に 1973 年のオイルショックが到来して高度経済成長が頓挫し、一時的に失業率の上昇が見られ、欧州型の多様な失業対策の方向に向けて従来の失業保険制度が再就職のための効果を重視して雇用保険方式に組み換えられ、1975 年からそれが実施された。しかし、その後の産業構造の転換によって 1970 年代から 80 年代にかけて日本は先進国の中でその経済的地位を高め、高い失業率に悩む欧州諸国に比較して経済的パフォーマンスの良さを見せつけることになった。また、1980 年代後半期におけるバブル経済期には本格的な人手不足の到来が指摘され、新規学卒者の求人難は著しく、外国人労働力の本格的な導入も進められた。このため雇用保険財政は引続き安定的状況を続けることができた。

しかるにバブル経済期の過剰融資は 1990 年代に入るとともに地価・株価の下落によって不良債権の累積をもたらし、一転して経済成長率の低下と過剰雇用状態が表面化し、既存労働者の解雇と新規求職者の就職難が深刻化するようになった。失業率は 1990 年代を通じて確実に上昇し、2000 － 2002 年に急上昇して 5%を超えた。

ここにおいて失業対策は質的にも量的にも拡大することを求められたが、事態はそのようには進まなかった。第一には、この時期は同時に財政制約が強まった時期であり、景気対策として採用された公共事業増加策も 1990 年代の後半からは抑制基調に転じることになった。こうした状況の下では、失業の増加に対して財政支出をともなう対策の拡張を図ることは困難であった。第二には、グローバリゼーションという名の世界的な企業間競争の激化に呼応した政策思潮の変化の下で、労働力の需給関係の

調整は雇用の流動化によって達成されるべきことが重視され、流動化を阻害しかねない失業対策は圧縮することが必要とされたのである。産業構造の変容にともなう産業間・職業間の人的移動を円滑に進めるためには、失業の恐怖が最も有効な促進剤であると看做されたからである。

かくて、失業対策をめぐるこうした制約と、失業者増加に対する政策強化の社会的・政治的要請の高まりという現実との拮抗の下で、失業政策は拡張・圧縮の両圧力にさらされることになり、それまでは一部の関係者にしか注目されることのなかった失業対策が、広く国民の関心を引き付ける政治上の大きなテーマとなってきたのである。そうした今日の状況に立って、失業対策の具体的内容を整理してみよう。

## Ⅰ　失業者への金銭給付

### （１）制度の特性

日本の失業保険制度は 1947 年に発足し、頻繁に制度の変更を経験してきたが、今日の制度は国際的に見るといくつかの特徴を有している。そのうちでも重要な点は、第一に、給付額の低さと給付期間の短期性、第二に、給付を受けるための掛け金期間の条件が厳しいこと、第三に、生活保護制度と実質的に切断されていること、第四に、給付対象者の選択における寛大さが指摘できる。

まず第一の給付額の低さと給付期間の短さについては、失業給付額が形式的には従前の賃金に比例する形をとっているものの、極めて低額の上限が設定されており、「従前賃金の 50 － 80％」と「給付日額上限」を比較すると、大多数の失業者にとって後者の方が相当に低額で、前者が意味をもたないという制度の現実がある。さらに、扶養家族を考慮せずに単身失業者の生活を支える制度として割り切られているという政策理念もこれに関連している。これらは給付水準についての考え方が、従前の所得を保証するという社会保険の理念ではなく、個人の最低生活を可能にするという生活保護の理念に沿っていることに対応している。フランスの失業給付には扶養家族分が追加されているのに対して、日本では失業者に扶養家族がいることは考慮されていないため、世帯主が失業した場合、その給付額は扶養家族の生活維持の手段とはなりえない水準であり[2]、給付水準・給付期間とも「アメリカ並の最低水準」で「ヨーロッパ諸国と比較して見劣りは明らか」と言われるとおりである[3]。もっとも日本においても失業保険収支が良好であった 1960 年代前後には失業給付に「扶養加算」が認められていた一時期があったのであるが[4]、1975 年における雇用保険への組み換えに際して、理念の転換についての議論も無しにその方式が捨てられたのである。

第二の掛け金期間に関する厳しい条件は、いったん失業保険を受給すると次に失

業給付を受けられるようになるまでに相当長い新たな掛け金期間が必要となり、頻繁に失業に陥りやすい不安定就業部門で働いている人々にとっては給付を受ける資格が実質的に得られなくなるという結果をもたらしている[5]。加えて、この条件によって、今日の失業者の中で急速にその比重を増してきた就職経験の無い失業者（新規学卒未就職者）が、完全に失業保険制度の対象外に置かれることになり、親世代に対する「パラサイト」状態が強いられざるをえないという状況が生じているのである。

第三の生活保護制度との制度的切断については、失業給付と生活保護費給付とは全く別個の基準にもとづいて決定されており、本人に多少でも預貯金等があり、あるいは近親者が当該失業者を扶養できる経済的能力を有する限り、失業者が生活保護を受給することはできない[6]。したがって失業保険の給付期間が満了した後は、他の保証が全くないことになるのである[7]。

第四の給付対象者の寛大さとは、自己都合退職者、定年退職者も受給できる制度となっていることである。これは社会保険制度の長い普及期を通して掛け金の払い戻し的意味を持たせることが必要と考えられてきたこと、低失業率状態が長期に続き失業保険財政が優良であったこと等を歴史的背景としている。もちろん周知のように、1990 年代に失業者数が急増し失業保険収支が悪化するにともなって、自己都合退職者・定年者等への給付制限が厳しくなり、後で触れるように 2001 年、2003 年における雇用保険法改正によって、「倒産・解雇等による離職者」以外の失業者の給付制限が厳しく制限されるようになっているが、国際的に見た場合には、この点の寛大さは依然として日本の失業保険の一つの特徴として指摘できる[8]。

しかしながら、失業給付についての以上のような特徴は 60 年近い失業保険の歩みの中で必ずしも一貫していたわけではない。特に、失業給付を失業者のうちのどの階層に、どの程度重点的に給付すべきかについての政策担当者の考え方の動揺は、時々の失業事情・失業保険財政とも関わって小さなものではなかった。この点を、給付日数の推移について整理した表 1 によって一瞥しておきたい。

まず、失業保険の発足当初においては、給付日数は一律に 180 日であり、掛け金期間・年齢による区別はなく、社会保険の理念が最も端的に適用されていたといえる。この状況は 1955 年に変更され、以後 20 年間にわたって、掛け金期間によって給付日数が区別されるという方式（年齢による区別はない）が続いたのである。社会保険の理念が部分的に修正されて、負担と給付との対応関係が制度化された段階である。これに対して、1975 年における雇用保険制度への組み換えは、失業給付の政策的位置づけを「失業期間中の生活費の給付」から、「再就職活動の支えのための給付」に変更するものであったから、「再就職の難易度」が給付日数に反映すべきものとされ、ここに初めて年齢による給付日数の区別が導入されることとなり、年齢とともに再就職の

困難度は高まるという想定の下に給付日数も年齢とともに増加するように定められたのである。こうして、掛け金期間と年齢の二つの基準によって給付日数を決定するという方式が 1975 － 2000 年までの 25 年間にわたって継続されることになったが、この間には、1984 年における基本手当給付の 65 歳上限制の導入（65 歳以上の者を高齢者給付に移して整理）や給付日数の小幅の手直しなどがあった。

2001 年の制度改訂は長期にわたって定着していたこの方式を大きく変更した。すなわち、第一に、倒産・解雇による離職者を「特定受給資格者」として別枠化し、これについては従来通り、掛け金期間と年齢による区別を存続させたこと、第二に、「特定受給資格者」以外の一般受給者については年齢による給付日数の区別を廃止して 1955 － 74 年の時期の方式に戻したこと（ただし給付日数は大幅に圧縮）、第三に、年齢による区別については、高齢者ほど優遇するという 2000 年までの考え方を否定して 60 － 65 歳未満階層の給付日数を 45 － 60 才未満階層のそれよりも引き下げたことが、主要な変更点であった。

**表１　失業保険給付日数**

| | | | 離職前の被保険者期間 | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 期間 | 対象者区分 | | 6 か月 － | 1 年 － | 5 年 － | 10 年 － | 20－ |
| 1947-54 | 全年齢 | | 180 | | | | |
| 1955-68 | 全年齢 | | 90 | 180 | 210 | 270 | |
| 1969-74 | 全年齢 | | 90 | 180 | 210 | 270 | 300 |
| 1975-83 | －30 | | 90 | 90 | | | |
| | 30－ | | 90 | 180 | | | |
| | 45－ | | 90 | 240 | | | |
| | 55－ | | 90 | 300 | | | |
| 1984-94 | －30 | | 90 | 90 | 90 | 180 | |
| | 30－ | | 90 | 90 | 180 | 210 | |
| | 45－ | | 90 | 180 | 210 | 240 | |
| | 55-65 | | 90 | 210 | 240 | 300 | |
| 1995-99 | －30 | | 90 | 90 | 90 | 180 | |
| | 30－ | | 90 | 90 | 180 | 210 | 210 |
| | 45－ | | 90 | 180 | 210 | 240 | 300 |
| | 60-65 | | 90 | 240 | 300 | 300 | 300 |
| 2000 | －30 | | 90 | 90 | 90 | 180 | |
| | 30－ | | 90 | 90 | 180 | 210 | 210 |
| | 45－ | | 90 | 180 | 210 | 240 | 300 |
| | 60-65 | | 90 | 240 | 240 | 300 | 300 |
| 2001-02 | 一般 | 全年齢 | 90 | 90 | 120 | 150 | 180 |
| | 特定受給資格者 | －30 | 90 | 90 | 120 | 180 | 210 |
| | | 30－ | 90 | 90 | 180 | 210 | 240 |
| | | 45－ | 90 | 180 | 240 | 270 | 330 |
| | | 60-65 | 90 | 150 | 180 | 210 | 240 |
| 2003－ | 一般 | 全年齢 | 90 | 90 | 90 | 120 | 150 |
| | 特定受給資格者 | －30 | 90 | 90 | 120 | 180 | |
| | | 30－ | 90 | 90 | 180 | 210 | 240 |
| | | 35－ | 90 | 90 | 180 | 250 | 270 |
| | | 45－ | 90 | 180 | 240 | 270 | 330 |
| | | 60-65 | 90 | 150 | 180 | 210 | 240 |

出典：労働省職業安定局編「失業対策年鑑」各年度版。
　　同「失業保険（雇用保険）事業年報」各年度版。
注１）1955-74 年の被保険者期間 6 ヶ月以上 1 年未満の者の給付期間は被保険者期間が 10 － 11 ヶ月のものについては 180 日である。

2001年以降のこうした変化を、先に確認した失業給付の特徴と関連付けて言えば、失業給付総額の圧縮を自発的離職者への給付日数の削減によって図り、掛け金期間と給付期間の対応関係についても自発的離職者についてはその相関度を弱めるという方向を明確にしたといえる。失業給付支出額との関係でいえば、「特定受給資格者」以外の失業者の給付日数が大幅に圧縮され、高齢者については「特定受給資格者」についても圧縮がなされたことによって、総額の削減に寄与することになったのである[9]。

このように、日本の失業給付制度は、制度の試行錯誤過程で継起した二つの格差付け基準（年齢による格差付け、掛け金期間による格差付け）と、高齢者の労働のあり方についての二つの考え方（労働の権利を認め仕事が得られなければその補償措置をとるべきか、労働市場における高齢者の低い評価に対応させた処遇であるべきか）の間を揺れ動きながら、失業給付財政の逼迫に強いられる形で2001年に一つの明確な回答を出し、2003年の改訂でその方向をさらに強めたといえる。この結果、国際的にみた場合の給付日数の短さ、日額上限の低さという特徴は、より際立ったものになったといえる。

### （２）退職金

離職労働者にとって企業の支払う退職一時金の意味が、とりわけ従前賃金の高い大企業・ホワイトカラー層にとって極めて大きく、金額的には失業給付を大幅に上回ることが通例である。退職一時金・解雇手当は、結果として失業者の生活を支える企業からの給付となっているが、解雇手当を支給すること、その金額を引上げることが意識的に追求されてきたことは、日本の労使関係の国際的特異点であるといえる。戦前日本で財界が失業保険制度に一貫して反対した際の主要な論拠の一つは、日本には解雇時に企業・職場仲間から渡される餞別金の習慣があり、権利・義務としての失業保険よりも、好意・感謝を培養する餞別金の方が日本の労使関係にとってはるかに適合的であるという主張であった[10]。社会局はこうした財界の主張を逆手にとって、1936年に「退職積立金及退職手当法」を制定し、工場法・鉱業法の適用を受ける工場・事業のうち常時50人以上の労働者を使用する事業場が従業員を解雇する際に、従業員の掛け金＝積立金の総額とそれと同額以上の企業の積立金を合わせて被解雇者に支給するという仕組みを作っている[11]。また、戦後、1946年10月に戦時補償を打ち切ることが決定された時点では、政府はそれによる解雇の急増を予想して、企業に解雇者に対して退職金を支払うことを求め、そのために特別の融資をすることを表明していた[12]。このように、公的失業給付の給付額・給付期間の厳しさ、特に最高給付額の極端な低さに由来する従前の大企業・正規従業員の所得の急落に対しては、解雇する企業の側が公的失業給付を大きく上回る給付を行ってきたという慣行がある。もちろん、

そうした慣行の受益者となれる者は、大企業等の正規従業員のうちで「希望退職」、「円満退職」等の会社側の提示した条件を容認した者に限られるから、中小企業従業員、非正規従業員、さらには正規従業員でも「円満退職」の勧奨を受け入れなかった者は、そうした制度の埒外に放置され、低水準の公的給付に合わせるべく、生活レベルの引下げを余儀なくされたと言わなければならない。

## Ⅱ　就労機会付与政策

### （１）職業紹介

職業紹介は就業機会自体を増やすものではなく、その情報提供を迅速・丁寧にするに過ぎないが、産業界にとってマイナスになるものではないので、1921 年の職業紹介法の施行以来、今日まで職業行政の中で基軸的な位置を占めてきたし、失業保険給付の条件として求職活動を義務付けていることも、職業紹介行政を必要不可欠なものとしている。

この領域での近年の大きな変化は、1918 年の国際労働会議の会合以来、無料の公共職業紹介が原則とされ、日本においてもそれが政策的方針とされてきたのに対して、1990 年代において民営職業紹介事業が容認される範囲が順次拡張され、1997 年 4 月からは有料の民間職業紹介事業の取扱範囲がネガティブリスト化されるなど、その比重を急速に高めてきたことである[13]。特に営利追求のための民間企業の競争的努力が職業紹介においても有効な成果を発揮するはずであるという主張が行政当局の政策理念を規定するようになり、民間職業紹介企業の成功報酬として多額の財政支出がなされるようになった点は注目される。

### （２）公的雇用

失業者を官公庁の事業で就労させるという直接的雇用がこれであり、歴史的には戦前の失業救済事業（1932 年度から失業応急事業と名称変更）、戦後の失業対策事業がその代表的なものであり、その仕事の内容は、公共土木事業での就労が中心であったが、そのほかにも事務労働を含む官公庁のアルバイト的作業への雇用も含んでいた。しかし、その経験に対する政策当局の強い否定的認識――失業対策事業から離れようとしない固定的就労者層が形成されてしまい、雇用情勢が好転しても事業を廃止できなかったという反省――によって、1980 年代以降、ほとんど実施されなくなっていたのである。

公的直接雇用によって失業者を吸収するという場合、就労すべき失業者の選択についてはいくつかのパターンがとられてきた。第一のタイプは、就労者の全員を職業安

定所に登録している失業者に限定するものであり、戦前の失業救済事業、戦後の失業対策事業等はこのタイプである。第二は、通常の公共事業等に一定の「失業者吸収率」を設定するものであり、登録した失業者とその他の一般就業者が異なった条件で同一の事業に従事するものである。第三は、採用すべき失業者の人数や率を定めることなく、公共事業等の官庁事業の増加の結果として雇用総数が増え、その中で失業者も雇用されることを期待するタイプである。この場合には、就労者中の失業者とその他の一般労働者の区別は存在しないことになる。景気対策として公共事業を増加させるといった 1990 年代半ばの時期の政策は、この第三のタイプによるものであった。

このうち「失業者吸収率」方式は戦後復興期の失業者救済策の中心的位置を占めていた。これは、公共事業を失業者数の変動に応じて増減させることができなかったために、「失業者吸収率」の調整によって必要な失業者対策を整えようとするものであった。しかし高度成長期以降、公共事業の機械化・合理化が進み、公共事業就労者にも機械操作ができる熟練労働者であることが要求されるようになったことによって不熟練の慢性的失業者を本来の公共事業に吸収することが困難になり、1971 年に失業者吸収率制度の原則廃止の措置がとられ、失業の多い特定地域のみに適用される限定的な制度として活用されることになって今日にいたっている[14]。

しかしながら公共事業での雇用の増加が失業者救済の機能を果たし得る程度は確実に低下してきた。その理由は、公共事業の機械化・近代化によって公共事業が誰でも就労できる簡易労働でなくなってきたこと、労働行政の効果もあって建設業において労働者の常勤化の流れが進んだことであろう[15]。

失業対策事業の就労者には高度経済成長期以降、高齢者、特に高齢女性の比重が高くなり、仕事の内容も公園の清掃など、体力を要求せず、かつ完成時期等について特段の制約のない事業に移っていった。この傾向は失業対策事業への新規失業者の参加が 1971 年に打ち切られるに及んで明確になった。これ以降、失業対策事業に対する批判が強まり、失業対策事業は正常な公共事業として運営されておらず社会福祉の代替措置として不効率的に継続されていると論難されることになった。これによって失業者の公的直接雇用措置は 1980 年代には縮小・廃止の方向が明確化し、1995 年に緊急失業対策法は廃止され、失業対策事業・炭鉱離職者就労対策事業も終了した[16]。

こうした経緯をたどって失業者の公的雇用政策は従来の登録者が高齢化によって引退するにともなって消滅するものと想定されていたのであるが、1990 年代末期から 2000 年代初期における失業率の急増によって、新たな内容で復活することになった。2002 年 1 月から 2004 年度まで、失業率急上昇に対処するための緊急策として実施された緊急地域雇用創出交付金事業がそれである。

この事業においては、就労者の固定化に代表されるかつての失業対策事業の弊害

を回避する仕組みが注意深く採用されており、就労期間は６か月以内で更新は認められない（その後、1 回のみ更新可能に変更された）という条件が課せられた。この条件の下においては、流動的・パート的求職者にはこの事業は利用可能であったが、常勤者が失業後に新たな常勤職としてこれにつくことは不可能であり、次の常勤職へのつなぎ期間の就労機会として利用することも限定されるものとなった。結局、地方自治体が従来から各課で実施していたアルバイト的業務をこの事業の対象とすることによって、国庫補助金を得て従前年度よりは多少多くの臨時的雇用者を採用したというささやかな成果が得られたに過ぎなかった。実際その仕事の内容は、公立学校での相談員・巡回員、森林組合作業員、短期間の雑多な単純事務労働といったものが多い[17]。なお、この事業が 2004 年度を最後として国の制度としては廃止された後においては、いくつかの県において類似の政策を小規模に継続している事例が見られる程度である。

### （３）民間就業機会拡張促進策

民間企業が失業者を雇用した場合に賃金補助や社会保険料の掛け金免除を行うという政策は日本では長く採用されていなかった。雇用者の決定は企業の専決事項と考えられていたこと、補助金の得られる失業者を採用しても代わりに企業が従来の従業員を余剰人員として解雇するのであれば、財政支出が増えるだけで失業問題解決にはプラスにならないと考えられていたためである。しかしこの構想は、民間企業の自発性を尊重する点で新古典派的政策潮流に受け入れられやすいこともあって、中小企業政策の転換（1999 年の中小企業基本法改訂による中小企業保護政策からベンチャー型企業の起業奨励・育成政策への転換）に前後して、ヨーロッパ諸国の制度にならう形でこの種の施策が重視されるようになってきた。若年者を長期雇用責任を負うことなしに試験的に雇用してみようとする企業への援助制度（「トライアル雇用」制度）も同様の趣旨にもとづくものである。

この種の施策には、県・市町村の制度を含めて極めて多数のメニューがあるが、新規雇用の当初の短期間に少額の賃金補助を与えるという仕組みが大半であり、長期的な雇用増加につながる効果は限られていると見られる。

また、失業者に対する起業奨励策は、少額の資金で事業化が可能な IT 技術が進展したこと等の条件もあって、政策内での位置を高めるようになったといえる[18]。とはいえ、不況下で自営業を新たに軌道に乗せることは現実には困難であり、要求所得水準の低い高齢者・主婦対策的な意味に限定されているのが実情のようである。特に伝統的な自営業者がスーパー、サービス産業のチェーン店化等の動きの中で廃業せざるをえずに自営業者の減少が続いている中では、マクロ的に見ればその効果が限られて

いることは当然である。むしろ企業側が雇用責任を果たさないですませられる方策として、雇用者を形式的に自営業者（個人業主形態）にして、経済変動にともなうリスクを労働者に負わせる手段として機能しているのが実態である。

### （４）職業訓練

職業訓練への公的支出の対 GDP 比は日本は国際的に見て極端に低い[19]。それは、職業のための技能・熟練は就職してから OJT によって獲得されるのであって、依然として労働市場で通用する資格とはなっていないためである。

職業訓練制度が一応の整備を見たのは、雇用保険法の施行（1975 年）による「能力開発事業」の制度化によってであり、その後 1999 年には職業訓練のための機関として、雇用・能力開発機構が設置され、各県にセンターを持つに至っている。

とはいえ、企業の側がそれを十分に評価しない結果、その内容が就職には直結しない一般的な教育となっていたり（英会話学校の授業料補助、コンピューター操作方法の習得など）、失業給付金の延長給付を受けるための形式的要件を満たすために職業訓練所に通っているに過ぎないとも批判されている。労働力流動化、労働需要の多い産業分野への労働力移動という政策理念にもとづいて、労働需要の多い分野の簡易な技能訓練を重視するという意味づけはされているが、企業側が即戦力となる人材をそこに求めるといった状況にはないのである。

## Ⅲ　解雇規制と雇用流動化政策の対抗

### （１）解雇規制とその緩和

#### ①　推移

解雇規制と失業率の関係は 1980 年代から OECD の調査等を通じて盛んに議論され、各国の政策に強い影響を与えてきた。そこでは解雇規制が失業の予防策として重要であるとするかつての国際労働機構の考え方を批判して、それが、その意図とは異なって、１）企業に新たな労働者の雇用を手控えさせる、２）いったん失業した者が再雇用されることを困難にする、３）産業構造の変容にともなう労働力の移動を抑えて労働生産性の上昇を抑制する、といった難点を有していることが主張されるようになってきた。その結果、各国においては、解雇規制の自由化が直接的に進展したり、あるいは解雇規制の対象とならない任期制労働者・派遣労働者等を増加することによって実質的に解雇規制の緩和を図る方向が採られるようになった。

日本の場合、戦前においては、職工についても職員についても、解雇は自由であった。現実には職工の移動率の方が職員のそれよりも相当に高かったが、第一次大戦後

の恐慌期や昭和恐慌期には、職工・職員を問わず解雇が盛んに行われている。労働組合法がなく、労働争議によって解雇を阻止することは困難であったから、不況下においては長期雇用が制度化される条件はなかったわけである。

これに対して内務省・社会局では、労働者がいったん失業した場合にその救済が極めて困難であるとの判断に立って、企業側に解雇の自粛、解雇規模の抑制を要望していたが[20]、自ら緊縮政策を採用する方針を定めて失業の増加が避けられないと判断した民政党内閣（1929 － 31 年）の下で、企業の解雇抑制が一層強く要望されることになった。しかし採用・解雇は企業の主権に属する事項であり、国家といえども関与する手立てはなかったので、政府のこうした姿勢は失業対策の国家的制度化は回避しつつ、企業の道義的対応を期待するという立場表明以上の効果は持たなかった。

これに対して第二次大戦期には、根こそぎ的な兵力動員によって労働力が不足したために、放任しておけば労働力の移動が増加する可能性が強かった。軍需生産を国家計画にそって引上げていくために、国家は労働力を各企業に割当配置し、その移動を禁じる方策を採用したが、これは企業側からすれば割当られた労働力を雇用し続ける責務を負うものであり、企業は解雇の自由を失うことになった[21]。この時期の企業側の解雇の権利は、「不良職工問題」として、すなわち割当られた労働者の中に「不良職工」が存在すると職場全体の労働能率が低下するので、その解雇を認めさせる課題として取り上げられていた[22]。

戦後においては敗戦による軍需生産の停止（生産規模の一挙的縮小）、軍需補償の打ち切りによる企業経営悪化等の対処策、レッドパージ等によって、大々的な解雇が実施された。この状況は石炭産業に代表される斜陽産業整理策としての解雇、その集約点としての三井三池争議（1960 年）にまでいたるものであった。

これに対して高度成長期においては、大企業・ホワイトカラーを中核とし、中小企業・ブルーカラーの一定規模のところまで、解雇の抑制、長期勤続関係の強化が進展した。それは労働力不足が顕在化したこと、企業が隣接・関連する事業を拡張しやすかったことによって、余剰人員を企業内部で活用できたことなど、成長経済に特有な好条件があったためであった。もちろん長期勤続が最も一般化＝規範化したこの時期においても、中小零細企業階層においては雇用の流動性は高く、労働者から経営主への転換が大量に実現していたことは、中小零細企業の高い開業率に示されている。

オイルショックによる高度成長経済の転換は事態を大きく変化させた。ここでは、国際競争力を強化するために「減量経営」がスローガンとなり、高度成長期以前の指名解雇が復活した。この状況に対する一つの対応が、雇用保険法施行令（1975 年）による雇用調整給付金（1980 年から雇用調整助成金と名称変更）制度の導入であり[23]、他の一つが、判例として「指名解雇の４条件」が定着したことであった。こうし

て成立した高度成長後の解雇ルールが 1990 年代まで継続し、今日、改定の対象にされているといえる。

ここで言われる「指名解雇の４条件」とは、労働者本人の合意しない指名解雇を実施するためには、以下の４つの条件がすべて満たされていなければならず、その条件を欠く場合には「解雇権の濫用」として解雇は無効になるというものである。

すなわち、第一に、人員削減の十分な必要性があること。第二に、可能な人員削減の手段の中から指名解雇を選択する必要性があること。第三に、労働者との誠意ある協議を含めて、解雇手続きが正当であること。第四に、被解雇者の選定方法が妥当であること、がそれである[24]。

この理念は大企業従業員の長期雇用慣行の下に形成された意識に支えられて打ち出され定着したといえるが、同時にそれが裁判法理として形成され、職場の労使関係の実態が生み出したものでは必ずしもなかったことによる大きな限界もあった。

第一には、この原則によって指名解雇が困難になったことにともなって、現実の解雇を「合意にもとづく離職」、「希望退職」にするための企業側の措置が整備されたことである。それは一方では、希望退職者に対する退職一時金の割増支給、再就職の斡旋から、他方では、「仕事を与えない」、「精神的苦痛を与える」といった方式で「職場いじめ」を行い、自発的退職に追い込んでいくといった方策までを幅広く含むものであった[25]。

第二には、この判例の存在にも拘らず、企業の意図にもとづいて指名解雇が事実上相当広範になされ、それが国家によって規制されなかったという現実がある。というのは、この法理は裁判のための規範であり、これに反する行為を企業が行ったからといって企業所在地の労働基準監督署が介入してそれを是正するわけではない。解雇された人々が裁判に訴えなければ問題化しないのであり、日本の現実では訴えれば 10 年以上の裁判を覚悟しなければならないし、裁判が解雇の無効＝職場復帰を求めるものである以上、「訴えの利益」は裁判継続中に再就職すれば失われてしまう。したがって、人生の短くない一時期を就職せずに戦う決意をしなければ、裁判を起こせないのであるから、指名解雇されても大多数の被解雇者は提訴することができなかったという現実がある。

### ②　修正をめぐる対抗

この指名解雇の４条件をめぐっては、2000 年前後から解雇の規制緩和を求める側からの提起によって論争がなされ、2003 年の労働基準法改正をめぐる攻防を通じてその一つの決着がもたらされた。

すなわち、2003 年 6 月に労働基準法が改正されたが、その際に解雇権濫用法理が条文上に明記されたのである。具体的には、第 18 条 2 項として「解雇は客観的に合

理的な理由を欠き、社会通念上相当であると認められない場合は、その権利を濫用したものとして、無効とする」という規程が挿入された。この改正に至るまでには、産業団体側はこの前に「雇用主は解雇できる」という規程、および「解雇の金銭解決制度」（金銭を払えば解雇できる）を明示するように要求し、逆に労働側は従来の判例によって認められた４条件を明記することを求めたが、双方の主張はいずれも退けられて、上記の条文が定められたのである。

この場合、「客観的に合理的な理由」による解雇であるか否かが裁判のみで決着が付けられるものであるとすれば、またその立証責任が被解雇者側に課せられるとすれば、この条文は解雇の自由化をもたらす可能性もありうるものである。また、この法律改正時には退けられた「解雇の金銭解決制度」については立法化に向けて厚生労働省内外で各種の制度化への動きが続いている。

**③　流動的職種の増加**

解雇の自由化が産業界の希望通りには進まない現実の下で、個別企業の意向によって任期付き採用、派遣労働者制度など、企業が長期雇用の責任を負わない仕組みで採用する方式が急速に普及してきた。そしてこの変化と整合するように、年金・退職金制度等について勤続期間が長期化するほど有利になる従来の仕組みが改変されつつある。

たとえば、2003 年の労働基準法改正によって、有期雇用の１年上限制が改変され、通常は３年、特別の場合には（専門職種および定年者など）5 年の期間が可能となって、相当多数の労働者を有期労働者として採用できる仕組みになった。また、派遣労働種類の一般化もこの期間に急速に進み、労働者派遣事業法（1986 年施行）の改正（2004 年）によって派遣期間の上限が１年から３年へ延長されるとともに、専門性の高い業種では期間の制限が撤廃されることになった。こうした流れの中で派遣労働者は急増を示しているのである。

### （２）　引退時期先送り政策

ヨーロッパ諸国において若年失業者に仕事を回すために 1980 年代以降早期引退制度が拡張され、その結果フランスを典型として 50 歳代後半から労働力率が急低下するようになったのに対して、日本では失業対策の観点ではなく、もっぱら年金財政悪化阻止の観点による年金支給開始年齢の引上げに対応して[26]、定年延長政策がとられてきた。

制度の具体的内容を見ると、1986 年制定の高年齢者雇用安定法によって、それまでの 55 歳定年制（年齢によって一律に定年になる規則を定める場合には、55 歳より若い年齢とすることはできないという規則）が 60 歳定年制に近づけるように定めら

れた。この規程は訓示規定＝努力義務の期間をおいた後に、1998 年 4 月に義務化されたのである。

日本のこの政策は、2000 年前後からヨーロッパ諸国が従来の早期引退奨励政策を再検討するようになって以降（その理由は、給付金負担の重さと政策効果に対する懐疑であった）、国際的に注目され、高い評価を与えられるようになった[27]。

確かにこの政策は、国家の負担によってではなく、企業の負担によって高齢者の就労機会を増加させようとするものであり、その意味で日本的な失業対策の一種として性格づけることができる。しかしこの制度は、若年者を含む全体的な雇用対策の一部として構成されているのではなく年金財政対策を第一義的目的として設計されていること、また企業側が雇用責任を回避するために採用している各種の対応を容認していることに留意しなければならない。

現行の 60 歳定年制度の下においても、現実の運用においてはそれ以前の年齢で引退する慣行が広く存在している。たとえば 50 歳代の一定の年齢で役職定年制を適用し、自発的に退職を申し出れば退職金の割増と、関連中小企業での就労機会が与えられるという方式は広く採用されている[28]。また、都市銀行の職員の離職方式も、60 歳定年制と矛盾することなしに、企業にとっては従業員の早期離職を実現している事例である[29]。

なお今後については、2006 年 4 月に高年齢者雇用安定法が改正施行され、次の目標として「65 歳定年制の義務化」に向けて順次定年年齢が上昇していくとされているが（2013 年度に 65 歳となり完成）、実際に同法が定めていることは、１）年齢による一律の定年制を定める場合には、65 歳を最低年齢にするように順次移行する、２）年齢による引退制度を廃止する（すなわちアメリカのように、年齢による一律の解雇を禁止するとともに、労働能力が劣化したことを理由に自由に解雇できる状態にする）、３）定年は従前のままで再雇用規定を置くという三種類の方策のうちのいずれかをとることであって、現実には、従来の早期退職制度や年齢一律でない退職指示（中小企業の場合など）が継続する可能性が高いというべきである。だからこそ産業界は、当初は企業の負担が拡大するとして反対していたこの制度改訂構想を受け入れることになったのであろう。

## おわりに　――　失業対策の日本的特徴

ここでは国際比較の観点から、以上に検討した失業対策の日本的特徴をまとめた上で、日本の失業対策によるモラル・ハザードの有無について若干の判断を示しておきたい。

失業対策の日本的特徴の第一は、政策順位における失業対策の低さ、失業対策の他政策への依存性である。定年年齢引上げの政策は雇用政策・失業対策との整合性を考慮することなく採用されており、もっぱら年金財政への配慮による年金支給年齢引上げに定年制度をあわせるものであった。また、公共事業によって就労機会を提供するという政策も、景気対策･地域経済振興策等の短期的観点で採用される傾向が強い。このように、失業対策の中で大きな比重を占める政策の相当部分が、他の目的のための他の政策措置の間接的影響として雇用効果を期待するというものであり、この点は国政全体の中での雇用政策・失業対策が占めている位置の低さに照応しているといえる。

第二の特徴は、失業対策の企業依存性である。失業手当の変形として機能している割増退職金は、少額の失業給付を企業が補うものであるし、定年延長措置は実質的にその負担を受容できる企業階層のみに適用され、中小零細企業は政策の埒外にとどまる傾向が強い。もちろん、フランスの雇用制度においても、企業の負担度の強さが指摘され、雇用者のための社会保険料掛け金の免除措置が新規雇用促進のための施策として大きな意味を持っているのであるが、フランスの場合には企業の負担は国家がいったん一元的に集めた上で、政策の論理にしたがって再配分するのである。これに対して日本の場合には、企業と失業者（ないし失業予備軍）の関係が国家を介在することなく直接的であり、したがって給付能力を有する大企業の従業員だけが有利な失業者救済措置を得ることができているといえる。

第三の特徴は、失業保険給付が社会保険原則にもとづくというよりも、一種の共同貯蓄・備荒貯蓄基金的に運用されている点である。掛け金を払った者は自発的離職であれ定年制による退職であれ給付の対象になるし、他方、再就職困難な者であっても掛け金期間に比例した給付日数（国際的には相当に短い水準の日数）を過ぎれば給付が打ち切られてしまい他の制度に移行することがないという仕組みには、保険事故に遭遇した者を保険加入者集団が支援するという意味合いが薄く、自分が積み立てた金額に対応する権利を利用してしまえば給付が終了するという貯蓄組合的発想が強いと言わざるを得ない。その発想に立てば、給付金に扶養家族分が認められないことも、給付期間が切れた後に生活保護に移行させるといった考え方が容認されないことも、また当然と言わなければならない。

以上は主としてフランスの失業対策を念頭に置きながら日本の失業対策の特徴点を現象的に整理したものに過ぎないが、失業率の上昇にともなって欧州の制度に接近したかに見える日本の制度が、依然として独特の性格を有していること、雇用保険財政の悪化にともなう失業給付抑制策等によってその傾向がさらに強まっていることが確認できる。

最後に新古典派論者が好んで主張する失業政策の副作用についてふれておきたい。まず、就労機会付与政策は勤労を条件とするので、モラルハザードを云々することは困難である。他方、日本の失業保険は、その金額の低さと給付期間の短さの点で国際的に際立っており、常勤的労働者層にとってはモラル・ハザードをもたらすだけの魅力のある制度にはなっていないといわなければならない[30]。給付切れの月に再就職が集中することをモラル・ハザードの表れとする理解もあるが[31]、それはむしろ、従来の仕事に匹敵するだけの適切な仕事が見つからず、給付切れによってやむを得ず、そうした不利な仕事につかざるをえない実情を反映している動きであると言わなければならない。実際、長期勤続的な男子労働力（世帯主）の場合には、失業期間が長引くほど再就職先企業での立場が不利になると考えられるから、一刻も早く再就職を望まざるをえない立場におかれている。

これに対して、再就職の意図の希薄な者（結婚等による自己都合退職者、高齢定年者等）では給付期限いっぱいまで失業給付期間を継続しようという意図が当然生じるであろうが、それは失業保険制度に残存している貯蓄組合的運用方式の問題性の表れであり、それを失業保険給付にともなう本来的なモラル・ハザードとすることは概念の濫用に過ぎるように思われる。

［注］

1　フランスの失業対策の制度的内容については、日本労働研究機構欧州事務所『フランスの失業保険制度と職業訓練政策―― Welfare to Work の視点から――』（日本労働研究機構、2003 年）。直近の事態については、フランス労働省、職業紹介所、ASSEDIC（商工業雇用協会）， UNEDIC（全国商工業雇用連合）等の関係機関のホームページに詳しい。Jacques Freyssinet, *Le Chômage*　（La Decouverte, 2004）は頻繁に改訂されて現在第 11 版が出ており、失業事情・対策の推移を見るためには好都合である。

2　基本手当日額の上限は、29 歳未満＝ 6580 円、30 歳－ 45 歳未満＝ 7310 円、45 歳－ 60 歳未満＝ 8040 円、60 歳― 65 歳未満＝ 7011 円。

3　橘木俊詔『失業克服の経済学』岩波書店、2002 年、60 頁。

4　1963 年の失業保険法改正によって「扶養加算」制度が創設され、1975 年における雇用保険制度への改変に際してこの制度が廃止されている。ちなみに、創設当時の扶養加算額は、一日当たり配偶者 20 円、18 歳未満の子のうち一人が 20 円、他は 10 円であった。労働省職業安定局失業保険課『失業保険制度概論』日刊労働通信社、1969 年、169 頁。

5　失業給付の受給には、「離職の日前の一年間に 6 ヶ月以上」の被保険者期間（すなわち掛け金を払った実績）があることが法定の条件である。

6　「日本では失業給付の対象を外れれば、一定の要件の下で、より普遍的な制度である生活保護制度の対象者になる」といった説明は、「一定の要件」がほとんど適用不可能な要件であることを注記しない限り、為にする弁護論といわなければならない。八代尚宏「雇用保険制度の再検討」猪木武徳・大竹文雄編『雇用政策の経済分析』東京大学出版会、2001 年、232 頁。

7　これに対してフランスでは、失業給付期間が終了した場合に、配偶者の所得・労働時間等が十分多くない

限り、ほぼ自動的に取得できる RMI（revenu minimum d'insertion）の給付がある。この制度をめぐる諸問題については、Nathalie Mlekuz（ed.），A quoi sert le RMI?，Le Seuil，1996。都留民子『フランスの貧困と社会保護――参入最低限所得（RMI）への途とその経験』法律文化社、2000 年。

[8] もっとも制度の形式論としてではなく、制度の機能論としては、この点には歴史的な正当性があるのであって、実質的な解雇であっても企業の圧力によって本人の「希望退職」として扱われる恐れが強いという社会的条件の下においては、自己都合退職を給付行政上不利益に扱うことが社会的妥当性を欠くという現実があった。労働条件の悪さ、退職強要等の結果としてなされる離職の多くが「自発的離職」に分類されてしまうという日本の現状がある限り、フランスのように自己都合退職者は給付対象としないといった割り切り方ではマイナス面が大きくなることは明らかである。

[9] 労働保険特別会計「雇用勘定」の歳出中の「失業等給付費」は、失業者の増加とともに増加し、1997 年度の 2.19 兆円から 98 年度の 2.58 兆円、99 年度の 2.65 兆円へと増加した後、制度改訂によって 2.5 － 2.6 兆円で停滞し、新制度の効果が全面的に現れた 2003 年度には 1.96 兆円に削減されている。大蔵省主計局編『決算の説明』各年度版による。

[10] 社会思想対策調査会『退職手当積立金法案要綱に関する意見』1936 年。

[11] 労働省『労働行政史』1961 年、310-325 頁。飯田鼎『社会政策の基本問題』亜紀書房、1987 年、101-112 頁。

[12] 『朝日新聞』1946 年 10 月 3 日付け記事「企業整備の解雇に指針」。

[13] 厚生労働省『失業対策年鑑』各年度版。

[14] たとえば、1978 年以降、特定不況地域・指定地域で中高年者に対象を絞って「失業者吸収率」制度が強化されており、その適用対象の公共事業も拡大されている。また、1995 年の阪神大震災の被災地のうち失業率が高い地域についてもこの方式が適用された。現在は 1987 年制定の「地域雇用等開発促進法」によって指定される地域の特定の公共事業業種において、原則 40％の雇用者を職業安定所に登録した失業者の中から採用することが義務付けられている。

[15] 実際、1980 年代以降には、失業者を就労させる意図を込めて公共事業を拡大しても、就労者が増加せず、従来からの建設業就労者の賃金が上昇したり、外国人労働者を建設業に呼び寄せることになるといった結果が現れるようになった。

[16] その後は、制度終了時に 65 歳未満であった者の生活の激変緩和措置として若干の事業がなされている。厚生労働省『失業対策年鑑』各年度版。

[17] 緊急地域雇用創出交付金事業の実績については、相当数の県がホームページ上でその事業の内容や関係統計類を公開している。

[18] ただしこの政策手法は新しいものではなく、むしろ伝統的なものというべきである。戦前および戦後復興期の帰農奨励政策や生業用少額資金貸与政策などはこの前史と見ることができる。積立金運用課『小額生業資金貸付に関する調査』1927 年など。

[19] 黒沢昌子「職業訓練・能力開発施策」猪木武徳・大竹文雄編『雇用政策の経済分析』東京大学出版会、2001 年、140 頁。

[20] 内務省社会局『救済事業調査会報告』（1918 年）以来、内務省・社会局のこの姿勢は一貫している。

[21] 唯木彬『労務調整令の指導と実際』日月書院、1943 年、3 頁。

[22] 「被徴用者中ニハ更生セザル前科者、農村ノ持テ余シ者等素質不良ナル者ノ混在スルヲ免レザル現状ナルモ…徴用工ハ規則上之ヲ解除スルコト殆ド不可能」という不合理があり、対策を要するという指摘がある（日本経済連盟会『生産増強ニ関スル意見――生産障害事項ノ排除ト積極的増産方策』1942 年、9 頁）。協調会『戦時労働事情』1944 年、97 頁以降。

[23] 雇用調整給付金制度に対する産業界および民間大企業労働組合の強い期待が、いったん廃案となった雇用保険法案を成立させる力となったことに示されるように、第一次オイルショック直後の不況局面において、

この制度への期待は大きかった。酒井謙弥「雇用保険法と雇用・失業保障闘争の課題」『賃金と社会保障』669 号、1975 年 3 月上旬号。

[24] 菅野和夫『労働法』第四版、弘文堂、1994 年、405-406 頁。

[25] 熊沢誠『リストラとワークシェアリング』岩波書店、2003 年、72 － 79 頁。

[26] 1994 年の年金制度改訂によって、2001 年度から 2013 年度にかけて基礎年金の支給開始年齢を 60 歳から 65 歳に順次延ばすことが決定され、同じく 2000 年の制度改正によって報酬比例部分について、2013 － 25 年度にかけて 60 歳から 65 歳に延ばすことが決定されている（女性は 5 年遅れで実施する）。

[27] たとえば Anne-Marie Guillemard, *L'âge de l'emploi, Les sociétés à l'épreuve de vieillessement*, Armand Colin, 2003, pp107-121.

[28] 一定ランク以上の官僚の引退システムはこの仕組を天下りと結びつけた制度である。

[29] 通例、都市銀行の従業員は 48 歳前後で銀行を自己都合退職し、銀行の紹介する企業に再就職し、この企業に 55 歳まで勤務する。この間は勤務先企業と従来の銀行の賃金との差額は銀行が支給するし、勤務先企業とトラブルがあれば別の企業を銀行が世話をする。55 歳で銀行のこの種の保証は切れ、後は 60 歳までの雇用が期待されてはいるが、具体的措置は勤務先企業の経営事情や従業員の有用性にもとづいて、勤務先企業と本人の間で決定され、銀行は関与しないとされている。都市銀行人事部門関係者からのヒアリングによる。

[30] 橘木俊詔『失業克服の経済学』岩波書店、2002 年、73 頁。

[31] 八代尚宏「雇用保険制度の再検討」。前掲、猪木・大竹編『雇用政策の経済分析』東京大学出版会、2001 年、234 頁。

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# 国際比較の中の失業者と失業問題

## ── 日本・フランス・ブラジル ──

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