

L'Année sociologique

Journal founded by Émile Durkheim, and published since 1898
Third series

Editor : Gianluca MANZO

CALL FOR PAPERS Biographical temporalities challenged by transformations of work

Scientific Coordination

Samuel JULHE (Université Clermont Auvergne, LESCORES & associated to CEREP),
Emmanuelle LECLERCQ (Université Reims Champagne Ardennes, CEREP),
Nicolas ROUX (Université Reims Champagne Ardennes, CEREP & affiliated to CEET)

Volume 75 / 2025 - Issue 1

L'Année sociologique is launching a call for papers in order to prepare a special issue on **Biographical temporalities challenged by transformations of work**. This call for papers aims to contribute to the updating and renewal of sociological reflections on the development of professional biographies, which have been put to the test by the transformations of the working world that have disrupted Western societies since the 1970s. In the process, it aims to document more broadly a certain state of society, whose institutional dynamics contribute to structuring and recomposing professional temporalities.

Terms of response to the call for papers

Authors who wish to respond to this call for papers with a proposal for an article are requested to contact the address samuel.julhe@uca.fr before Saturday 03/06/2023. The proposal is an abstract of 3,000 characters and specifying the chosen axis. This will give the issue's coordination team a first glimpse of the scope of futures contributions. It will make a selection and communicate it to the authors by July 15, 2023 at the latest.

Subsequently, the texts - with a volume of 60,000 English characters maximum, all include - must imperatively be drafted following the instructions presented on the [Journal website](#) and sent to the address samuel.julhe@uca.fr before 15/06/2024.

A response will be made quickly by the coordinators so as to allow the drafting of a version 1 (amended) to be transmitted to the [L'Année sociologique](#) by September 1, 2024 at the latest.

The article proposals will then be evaluated anonymously by two members of the committee and one exterior expert, with feedback scheduled for October 2024 (and a publication on Spring 2025, no 75-1).

Argumentation

Since the 1970s and 1980s, many North American and European demographers and sociologists have highlighted the twofold process of 'standardisation' and 'institutionalisation' of biographical development that gradually marked Western societies in the 19th and 20th centuries (Elder, 1974; 1975; 1985; Lévy, 1977; Hogan, 1978; 1980; Kohli, 1985; 1986; Gee, 1986; Mayer & Carroll, 1987). The central idea of these studies is that every society produces one or more 'models' that structure

the chronology of human lives in its continuities and discontinuities, based on shared references, collective representations, and norms from which stem 'age roles' and transitions associated with 'typical ages'. From this point of view, it appears that the Western model has increasingly been centred on its relationship with work and is divided into three main phases: education, professional life and retirement. For the above mentioned authors, who are more or less part of what will be called the 'life course theory' (Elder et al, 2003; Kohli, 2007; Kok, 2007; Kreyenfeld & Konietzka, 2017), this segmentation of the biographical process is the result both of the creation of legally regulated temporal boundaries (such as compulsory school age or legal retirement age) and of an increase in the number of organisations and professionals likely to intervene in one or another aspect of the biographical process (such as academic decisions, professional integration, return to employment, vocational retraining, transition to retirement, etc.). In this canonical model, which is one of the foundations of social protection systems (Guillemard, 2008; Möhring, 2016), the transition to 'adulthood' is objectively and symbolically marked by the near simultaneity of having a first job, leaving the parental home in economic and housing terms, and setting up a new household.

However, new researches in the two following decades highlight a possible decline in this model's importance. According to these approaches, mass unemployment, prolongation of the initial training, injunction to take active retirement, and more broadly the multiplication and diversification of 'atypical' or 'new' forms of employment (Maruani & Reynaud, 2003), has led to a gradual 'de-standardisation' and 'individualisation' of biographical paths (Henretta, 1992; Berger et al, 1993; Shanahan, 2000; Brückner & Mayer, 2005; Macmillan, 2005; Elzinga & Liefroer, 2007; Vinken, 2007; Widmer & Ritschard, 2009). Even more recently, a new generation of researches has sought to study the processes underlying the previous findings in depth, in particular by focusing on the transition and turning point phases (Bessin et al., 2009; Mayer, 2009; Nico & Caetano, 2017; Bidart, 2019; Legewie & Tucci, 2019). On an empirical level and in a prosaic way, these perspectives have largely fed researches that deal with the contemporary upheavals of employment times (Lallement, 2007; Maruani & Reynaud, 2004), the study-work relationship (Coupié et al, 2018; Denecheau & Houdeville, 2018) and, more generally, of the social life (Rosa, 2010; Cingolani, 2012), particularly in terms of its unequal distribution between men and women and within families (Landour, 2019; Barbier et al., 2020). These reflections become especially perspicuous when placed in the context of global events that have significant repercussions on the jobs and the 'life course' of those who write about them (like the various pandemic, climate and economic 'crises', etc.).

All of this also leads to reflexions on the difficulties of qualifying the abundance of biographies, social and professional positions, as well as the accompanying events (Bessin, 2009). This project deals with the methodological and theoretical challenges faced in thus starting from scratch, whether in terms of the choice of notions or interpretative framework used to report on these transformations and/or the way in which biographical material is collected, processed, and analysed. Areas of interest include, but are not limited to, the following research questions:

1. The temporal forms of biographies and their variations, particularly the rhythm of professional lives. In this respect, it is interesting to address the issue of standardisation/de-standardisation of sectors of activity or of professional groups. Some of them may indeed be distinguished by specific temporal regimes (Devetter, 2004; Nicole-Drancourt, 2009), for example professions with 'short careers' or project-based professions (e.g., modelling, professional sports, artistic worlds, etc.) (Pilmis, 2010; Sinigaglia-Amadio & Sinigaglia, 2017), that differ from professions with 'long careers' (e.g., notaries, academics, senior civil servants, etc.) (Demonteil, 2021). What are the temporalities that structure biographies before and throughout one's professional life? Can we distinguish rhythmic variations or observe effects of reversibility? How can we report on periods of transition (Bessin et al., 2009; Mazade, 2011), for example between forms of employment (e.g., short-term or stable, part-time or full-time) and more uncertain temporalities (e.g., periods of non-employment,

training)? Conversely, what mechanisms contribute to the stability of situations according to the social spaces considered?

2. A second approach consists in concretely putting to the test the notion of 'linked lives' (Elder, 1974; Fischer, 1986; Settersten, 2015; Carr, 2018), which aims to document the role of certain kinds of biographical events and the interactions between different spheres of social life at an intra-individual or inter-individual level. The occurrence of a long-term illness, for example, is likely to disrupt someone's career path (Hélaridot, 2006; Algava et al., 2012; Hélaridot et al., 2019; Primérano, 2022). Similarly, the development of work from home changes family dynamics and creates specific professional lives. At the same time, we can also study the way the biography of some influences that of others, like the researches carried out on family caregivers (Trabuet & Weber, 2009; Duconget, 2020), where the support provided to a member of the inner circle weighs on their professional activity or makes it possible, or the impact of unemployment of a partner in a couple (Pochic, 2000; Pailhé & Solaz, 2004), etc.

3. Finally, the submitted texts could also focus specifically on the institutionalisation of working lives. In a context advocating 'flexicurity' (Charpail & Marchand, 2008; Caillaud & Zimmermann, 2011), public policies have developed many devices and instruments designed to influence this evolution: from integration assistance, to the promotion of 'active retirement' and 'combined employment and retirement', by way of support for vocational training (ongoing or lifelong), 'professional transition' advice, 'skills assessment' (Gonnet, 2019) or various forms of 'counselling' (Meilland & Sarfati, 2016; Sarfati, 2017) or 'intermediation' between job offer and job application (Verkindt, 2019; Dif-Pradelier & Roux, 2022). How and to what extent do these devices lend a sense of control or influence over one's situation or fate? What are the conditions to be performative or effective? The contributions in this area of research will aim to observe biographies through the prism of public or private devices that are supposed to influence them, as seen from the point of view of those concerned. The objective will thus be to understand the way these devices are mobilised and what their impact may be. For example, how can self 'activation' be good for some but not others? What are the conditions for it to be used in a dynamic of securing conditions of existence, of professional mobility, or even of emancipation, or conversely does it increase the 'hyper-institutionalisation' of biographies in working-class environments (Couronné & Sarfati, 2018) and the welfare stigma (Duvoux, 2009)?

Furthermore, transversely to these major research thematics - which are not mutually exclusive - the authors are expected to focus on the following points:

- data collection and processing methodology must be made explicit, specifying the implications in terms of phenomena made observable, the construction of indicators, etc. For example, it is known that the methods of reconstruction of professional calendars used in questionnaire surveys do not finally observe the same thing as a series of biographical interviews (Demazière, 2007; Monso & Thévenot, 2010). This raises questions about the different ways of capturing the transition between social states according to data collection methods, the relevant degree of granularity of mobility data, the temporal window or period of observation, the way micro-mobilities are accounted for, etc. (Pagis & Pasquali, 2016; Jayet, 2021)
- the authors are expected to specify their choice of theoretical framework and conceptual glossary. Indeed, the glossary used to account for 'temporal forms of interpretation' (De Coninck & Godard, 1990) is not neutral, especially as it is abundant (Passeron, 1990): the researches mobilise terms such as careers (Becker & Strauss, 1956; Gonin-Bolo, 2007; Darmon, 2008), trajectories (Outin, 1990), courses (Zimmermann, 2011; Caradec et al, 2012; Ertul et al., 2012; Leclercq, 2014), career paths (Coninck & Godard, 1992), employment sequences (Lima, 2019), etc. However, if these notions seem to be used almost indifferently in the Anglo-Saxon context, they give rise to controversies in France (Dubar

& Nicourd, 2017). How can this contrast be understood? What do these conceptual distinctions offer at a heuristic level? Do they respond to data collection and analysis requirements, to theoretical positions, or to different scales of analysis (Grossetti, 2011)? Etc.

Ultimately, this call for papers aims to contribute to the updating and renewal of sociological reflections on the development of professional biographies, which have been put to the test by the transformations of the working world that have disrupted Western societies since the 1970s. In the process, it aims to document more broadly a certain state of society, whose institutional dynamics contribute to structuring and recomposing professional temporalities.

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CORRESPONDENCE

L'Année sociologique

Maison de la Recherche
28 rue Serpente 75006 Paris - France
delphine.renard@sorbonne-universite.fr

Samuel JULHE samuel.julhe@uca.fr

Emmanuelle LECLERCQ emmanuelle.leclercq@univ-reims.fr

Nicolas ROUX nicolas.roux@univ-reims.fr