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Contents

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Articles

Changes in the Intensity and Hardships of Hospital Work in France (1998-2013)*

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This paper looks at the evolution of working conditions in France's hospital sector over the fifteen years to 2013. The issue is important in view of the extensive reforms undertaken in the sector since the early 1990s, which have led to profound reorganizations. We start by reviewing the state of knowledge and data of working conditions in hospitals. In the light of the last three editions of France's *Working Conditions* survey (*enquête Conditions de travail*), we then look at the changes in the pace of work and in the different forms of hardship at work that occurred in French hospitals between 1998 and 2013. We then compare these with observations for other sectors. Finally, we analyze, *ceteris paribus*, the current specificities of the hospital sector in terms of exposure to work pace, staggered schedules, physical hardships and a worsening working environment. We observe that there was an acceleration in work pace faced by hospital staff in the period studied. This was accompanied by a slight alleviation of physical hardships. However, working conditions in hospitals remain particularly stressful.

France's public hospital sector has been subject to numerous reforms since the beginning of the 1990s, aimed at reducing costs. These reforms have concerned both the financing and governance of hospitals, and in particular the exercise of public tutelage.[1] The main reform in financing took place in 2003, with the implementation of activity-based pricing (*tarification à l'activité* or T2A). This new pricing method aimed to simulate market mechanisms by assigning an average price to medical procedures. In doing so, it was supposed to encourage hospitals to provide care at lower costs by introducing yardstick competition between establishments.

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1. The creation of Regional Hospitalization Agencies (*Agences régionales de l'hospitalisation*) in 1996 especially, and that of Regional Health Agencies (*Agences régionales de la santé*) in 2009.

Based on various foreign experiences, the economic literature has highlighted the risks associated with this type of payment, including: patient selection (Silverman, Skinner, 2004), as hospitals have an interest in keeping low-cost patients and avoiding expensive patients; declines in the quality of care due to premature discharging of patients as prices are disconnected from the length of hospitalizations (Newhouse, 2003); and the refocusing of hospitals' work on lucrative specialties and cuts in unprofitable care (Scanlon, 2006).

From the point of view of internal organization, this new method of financing has led to a strong rationalization of activity within hospitals, as part of a constant search for productivity gains. It has been accompanied by the implementation of management techniques directly inspired by the private sector (Domin, 2015). Organizational and managerial techniques resulting from new public management have thus been applied to hospitals (Pierru, 2007). These manifest themselves in the rationalization of patient flows, the standardization of care procedures, and also implementation of new work assessment methods such as timing tasks. Staff are thus encouraged to improve their productivity through new performance indicators.

These profound changes in hospitals and their functioning have impacted working conditions in the sector. Empirical analyzes carried out from the mid-2000s – mainly using qualitative field surveys – indicate an "increasing pressure from work pace constraints" (Gheorghiu, Moatty, 2013, p. 250). This has been accompanied by a deterioration of working conditions in the hospital sector (Belorgey, 2010). These trends, however, are not specific to hospitals, and have been observed for all sectors during the same period. Élisabeth Algava and her co-authors (2014) have thus highlighted a resumption of work intensification for all workers between 2005 and 2013, following a period of stabilisation between 1998 and 2005 (Bué *et al.*, 2007). Physical constraints and pressures at work have also increased.

In the hospital sector, the search for greater productivity to improve its performance, and thereby reduce costs, faces another challenge the public authorities must tackle at the same time, namely the risk of staff shortages, and in particular of nursing staff, in a context of France's aging population. This affects hospital staff too (Noguera, Lartigau, 2009). The lack of job attractiveness, resignations and early retirements, as well as high staff turnover and absenteeism for health reasons all threaten lasting personnel shortages and cause major disorganizations within the sector (Estryn-Béhar, 2008). Improving working conditions is one lever available to the public authorities to limit these threats, and it is clearly central in a sector in which work is particularly physically and mentally demanding, causing premature professional exhaustion. Since the 2010s, the public authorities have taken initiatives to this end, especially through social dialogue or quality of work life improvements.[2] We may assume that these initiatives have had a beneficial impact on hospital staff's working conditions.

2. On these issues see Couty (2013), in particular.

Given these seemingly contradictory forces, which are liable to affect working conditions, work in the hospital sector has been undergoing major changes, raising many questions. In this context of profound reforms and permanent reorganization, how have working conditions in hospitals evolved over the past fifteen years? Has there been an intensification of work, as in other sectors? Is this more marked in hospitals? Has it been accompanied by a softening of "historical" working constraints, or indeed a hardening?

In this article, we propose to answer these questions by analyzing the evolution of work intensity and hardships in the hospital sector, since the end of the 1990s, compared to other sectors of activity. We do not take an evaluative approach, which would consist in attributing observed changes in working conditions to the reforms implemented. Instead, we adopt a comparative approach whose aim is to point out differences in development between hospitals and other sectors. Our work thus completes the panorama of working conditions in healthcare establishments drawn up by Julien Loquet and Layla Ricroch (2014).

To do this, we use individual data from the last three editions of France's *Working Conditions* survey (*enquête Conditions de travail*), covering the period from 1998 to 2013. These data have the twofold advantage of describing working conditions in detail, as they are experienced by employees, while also using a large sample which allows differentiated analyzes to be carried out according to the sector of activity. We set out our work here in three stages. After presenting the state of knowledge concerning working conditions in hospitals, especially changes in recent years, we describe the data and the methodology used. Lastly, we will detail and discuss the main results obtained.

The Demands of Hospital Work: the State of Knowledge

The organization of work in hospitals has to meet certain requirements of equal access and continuity of care, which constrain the sector especially in terms of working conditions. These are physically demanding, and employees are over-exposed to certain potentially-pathogenic constraints. Competition between hospitals via T2A and the introduction of managerial techniques directly inspired by the private sector may also have accelerated the pace of work.

Demanding Working Conditions

The working conditions and constraints faced by French hospital staff have been the subject of increased attention by researchers and public authorities since the beginning of the 2000s especially. These questions relate to a triple public health challenge (Lamy *et al.*, 2013). First, there is the issue of how the work of hospital staff can be maintained given demographic aging, which affects staff in the sector itself

(Kranklader *et al.*, 2013). Then, there is the question of preserving staff health in the face of permanent changes and the profoundly-reformed context. Lastly, the quality of care needs to be maintained in an increasingly financially-constrained working environment.

This increased attention given to hospital working conditions has been accompanied by a significant development of databases allowing them to be analyzed in more detail, and more generally the organization of work in the sector. Analyses include: i) France's research programme on *Promoting the Health and Satisfaction of Caregivers at Work in Europe* (PRESST, *Promouvoir en Europe santé et satisfaction des soignants au travail*) as part of the European *Nurses Early Exit Study* (NEXT), from 2002 onwards; ii) the *Conditions and Organization of Work of Employees in Health Establishments* survey (COTAES, *Conditions et organisation du travail des actifs en établissements de santé*) in 2003; iii) the extension of the survey on *Organizational Changes and Computerization* (COI-H, *Changements organisationnels et informatisation*) of staff in public and private health establishments in 2006; and iv) the over-representation of hospital workers in the 2013 edition of the *Working Conditions* survey. In addition to these quantitative data, there have been field surveys aimed at deepening certain aspects of work reorganizations underway within the hospital sector.[3]

These sources have made it possible to improve knowledge appreciably about work constraints existing in hospitals. We are not seeking here to present them exhaustively, but to target working conditions which have deleterious effects on health and life expectancy. We are thus interested in a "set of noxious and potentially pathogenic constraints present throughout employees' professional lives" (Molinié, Volkoff, 2006, p. 96). According to epidemiological studies, such constraints exist in three types: staggered hours and shift work, tasks requiring significant physical effort, and exposure to a toxic work environment (Lasfargues, 2005).

Staggered hours and shift work are especially widespread in hospitals, insofar as they are essential to equal access to care and continuity of care. Night or weekend work, on-call duty and on-call duty outside normal working hours are one of the specific features of hospital services. Thus, according to the COI-H survey, nearly half of staff in public and private health establishments frequently work Saturdays or Sundays, and nearly one in four employees frequently work at night (Cordier, 2009). These constraints concern more especially medical staff, nurses and nursing assistants, and are more frequent in France's public hospital services. Shift work is also over-represented in the public hospital sector: according to the *Medical Surveillance Survey of Employee Exposure to Occupational Risks* (SUMER, *Surveillance médicale des expositions des salariés aux risques professionnels*)[4] in 2010, nearly 44% of workers in this sector have some shift work, compared to 16% in all sectors (Arnaudo *et al.*, 2013).

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3. On this issue, readers may turn to Raveyre, Ughetto, 2003; Acker, 2005; Gheorghiu, Moatty, 2005; and Divay, Gadéa, 2008, among others.

4. This was a survey coordinated by the Directorate for the Animation of Research, Studies and Statistics (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques*, DARES) and the Directorate General of Labour (*Direction*

Significant physical exertion is also common in hospitals. Using data from the 2003 *Hospital Working Conditions and Organization* (*Conditions et organisation du travail à l'hôpital*) survey, Romuald Le Lan and Dominique Baubeau (2004) have shown that workers are particularly exposed to four physical hardships, including: prolonged standing, carrying heavy loads, carrying out painful and tiring movements, as well as frequent and long movements by foot. They also show that exposure to the last two constraints increased significantly between 1998 and 2003. Here again, there are significant differences between professions, with nursing assistants being the most exposed (93% of them were affected by having to move heavy loads in the public hospital sector, in 2003). However, exposure to intense physical exertion seems to have been reduced in hospitals more recently, even if it remains clearly over-represented in this sector (Loquet, Ricroch, 2014).

Finally, the overall working environment also appears to be much less favorable in hospitals. Data from the 2010 SUMER survey reveal a pronounced overexposure of hospital employees to chemical and biological risks (Arnaudo *et al.*, 2013). Three quarters of them are exposed to biological risks, mainly through contact with patients. More than half are also exposed to at least one chemical product, compared to one third of all workers, in all sectors combined. Hospital staff are also over-represented with regard to the simultaneous exposure to at least three chemical agents: this affects one in four public hospital workers, in contrast to 14% for all employees.

Did the Pace of Work in Hospitals Increase?

The notion of work intensity is difficult to grasp. As Thomas Amossé and Michel Gollac (2008) have emphasised, it actually covers various meanings depending on the type of organization concerned. Work intensity may refer to the number of operations per unit of time in Tayloristic organizations. But it may also, for example, refer to the relationship between means and objectives in more modern forms of organization characterized by strong worker autonomy. Comparing work intensity between sectors of activity therefore seems difficult. Without claiming to offer a complete and definitive definition of work intensity, statistical surveys on working conditions have nevertheless made it possible to understand better its evolution since the beginning of the 1980s. Here, work intensity is identified through the various constraints weighing on the pace of work (the speed of machines or automatic movement of products, standards or deadlines to be respected, external requests from the public, etc.). These in turn are underpinned by different organizational logics (Valeyre, 2001). The questions relating to such work pace constraints, present in the various editions of the *Working Conditions* survey, have made it possible to highlight an intensification of work in France, from the mid-1980s onwards, across all sectors (Algava *et al.*, 2014).

générale du travail, DGT), and it was carried out by occupational physicians. Its aim was to measure in detail occupational risks that employees face at work. The survey was conducted three times: in 1994-1995, in 2002-2003 and in 2009-2010.

The hospital sector has not been spared such intensification. By comparing the results of the *Working Conditions* survey in 1998 with those of the *Hospital Working Conditions and Organization* survey in 2003, R. Le Lan and D. Baubeau (2004) thus observed that the share of hospital workers who declare that their pace of work is imposed by production standards or deadlines to be met within one hour at most, had doubled over the period, from 24% to 48%. This increase is all the more spectacular as it is out of all proportion compared to increases observed over the same period for all workers: the share of persons subject to a work pace imposed by production standards or deadlines to be observed within one hour at most, rose from 23% to 25% between 1998 and 2005, according to data collected in the two editions of the corresponding *Working Conditions* survey (Bué *et al.*, 2007). The results obtained by R. Le Lan and D. Baubeau (2004) are however derived from the comparison of two distinct data sources, and the authors suggest they should be considered with caution.

The same precaution is called for with more recent results, which show a significant easing of pace constraints within the hospital sector, between 2003 and 2013 (Loquet, Ricroch, 2014). Having a work rate imposed by the automatic movement of a product, or the speed of a machine affected nearly 22.5% of staff in the sector in 2003, compared with 6.8% and 7.5% of staff respectively in 2006 and 2013. A work rate imposed by production standards or deadlines to be met within one hour affected 30% of hospital workers in 2013, compared to 48% in 2003. Finally, the share of staff declaring they face a work pace set by other technical constraints appears to have more than halved between 2003 and 2013, falling from 39% to 18%. These encouraging results are interpreted by the authors of the study as "an overall reduction in the pressure from work pace" (p. 2), even if these findings are based on the use of three different data sources, whose comparability is not guaranteed: the *Conditions and Organization of Work of Employees in Health Establishments* survey (COTAES) of 2003, the *Organizational Changes and Computerization* survey in the hospital sector (COI-H) of 2006 and the *Working Conditions* survey of 2013. These results are moreover all the more surprising as between 2003 and 2006, 46% of employees of health establishments questioned within the framework of the COI-H survey also declared feeling a sharpening of work pace constraints (Cordier, 2009).

The question of changes in work pace constraints within the hospital sector thus remains to be clarified, especially more recently. Yet the fact remains that certain constraints are particularly significant in this sector (Loquet, Ricroch, 2014). This is the case of: the immediate dependency on the work of colleagues (in 2013, 43% of the staff concerned declared such dependency, compared to 30% for all employees); the obligation of immediately responding to external requests (64% and 58% respectively), computerized control or monitoring (41% and 35% respectively); and even production standards or deadlines to be met within an hour (30% compared to 27%). These pace constraints have combined with other forms of time pressure specific to the hospital sector, which have been highlighted by qualitative research: emergency work, work peaks, and work pressure from queuing (Gheorghiu, Moatty, 2013).

This time pressure comes on top of the physical hardships mentioned previously. It can be interpreted as strong work intensity, and may be linked directly to the significant increase in production and productivity observed since the beginning of the 2000s, based on administrative data (Or *et al.*, 2013). This increase in productivity was particularly significant between 2007 and 2008, the year in which T2A was introduced as the sole means of financing hospitals (Yilmaz, Frikha, 2012). Furthermore, the strong intensity of work has also had an impact on the perception that staff have of their work, on the strategies they develop to make their work bearable, and therefore on their state of health (Gollac, Volkoff, 2006). For these reasons, it seems essential to us to better understand this evolution.

A New Analysis of the Evolution of Working Conditions in Hospitals: Factors and Methodology

We use data from the *Working Conditions* survey to provide an analysis of the changes in working conditions within the hospital sector, compared to that observed in other sectors. We use the three latest editions of this survey, running from 1998 to 2013. We then focus on the data from the 2013 edition. By controlling for many characteristics, it allows us to compare the current work situation of hospital staff to that of workers from other sectors.

The Monitoring of Work Constraints over Time Based on the *Working Conditions* Surveys

We wanted to study the changes in the work constraints faced by workers in the hospital sector, over the recent period. To do this, we chose to use the last three editions of the *Working Conditions* survey (Box 1), covering the period from 1998 to 2013. We compared these developments with those observed for workers in other sectors.

This survey has two advantages for our analysis. First, it provides detailed information to describe the work constraints faced by employees. Second, as the survey has been carried out regularly since the late 1970s, it makes it possible to understand the evolution of working conditions.

The survey also questioned a large proportion of workers in the hospital sector for each of the editions studied (Table 1). For each edition, we therefore have a sufficient sample to compare the results obtained for hospital staff and for workers in other sectors.

Based exclusively on data from the *Working Conditions* survey, our analysis is intended to complement the work of J. Loquet and L. Ricroch (2014). They studied the evolution of the working conditions of hospital staff between 2003 and 2013, using three different sources: i) the 2003 COTAES survey (*Conditions and*

Organization of Work of Employees in Health Establishments); ii) the 2006 COI-H survey (*Organizational Changes and Computerization* in the hospital sector); and iii) the 2013 *Working Conditions* survey (see above). The use of these three surveys met the objective of their study, which was to analyze the evolution of working conditions

BOX 1

Presentation of the *Working Conditions* Survey

The *Working Conditions* survey is a statistical survey which is complementary to the *Employment* survey (*enquête Emploi*). It is carried out every seven or eight years mainly by the Ministry of Labour: specifically the Directorate for the Animation of Research, Studies and Statistics (*Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques*, DARES), and INSEE (France's National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies, *Institut national des statistiques et des études économiques*). The survey provides framework data on the working conditions of France's entire working population in employment. The survey makes it possible to observe as closely as possible real work: *i.e.* work as perceived by employees; and not prescribed work, described by companies or employers.

The *Working Conditions* survey was initially conducted in 1978 and the latest edition available (at the time of writing) is for 2013. The survey questionnaire has changed dramatically. Initially it focused on the industrial world, in particular on constraints related to machines. But, the survey has gradually integrated observations on cognitive pressures (responsibilities, attention constraints, etc.), employees' room for maneuver (their power to vary deadlines, etc.), and psychosocial risks. Since 2005, the survey has also been interested in paradoxical injunctions (BUÉ, HAMON-CHOLET, 2006). Finally, the 2013 edition includes a self-questionnaire relating to exposure to psychosocial risks and questions concerning the state of health (the Minimum European Health Module).

TABLE 1 **– The Main Sets of Questions Relating to Working Conditions: Changes According to Each Survey Edition**

Questions related to:	1984	1991	1998	2005	2013
… schedules and the organization of working time	X	X	X	X	X
… the organization of work	X	X	X	X	X
… risk	X	X	X	X	X
… inconveniences	X	X	X	X	X
… work hardships (arduous nature of work)	X	X	X	X	X
… the content of the work		X	X	X	X
… mental pressure/stress/paradoxical injunctions		X	X	X	X
… the use of machines/new technologies		X	X	X	X
… accidents at work			X	X	X
… occupational health and safety				X	X
… the state of health					X
… psychosocial risks					X

Interpretation: All the editions (1984 to 2013) include a set of questions on schedules and work organization. Only the 2013 edition includes questions relating to psychosocial risks.

by professions and types of establishment.[5] This required large samples for each year studied.[6] The sources used by the authors allow for more substantial samples than those provided by the *Working Conditions* survey before 2013: respectively 4,700 workers in the sector in 2003 (COTAES) and 1,400 in 2006 (COI-H). These sample sizes allow for the production of statistics on working conditions, broken down by profession and type of establishment.

In contrast to these authors, therefore, we have chosen to base our analysis on the same source, the *Working Conditions* survey, for three reasons:

1. Using this source allows us to observe working conditions over a longer period – fifteen years – than that available from the data of the 2003 COTAES and 2006 COI-H surveys. The most important changes within hospital organization took place from the beginning of the 2000s onwards (Box 2). It therefore seems essential to us to have an observation point preceding this date;
2. The survey makes it possible to compare the evolution of working conditions observed within the hospital sector with that of workers in other sectors. In this way, we hope to highlight any specificities of the hospital sector in terms of changing working conditions and analyze them in relationship to the evolution of the sector;
3. Finally, the use of a single source of data to study the way in which the working conditions of workers in the hospital sector have evolved avoids the pitfalls associated with the use of multiple sources. Indeed, as R. Le Lan and D. Baubeau (2004), but also J. Loquet and L. Ricroch (2014) have emphasised, surveys vary in terms of questioning methods,[7] the order and formulation of the questions, as well as the general or sectoral nature of the survey. These variations may cause exogenous discontinuities in the recording of work constraints faced by employees.

Focusing exclusively on the *Working Conditions* surveys, however, is not without its own pitfalls. More precisely, it raises two difficulties. The first is linked to the over-sampling of the 2013 survey. The numbers surveyed in the last edition are more than four times higher than in the 1998 and 2005 editions (Table 2). Furthermore, the 2013 survey is independent of the INSEE *Employment* survey, unlike the 1998 and 2005 editions, which were complementary modules to the *Employment* survey. The sampling base for the over-sampling of workers in the hospital sector was taken from the Information System on Public Service Employees (SIASP, *Système d'information sur les agents des services publics*) in 2010 for public hospitals, and of the Annual Social Data Declarations (DADS, *Déclarations annuelles de données sociales*) in 2010 for private hospitals.

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5. More precisely, the study "is particularly interested in the differences which could exist within the same professional family, according to the sector of the establishment, *i.e.* public or private" (Loquet, Ricroch, 2014, p. 13).
6. Another notable difference is that the constraints of work pace are central in our analysis, while they occupy only a minimal place in the study by J. Loquet and L. Ricroch (2014).
7. Exclusively face-to-face, at home for the *Working Conditions* survey; mainly by telephone for the COTAES and COI-H surveys.

TABLE 2 – **Staff Surveyed for Each Edition of the Survey**

	1998	2005	2013
All sectors	21,380	18,789	33,673
Hospital sector	969	910	4,327
of which public hospitals	727	521	2,760

Interpretation: Of the 33,673 people questioned as part of the *Working Conditions* survey in 2013, 4,327 worked in the hospital sector, of which 2,760 declared themselves to be employees of a public hospital (the variable "Statut" in the data, referring to different types of job contracts).
Field: Employed workers.
Source: *Working Conditions* survey, Ministry of Labour, DARES, DGAFP, DREES, INSEE, editions 1998, 2005 and 2013.

BOX 2

The Implementation of the 35-Hour Week in Hospitals

As in other sectors, the 35-hour week and the cut in working time had adverse effects in hospitals, leading to a deterioration in working conditions. Cuts or even the absence of hiring has favored work intensification. In other words, the volume of hours worked has decreased but work has intensified. Hospitals have evolved like other productive sectors in this respect: the reduction in the working week has resulted in intensified, more flexible and multitasked work (ASKENAZY, 2004). The 35-hour week has thus modified the relationship between working time and life time in particular, by modifying the time availability of the labour force (BOUFFARTIGUE, BOUTEILLER, 2012).

The implementation of T2A has also reinforced the intensification of work. From 2003 to 2009, the growth of activity in public healthcare establishments was faster than the increase in healthcare personnel. The productivity rose in this period by 11.3%, or 1.8% per year. The increase was even stronger between 2007 and 2008, the year in which T2A became the sole means of financing hospitals (YILMAZ, FRIKHA, 2012). The absolute quest for productivity has shown up in increasing workforce cuts, pressure on healthcare professionals and increased flexibility. This logic has accentuated all kinds of constraints on staff: schedule changes, time overruns, difficulties in choosing vacations freely, tighter management of absences or even recalls when staff are resting (GHEORGHIU, MOATTY, 2013).

A simple comparison between the results of the 2013 survey and those of previous editions could therefore be problematic. However, adjustments made to the 2013 edition of the survey by its producer organizations (DARES, DREES, DGAFP) have made it possible to overcome this difficulty. Several variables in the 2013 sample identify fields that are comparable with previous editions: the main sample indicator makes it possible to identify the workers resulting from the over-sampling (and therefore potentially allows them to be excluded from the analysis); the variable "champ_ct2005" limits the workers present in the 2013 survey to persons covered by the 2005 edition. In addition, several weighting variables were calculated to take these sampling differences into account. For all the changes presented in this article,

we tested all the tools made available to us. The results for our variables of interest are only very marginally sensitive to field restrictions. To make the results easier to read, we present the evolutions for all the people questioned in 2013, as well as for persons falling within a comparable field to that of 2005 (use of the "champ_ct2005" indicator).

In any case, the field retained, for the three editions studied, concerns employees, including temporary employees, coming from all sectors of activity. Those working in the hospital sector are identified from the code of the Nomenclature of French Activities (the *Nomenclature d'activités françaises*, or NAF code) for the 1998 and 2005 editions. For the 2013 edition, a combination of the "Statut" variable and the NAF code is used.[8] This represents 3,944 employees, when including all staff in the sector, and 3,744 individuals if we retain a field comparable to 2005.

The second difficulty is linked to the general nature of the *Working Conditions* survey. We want to analyze the differentiated changes in work intensity between the hospital sector and other sectors of activity. In particular, the aim is to check whether the pace of work has accelerated more clearly in hospitals, in connection with the changes experienced by this sector during the period observed. Studying the pace of work within the hospital sector requires having information relating to what directly influences it, such as the flow of patients treated in a day, or the rate of bed turnover. This type of indicator would make it possible to check the way in which workers occupy each unit of time, in order to carry out managers' orders. Thus, as Corinne Gaudart (2015) has emphasized, the intensification of work is measured by the combination of constraints on the pace of work, and the number of operations that must be carried out during time units. By analyzing the evolution of the pace of work using a general survey, we can only apprehend a possible intensification of work through the constraints weighing on such work paces.

To monitor working conditions rigorously during the period of observation, we focused on those which were described continuously between 1998 and 2013 (Box 3). This approach makes it possible to identify the specificities of the hospital sector compared to other sectors of the economy, and also to identify a possible discontinuity in the evolution of exposure to work constraints that are potentially pathogenic for hospital staff.

8. The NAF codes in the 1998 and 2005 editions of the survey are available at a detailed level, which makes it possible to identify hospital establishments directly. By contrast, the 2013 edition only provides a NAF code for 88 positions. As a result, both the employment status and the NAF code must be used to identify all workers in the hospital sector.

Box 3

The Work Constraints Studied

We focus on the four categories of work constraints mentioned above, which are addressed by the same questions in all the editions involved: (1) pace constraints; (2) significant physical exertion; (3) staggered hours and shift work; and (4) an unhealthy working environment.

1 - The pace constraints are identified from answers to the following questions:

"Your pace of work is imposed by…?

– the automatic movement of a product or part;
– the automatic work rate of a machine;
– other technical constraints;
– immediate dependency on the work of one or several colleagues;
– production standards, or deadlines to be met within one hour at most/one day at most;
– an external request (customers, the public) needing an immediate response/not requiring an immediate response;
– permanent (or at least daily) controls or surveillance carried out by management;
– computerized control or monitoring."

The first five constraints listed here are generally grouped together under the name of "industrial constraints", because they seek to control employees' effort, while the sixth constraint (external demand) is seen as a market constraint, because it follows an external request (Gollac, 2005).

2 - The answers to the following questions are used in order to study exposure to significant physical exertion:

"Does do your work require you to…?

– remain standing for a long time;
– remain in another uncomfortable or tiring posture for a long time, in the long run;
– move around by foot, for long periods and frequently;
– carry or move heavy loads;
– perform other significant physical efforts;
– be subjected to shocks or vibrations."

3 - Staff affected by staggered working hours are identified using the following series of questions:

"Do you have at least forty-eight consecutive hours of rest per week? (Yes/No).

Do you work nights, between midnight and five o'clock in the morning?

Do you work Saturdays?

Do you work Sundays?

(Usually/Occasionally/Never)"

Persons replying "usually" or "occasionally" to these three questions are considered as affected: *i.e.* they are exposed to changing working hours.

4 - The two following questions are used to describe the working environment to which the workers are exposed:

"Do your work and place of work have the following disadvantages:
– dirt;
– humidity;
– drafts;
– infectious risks (microbes, viruses, etc.), parasites;
– lack of or poor sanitary facilities."

"Does your place of work lead you to…?
– inhale fumes;
– inhale dust".

In terms of the working environment, the information gathered from the *Working Conditions* survey is less precise than that from the SUMER survey, particularly with regard to exposure to chemicals (see above*).*

The Method Followed to Describe Exposure to Work Constraints Using the 2013 Edition

After having estimated the evolution of working conditions between 1998 and 2013, we describe more precisely the constraints to which workers in the hospital sector are exposed in 2013. This description is done in two stages.

We first take advantage of the over-sampling of the 2013 survey to put forward an analysis of constraints by profession. Hospital staff are therefore divided into six professional categories, based on the nomenclature of professional families (see the distribution presented in the figure).

The 1998 and 2005 data from the *Working Conditions* survey are also associated with those collected within the framework of the *Employment* survey. We therefore have information in areas other than those of working conditions. Although it is independent of the *Employment* survey, the 2013 *Working Conditions* edition provides additional information comparable to that available in previous editions. We were thus able to describe the working conditions to which workers in the hospital sector are subjected, all other things being equal. It could indeed be that the differences observed according to the sectors of activity in fact stem from the structure of the professions within the various sectors.

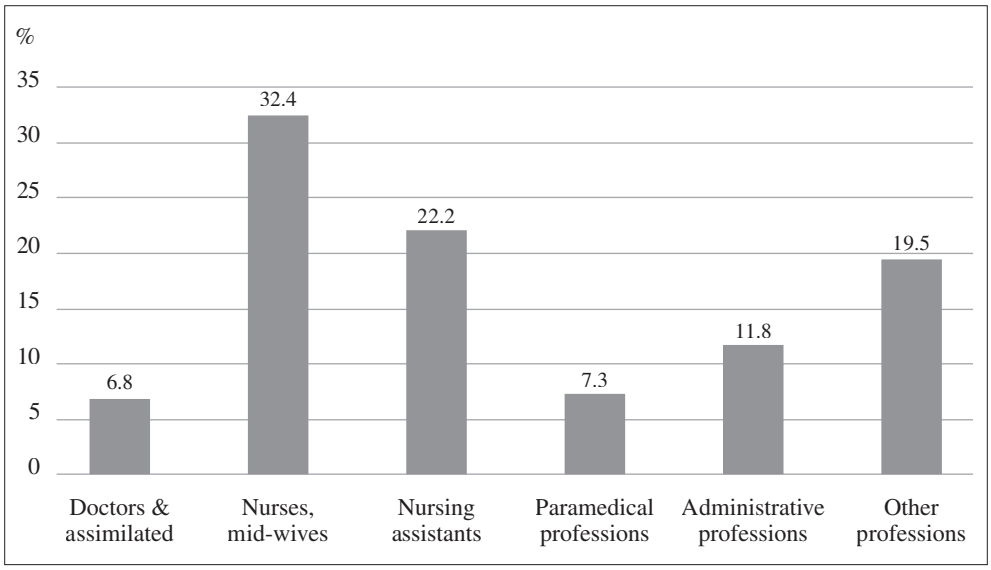
We therefore described the working conditions faced by people in hospitals, using the following equation:

$$H_i = \gamma S_i + \beta X_i + \varepsilon_i$$

with $i = 1, \ldots, N$ and ε_i being the error term.

H_i is an indicator variable equal to 1, if individual i works in a hospital, else 0. The characteristics of work studied are noted S_i.

FIGURE – **Distribution by Profession of Workers in the Hospital Sector, in 2013**



Interpretation: In 2013, 32.4% of hospital staff were "nurses, mid-wives".
Scope: Employees in the hospital sector.
Source: *Working Conditions* survey, Ministry of Labour, DARES, DGAFP, DREES, INSEE, 2013 edition.

The control variables that we retained are denoted by X_i, and can be classified into two groups: the first summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals questioned, and integrates age, sex, marital status, educational level, as well as the country of birth; the second includes information on employment conditions, in particular employees' type of contract (permanent or precarious), profession, their sector of activity (public or private), working time (full or part-time), and seniority in the company.

The Over-Exposure to Pace and Hardship Constraints: a Twofold Penalty for Hospital Workers

Increases in Work Pace Constraints, Decreases in Exposure to Physical Hardship

Using the last three editions of the *Working Conditions* survey shows up an increase in exposure to work pace constraints faced by hospital employees (Table 3).

In 1998, 79% of hospital workers were subject to at least one work pace constraint, rising to 82% in 2005, and 84% in 2013. By contrast, no increase was observed over the same period for workers in other sectors (76% and 76.8% in 1998 and 2013 respectively).

TABLE 3 – **Share (in %) of Employees with Work Pace Imposed by…**

		1998	2005	2013	2013 – CC*
… the automatic movement of a product or a component part	Hospital sector	2.1	3.2	5.9	5.6
	Other sectors	*6.5*	*7.2*	*8.3*	*7.5*
… the automatic rate of a machine	Hospital sector	2.4	3.0	4.2	3.9
	Other sectors	*7.7*	*7.3*	*7.3*	*6.9*
… other technical constraints	Hospital sector	13.2	15.0	**19.9**	**19.9**
	Other sectors	*15.8*	15.6	16.3	16.5
… production standards or deadlines to be met in one day at most	Hospital sector	36.8	40.1	**47.8**	**48.7**
	Other sectors	*42.8*	41.5	41.8	43.6
of which in one hour at the most	Hospital sector	23.8	27.1	**31.6**	**32.0**
	Other sectors	23.2	24.7	25.3	25.8
… immediate dependence on the work of one or more colleagues	Hospital sector	**37.2**	**36.7**	**43.0**	**43.1**
	Other sectors	26.0	25.9	27.4	28.3
… external demand – customers, general public	Hospital sector	**66.1**	**67.6**	**71.8**	**72.7**
	Other sectors	63.5	64.6	65	68.3
of which requiring an immediate response	Hospital sector	**61.1**	**61.5**	**64.4**	**65.2**
	Other sectors	53.0	53.2	54.2	56.8
… permanent (or at least daily) controls or surveillance carried out by the hierarchy	Hospital sector	**35.2**	**36.8**	**34.7**	**34.8**
	Other sectors	28.8	29.2	30.2	30.1
… computerized control or monitoring	Hospital sector	nd	19.7	**43.2**	**43.5**
	Other sectors	nd	*24.9*	34.2	35.3
Workforce	Hospital sector	964	902	3,944	3,744
	Other sectors	17,808	16,096	26,254	22,239

* CC corresponds to individuals from a field comparable with the 2005 edition, *i.e.* those identified using the "champ_ct2005" variable, provided in the 2013 edition of the survey.
Interpretation: In 2013, 47.8% of workers in the hospital sector were exposed to a work pace constraint linked to compliance with production standards or deadlines to be met in one day at most, compared to 41.8% of workers in other sectors. The statistics in bold correspond to the work pace constraints for which we observed significant over-exposure (at the 5% threshold) of workers in the hospital sector, compared to workers in other sectors. Conversely, the statistics in italics correspond to work pace constraints for which we observed a significant over-exposure (statistically speaking) of workers in other sectors, compared to workers in the hospital sector.
Field: Active workers in paid employment.
Source: *Working Conditions* survey, Ministry of Labour, DARES, DGAFP, DREES, INSEE, 1998, 2005 and 2013 editions.

If we look in detail at the different pace constraints faced by employees, we can see an increase in the share of workers having work pace imposed by the automatic movement of products or component parts, or the automatic rate of a machine. This increase is comparable for workers in hospitals and in other sectors.

On the other hand, the increase is much more marked for hospital workers with regard to work rate exposure due to technical constraints, by production standards or deadlines to be respected in a day, and in particular by production standards or deadlines to be met within an hour at most, or by immediate dependence on the work of other colleagues. They are now more frequently subjected to this type of constraint than workers in other sectors.

Hospital workers are also significantly over-represented[9] among persons declaring that work pace is imposed by management controls or supervision, whatever the year of observation. This work pace constraint has remained stable over the period, regardless of the sector of activity.[10]

Regarding the pace of work imposed by computerized tracking (observable only for the editions 2005 and 2013), the share of the workers increased significantly between 2005 and 2013 across all sectors. Here again, the increase was significantly greater for hospital staff, who are now significantly over-exposed to this work pace constraint, whereas this was not the case in 2005.

In total, 42% of hospital staff are exposed to at least one form of industrial work pace constraint (*i.e.* experiencing a work pace imposed by the automatic movement of a product or a part, by the speed of a machine, by other technical constraints, or even by production standards or deadlines to be respected in one hour at most). This compares to 30% of staff in such situations at the end of the 1990s and 35% in 2005 (Table 4). The increase of 12 percentage points between 1998 and 2013 was all the more substantial since no similar increase can be observed in other sectors over the same period (35% in 1998 and 2005, 37% in 2013).

This reinforcement of industrial work pace constraints in hospitals has not been accompanied by a relaxation of market constraints (*i.e.* also experiencing work pace constraints from external demand – customers, the public – requiring immediate responses). On the contrary, in 2013, more than 65% of hospital workers declared they were subject to market work pace constraints, compared to 61% in 1998 and 2005: *i.e.* there has been an increase of four points in eight years. This again is less noticeable in other sectors of activity.

Differences in exposure have also been very marked in the combination of the two types of constraints, industrial and market/commercial: in 2013, 32% of hospital workers were affected by such combinations, compared to 24% of workers in other sectors. The increase over the 2005-2013 period was much greater in hospitals (+6 percentage points) than in other sectors of activity (+2 points).

We must remember at this stage that these work pace constraint indicators reflect only a quantitative part of work pace pressure workers have to face. They are certainly not sufficient to measure the evolution of work intensity during the observation period. That said, the results obtained indicate quite clearly a strengthening of time pressure over fifteen years, especially between 2005 and 2013. And this pressure is exerted more strongly on hospital workers, notably from 2005 onwards, marking a break in the evolution observed here.

9. We carried out Chi2 independence tests in order to check whether there is a link between the activity sector (hospital *versus* other sectors) and all the work pace constraints studied.

10. Even if we observe a slight change in exposure to this constraint, we can consider it to be stable, insofar as the confidence intervals (calculated by the Wald method) over the different periods overlap.

It should be noted that our results contradict those highlighted by the comparison of data from the COTAES 2003, COI-H 2006 and *Working Conditions* 2013 surveys (Loquet, Ricroch, 2014). As we stated above, this comparison indicates there was an overall decrease of work pace constraints between 2003 and 2013. By contrast, we observe a significant increase in exposure to all pace constraints in hospitals, especially between 2005 and 2013. These divergent conclusions seem to stem primarily from the COTAES 2003 survey, which appears clearly to overstate exposure to work pace constraints compared to the *Working Conditions* survey in 2005. For example, having work pace imposed by the immediate dependence on the work of one or more colleagues affected 47% of hospital workers in 2003 according to the COTAES survey, but only 37% in 2005 according to the *Working Conditions* survey. Likewise, 48% of people questioned as part of the COTAES 2003 survey declared that their pace of work was imposed by production standards or deadlines to be met in one hour, while in the *Working Conditions* survey it was only 27%. These particularly high exposure levels in 2003 lead J. Loquet and L. Ricroch (2014) to conclude that work pace constraints had been reduced in the following ten years. We however have noted a worsening of these constraints. In addition to potential differences linked to the differences in sources (see above), the significant difference in exposure to pace constraints between the 2003 and 2005 surveys may be explained by the move to the 35-hour week between 2002 and 2003. This change in the working week initially led to work overload, before necessary recruitments were made, so that caregivers may have experienced a greater sense of urgency in their work.

At the same time, the other forms of constraint fell overall, for all workers during the period of observation (Table 4), with physical constraints including: carrying heavy loads, prolonged standing, long and frequent walking, painful postures, significant physical exertion, jolts or vibrations. The proportion of workers exposed to one of these hardships decreased by 4 points in hospitals and by 3 points in other sectors. Nevertheless, hospital sector personnel remain overexposed to such physical hardships: in 2013, 85% of them declared that they were affected by at least one form of physical constraint at work, compared to just under 70% among workers in other sectors. Hospital staff are also significantly more likely to occupy positions that combine several physical hardships (55% and 33% respectively).

Staggered hours (working weekends, at night, or not having at least forty-eight consecutive hours of rest during a week) also occurred less frequently for all workers in 2013 than in 1998. The drop is particularly noticeable for workers in the hospital sector, where the share of staff on shift work fell from 76% in 1998 to 71% in 2013. However, given the obligation of continuity of service, hospital staff all remained more likely to be subject to time constraints and to combine several forms of irregular hours.

Finally, with regard to the risks related to the working environment (dirt, humidity, drafts, infectious risks, parasites, absence or poor condition of sanitary facilities, fumes, dust), hospital workers are more exposed to at least one of these risks (in 2013, 89% versus 64% in other sectors). They are mainly concerned by the risk of

TABLE 4 – **Share of Employees Stating They Are Exposed to at Least…**

In %

	1998		2005		2013		2013 – CC*	
	Hospital sector	**Other sectors**	**Hospital sector**	**Other sectors**	**Hospital sector**	**Other sectors**	**Hospital sector**	**Other sectors**
… an "industrial" pace constraint	30.1	35.2	35.0	35.1	42.2	36.8	42.3	36.8
… a "market" pace constraint»	61.1	53.0	61.5	53.2	64.4	54.2	65.2	56.8
… an industrial and a market work pace constraint	22.8	20.5	25.7	21.7	32.1	23.5	32.4	23.9
… a physical constraint	88.3	70.9	85.7	67.9	84.6	68.9	84.5	67.9
… three physical constraints	60.1	32.7	56.0	30.9	54.6	32.5	54.6	32.4
… a time constraint	75.7	49.8	76.6	51.4	71.0	49.5	70.8	48.9
… three time constraints	46.2	16.1	45.0	14.8	41.6	15.8	41.5	16.0
… an environmental constraint	88.3	54.2	87.9	58.8	89.3	63.3	89.5	63.4
… three environmental constraints	14.8	17.4	21.4	25.3	23.0	27.7	22.7	27.7

* CC corresponds to individuals from a field comparable with the 2005 edition: *i.e.* those identified using the "champ_ct2005" variable provided in the 2013 edition of the survey.
Interpretation: In 1998, 88.3% of workers in the hospital sector declared being exposed to at least one physical constraint, compared to 70.9% of workers in other sectors.
Field: Active workers in paid employment.
Source: *Working Conditions* survey, Ministry of Labour, DARES, DGAFP, DREES, INSEE, 1998, 2005 and 2013 editions.

infection. However, unlike in other sectors, exposure to at least one of these risks did not increase between 1998 and 2013. The accumulation of at least three working environment constraints was also less frequent in hospitals, even if it seemed to have increased significantly over the period.

The Specificities of Hospital Staff in Terms of Working Conditions, in 2013

We have therefore observed a significant increase in work pace constraints, especially for hospital workers, between 1998 and 2013. At the same time, there has been a decrease in exposure to certain physical and time constraints for these same personnel, since the early 2000s.

Nevertheless, hospital staff seem now to face many work constraints. Table 5 shows the intensity of the various constraints to which hospital workers were exposed in 2013, by major occupational group.

Clear disparities in exposure to the various constraints appear between professions. Nurses, midwives and nursing assistants are the most heavily subjected to the constraints studied. Nursing assistants in particular have a very high index of physical hardship, and also face high levels of the other constraints, such as time and environmental constraints.

TABLE 5 – **Exposure of Hospital Staff to the Various Work Constraints, by Profession, in 2013**

	Doctors & assimilated	Nurses, mid-wives	Nursing assistants	Paramedical professions	Admin professions	Other professions
Intensity index[a]	2.0	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.1	2.3
Physical hardship index[b]	1.3	2.7	3.3	2.0	0.8	2.5
Hourly constraints index[c]	2.5	2.2	2.4	1.1	0.5	1.5
Environmental nuisance index[d]	1.3	1.8	2.0	1.6	1.1	2.1

a: average number (between 0 and 8) of work pace constraints due to: the automatic movement of a product/component part; to the automatic work rate of a machine; to other technical constraints; to standards of production or deadlines to be respected in one hour at most; to an external request requiring an immediate response; to immediate dependence on the work of colleagues; to controls or surveillance exercised by the management; and to computerized control or follow-up.
b: average number (between 0 and 8) of physical constraints, including standing for a long time, being in a painful posture for a long time, making long movements on foot, carrying or moving heavy loads, and being subjected to jolts or vibrations.
c: average number (between 0 and 4) of time constraints, including not having 48 consecutive hours of rest, work on Saturdays, Sundays, or at night work.
d: average number (between 0 and 7) of environmental constraints, including dirt, humidity, drafts, the risk of infection, poor condition of premises, and fumes or dust.
Interpretation: In 2013, nursing assistants were exposed on average to 2.5 work pace constraints.
Field: Hospital staff in paid employment.
Source: *Working conditions* survey, Ministry of Labour, DARES, DGAFP, DREES, INSEE, 2013 edition.

Doctors and assimilated professionals have the highest index for time/hourly constraints, but are relatively spared other constraints, particularly physical hardships.

To obtain a more precise inventory of the working conditions for hospital staff, compared to employees in other sectors, we carried out a logit analysis, *ceteris paribus*. The results of this analysis are detailed in Table 6.

We estimated three different models. The first is denoted M1, and presents a summary "picture" of the constraints to which hospital workers are more or less exposed, by the main sets of constraints (work pace, staggered schedules, physical strain, and an unhealthy working environment). The second model (M2) lists in a systematic and detailed manner all the working conditions that we retained for our comparison of persons questioned, depending on whether they work in hospitals or not. The last model (M3) proposes an analysis of the intensity of work constraints experienced by hospital staff, by estimating the simultaneous exposure to several constraints within each of the four major categories of hardship.

The coefficients estimated from these different models indicate the various work constraints and hardships for which there is a significant difference in exposure between hospital employees and other workers. The positive coefficients indicate an over-exposure of hospital personnel to the corresponding work constraints, *ceteris paribus*, while the negative coefficients indicate a lower exposure. The parameters associated with work constraints for which there is no significant difference in exposure are noted as "ns" for "not significantly different to".[11]

11. The coefficient estimations of the control variables (X_i) are available on request from the authors.

TABLE 6 – **Description of Working Conditions for Hospital Staff in 2013 (logit models)**

	M1	M2	M3
Work intensity			
Work pace imposed by…			
… automatic movement of a product or part		ns	
… automatic work rate of a machine		ns	
… other technical constraints		ns	
… production standards or deadlines to be met in one hour at most		0.14*** (0.05)	
… an external request requiring an immediate response		ns	
… immediate dependence on the work of colleagues		0.39*** (0.05)	
… the controls or surveillance exercised by management		ns	
… computerized control or monitoring		0.10*** (0.05)	
Be subject to at least one work pace constraint	0.39*** (0.05)		
Accumulate at least three work pace constraints			0.35*** (0.04)
Time/hourly constraints			
Not having 48 consecutive hours of rest		– 0.32*** (0.06)	
Working Saturdays		– 0.16** (0.07)	
Working Sundays		1.05** (0.07)	
Working at night		0.43*** (0.06)	
Be subject to at least one time/hourly constraint	0.84*** (0.04)		
Accumulate at least three time/hourly constraints			1.11*** (0.04)
Physical constraints			
Standing for a long time		– 0.28*** (0.06)	
Staying a long time in a painful posture		ns	
Moving a lot by foot		0.79*** (0.05)	
Carrying or moving heavy loads		0.63*** (0.05)	
Be subject to jolts or vibrations		– 0.23*** (0.07)	
Be subject to at least one physical constraint	0.53*** (0.05)		
Accumulate at least three physical constraints			1.21*** (0.04)
Working environment			
Dirt		ns	
Humidity		– 0.66*** (0.07)	
Drafts		ns	
Risks of infection		1.88*** (0.05)	
Poor condition of the premises		– 0.26*** (0.07)	
Fumes or dust		– 0.75*** (0.6)	
Be subject to at least one environmental constraint	1.34*** (0.06)		
Accumulate at least three environmental constraints			– 0.47*** (0.05)

Note: The specification also includes a set of variables describing the socio-demographic characteristics of individuals and their employment conditions. The estimated parameters associated with these characteristics are available on request from the authors.
Interpretation: Significant at thresholds of: *** 1%, ** 5%, * 10%. Standard deviations in parentheses.
Field: Active workers in paid employment.
Source: *Working conditions* survey, Ministry of Labour, DARES, DGAFP, DREES, INSEE, 2013 edition.

In terms of exposure to the different forms of constraint/hardship in aggregate (column M1 of Table 6), a systematic over-exposure of hospital staff to all the categories of constraints studied here can be seen. The most significant over-exposure concerns environmental constraints, mainly due to the risk of infection. Next, in order, are the time constraints, the physical hardships and the work pace constraints.

If we break down the various work constraints retained (column M2 of Table 6), the situation of workers in the hospital sector turns out to be more contrasted. They are systematically over-exposed to work pace constraints, and particularly affected by three of the following: i) production standards and deadlines to be met in one hour at most, ii) dependence on the work of colleagues, and iii) computerized monitoring or control.

The reorganizations of work imposed by the reforms since the early 2000s certainly explain this over-exposure – at least in part. Let us recall here that workers in the hospital sector were initially (in 1998 and 2005 respectively) less exposed than other workers to two of these constraints (standards/deadlines and computerized monitoring: Table 3). These constraints impose a quantity of work to be produced over a period of time. They have certainly led to an increase in work pace rates of personnel in the sector. Yet, the production standards and deadlines to be respected within one day at most, translate the productivity gains and improved quality of care desired by lawmakers. This same tension between quantity and quality is found in the indicators used to assess the performance of emergency services (Belorgey, 2011). To understand the quality of service, it is customary for a manager to use the waiting time and passage. Reductions in waiting times is understood here by assessors both as an indicator of improved quality of service provided to users, and as an indicator of higher productivity. However, as Nicolas Belorgey (2011) has emphasized, for staff, this logic is simply equivalent to increasing work rates.

This is made all the more problematic by the emergence of the concept of health democracy, which complicates and lengthens clinical examination – the unique interaction between patient and doctor (Bergeron, 2007). The increasing demands of some patients make the time spent by health care providers more uncertain (Sainsaulieu, 2006). Change here has been amplified by the greater rotation of patients whose length of stay in hospitals has been shortened (Raveyre, Ughetto, 2003). Patients are asking for more information and aspire to being in closer touch with medical teams. But the reinforcement of work pace constraints may lead caregivers to subordinate this expectation of patients so that care providers can improve their performance, which is evaluated in time. Administrative burdens and increasing staff turnover thus limit *de facto* the relationship time between patients and staff (Havard, Naschberger, 2015).

With regard to time constraints, hospital staff are less concerned by work on Saturdays and by not having at least forty-eight consecutive hours of rest during a week. However, they are significantly more likely to work on Sundays and at night (between midnight and 5 am). This work pace constraint is not new in hospitals, as it is inherent in the organization of hospitals for the provision of continuity of service.

But this panorama of time constraints is incomplete. It does not reflect a notable change in the organization of the hospital sector around twelve hours of consecutive work (Vincent, 2016, 2017). Since 2002, a derogation has allowed caregivers to alternate "long" and "short" working weeks (sixty and twenty-four hours respectively), interspaced by weeks of rest. Such an organization is developing rapidly in the hospital sector, and is being requested by a growing number of employees: many days off, a better work-life balance, but also better patient follow-up linked to longer periods of work and more autonomy in planning tasks, etc. It is also part of a context of stronger performance incentives. However, this new organization of work is quite favorable to healthcare establishments insofar as work in two twelve-hour shifts forces teams to pass on case loads in personal time, so that actual total working time is often longer. Such extended hours of work may, combined with night work, have deleterious effects on health, insofar as it leads to a conflict between work schedules and workers' natural body rhythms (Barthe, 2015).

Concerning the physical constraints of work, hospital staff are more subject to carrying heavy loads and frequently have to walk long distances in hospitals. These physical constraints affect nursing assistants most, which is coherent with other research results on physical loads carried and musculoskeletal disorders suffered by this category of workers (Gadéa, Divay, 2012; Loriol, 2003). On the other hand, they are less affected than other workers by standing for long periods of time, or being subjected to jolts and vibrations.

Likewise, the environment of hospital workers is characterized by over-exposure to risks of infection. However, these same workers are less often affected by other environmental constraints (dirt, humidity, the poor condition of premises, fumes and dust).

Finally, hospital workers are more numerous, *ceteris paribus*, in accumulating at least three work constraints simultaneously, for most of the forms of hardship observed (column M3 of Table 6). This is particularly the case for work intensity, staggered hours and physical hardship. By contrast, they are less likely to face at least three environmental constraints.

The study of the last three editions of the *Working Conditions* survey has enabled us to show statistically the "growing pressure of work pace constraints" (Gheorghiu, Moatty, 2013, p. 250) between 1998 and 2013, with a clear acceleration between 2005 and 2013. The latter is clearly greater for workers in the hospital sector, who are now very strongly exposed to work pace constraints linked to compliance with standards or production deadlines, or to dependence of work on one or more colleagues.

These results invite us to look beyond "the overall reduction in work pace constraints" as concluded by J. Loquet and L. Ricroch (2014, p. 2), and based on a comparison of the *Conditions and Organization of Work of Employees in Health*

Establishments (COTAES) survey in 2003, the *Organizational Changes and Computerization* (COI-H) survey in 2006, and the *Working Conditions* survey of 2013. Undoubtedly, apart from differences in the sources used, their conclusion was due to an intensity of work which was perceived to be particularly high in 2003, when the shift to the 35-hour week occurred.

The increased time pressure in hospital work has been accompanied by a slight relaxation of "historical" constraints of such work (especially physical and time constraints). Yet, in 2013, workers in this sector remained more often subject to at least one form of staggered schedules, physical hardship and constraints in their working environment. They are also more likely to accumulate simultaneously various forms of work pace constraints, staggered schedules and physical hardship.

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Results of a Quantitative Assessment of France's *Garantie Jeunes* Programme

What Target Groups, What Kinds of Support, and What Beneficiary Trajectories?*

*Mathilde Gaini, Marine Guillerm, Solène Hilary, Emmanuel Valat, Philippe Zamora***

France's *Garantie jeunes* ("Youth Guarantee", GJ) is a local support programme that targets young people who are in precarious situations and neither in employment, education, or training. It was set up in October 2013, initially on a trial basis. This article presents the results of a quantitative evaluation of the scheme. A panel survey conducted among young people who participated from the beginning of the trial in the areas first trialling *Garantie jeunes* reveals a very fragile population. The programme offers a high level of support, especially during the collective phase at the start. The evaluation of the scheme takes into account the fact that it was initially set up in only part of the country. Estimates concerning the participants in the first *Garantie jeunes* target areas indicate that the programme has had an impact on their life trajectories. It has intensified support and has had an impact on beneficiaries' employment rates, an impact that continues in the months following the end of support.

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Garantie jeunes is an employment assistance programme for young people aged 16 to 25 who are neither in employment, education, or training ("Neets") and in a situation of financial insecurity. The aim of this innovative scheme is to remobilise young people who, in addition to their socio-demographic characteristics, have very particular individual characteristics (Mendolia, Walker, 2015). A local centre (a *Mission locale*) dedicated to young people provides support over twelve months, in a more collective form for the first few weeks and then mainly individually. The support is built on the logic of "work first" and active intervention: the young people are encouraged to engage in multiple work situations (in the form of job "immersions", or secondments, in companies in particular) even before dealing with the various underlying obstacles to employment (problems of mobility, housing, health, etc.). The young people also receive a guaranteed stipend for twelve months, which is degressive with any job income and is capped at the level of France's RSA (*Revenu de solidarité active*) social welfare benefit for a single person (484.82 euros per month as of April 2018).

A quantitative evaluation of *Garantie jeunes* was planned from the moment it was established. Its objectives were to verify that the programme was reaching its target audience, to describe the career paths taken by the young participants and to assess its impact on their future, particularly on their integration into employment (Wargon, Gurgand, 2013).

Enhanced support for young people from the local centre includes personalised follow-up, group workshops focusing in particular on job search techniques and life skills, and contacts with companies (in the form of job immersions, for example). In theory, the enhanced support for job seekers should improve their access to employment by helping them conduct job searches more intensively and efficiently. It prepares them for recruitment procedures and puts them in contact with companies. Given the major frictions these young people face (Pissarides, 2011), this helps to make the labour market more fluid. Overall, evaluations of enhanced support programmes show that they have a positive effect on the return to employment in the short and medium term and that, on the whole, they benefit young people as well as people in other age groups, but especially the groups that are most socially disadvantaged (Card *et al.,* 2018; Parent *et al.,* 2013). Several support programmes specifically targeted at young people have been evaluated in France, including, for example, the case of a trial programme for young graduates (Crépon *et al.,* 2011), clubs for young job seekers living in what are called troubled urban areas (*Zone urbaine sensible*) (Blasco *et al.,* 2015) and the intensive support for young people programme (*Accompagnement intensif des jeunes*) of France's job centre Pôle emploi (Blache, Greco, 2017). These three evaluations concluded that the schemes have a positive effect on access to employment, and particularly to long-term employment.

Garantie jeunes support features a collective phase during the first few weeks, in groups of around fifteen young people. It is, by definition, less personalised than traditional individual support, but the collective format aims to create dynamic cooperation

among the young people (information-sharing, networks, mutual aid, etc.). The "clubs for young job seekers" experiment provided an opportunity to evaluate the impact of collective support compared to individual support. It concluded that collective support has a positive impact on participants' access to employment, particularly on their access to long-term employment (Blasco *et al.,* 2015). Within six months, the clubs had lifted the long-term employment rate of the young people involved by five percentage points.

The *Garantie jeunes* programme also includes the payment of a stipend. This represents first of all significant financial support for a population of young people in precarious situations. The payment of a stipend can however have two opposing effects on the job search. On the one hand, it should enable participants to invest in their professional development and training on a long-term basis by easing the financial constraints they face, helping to pull them out of a short-term logic that would lock them into subsistence work. On the other hand, the payment of a stipend may have a disincentive effect: beneficiaries may reduce their job-seeking efforts because they have additional income. This disincentive effect could also be reinforced by the degressive nature of the stipend with job income (starting from the first euro).

The effect of paying a stipend was examined as part of the trial of the RCA (*Revenu contractualisé d'autonomie*) programme carried out between April 2011 and June 2013, which involved a conditional cash transfer. *Garantie jeunes* fully takes into account the results of this evaluation. The RCA provided for individualized support, similar to that provided under the main national job placement programme for youth called Civis (*Contrat d'insertion dans la vie sociale*), but supplemented by the payment of a stipend for two years (the first year provided a monthly stipend of 250 euros, decreasing quarterly in the second year). The results of the trial highlight the disappointing impact of the RCA in terms of participants' access to employment (Aeberhardt *et al.,* 2014). The impact of the RCA on participants' income was too small to ease their budgetary constraints. *Garantie jeunes* thus used the principle of a guaranteed monthly stipend, but the amount is almost doubled, access to the programme is reserved for young people in a precarious situation, the stipend is degressive only from 300 euros of job income, and sanctions are possible in case of non-compliance with a contract that the young person signs with the local centre.

The first part of this article describes the sources and methodology used for the impact assessment. The second part presents a description of the profiles of the *Garantie jeunes* participants, the support trajectory in the local centres, and changes in their situation in terms of access to employment and autonomy, both while they are in the programme and in the months following their departure. The third part presents the results of the evaluation of the impact of *Garantie jeunes* on the beneficiaries' career paths.

Methodology and Data

Evaluation Strategy

As with any other employment policy programme, the evaluation of the impact of *Garantie jeunes* consisted of comparing the situation of the beneficiaries with the "counterfactual" situation, *i.e.* the situation that would have prevailed for these young people if the programme had not been established. The difference between these two situations gives an assessment of the scheme's "causal impact". The counterfactual situation is by definition not known directly. It is therefore necessary to reconstruct a comparison group that is as similar as possible to the beneficiary group, which can sometimes be complex.

The evaluation of *Garantie jeunes* takes full account of the scheme's experimental nature. As *Garantie jeunes* was initially implemented in only a limited number of areas ("pilot sites"), it is possible to reconstruct counterfactual trajectories in areas that did not participate in the experiment ("control sites"). The pilot sites here correspond to the first ten areas that implemented *Garantie jeunes* in October 2013 (areas in phase 1 of the trial).

However, it is not possible to directly compare the future of beneficiaries of *Garantie jeunes* in the pilot areas with that of young people residing in the control areas who would have joined *Garantie jeunes* if it had been implemented in their area. This group cannot be precisely identified in the control areas. For example, it is not precise enough simply to select young people who are not in employment or who are monitored by local centres. This would amount to neglecting possible selection factors that differentiate this group from the beneficiaries of *Garantie jeunes*. This is actually a difficulty in evaluating social programmes generally: the participants have many characteristics that help to explain their future but which are difficult to observe directly, even using very detailed surveys. If these characteristics are ignored and "raw" comparisons are made between beneficiaries on the one hand and a group in the control sites on the other, the latter will be tainted by potentially very significant selection biases.

In order to evaluate the effect of the programme properly, it is therefore necessary to work on well-defined groups with the same characteristics measured in the same way in all the areas (pilot and control), and which therefore differ only in that some are in areas that have implemented *Garantie jeunes* and others in areas that have not. To this end, the evaluation of *Garantie jeunes* is based on the identification of young people eligible for the programme in both the pilot and control areas. The Œdipe platform, an Extranet tool for identifying eligible groups, has made it possible to identify young people eligible for *Garantie jeunes* at local centres located in both pilot and control areas, whether or not these young people ultimately did or did not join the programme.

Furthermore, the pilot areas in phase 1 of the trial, which are the subject of the evaluation, were not selected at random and are characterised by a more difficult

economic situation than the other areas: in 2010, the unemployment rate for young people aged 16 to 25 was 31.5%, compared to 24.5% for the country as a whole. It is therefore very likely that without the implementation of *Garantie jeunes*, young people in the pilot and control areas would not have experienced the same trajectory. In other words, a "structural gap" between these two groups would have been observed.

To take account of this discrepancy between the estimates, the sample of eligible young people was supplemented by a sample of young people with characteristics close to those identified as eligible in the Œdipe tool even if *a priori* they are not eligible. These young people were interviewed individually at the local centre during the reference period and were not reported as eligible in Œdipe. In order to ensure that ultimately only a small number of these young people will be eligible, they were selected from among the young people living with their parents or in independent accommodation (tenant or owner). These young people will be referred to in the rest of the article as "non-eligible", even though they represent only a portion of the young people not eligible for *Garantie jeunes*. The "common gap" hypothesis consists of assuming that the deviation observed for "non-eligible" youth between the pilot and control areas corresponds to the gap that would have been observed for youth identified as eligible if the programme had not been implemented. This is the main hypothesis of the evaluation.

The difference-in-difference estimator is thus at the centre of the evaluation. It consists in controlling the difference between those eligible (E) in the pilot (P) and the control (T – *témoin*) areas, *i.e.* $\bar{y}_{E,P} - \bar{y}_{E,T}$ and the structural difference estimated from "non-eligible" (NE) young people: $\bar{y}_{NE,P} - \bar{y}_{NE,T}$. The difference-in-difference estimate (noted DID) of the variable of interest thus corresponds to:

$$DID = (\bar{y}_{E,P} - \bar{y}_{E,T}) - (\bar{y}_{NE,P} - \bar{y}_{NE,T})$$

The effect measured by the difference-in-difference estimator corresponds to the average effect on all youth identified as eligible in the pilot areas, in the literature called "Intention to Treat" (ITT). However, only a portion of these youths benefited from *Garantie jeunes*. The Average Treatment Effect on the Treated (ATT) is a more readable and understandable indicator, since it does not depend on the rate of young people actually entering *Garantie jeunes*. In the absence of young people entering the programme among young people in the pilot areas and among non-eligible young people, and given the assumption that the programme had no impact on non-participants, the impact of *Garantie jeunes* on participants corresponds to the difference-in-difference estimator previously calculated relative to the percentage of eligible young people in the pilot areas who actually entered the scheme.

In fact, some young people from the control areas and some non-eligible young people (regardless of the area) also enrolled in *Garantie jeunes*. This is known as "statistical contamination". First of all, the criteria used to define non-eligible groups are not perfect predictors of non-eligibility for *Garantie jeunes*. In addition, non-eligible youth may have become eligible over time. Finally, due to the extension of the scope

of the trial in January 2015, some control areas started to trial the *Garantie jeunes* scheme during the evaluation process.

Statistical contamination leads to a potential bias in the aforementioned difference-in-difference estimator. While, like other schemes with reinforced support, *Garantie jeunes* has a positive effect on access to employment, statistical contamination leads to an underestimation of the impact (unless its effect on ineligible "contaminated" young people is much greater in the control areas than in the pilot areas).

To correct the statistical contamination, a first option could be to remove from the sample the control young people entered in *Garantie jeunes*. This option is not, however, very satisfactory. As the "contaminated" young people have particular characteristics, some of which are not observable, the samples of eligible and non-eligible young people would no longer be comparable between the pilot and control areas. Statistical contamination requires an additional hypothesis concerning the effect of *Garantie jeunes* on "contaminated" young people. For a variable of interest *y,* the average rate that would have been observed in the absence of statistical contamination, for example on the eligible young people in the control areas, corresponds to:

$$\bar{y}_{E,T} - \overline{GJ}_{E,T}\, ATT_{E,T}$$

where $\overline{GJ}_{E,T}$ corresponds to the proportion of eligible young people in a control area who have entered *Garantie jeunes*, and $ATT_{E,T}$ is the impact of *Garantie jeunes* on these contaminated youth. The common gap hypothesis that takes account of the statistical contamination is therefore written as follows:

$$(\bar{y}_{E,P} - \overline{GJ}_{E,P}\, ATT_{E,P}) - (\bar{y}_{E,T} - \overline{GJ}_{E,T}\, ATT_{E,T}) = (\bar{y}_{NE,P} - \overline{GJ}_{NE,P}\, ATT_{NE,P}) - (\bar{y}_{NE,T} - \overline{GJ}_{NE,T}\, ATT_{NE,T})$$

This equality makes it possible to deduce the effect on the beneficiaries provided that a hypothesis is made concerning the impact of *Garantie jeunes* on "contaminated" populations. The difference-in-difference estimator relative to the rate of *Garantie jeunes* entry among eligible youth in the pilot areas implicitly assumes that *Garantie jeunes* had a nil effect on "contaminated" youth. We thus favour the hypothesis of a homogeneous impact on beneficiaries, *i.e.*, the effect of *Garantie jeunes* on beneficiaries is the same for all four sub-populations. Under this hypothesis, the effect of *Garantie jeunes* on beneficiaries can be estimated as follows (DE CHAISEMARTIN, D'HAULTFOEUILLE, 2018):

$$\text{ATT} = \frac{(\bar{y}_{E,P} - \bar{y}_{E,T}) - (\bar{y}_{NE,P} - \bar{y}_{NE,T})}{(\overline{GJ}_{E,P} - \overline{GJ}_{E,T}) - (\overline{GJ}_{NE,P} - \overline{GJ}_{NE,T})}$$

The numerator corresponds to the difference-in-difference estimator. The denominator corresponds to the differential entry rate.

The estimates presented in the rest of the article are calculated at different points in the young person's career path. The panel survey collected the situation of young people at three different dates (see below). The month-to-month employment calendar

reconstructed during this same survey is used to estimate the effect of *Garantie jeunes* at different points in time during the support process and after leaving the programme (for more details on the estimation methodology, see Gaini *et al.,* 2018). The estimates presented in the third section are controlled for various individual characteristics. The estimation models also include a "local centre" fixed effect.

Data Come from Three Sources

The evaluation of *Garantie jeunes* is based on three data sources: the I-Milo database of local centres plus the two sources set up for the purposes of the evaluation: a census conducted among local centre advisers of young people eligible for *Garantie jeunes* (Œdipe) and a panel survey of young beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of *Garantie jeunes*.

The I-Milo data comes from the application used by all local centre advisers for maintaining the young people's case files. This administrative database lists the young people in contact with the local centres, whether or not they are in *Garantie jeunes*. It is used to describe a large number of the young people's individual characteristics, the actual steps taken within the structure or with its partners, the services that the young people can make use of, and the professional situations that they declare to their adviser.

However, the I-Milo information system is not sufficient on its own to identify young people who meet the eligibility criteria for *Garantie jeunes*. The Œdipe platform was therefore set up. The local centres were asked to identify the young adults potentially eligible for *Garantie jeunes* with whom they were in contact between June and December 2014. The advisers also indicated the difficulties that they believed the young people face. This system enabled more than 20,000 young people to be identified in the pilot and control areas.

Finally, a panel survey was conducted on a sample of young people in contact with a local centre on three occasions between June and December 2014. The sample included a representative sub-sample of young participants of *Garantie jeunes* in the phase 1 areas of the trial who entered the programme between June and December 2014. For the purposes of the counterfactual evaluation, the survey sample also included a sub-sample of young people identified as eligible on the Œdipe platform and a sub-sample of non-eligible young people, in both the phase 1 pilot areas and the control areas. All of these young people were questioned about their career path (the survey included a retrospective employment calendar), the support they had received, their personal and family situation, their living conditions, their autonomy, etc. The young people were questioned three times at six-month intervals: the first time between May and July 2015, then between November 2015 and February 2016, and finally between May and July 2016. The effects can thus be estimated at three different points in time: on average it was then eleven months, seventeen months and twenty-two months since the participants entered *Garantie jeunes* (see Table 1).

TABLE 1 – **Situation at the Time of the Three Surveys of Young People in the Sub-Sample Used for the Evaluation**

	Survey 1				Survey 2				Survey 3			
	May 2015 - July 2015				November 2015 - Feb 2016				May 2016 - July 2016			
	Eligible pilot	Eligible control	Non eligible pilot	Non eligible control	Eligible pilot	Eligible control	Non eligible pilot	Non eligible control	Eligible pilot	Eligible control	Non eligible pilot	Non eligible control
No. of respondents to the 3 surveys (total: 6,887)	1,886	2,364	1,198	1,439	1,886	2,364	1,198	1,439	1,886	2,364	1,198	1,439
Of which entered GJ on the survey date (%)	67.2	8.5	5.8	1.2	68.7	13.9	8.3	2.4	69.5	16.9	9.4	3.4
No. of months since the participants entered GJ	10.7	2.8	6.4	2.2	16.5	6.4	9.3	5.3	21.8	10.2	13.3	8.2

Interpretation: 1,886 young people identified as eligible via the Œdipe platform in the pilot areas responded to the three surveys. At the time of the first survey, 67.2% of them had entered *Garantie jeunes* (whether they were still in the scheme or had left it).
Field: 6,887 respondents to the three surveys, identified as eligible or non-eligible between June and December 2014. The pilot areas correspond to the first 10 areas to have implemented *Garantie jeunes*.
Sources: I-Milo, Youth follow-up surveys to the *Garantie jeunes* trial, DARES processing.

The young people in the sample are a vulnerable population facing occupational and/or social difficulties. In addition, they were difficult to contact because they often change their contact details and tend, in general, to respond less well to surveys. A variety of means were used to optimise response rates and thus limit bias. Approximately 70% of the young people surveyed responded to the first survey, and the attrition rate was approximately 20% at each survey point.[1] Out of the initial sample of 17,330 young people, 8,190 – nearly half – responded to all three surveys. Of these, 6,177 were part of the representative sub-sample of youth who entered *Garantie jeunes* between June and December 2014, and 6,887 were part of the sub-sample used to conduct the evaluation.

Main Descriptive Results for the Target Groups, the Support, and the Career Paths

Garantie jeunes was started in October 2013, initially on a trial basis in ten areas, corresponding to forty-one local centres. It was then extended to other areas in successive waves from January 2015, and was rapidly ramped up. The system was

1. These response rates are higher than those observed in the RCA evaluation survey and were on the same order of magnitude as those observed in the survey to evaluate "jobs of the future" (*emplois d'avenir*).

generalised to the entire country on 1 January 2017.[2] *Garantie jeunes* has become a universal right for all young people between age 16 and 26 who meet the criteria for access, *i.e.* who are not in employment, education, or training and who are in a precarious situation. Between the start of the trial and the end of 2017, some 178,000 young people had joined the programme.

Beneficiaries of *Garantie Jeunes*: Particularly Disadvantaged Situations

The programme targets a specific population: young people who are not in employment, education, or training, and who are in a situation of financial insecurity, *i.e.* who do not enjoy financial support from their parents and have few resources. A quantitative analysis of the profile of *Garantie jeunes* participants reveals a group of fragile young people who have experienced a series of difficulties in their lives.

Of the young people who joined *Garantie jeunes* before the end of 2016, 45% were female (source: I-Milo). Entrants to the programme were on average 21 years old. 6% had a foreign nationality, and 38% had at least one foreign parent. The fact that they live in one of France's priority urban districts did not directly form part of the targeting, but young people in these areas, who on average have fewer qualifications than others, access *Garantie jeunes* more often: a quarter live in a priority district, compared with only 9% of all young people aged between 16 and 25. Participants in *Garantie jeunes* have a low level of education: 30% had stopped their initial studies during lower secondary school or before achieving a vocational diploma (compared to 6% of all young people aged 16 to 25), 40% have a level V qualification (CAP [*Certificat d'aptitude professionnelle*] or BEP [*Brevet d'études professionnelles*] vocational diploma, validated or not), and 30% went to the last year of upper secondary school (the high school baccalaureate diploma, the "Bac", validated or not). Fewer than 2% had gone on to tertiary education (Bac + at least two more years) or more, compared with 44% of all young people aged 16 to 25. 18% of participants had halted their studies before the age of 17 (compared to 5% of 16-25 years old).

The panel survey of participants showed that they often experience situations of isolation. They have lost relations with their families more often than have other people in their age group, especially with their fathers: 14% have a father who is dead or unknown, and 21% of the rest have had no contact with the father during the year. In the general population of youth aged 18 to 24, 7% of young people have a deceased or unknown father, and 7% have no further contact with their father (from the ENRJ 2014 survey).

Participants encounter peripheral barriers to employment. 22% of the beneficiaries surveyed believe that mobility problems (means of transport, driving licenses) pose the main difficulties in obtaining a job. Only 30% had a driving licence when they joined *Garantie jeunes* (compared to around 70% of young people in this age group).

2. In accordance with the Law of August 2016 on work, modernising the social dialogue and securing career paths.

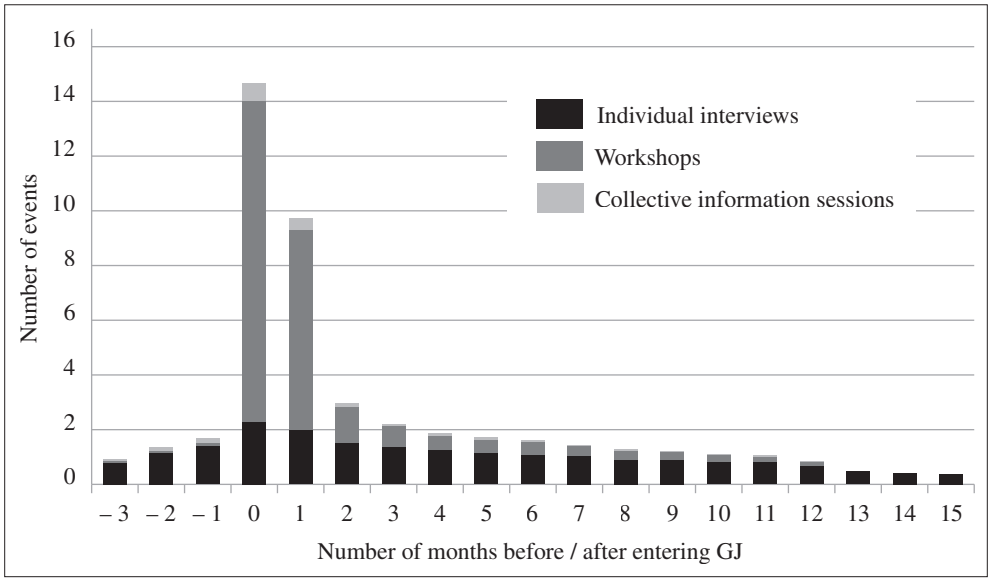
A quarter of them have already experienced significant housing difficulties during their lives, and 6% were in an unstable housing situation or were homeless in the months preceding their entry into *Garantie jeunes*.

Support for Participants is Intensive, Particularly at the Beginning of the Programme

The support lasts twelve months, with a possible renewal for a maximum of six months (but which is very rare in practice). Early departures are possible, particularly if the young person abandons the scheme or moves or is excluded for not respecting the conditions of the contract signed with the local centre. 23% of the young people who entered *Garantie jeunes* by end 2015 left the scheme prematurely, on average after eight months: 43% of these early departures were motivated by a failure to comply with commitments, and 21% because the young person gave up (which may follow access to employment or training).

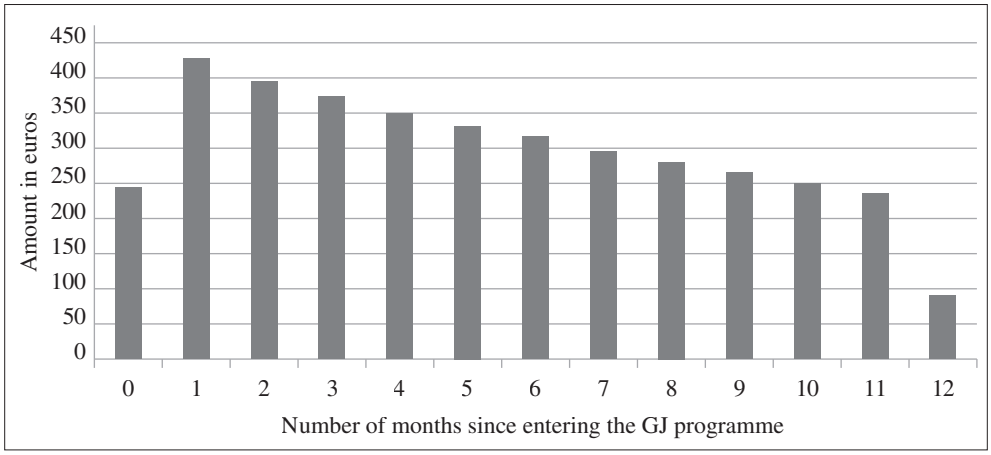
The first two months of support are characterised by numerous group workshops that each cohort of young people attend full-time (Figure 1). On average, the young people benefit from one individual interview per month over the twelve months following their entry into *Garantie jeunes*. These interviews are more frequent at the start of the programme.

FIGURE 1 – **Interviews, Workshops and Collective Information Sessions Involving Participants Month by Month Before and After Entering *Garantie Jeunes***



Interpretation: In the month following entry into *Garantie jeunes* (month 1), beneficiaries have an average of 2 individual interviews and attend 8 workshops or group information sessions.
Field: Young people who have joined *Garantie jeunes* by end 2015.
Source: I-Milo, DARES processing.

FIGURE 2 – ***Garantie Jeunes*** **Stipend Received by Participants in the Twelve Months after Programme Entry**



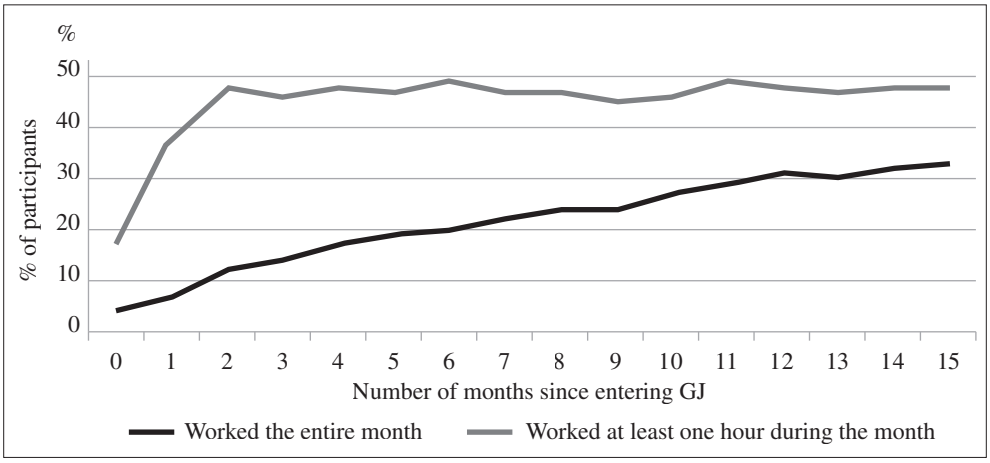
Interpretation: Young people benefit on average from 400 euros of the *Garantie jeunes* stipend in the second month after entering *Garantie jeunes* (month 2). The amounts for the months of entry (month 0) and exit (month 12) are much lower because the stipend, calculated on a *pro rata temporis* basis, corresponds to incomplete months.
Field: Stipends received during the first twelve months, starting from the month of GJ application, for young people entering GJ by end 2015.
Source: I-Milo, DARES processing.

Beneficiaries receive a stipend capped at the amount corresponding to the RSA social welfare benefit for a single person, after deduction of the housing benefit, *i.e.* approximately 470 euros per month in 2016. The stipend is linearly degressive beyond 300 euros of monthly earned income and is no longer paid when this income reaches 80 per cent of the gross minimum wage (SMIC). At the beginning of support, the beneficiaries very often receive the maximum amount of the stipend, and then as support goes on, the average amount decreases with the increase in other income, as well as with – *a priori* to a lesser extent – sanctions and early exits from the programme (Figure 2). Over the entire support period, young people receive an average of 3,900 euros.

Participants' Trajectories: Gradual Professional Integration and Increased Autonomy

Employment among the young beneficiaries increased after entry into the programme, particularly long-term employment. After the first two months of support, *i.e.* when the young people have completed the full-time collective support at the local centre, 45% of them questioned in the panel survey say they have worked at least one hour during the month (including internships, temporary work and immersions) (Figure 3). This proportion then remains stable until the end of the support, but the intensity of employment increases: the proportion of young people declaring that they have worked all month increases from 11% two months after entering *Garantie jeunes*

FIGURE 3 – **Share of Young Beneficiaries Having Worked at Least One Hour in the Month and the Entire Month (Including Internships, Temping, Immersions)**



Interpretation: In the third month after entering *Garantie jeunes*, 46% of participants worked at least one hour in the month, and 14% worked the entire month. Employment here corresponds to employment in the broadest sense. It includes internships, temporary work and immersions.
Field: Young participants who joined *Garantie jeunes* between June and December 2014 in the pilot areas in phase 1 of the trial and who answered the 3 surveys.
Source: Youth follow-up surveys to the *Garantie jeunes* trial, DARES processing.

to 29% upon leaving the scheme. Then, over the few months following departure from the programme, the proportion of young people who worked at least one hour during the month remains stable, while the proportion of young people who worked the entire month continues to rise.

Long-term employment is increasing: the proportion of young beneficiaries who say they are mainly in long-term jobs rose from 8% in the first survey (on average nine months after entry into *Garantie jeunes*) to 13% in the second survey (fifteen months after entry) and 16% in the third survey (twenty months).

Half of the young people report that their financial situation has improved since joining *Garantie jeunes* and one-third say it has remained the same. However, the financial situation of the majority of beneficiaries remained difficult. 38% said they have to be careful, and 32% said they have difficulty or cannot manage without getting into debt.

The young beneficiaries are becoming more independent. The proportion of those with a driver's licence increased from 38% at the time of the first survey to 48% a year later. However, this proportion is still much lower than for this age group as a whole. The young people are also increasingly autonomous in terms of housing. One year before the first survey, a few months before they joined *Garantie jeunes*, two-thirds of them lived with their parents. Two years later, only half of them were still living with their parents. The proportion of young people renting, sharing or owning their own home rose from 19% one year before the first survey to 37% upon the third survey.

The situation of young *Garantie jeunes* participants has therefore evolved rather positively since the programme was introduced, in terms of autonomy and access to employment. However, these descriptive elements are insufficient in themselves to conclude that *Garantie jeunes* has had a positive impact on participants' trajectories. This is the subject of the counterfactual evaluation presented in the following section.

Results of the Impact Assessment of *Garantie Jeunes* on Participants' Trajectories

This section presents the results of the impact assessment on the career path of young beneficiaries identified between June and December 2014 in the phase 1 trial areas. We also estimate the effect that entry into *Garantie jeunes* had on the intensity of support for participants.

An Important Impact of *Garantie Jeunes* on Long-Term Employment for Beneficiaries

The difference-in-difference estimates of the impact of *Garantie jeunes* rely on several assumptions (see section presenting the assessment strategy). The first, the common gap hypothesis, is to assume that the groups of ineligible youth make possible a good estimate of the structural gap between the pilot areas and the control areas. This hypothesis cannot be directly verified in the absence of data on the career paths of young people prior to the implementation of *Garantie jeunes*. However, in order to provide convincing evidence for this hypothesis, it was tested on a certain number of predetermined variables prior to the introduction of *Garantie jeunes* (gender, age, driving licence, national origin, relationship with parents, housing difficulties, place of residence, and educational level). Estimates on these variables indicate a structural gap between eligible youth in the pilot and control areas that is corrected by the difference-in-difference estimation.

Statistical contamination requires making a hypothesis about the effect that *Garantie jeunes* has had on the young people in the control areas and on the ineligible young people who entered the programme. The hypothesis adopted is that the effect of *Garantie jeunes* was homogeneous. It consists of assuming that the impact of *Garantie jeunes* on beneficiaries is the same at the time of each survey, regardless of the characteristics of the young people or the length of time spent in the programme. For example, the impact of *Garantie jeunes* on beneficiaries in the pilot areas who, at the time of the first survey, had been in the programme for an average of eleven months should be the same as that on participants in the control areas who had received support for an average of three months. This is a strong assumption, and it is unlikely to be met, as the impact of the scheme undoubtedly varies during the course of the support. In particular, it is *a priori* stronger at the beginning of the programme when the young people benefit

from numerous immersions. However, it can be assumed that the bias incurred is small, as the statistical contamination of the control populations is low (Table 1). Moreover, the bias is certainly smaller than that of the difference-in-difference estimator relative to the rate of entry into *Garantie jeunes*, which implicitly assumes that the programme has had no effect on "contaminated" youth.

The effects on employment are examined using four variables of interest: total employment along with various breakdowns of this, including:

– Supported employment (excluding work-study), internships, immersions, and civic service;
– Non-long-term employment (fixed-term contract of less than six months, temporary work, etc., excluding supported employment, internships, and civic service);
– Long-term employment (permanent and fixed-term contracts of six months or more, including work-study contracts, excluding supported employment).

The impact is assessed at the time of the various surveys.

The estimates point to a significant effect on participants' employment rates: +9.9 percentage points at survey 1, +14.9 percentage points at survey 2, and +11.4 percentage points at survey 3 (Table 2).[3] This means, for example, that at the time of the first survey the employment rate of 29.9% of participants would have been 20.0% without *Garantie jeunes*. This impact on employment is due to the effect on long-term employment, which remains almost stable between survey 2 (+13.1 points) and survey 3 (+12.1 points).

Given the low average employment rates (total and long-term employment) of the young people targeted by the programme, the impacts thus highlighted are rather strong. This is all the more noteworthy as it can be confirmed that the observed impact mainly affects long-term employment and much less employment of under six months, even though this is easier and more common to find. Likewise, the positive effect on *Garantie jeunes* beneficiaries does not stem from the greater use of supported employment to place them in work. Since young people are in less of a hurry thanks to the stipend, they have more time to find good quality jobs.

The impact of *Garantie jeunes* is estimated on the beneficiaries of the programme who constitute a potentially specific sub-population of young people among those eligible for the programme. Entry into *Garantie jeunes* is based on eligibility criteria, but also on the fact that the young person volunteers to take part and that the local centre adviser actually proposes the scheme to him or her and presents his or her file to a commission responsible for assignments and follow-up. The Œdipe platform has made it possible to collect data from the local centre advisers that indicate the social and professional difficulties they believe the young people face. This data provides information on the profile of the young people who ultimately enter the scheme. It appears that being able to stick to full-time support has played a role in access to the

3. The intention to treat estimates (difference-in-difference estimator) can be found in the appendix.

TABLE 2 – **Impact of *Garantie Jeunes* on the Employment Rate of Participants**

	Survey 1		Survey 2		Survey 3	
	Rate among participants *(in %)*	**Differential impact**	**Rate among participants** *(in %)*	**Differential impact**	**Rate among participants** *(in %)*	**Differential impact**
Total employment	29.9	9.9* (5.2)	32.3	14.9** (5.8)	38.9	11.4** (5.7)
Supported employment (excluding work-study), internship or civic service	9.2	0.9 (2.6)	9.5	– 0.002 (3.5)	10.0	0.6 (3.4)
Long-term employment (permanent or fixed-term contract of six months or more), including work-study, excluding other supported contracts	11.6	7.2** (3.6)	15.0	13.1*** (5.0)	18.3	12.1** (5.3)
Non-long-term employment (excluding supported contracts, internship and civic service)	9.2	1.7 (3.2)	7.8	1.8 (3.2)	10.5	– 1.3 (3.4)
Number of observations	6,758		6,758		6,758	
Number of months since the participants entered GJ among the eligible pilot area participants	10.7		16.5		21.8	
Entry rate for eligible pilot	67.2%		68.7%		69.5%	
Differential entry rate	54.1%		48.9%		46.6%	

***: significant at the 1% threshold; **: significant at the 5% threshold; *: significant at the 10% threshold.
Standard deviations in brackets.
Interpretation: At the first survey, the impact of *Garantie jeunes* was significant at the 10% threshold on the employment rate of young beneficiaries. At the time of this survey, the implementation of *Garantie jeunes* in the phase 1 trial areas resulted in an increase in the proportion of young beneficiaries in employment of 9.9 percentage points compared to what would have occurred without *Garantie jeunes*. The employment rate of 29.9% would therefore have been only 20.0% without *Garantie jeunes*. At the time of this initial survey, the participants had been in the programme for an average of 10.7 months.
Field: 6,758 respondents to the three surveys, identified as eligible or non-eligible between June and December 2014, in the pilot areas (areas in phase 1 of the trial) and in the control areas.
Sources: I-Milo, Youth follow-up surveys to the *Garantie jeunes* trial, DARES processing.

programme. Among the young people identified as potentially eligible, 16% could handle support only with "some difficulty" or "great difficulty" according to the information provided by the local centre advisers. The proportion of young people who were "supportable" only with "some difficulty" or "great difficulty" was lower among the actual participants (13% among participants, 23% among eligible non-participants). It also seems that slightly fewer participants (proportionally) had health problems (physical or psychological). On the other hand, they were more likely to have problems with soft skills and to have a level of qualifications considered insufficient. They were also more likely to have housing problems, family problems, and low self-esteem.

The Impact on Employment Varies over Time

The retrospective employment calendar provided an opportunity to flesh out the estimates of the impact on employment. It reconstructs, on a month-by-month basis, the proportion of young people who worked at least once in the month or for the entire month. This makes it possible to estimate the effect of *Garantie jeunes* at different times during the scheme and after leaving it. However, the information on employment found in the calendar is not as precise as the employment situations described at the time of each survey. The concept of employment in the calendar includes all forms of employment, including internships, immersion periods, temporary work, civic service, supported contracts, and traditional job contracts. This analysis highlights that there is substantial variability in the impact on having worked at least one hour in the month based on the timing of the support. The impact is significant at the start of the programme, continues in the middle of the programme, is not significant in the last two months of support, and rises significantly just after leaving the programme (Table 3).

The significant impact estimated in the first three months of the programme is undoubtedly linked to the very high intensity of the support during the first few weeks. There is in particular a significant effort on immersions during this period. The logic of "work first" leads young people in *Garantie jeunes* to be in employment situations more quickly than young people who are not beneficiaries.

While the impact diminishes during the remainder of the programme, the exit appears to function as a second "trigger" moment. Several factors could explain this rebound at the end of the period. It could be because the beneficiaries, seeing the end

TABLE 3 – **Impact of *Garantie Jeunes* on Having Worked at Least One Hour in the Month, over Different Periods after Entering the Programme**

	Variable of interest: worked at least one hour during the month	
Number of months since entering GJ	**Observed rate among participants** *(in %)*	**Impact on participants**
3 months or less	36	26.1*** (7.3)
From 4 to 9 months	45	18.4*** (5.4)
From 10 to 12 months	46	– 6.6 (8.3)
From 13 to 16 months	47	22.2*** (7.6)
17 months and over	51	6.6 (4.8)

***: significant at the 1% threshold; **: significant at the 5% threshold; *: significant at the 10% threshold.
Interpretation: Between months 4 and 9 after entering *Garantie jeunes*, 45% of young people worked at least one hour in the month. The impact of *Garantie jeunes* on the average proportion of young beneficiaries who worked at least one hour is +18.4 percentage points, which is significant.
Field: Respondents to the three surveys, identified as eligible or non-eligible between June and December 2014 in the pilot areas (areas in phase 1 of the trial) and in the control areas.
Source: Youth follow-up surveys to the *Garantie jeunes* trial, DARES processing.

of the scheme approach, remobilise and seize all possible job opportunities, whereas the period preceding the exit might be spent more on the job search, but also, in some cases, on certain investments (training, obtaining a driving licence, etc.). Another hypothesis – not to the exclusion of the previous one – is that the local centre advisers step up their placement efforts for young beneficiaries as the end of the programme approaches.

Statistical contamination also affects the employment calendar data. However, since the effect is estimated at different points in time during the support, the assumption of homogeneity here does not assume that the effect is constant over the support period. Rather, it assumes an identical effect on eligible and non-eligible young people, whether they are in a pilot area or a control area. Here too, the bias incurred in case this hypothesis is not met could be considered to be small due to the low rate of contamination.

What Additional Support in the Local Centre for Participants?

The effect of *Garantie jeunes* on access to employment can be interpreted as the impact of the additional support provided to young people who have joined the programme during their support period (which is not limited to the twelve months in the scheme) compared to the "traditional" support they would have received if *Garantie jeunes* had not been introduced. In particular, some young people would have entered the Civis programme and would also have benefited from individual follow-up; they would have attended group workshops and taken part in immersions, and some of them would have received an interstitial stipend. It is possible to appreciate the support provided to young people through *Garantie jeunes*, at least in part, from the individual interviews, workshops, immersions, and stipends recorded in the local centres' information systems. At the same time, the informal exchanges between the young people and advisers are not recorded (yet there are many such exchanges in *Garantie jeunes*); the same is true of the support that young people may have received in other structures, such as France's Pôle emploi job centres, for example.

Estimates indicate that the introduction of *Garantie jeunes* has indeed strengthened support for participants, particularly towards the start of the scheme. During the first three months, young people in *Garantie jeunes* benefited from an additional individual interview each month (1.7 instead of 0.7, as indicated in Table 4), as well as five workshops, two days of immersion, and an additional stipend of 220 euros (this amount may seem low compared to the maximum amount of the stipend, but this calculation includes the stipend for the first month in *Garantie jeunes*, which, calculated on a *pro rata temporis* basis, is often not the full amount). Thereafter, between four and nine months after entering the programme, the additional monthly support is less substantial: 0.3 individual interview and 0.7 day of immersion more, but 0.4 workshop less (these are mainly provided during the first weeks of collective support). The financial support represented by the stipend continues over the twelve

TABLE 4 – **Estimates of the Monthly Support Differential Enjoyed by Young People in *Garantie Jeunes*, at Different Times during the Programme and upon Leaving it**

	Individual interviews		Workshops		Immersion days (1)		Stipend *(in euros)*	
Number of months since entering GJ	**Monthly average of participants**	**Effect on participants**	**Monthly average of participants**	**Effect on participants**	**Monthly average of participants**	**Effect on participants**	**Monthly average of participants**	**Effect on participants**
From 0 to 3 months	1.7	1.0*** (0.2)	5.3	5.2*** (0.3)	2.5	2.1*** (0.5)	265.9	220.0*** (11.4)
From 4 to 9 months	1.0	0.3** (0.1)	0.4	– 0.4** (0.2)	1.4	0.7*** (0.2)	351.6	369.0*** (12.4)
From 10 to 12 months	0.8	0.2 (0.1)	0.2	0.3 (0.3)	0.7	0.3 (0.3)	292.3	290.5*** (19.0)
From 13 to 16 months	0.3	– 0.3** (0.1)	0.03	0.04 (0.1)	0.1	– 0.2 (0.2)	36.3	1.7 (9.5)
17 months and over	0.2	– 0.1** (0.04)	0.02	– 0.04 (0.03)	0.1	– 0.1 (0.1)	4.5	– 2.6 (3.4)

***: significant at the 1% threshold; **: significant at the 5% threshold; *: significant at the 10% threshold.
Standard deviations in parentheses.
(1) Periods of situational exercises in the workplace and other equivalent arrangements.
Interpretation: It is estimated that young people in *Garantie jeunes* benefit from 1.0 additional individual interview per month over the first three months compared to the situation without the implementation of *Garantie jeunes*. They have an average of 1.7 individual interviews per month, compared to 0.7 if *Garantie jeunes* had not been put in place.
Field: Respondents to the three surveys, identified as eligible or non-eligible between June and December 2014 in the pilot areas (areas in phase 1 of the trial) or control areas.
Sources: I-Milo, Youth follow-up surveys to the *Garantie jeunes* trial, DARES processing.

months of support, with a reduction in the last two months due to the fact that the young people are more employed and that some participants have left the scheme early. This reduction is also due to the fact that the last month's stipend is often incomplete for the same reasons as those mentioned for the month of entry. Upon leaving the scheme, young people in *Garantie jeunes* are less often interviewed individually than at other times in the scheme.

What accounts for the effectiveness of *Garantie jeunes* observed here for this sample of participants? It is difficult to attribute the impact to one specific new component of the programme: is it due to the increased intensity, to the collective support that creates a dynamic of mutual aid among the young people being supported, to the stipend that supports their efforts over time, or to its overall philosophy that puts the professional situation at the forefront, ahead of all other interventions?

The results reported here concern the first cohort of *Garantie jeunes* beneficiaries who entered in the first areas that volunteered in 2013. These results confirmed several studies on this same programme (FARVAQUE *et al.*, 2016; LOISON-LERUSTE *et al.,* 2016), which the Law of 8 August 2016 generalised to the whole of France. As with all evaluations carried out on pioneering or trial programmes, strictly speaking the results apply

only to this trial phase. It could be argued in particular that the energy of its pioneers and their belief that an innovative project will bring benefits does not always foreshadow the results of its successors. However, the philosophy and professional activities of *Garantie jeunes* were framed by very precise and relatively well-defined specifications (Farvaque *et al.,* 2016) and were the subject of a particularly substantial design and training effort. If the programme's spirit and method are regularly reincorporated and reworked by professionals in the field, it is likely that this effectiveness will be sustainable. Moreover, the deployment of *Garantie jeunes* has been presented and felt more as a prototyping phase than as some pure experiment that is likely to lead to the programme's possible abandonment (Simha, 2017). All the stakeholders in the field (local decision-makers and professionals) were thus fully mobilised from the first months of *Garantie jeunes*, as in any other common law programme, which lends the results of the evaluation a more convincing degree of external validity.

The impact assessment of the *Garantie jeunes* programme should therefore be pursued both qualitatively and quantitatively. New ex-post evaluations could thus make use of the period of the programme's gradual roll-out (2013-2016) throughout the country.

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Appendix 1 – Estimated Impact of *Garantie Jeunes* with Intention to Treat Analysis

The table below presents estimates of the impact of *Garantie jeunes* with intention to treat analysis (difference-in-difference estimator), *i.e.*, the effect of being eligible in a pilot area rather than a control area. Due to the statistical contamination of the control populations, the estimator is biased.

The impact assessed in survey 1, on average 10.7 months after entry into *Garantie jeunes*, shows a statistically significant positive effect on the employment rate of young people identified as eligible in Œdipe in the pilot areas (+5.4 percentage points on the total employment rate). In survey 2, on average 16.5 months after entry into

Table – **Differential Impact of *Garantie Jeunes* on the Employment Rate of all Pre-Identified Young People in the Pilot Areas (*i.e.* Eligible People Listed in Œdipe, Whether or not they are Beneficiaries of *Garantie Jeunes*)**

	Survey 1		Survey 2		Survey 3	
	Rate of eligible/pilot *(in %)*	**Differential impact**	**Rate of eligible/pilot** *(in %)*	**Differential impact**	**Rate of eligible/pilot** *(in %)*	**Differential impact**
Total employment	32.5	5.4** (2.6)	36.3	7.1*** (2.7)	43.8	5.2** (2.6)
Supported employment (excluding work-study), internship or civic service	7.6	0.5 (1.4)	8.8	– 0.1 (1.7)	9.4	0.2 (1.6)
Long-term employment (permanent or fixed-term contract of six months or more), including work-study, excluding other supported contracts	14.1	4.1** (1.9)	18.9	6.4*** (2.3)	23.2	5.3** (2.4)
Non-long-term employment (excluding supported contract, internship and civic service)	10.8	0.1 (1.7)	8.6	0.8 (1.6)	11.1	– 0.4 (1.6)
Number of observations	6,758		6,758		6,758	
Number of months since the participants entered GJ among the eligible pilot participants	10.7		16.5		21.8	
Entry rate for eligible/ pilot	67.2		68.7		69.5	
Differential entry rate	54.1		48.9		46.6	

***: significant at the 1% threshold; **: significant at the 5% threshold; *: significant at the 10% threshold.
Standard deviations in parentheses.
Interpretation: The implementation of *Garantie jeunes* led to a 5.4 percentage point increase in the rate of eligible young people in employment in the pilot areas in phase 1 of the trial at the time of the first survey, when participants had been in the programme for an average of 10.7 months. The 32.5% employment rate of pre-identified young people in the pilot areas would therefore have been only 27.1% without *Garantie jeunes*.
Field: 6,758 respondents to the three surveys, identified as eligible or non-eligible between June and December 2014 in the pilot areas (areas in trial phase 1) and in the control areas.
Sources: I-Milo, Youth follow-up surveys to the *Garantie jeunes* trial, DARES processing.

Garantie jeunes, the evaluated impact is positive and very significant: it amounts to +7.1 percentage points on the total employment rate, and +6.4 points on the long-term employment rate. In other words, at the time of survey 2, the proportion of young people identified as eligible in the pilot areas who were in employment is 36.3%, instead of 29.2% if *Garantie jeunes* had not been introduced. Similarly, their share in long-term employment was 18.9%, instead of the 12.5% that would have been the case without *Garantie jeunes*. Finally, in survey 3, 21.8 months on average after entry into *Garantie jeunes*, the effect on employment is 5.2 points, which is statistically significant, and is supported by the effect on long-term employment (+5.3 points).

Appendix 2 – Robustness Tests of Estimates

The table below presents estimates of the effect of *Garantie jeunes* on beneficiaries according to the model's different specifications.

Table – **Differential Impact of *Garantie Jeunes* on the Long-Term Employment Rate of Young Beneficiaries According to Different Specifications of the Model**

	Variable of interest: in sustainable employment		
Model	**Survey 1**	**Survey 2**	**Survey 3**
Model with control variables and local centre fixed effects, balanced data	7.2** (3.6)	13.1*** (5.0)	12.1** (5.3)
Model without control variables and local centre fixed effects	6.1* (3.6)	10.5** (4.3)	8.9* (4.8)
DID estimator relative to the entry rate among the eligible people in pilot areas	5.8** (2.8)	9.2*** (3.4)	8.0** (3.4)
Model with control variables and local centre fixed effects, unbalanced data	5.5* (3.3)	11.2** (4.5)	12.1** (5.3)

Economic Mechanisms Explaining Low Wages in the Personal Services Sector

An Analysis Focusing on Home Help Workers*

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The purpose of this article is to show how low wages in home help services, a sector where jobs are considered "low-skilled", result from an array of mechanisms that themselves are the fruit of a socio-political and socio-economic construction. These mechanisms flow from both public and private strategies, which we seek to clarify by synthesising empirical work in the field of personal services. Three mechanisms involved in the non-recognition of these professions are identified (denying or reducing the "qualities" used; developing an abundant labour supply; and dividing the workforce), with each of these being applied in both national policy guidelines and employer human resources strategies. The home help sector appears to be illustrative of trends at work in many other highly feminised service activities (cleaning, hotel and catering, and retail).

Changes in employment over the last thirty years have been characterised by growing inequalities in income and skills. The development of a "knowledge economy" has undoubtedly led to an increase in highly qualified jobs (managers and engineers), but it has also been accompanied by the preservation or even renewal of low-skilled jobs (Méda, Vennat, 2004). This phenomenon of job polarisation has been studied in the United States as well as in Europe (Jolly, 2015), from the point of view of changes in both job quality (Fernandez-Macias, 2012) and job qualifications (Oesch, Menes, 2011). Studies have also been conducted more specifically in France (Ast, 2015), but these have often focused on the technological transformations that have affected industry in particular. With a few exceptions (Dwyer, 2013), the

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specificities of women's occupations, mainly in services, have not been at the heart of analysis of job polarisation.

The focus of this article is precisely on a segment of this so-called "unskilled" labour market, in services where women are strongly represented: the segment of personal services activities (PSA[1]), and in particular jobs as home helps[2] (Box 1). Like other activities identified from the *Working Conditions* survey (*enquête Conditions de travail*) carried out by the French Ministry of Labour's statistics and research section, the *Direction de l'animation de la recherche, des études et des statistiques* (DARES) in 2013, such as cleaners, waiters and kitchen helps, clothing salespeople, service representatives, etc., these activities are particularly degraded segments of the labour market, combining precariousness, low pay, a lack of training or career prospects, and often harsh working conditions (Caroli, Gautié, 2009; Carré, Tilly, 2012; Kalleberg, 2011). Far from shrinking, this segment of the labour market has been expanding, and includes jobs with high recruitment prospects (Aboubadra *et al.,* 2014) but few real improvements in the level of wages.

Although the statistical categorisation of unskilled employees has not fully stabilised (Burnod, Chenu, 2001; Amossé, Chardon, 2006; Rose, 2012), many service jobs seem to belong to this type of category, whose position at the bottom of the scale is traditionally explained by three self-sustaining mechanisms. First, the low productivity of these jobs justifies only low pay (Cahuc, 2001). France's minimum wage (*Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance*, SMIC) may even be higher than the wage level that these jobs' marginal productivity should imply, which would then justify specific subsidies[3] (Blanchet, Ravalet, 1995). Second, since the skills needed are widespread in the population, the potential labour supply is abundant, which pulls the market wage downwards, especially in periods of high unemployment. Finally, in terms of industrial relations, since work is often dispersed, these occupations are marked by a lower level of collective organisation and unionisation than found in other sectors (Western, Healy, 1999).

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1. Home help activities are activities carried out in the private homes of so-called fragile people (elderly people, disabled people, families considered to be in difficulty). These activities are considered to belong to social and medico-social activities under the Law of 2 January 2002 renovating social and medico-social action, and have been included in the field of personal services since the Borloo social cohesion plan of 2005. This field of PSAs is now much broader and includes home helps, do-it-yourself activities (DIY), computer assistance, and home gardening. Home help for dependent persons accounts for more than 57% of the activity of PSA agencies, with housekeeping at 26.3%, and DIY/gardening and childcare at about 5% each (Kulanthaivelu, 2018). Most employed home helps do not have a diploma related to the sector, and even the State diploma for homecare assistants (*Diplôme d'État d'auxiliaire de vie sociale*, DEAVS) remains rare (Trabut, 2014).

2. This article will focus on the home help sector, in which professions, training, and diplomas have historically been constructed. The field of personal services will also be addressed, insofar as the creation of the market for personal services is part of a public strategy to legitimise low wages in all the activities that fall within its scope.

3. In parallel, the relatively high level of the minimum wage (in absolute terms and in terms of the ratio of minimum wage to median wage) may lead employers to "compensate" by intensifying work and/or investing less in the non-wage dimensions of job quality. Ève Caroli and Jérôme Gautié (2009) thus explain the French paradox of low-wage workers who are relatively well paid compared with their counterparts in other European countries, but who are more dissatisfied with their wages because, according to European surveys, they are subject to harsher working conditions.

Box 1

From Home Care to Personal Services: The Evolution of a Sector under Public Policy Pressure

While, since the 2005 Borloo plan, personal services have included a heterogeneous set of activities with very different histories, logics, and regulations (Devetter *et al.,* 2015), home help activities have had a certain historical, statistical, professional, and legislative consistency. Home help is defined here on the basis of the collective agreements covering all the services aimed at a fragile public (elderly or disabled people, families in difficulty) that are provided in the beneficiaries' private homes. The first home help enterprises were associations formed at the end of the 1940s. The first collective agreements date back to 1970 and grew especially during the 1980s, in the dual sense that they multiplied in number and became more comprehensive. They were subsequently supplemented by branch agreements, particularly in the 1990s. During the 2000s, the three collective agreements in the private non-profit sector merged, and a new collective agreement was created, covering for-profit personal services companies.

The sector was opened to competition in 1996 and has mushroomed since 2005. Today it is characterised by the coexistence of two types of employment and four types of employers (diagram below). This situation grew out of a process that began in the 1980s, aimed at developing family jobs as a means of reducing unemployment by creating local jobs that are considered accessible with no need for special qualifications. Employment policies and policies allowing social security and tax exemptions have expanded strongly in this field.

These three mechanisms are evidenced by well-documented empirical findings. These socio-economic processes come together to naturalise the situation of home help workers and thereby legitimise the maintenance of low wages. Low job productivity, the existence of an abundant labour supply, and the dispersion of the workforce are not data that emerge spontaneously but are, on the contrary, the consequence of public policies and human resource management strategies that are more or less intentional. These have been the subject of in-depth analyses of industrial jobs, which have highlighted de-skilling mechanisms[4] affecting skilled workers (Braverman, 1976; Haakkestad, Fridberg, 2017), the existence of an "industrial reserve army" (Marx, 1867), and mechanisms to divide the workforce (Marglin, 1974; Gordon *et al.,* 1982; Perraudin *et al.,* 2006).

The purpose of this article is to use a socio-economic approach to bring to light the processes corresponding to these economic mechanisms, in terms of both their content and their perpetuation and growth, so as to explain the maintenance of low

4. "De-skilling" is understood here to mean a dual process involving the downplaying or non-recognition of the skills used, on the one hand, and the suppression of the skills used through the development of tools or forms of job organisation that reduce the autonomy of the professionals, on the other hand.

wage levels. The article is based on a synthesis of empirical work in the field of personal services, and mainly on home help. The first mechanism (low pay) involves denying or downplaying the "qualities" employees make use of in their daily work. Doing this has a dual meaning: downplaying these qualities, but also de-skilling (Braverman, 1976), *i.e.* the suppression of these qualities, in particular through methods of work organisation. This article will focus primarily on the first aspect. The second mechanism concerns the construction of an abundant labour supply, the objective of which is to maintain an imbalance between supply and demand in favour of the demand for labour, *i.e.* of employers. Finally, the third mechanism identified consists in dividing the workforce, by heightening competition and weakening work collectivity, in order to reduce people's capacity for expression (Table 2, p. 74, summarises these different elements). Our analysis is based mainly on our previous empirical studies, on the home help professions and occasionally on other professions at the lower end of the pay scale, where the mechanisms identified are found to be structural. This approach makes it possible to highlight the heuristic virtue of the home help sector in understanding the functioning of degraded segments of the labour market (Box 2).

Box 2

Methodology used

This contribution has a theoretical objective: it aims to synthesise the processes contributing to non-recognition of the wages and symbolic value of the home help professions. It is based on ten empirical studies carried out in this field between 2008 and 2017. This is mainly material covering the home help sector, but the cleaning sector and early childhood professions are also addressed. A total of 442 semi-directive interviews were conducted with employees, employers, and regulators in these fields of activity (see the appendix for a list of studies and interviews). Specific insights into other sectors are drawn on when the mechanisms identified have been observed there as well.

Denial of Competence and Hardship

At the heart of theories of neo-classical inspiration used to explain wage differentials are human capital theory and hedonic wage theory. In the first, differences in pay are said to compensate for the direct and indirect costs of acquiring human capital and are explained by differences in productivity (approximated by differences in training or qualifications), whereas in the second case it is the arduousness or hardship endured that is used to justify wage differentials.

However, low pay is due not so much to a low level of these two aspects of employment (qualifications and hardship) as to a lack of social recognition. In fact,

making the link between these two dimensions of a job and its compensation requires that the levels of both hardship and qualifications be well established. Such social recognition does not emerge spontaneously, but depends on the will of those concerned. However, in the field of personal services, the lack of valorisation is an issue, as is, upstream, the recognition of the very existence of the skills used and the hardships endured.

Naturalisation of Skills

The negation of skills has been examined in depth by sociological and economic studies on women's occupations, both in industry (Guilbert, 1966; Maruani, Nicole-Drancourt, 1989) and in services (Dussuet, 1997; Gadrey *et al.,* 2004; 2009; Folbre, 2001; Budig *et al.,* 2002).

The mechanisms highlighted in this work support an initial logic, which consists of not considering the competencies required to be identifiable or objectifiable. These are instead presented as "natural", as characteristics of people's "savoir-être". Above all, as they are not formalised, they cannot constitute an "entry barrier". The skills and qualities used are then considered to be widely shared because they are to a great extent acquired in the private and informal sphere, within the framework of a socialisation process marked by the weight of gender (from men's strength to women's meticulousness). As a result, the required skills are not transmitted in specific training schools, which blocks their objectification and visibility. Another process favouring the broad sharing of these supposedly non-specific skills stems from technical and organisational mechanisms that reduce the work to a succession of simple routines or attitudes. This process has been particularly well studied in the context of implementing a scientific approach to the organisation of labour – in a logic close to that described by Harry Braverman (1976) in industry – in highly Taylorised services such as fast food (Nkouatchet, 2005). This has been emerging more recently in services that are more "relational", such as personal services, and is based on the development of certified quality standardisation procedures and mechanisms associated with increased control of the workforce, or even a devaluation of certain "lay" skills (Cresson, 2006). There have been intense conflicts around the recognition of skills and their certification but, at the same time, explicit disqualification mechanisms can be observed. Two examples can be used to illustrate these processes: on the one hand, the recruitment methods for childminders and, on the other hand, the decisions made by public policy makers and employers regarding home help.

The situation of childminders is particularly emblematic. The progressive structuring of the profession and the growth of public regulation (Tirmarche-Issemann, 2011) have not been accompanied by the promotion of training (initial or continuing) which, "although it is considered interesting or even useful, is rarely perceived as necessary, let alone indispensable" (Aballéa, 2005, p. 60). For example, the requirement to enrol in the compulsory "Child care in the home" module for France's certificate of professional competence in early childhood skills (*Certificat d'aptitude*

professionnelle) does not imply any requirement that the tests be validated. Qualitative surveys highlight the contradictions of both public authorities and parent employers, who oscillate constantly between recognition of the "remarkable work" done by these employees and the insistence on making this profession accessible to all, with no barriers to entry, in the name of the necessary fight against unemployment. This dissonance between two opposing objectives, valuing the "job of motherhood" and the desire for a professional framework, produces a situation in which recruitment procedures resemble a social selection process that draws on the socio-demographic characteristics of the employees (place and setting of the home, appearance, etc.; cf. Vozari, 2014), involving criteria that are too implicit to be legitimised. This refusal to give social recognition to the qualities used can be explained in part by the fact that the community agrees to pay these professionals only very little (one-third of the minimum hourly wage for care of a child). Jeanne Fagnani and Antoine Math (2012) have shown, on the basis of econometric analyses, that employer parents were in general not willing to pay a higher salary to someone with higher qualifications. This is confirmed by the fact that seniority is hardly ever valued in collective agreements.

In the case of home help, public policies have positioned themselves in favour of professionalising jobs and occupations. However, this willingness has been both belated and ambivalent (Puissant, 2011). Belated, because in the case of home help for the elderly, France's first national diploma for this job (the *Certificat d'aptitude aux fonctions d'aide à domicile*) dates from 1990, and the first State diploma (DEAVS) dates from 2002, whereas the Certificate of aptitude for care assistants (*Certificat d'aptitude aux fonctions d'aide-soignant*), for example, has existed since 1956. The attitude of the public authorities has been ambivalent, because although the State diploma is a considerable step forward in the recognition of the qualified nature of certain professions in the sector,[5] the fact that it is optional for carrying out home help greatly reduces its scope, both symbolically and materially (Dussuet, Puissant, 2015). Moreover, this diploma is recognised by only one type of employer (associations in the non-profit sector). It is not taken into account in the classifications in other collective agreements (those of private employers, for-profit companies, and municipal and inter-municipal social work centres). The ambivalent nature of this professionalisation with respect to the recognition of qualifications is undoubtedly the result of an attempt to reconcile two social representations related to ageing, which lead to significantly different public policy objectives: one concerns the need to develop skilled jobs in the medico-social sector of care for the elderly, and the other concerns the desire to keep down the public cost of care for old-age dependency.

Employers and the human resource (HR) policies put in place in home help agencies also play a role in the process of naturalising skills. Interviews with employers show that the recruitment criteria used often relate to the gender characteristics of the candidates, their extra-professional status (in particular as mothers or daughters),

5. The creation and increased take-up of the DEAVS diploma since 2002 has been accompanied by a significant increase in the average wage levels of home helps, although wages remain very low (Devetter *et al.,* 2017).

or their demonstrated "time availability", but much less often to the qualifications they have acquired (Devetter, Rousseau, 2009). Likewise, access to training for employees is relatively modest in this sector and is still very dependent on the status of the employer: very limited for employees of private employers, a little less so for those of service providers (Table 1). In any case, however, the portion of non-qualifications training remains predominant, as the HR director of one association points out:

> "The most important thing in training is that employees realise the complexity of what they are being asked to do… Do you encourage employees to get the DEAVS diploma? Oh no, no! If they want to, no problem of course, the validation of acquired experience [*Validation des acquis de l'expérience*, VAE] is a right! But we don't ask for it, it's not really necessary. Besides, with our hourly rate it'd be impossible for all the employees working in the homes of sick people to have diplomas! [laughter]"
>
> (Interview with the HR director of an association in Rhône-Alpes, 2011 [Lamotte, Puissant, 2013])

This outlook is also quite frequently taken up by the employees themselves, who even go so far as to declare that they don't reveal possessing a diploma:

> "I knew that if I told them [I had the DEAVS], they wouldn't take me, I would have cost too much. It happened to a colleague, so I didn't want to take the risk."
>
> (Statement by an employee of an association in the Drôme area, during a meeting on population ageing, 2008 [Lamotte, Puissant, 2010])

Employers thus often perceive a diploma as implying an additional wage cost and a risk of leaving (for example for jobs in residential care facilities such as nursing homes for elderly dependents [*Établissements d'hébergement pour personnes âgées dépendantes*, Ehpad]) rather than as an opportunity to improve work and service quality. This may help to explain the low level of training in enterprises and associations and its virtual absence in direct employment (Table 1).

Table 1 **– Training in the Personal Services Sector**

In %

	Private service provider (association or company)	**Public sector**	**Individual employer**
Attendance of formal training during the four weeks preceding the survey (FORMEL)	2	4	0.5
Attendance of a course or internship during the last three months (COURSTAG)	10	12	1
Participation in courses, conferences or seminars in the last three months (SEMCONF)	1	2.5	0.5
This training has been at least partially completed during working time (LWORHA, if the person is or has been undergoing training)	53	62	5

Field: Employed home help workers and domestic workers (N = 6,522).
Source: *Employment* survey (*enquête Emploi*, 2015), INSEE.

Hardships that are Denied and Lack Compensation

Rendering skills invisible in this way is also found in regard to the arduousness of the work and working conditions. Indeed, the institutional frameworks for seeing and recognising working and employment conditions were constructed in the context of the "wage society" (Castel, 1995), which is rather industrial and male. However, the tertiarisation and feminisation of work and employment represent major challenges in terms of renovating these analytical frameworks. Thus, while arduous so-called "industrial" tasks are nowadays rather well referenced and detailed in statistical nomenclatures, collective agreements, and branch agreements, the same cannot be said for arduous so-called "tertiary" tasks that are linked to the "service relationship", in the sense accorded them by Jean Gadrey (2003). However, recent work has attempted to characterise these forms of hardship (Devetter, Messaoudi, 2013) and the associated occupational risks (Dussuet, 2013).

Home help is thus a sector that is highly exposed to occupational accidents and illnesses, with more than 47 days off work per million hours worked, compared to an average of 33 days off for all employees (CNAMTS, 2016). The arduous nature of the work is due in particular to the large number of journeys made between two interventions in the course of the same day, as the following two interview extracts show:

> "We've got 15 minutes to get to the people's home. So today, let's say, I'm working in my sector. I'll do half an hour there and then I'll race over to the other side. Now they're no longer arranging us like they used to. So before I had, like one person. Sometimes I do somebody on one side of the sector and later I go back there and then afterwards I go back to the other side. So, like that, you're running… "
>
> (Home help, woman, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

> " – On weekends, it's only half hours, it's actually for meals…. Sometimes I do 9h30 over the course of a day.
>
> Q: – And you have two-hour interventions?
>
> – Ah, almost never, there's no… The maximum is one hour. And apart from Monday afternoon at this one woman's, I have from 2:15 to 2:45. That's when I do my shopping."
>
> (Home help, woman, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

However, public regulation of the sector and the way it is financed (by the user paying an hourly tariff that remains relatively low) does not encourage better consideration of these professional risks. It does not, for example, make it possible to correctly integrate the time considered as "non-productive" (between shifts in particular), which contributes to intensifying work and making it more difficult to carry out. Similarly, occupational medicine plays only a partial role in relation to home helps. First, it covers only a small proportion of salaried employees (private individuals' employees are not covered at all). Second, for those employees it does cover, the occupational physician cannot access the workplace (private homes), and the same holds for the labour inspectorate. Finally, the occupational medicine staff often come into play late

in the day (there are few prevention policies) and in a way that is very complex for the structures to manage: faced with the health difficulties encountered by employees, the occupational physician may recommend "partial incapacity" (for example, not to carry loads of more than 5kg); however, these medical decisions are in fact incompatible with practices in the profession, and are regularly criticised by the employers we were able to interview. The organisation of work together with HR policies have the effect of putting the hardships into perspective. Studies of associations in general (Hély, 2009), and of home help associations in particular (Dussuet, 2005; Puissant, 2010), have highlighted the predominance of service to the users, to the detriment of employee working conditions. Our surveys show that the organisation of labour can also be a factor in aggravating hardship: failure to take this into account can lead employers to develop job organisation schemes and HR policy tools that increase work rates:

> "We just do our best, that's all, but often we're overwhelmed: with the half hour they give us, we can't do everything, it's just not possible. No, we just can't. Often, if something is missing, you just have to run out and buy it quickly, when the shop's not far away, it's good, but when it's further away, you can't. And besides, as soon as the time is up, what do we do with people?"
>
> (Home help, woman, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

The fragmentation of labour is a factor involved in hardship and increased occupational risk: the danger of road accidents in particular is multiplied, as well as, more generally, the risk of a deterioration in the state of employee health:

> "But it wasn't permanent, the stress, it was afterwards in the end, the stress was the time, the distances I had to ride my bike. The distances, because I had ten interventions in one day and that was it. No time to eat, no time to go home for lunch…."
>
> (Home help, woman, dismissed for unfitness following a bicycle accident between two interventions [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

The trend towards an increase in the number of interventions of less than one hour in the homes of the elderly is increasing this fragmentation, which is further reinforced by the spread of time control methods via remote management tools (Dussuet *et al.,* 2017).

This process is also at work in other professions, such as cleaners (especially women), who suffer from the invisibility of the hardships they endure. Karen Messing and her co-authors (1993, 1998) thus analyse in depth how tasks considered less physically difficult (known as "light work") often involve constraints that are just as or even more intense than work initially viewed by employers and clients as more demanding (so-called "heavy" work): the reality of working conditions thus differs markedly from their *ex ante* characterisation by management. Similarly, exposure to chemical substances remains largely invisible in these jobs, in which toxic products (various sprays, bleaches, descalers, etc.) are very commonplace, even though their impact on health is now well established by scientific work (Zock, 2005, for example).

These sectors even have the highest number of occupational accidents and illnesses: the number of accidents per million working hours thus reaches 52 in the routine cleaning of buildings and 75 in home help, compared to an average of 23 for all employees covered by the general occupational health scheme and 39 in the building and public works sector (CNAMTS, 2016). However, analysis of the statistical data relating to the home help and cleaning professions shows a significant discrepancy between the reporting of some arduous work (the perceived work rate is thus rather low) and employees' state of health. The link between working conditions and health status is poorly assessed, as employees seem to under-report the arduousness of their work. Several studies have highlighted the importance of gender in this underestimation of arduousness (Gollac, Volkoff, 2006), which can contribute to degraded and uncompensated work situations on the labour market: if female employees fail to feel the actual hardship and to express this in a collective manner, these jobs will not be compensated, in particular by a salary higher than the minimum wage. Employees then wind up dealing with their capacity for resistance individually: the generalised use of part-time work appears to be one way of "holding on" to a job that is nonetheless very arduous. This kind of strategy also exists in other sectors, notably, the case of female agricultural workers who opt for employment on successive fixed-term contracts (*Contrat à durée déterminée*) in order to have breaks between two contracts (Roux, 2018).

Construction of an Excess Labour Supply

The logics that we have described above legitimise the assertion that there is no need for specific qualifications and, consequently, no remuneration for them. This logic therefore removes possible "entry barriers" to certain professions and facilitates the emergence of mechanisms leading to the expansion of the labour supply (without having to resort to the classic channels of raising wages and developing training), because the social perception of the service provided (characterised by a very low willingness to pay) prevents the work underlying these services from being assigned a market wage higher than the minimum wage. This work, socially necessary but with no market value, must be offered by a "prompted" workforce. It is then necessary to orient enough people to these occupations and to "put to work" the men, and frequently the women, who "should" accept these jobs. In order to understand this phenomenon, two main approaches are discussed here, with a distinction made between the role of public policy and that of employer strategies: what is involved is putting specific categories of labour to work and subsidising this "unproductive" labour (on both the labour supply side and the demand side concerned by these services).

Putting to Work "Under-Mobilised" Groups: Mothers and Immigrants

The first way to expand the labour supply is to encourage the activity of certain categories of people perceived as "underemployed". The exploitation of pools of labour is necessary as soon as a large volume of job vacancies is identified because, in the absence of a new labour supply, pressure on hiring could arise and push up wages. From this point of view, it is rather paradoxical to note the extensive media reports mentioning a "sector under pressure" while there have been no improvements in job conditions or wages. It is actually complex to say the least to determine the reality of difficulties in hiring (Estrade, 2013), particularly because many companies have "extensive" recruitment practices: for example, a large number of "permanent" advertisements are placed, which aim to attract applications for positions that will become open only if new clients come forward. Interviews with employers often underline both the importance of the flow of applications[6] and the difficulty in retaining these employees. The possible pressure on hiring is thus not due to a quantitative weakness in the labour supply but rather to a mismatch between employers' requirements and the quality of jobs on offer. To deal with this, employers and public policy aim not to improve the quality of employment (which is considered too costly), but rather to increase the potential recruitment pool as much as possible.

The low employment rate (rather than the high unemployment rate) is then highlighted (Zajdela, 2009), especially in the case of young people under age 25, immigrant women and mothers. Specific measures are taken to encourage these categories to join the labour market. These measures may aim to reduce real or assumed obstacles preventing the expression of a labour offer by providing assistance with mobility (aid for obtaining a driving licence, for example) or developing more customised employment contracts (student contracts, voluntary part-time contracts, etc.). Recruitment methods could also be adapted, both in terms of selection criteria (with emphasis on specific socio-demographic characteristics) and in terms of networking (forums, "speed dating", permanent advertisements, etc.[7]). The role of labour market intermediaries is also central here: France's job centres (*Pôle emploi*), local agencies, social services, etc., are directly involved in constructing a flow of female jobseekers into these professions. Speaking more analytically, we can see that the existence of a de-skilled workforce (*i.e.* whose qualifications have been eroded – or at least employers believe this to be so – in particular following a suspension of professional activity), e.g. "mothers returning to work", has been reinforced by public measures such as parental leave, which have had impacts on women's qualifications and careers and been extensively highlighted (Méda, Périvier, 2007).

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6. "We get CVs every day. Every day, women come by the agency. Every single day". (Employer, SAP Company, 2018)
7. In the case of our study on outsourcing the maintenance of nineteen secondary schools, for example, two employees of the service provider explained that they were recruited "in five minutes, right at the gate". The area manager who hired them confirmed that "in this [geographical] sector and given the unemployment rate, it is not difficult to find people" (Area manager, man, 2015 [Devetter, Steinauer, 2017]).

This situation is directly observable in the personal services sector. Indeed, labour market intermediaries, notably Pôle emploi and the employment services of France's *départemental* councils, are directly encouraged to orient female job seekers towards these professions (Alberola *et al.,* 2011). One home help we met confirmed this almost systematic orientation towards personal services:

> "When I needed to work for a salary, the only thing I was offered was to work with the elderly. I didn't hesitate for long really, I didn't have a choice."
>
> (Home help, woman, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

Employers, like public agencies, also seek to attract certain segments of the workforce by emphasising the "natural" skills that are needed but also by announcing that they take into account the specific constraints on "mothers". The O2 company thus publishes testimonials from employees on its recruitment page, all of which emphasise the compatibility of their working hours with family constraints. The selection of personnel can take complex paths, such as the segmentation of profiles based on the supply of specific work schedules. Some employers explicitly propose jobs with very limited schedules offering the supplement of a small wage but compatible with family responsibilities, as the following discussion illustrates:

> "The second profile? The mother who has sacrificed her career to raise her children and who wants a supplemental income and work schedules consistent with her obligations (no Wednesdays, etc.). They work twenty hours a week. Everyone is happy."
>
> (Company head, male, 2008 [Devetter, Rousseau, 2009])

The immigrant population (women in particular) is a second category of labour that is steered towards personal services. While labour import policies have been studied in the case of industrial and construction jobs (Jounin, 2009), there have been fewer studies of low-skilled service jobs. However, there has been a long tradition, visible in domestic services, of recurrent recourse to allogeneic labour: coming from Brittany and Belgium in the early 20th century, the West Indies in the 1930s, Spain and then Portugal in the 1960s and 1970s, etc. (Martin-Huan, 1997). Public policy has recently relaunched this process, symbolised by an agreement in 2008 between France's National agency for personal services (*Agence nationale des services à la personne*, ANSP) and the Ministry of Immigration, aimed at making it a priority to orient new arrivals to these services (Devetter *et al.,* 2015). Similarly, a report by the Centre d'analyse stratégique entitled *Besoins de main-d'œuvre et politique migratoire* ["Labour Needs and Migration Policy"] (May 2006, p. 53) states that it is in the health care and personal services and home help professions "that recourse, at least temporarily, to greater immigration can be justified". On the side of employers and employer associations, the strategies are fairly explicit when recruitment is based on "ethnic" networks (Anderson, 2000; Bakan, Stasilius, 2005; Ibos, 2013; April, 2014). The priority hiring of immigrant women employees also takes place through other forms of the naturalisation of skills; in an interview in 2009, a member of one employer association emphasised "the love of elderly people for African women".

Here, naturalisation is to be understood as a social process that treats skills or qualities as innate, thereby denying that they are the result of a process of socialisation rooted in social relations structured by gender and origin (Dussuet, 2010).

For example, in order to avoid having to compete in the labour market, employers in the personal services sector (as well as in cleaning and catering) seek to exploit "underutilised" segments of the workforce. In this sense, they can play a role of integrating into employment categories of employees who traditionally have less job access while doing this at particularly low job quality levels.

In addition to the personal services sector, the other occupations found in degraded service jobs are also affected by these types of mechanisms. The most significant case probably concerns employees in the hotel and catering industry, where "specific categories" (immigrants and students in particular) play a central role. As Pierre Barron and his co-authors (2011) point out, quoting André Daguin, head of the *Union des métiers de l'industrie hôtelière* (hotel workers union), the recruitment of undocumented employees seems to be "an economic necessity". Similarly, far from being a supplemental workforce, young students make up a significant proportion of employees and contribute to maintaining an undemanding labour supply (Nkouatchet, 2005).

Making Work Pay

Developing an available labour force not only involves recourse to "new" populations, but also requires convincing employees to accept the jobs in question. Once again, both public policy[8] and employers contribute in general to this objective, either by seeking to "make work pay" (*i.e.* more remunerative and profitable for the individual) or by reducing the ability of future employees to refuse unattractive jobs (Cattacin *et al.,* 2002; Fagan *et al.,* 2006).

The conversion of France's minimum income benefit (*Revenu minimum d'insertion*, RMI) into an in-work income supplement (*Revenu de solidarité active*, RSA), which is designed to facilitate the partial accumulation of job income and social assistance, is probably the most important example of a public measure that follows this "workfare" logic. The public policy in favour of personal services thus emphasised the need to make use of the RSA supplement for this purpose,[9] and France's National Agency for Personal Services (ANSP), like the business world,[10] broadly publicised the possibility of relying on this system. The ANSP website provided clear information about how

8. Public aid as presented in this paragraph primarily concerns direct subsidies for the labour supply, but it can also take the form of demand subsidies that lower the "cost" of labour while indirectly supporting the net wage paid to employees.
9. Thus, according to Michèle Debonneuil (2008, p. 31), the RSA income supplement should be encouraged "so that companies have less difficulty finding candidates, since they could offer anyone seeking full-time work to be paid as if they were working full-time even though they would be working part-time".
10. To take one example among many, see the press release "Adecco à domicile et l'Afpa forment des bénéficiaires du RSA" ["Adecco at home and Afpa train RSA beneficiaries"]: http://www.groupe-adecco.fr/articles/adecco-a-domicile-et-lafpa-forment-des-beneficiaires-du-rsa, accessed 1st February 2021.

employees could benefit from the RSA[11] and ended with the slogan "That's what the RSA is for!". The agency also had an information brochure on the RSA supplement sent out to all employees being paid with universal service employment vouchers (*Chèques emploi service universel*, CESU).

Measures aimed at encouraging a so-called "reasonable" job offer or seeking to make social assistance conditional on a "job" offer are extending this logic in France and more generally throughout Europe. Unskilled jobs in fields akin to personal services thus constitute a large contingent of Germany's mini-jobs (Hipp *et al.,* 2015). Similarly, the numerous subsidies and social and tax exemptions enjoyed by low-skilled jobs and, even more so, the personal services sector, are enhancing the possibility of paying for work that is considered not to be worth what it costs (*i.e.* where perceived productivity is considered to be lower than the wage paid) (Devetter, Jany-Catrice, 2010).

At the employer level, this logic involves recruitment strategies that specifically target "low employability" employees in other segments of the labour market. For example, one employer (Devetter, Rousseau, 2009) insisted in 2008 on recruitment criteria that would avoid an excessive turnover rate: "Young girls don't come to us to stay. It's a temporary job. But for 40-year-old women, they don't see themselves doing anything else."

The fact that employees have gone through a "difficult period" may also be an important criterion:

> "We're in a disaster area for textiles. There are a lot of people who come from this sector, who are between 35 and 50 years old. It's where we have the easiest time recruiting because they are professional and have respect for the customer and respect for the employer that is more extensive than younger people do."
>
> (Company head, 2008 [Devetter, Rousseau, 2009])

These selection methods may explain the apparent paradox between the very low employability of employees according to traditional criteria (qualifications, mobility, etc.) and how easy it is for them to get hired: it is precisely these usually negative criteria that are sought here by some employers (Devetter, Rousseau, 2009). Employers thus sometimes explain that they distinguish between "vehicled" and "non-vehicled" employees and, if concretely possible, favour the latter. The sometimes negative impact of holding the DEAVS diploma described in the previous section indirectly stems from this same process of indifferentiation that nourishes an abundant supply. Thus, the low employability of female employees is to be understood not as leading to difficulties in being hired, but as characteristics in terms of low geographical and professional mobility in particular which lead to degraded positions on the labour market.

11. The ANSP page, "Bénéficiez du RSA!" ["Benefit from the RSA!"]: https://archives.entreprises.gouv.fr/2013/www.servicesalapersonne.gouv.fr/beneficiez-du-rsa-pour-ameliorer-votre-quotidien-(12164)d41d.html, formerly online, accessed 5 December 2018.

Outside the field of personal services, the use of subsidised contracts can also exemplify this strategy, which is aimed at both making work pay (by supplementing the salary with social assistance) and making it difficult to refuse, as jobs are offered by the social services. The case of local authority agents (including, since 2005, those in schools) is emblematic. In the context of producing monographs covering nineteen secondary schools (Devetter, Steinauer, 2017), it turned out that the additional manpower provided by employees on subsidised contracts was not at all an extra cost but rather a means of supplementing teams that were clearly inadequate. According to the *Working Conditions* survey, subsidised jobs represent more than 12% of service positions in schools (profession 525A).

Segmentation and Division of Labour

Finally, a third mechanism can block or reverse the process of constructing a path to professionalisation and higher pay: the maintenance of a division of labour that hinders the possibilities of forming a homogeneous work collective and limits the impact of trade union demands. Two processes involved in the division of labour can be identified here: the recourse to a wide variety of types of employers and statuses (to perform the same job) or competition between different jobs (to perform the same tasks), on the one hand, and measures that make it difficult to structure a work collective, on the other. Yet again, each of these two processes is backed up by public policy and by HR policies developed by employers.

Competition between Different Types of Employers, Professions, and Collective Agreements

Of the ten occupations at the bottom of the wage hierarchy, almost all are subject to multiple modes of organisation, which put different types of employers in competition with each other: the coexistence of national guidelines and national collective agreements (NCAs) or specific forms of employment ("extra" and very short fixed-term contracts in the restaurant industry, outsourcing and subcontracting in the hotel and cleaning industries, etc.). The coexistence of public bodies, associations and private firms, or even direct employment by an individual employer to organise comparable work does not occur very frequently from a general point of view, but it is common for domestic workers, home helps, childcare assistants, and cleaning personnel. Likewise, several of these occupations are among those most exposed to the growth of subcontracting. Female cleaners and chambermaids are particularly exposed to outsourcing: 60% of female cleaners work in the cleaning sector, while the others are employed by companies that keep their cleaning staff in-house but come from different economic branches. However, the use of subcontracting is leading to a net deterioration

in job conditions for employees, both in France (Abasabanye *et al.,* 2016; Devetter, Steinauer, 2018) and abroad (Holley, Rainnie, 2012; Grimshaw *et al.,* 2014).

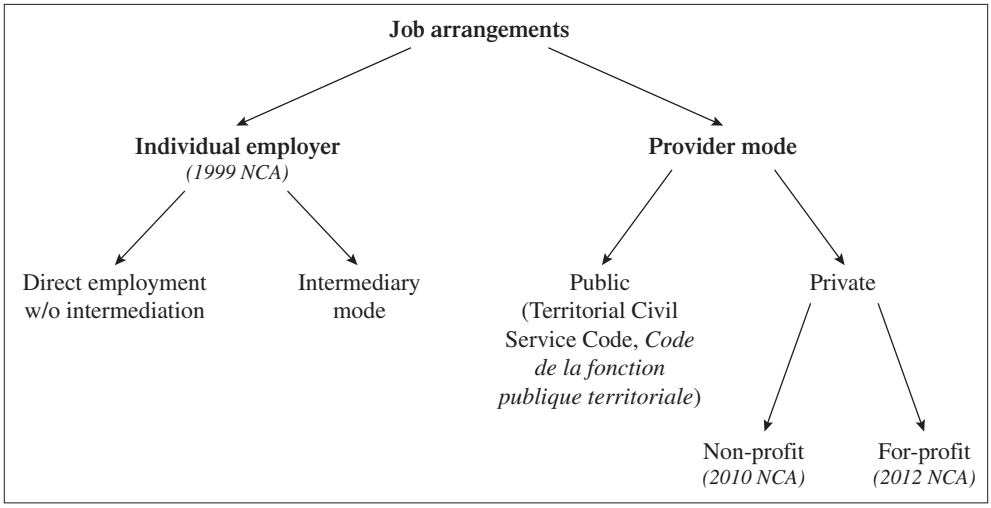
The personal services sector is emblematic of this fragmentation between different types of employers and job terms and conditions, a fragmentation that leads to great heterogeneity in the applicable rules (particularly those stemming from NCAs). Far from seeking to unify the sector, public policy has promoted the diversification of these employment arrangements since the 1980s, from the very first incentives for the development of direct employment. Then incentives in favour of lucrative businesses were strengthened in the 1990s, but with a clear acceleration in 2005 with France's personal services development plan. This accentuated competition between types of employers, with differences in their status having strong repercussions in terms of working and employment conditions (Lefebvre, 2012; Devetter *et al.,* 2017).

The fostering of competition between different types of employers is also due to their own actions, whether at the level of the branches or the enterprises themselves. The plurality of collective bargaining agreements,[12] which is characteristic of the home help industry, is a determining factor in price competition between different types of employers and service providers. It also contributes to fragmentation and to weakening the representation of the personnel, especially as the trade union leaders struggle to standardise their methods of representation: the negotiators for the different branches usually belong to separate unions ("social health care"[13] for the home help branch and "commercial services"[14] for for-profit personal services firms). Strengthening competition is also part of the strategy of the enterprises themselves, through the multiplication of agencies or employing units, which makes it possible, consciously or not, to circumvent the thresholds for staff representation and to optimise certain tax schemes (Perraudin *et al.,* 2006). The use of franchising by for-profit firms and the splintering of associations into small local structures are blatant examples of this. Another example of an employer strategy that exacerbates competition between these different types of services is the use of two systems of employment: service provision and contracting (diagram). The service providers are collective organisations that can have different statuses (public or private, for-profit or not-for-profit): they employ home helps, pay them and determine their schedules, etc. The employees work in the homes of users who finance a help service, but do not employ them or pay them directly. In this case, the employees are subject to the collective agreement corresponding to the status of their employer (the 2013 NCA for a for-profit personal service provider, or the 2010 NCA for a service provider association). However, many of these organisations are developing a so-called intermediary service within their organisation, alongside their service provider activity. In this case, the provider does not employ the employees: it

12. Coverage by a collective agreement depends on the legal status of the employer and not on the activities performed.
13. This is more specifically the *Fédération des organismes sociaux* for the CGT trade union (*Confédération générale du travail*) and the *Fédération « santé sociaux »* for the CFDT trade union *(Confédération française démocratique du travail*).
14. This is the *Fédération du commerce* for the CGT and the *Fédération des services* for the CFDT.

is the users who directly employ and pay them, mainly in the form of the CESU credit vouchers. The employees are therefore subject to the collective agreement governing the individual employer. The intermediary organisation is paid by the users only to help them with the administrative management of employment (drawing up pay slips, holidays, sick leave, etc.) and in the planning of schedules in the event of absence, for example, to provide a temporary replacement. Often in the course of a single day employees will be required to work under several collective agreements, sometimes with the very same users.

DIAGRAM – **The Different Modes of Employment in Personal Services**



Source: Authors.

This situation is a major obstacle to trade union representation, as attested by an excerpt from an interview conducted in 2012 with the leader of the Rhône-Alpes regional CGT trade union for "home help" (LAMOTTE, PUISSANT, 2013):

> "Personal services are a real trade union challenge! Unions need to talk to each other, girls don't necessarily see themselves involved in social action [*sic*], but more in health care. And the associations are often so small, the girls are isolated. We're considering the creation of an economic and social union, so that employers are obliged to group together, and we can then create unions in the associations. We are also thinking about creating local unions for all the home helps who would like to join a union. Trade unionism must evolve to respond to these changes, and to allow these girls to join a union and defend themselves, but it's not easy."

Competition between types of employers may be reinforced by a division between occupations originally conceived as distinct. Thus, historically, it is the activities furthest removed from household chores, carried out by home helps, that have been recognised as requiring special skills. The first diploma in the sector dates back to the 1950s, and concerned home help to families involving so-called educational activities

with children. Recognition came later for services for the elderly (1990s) and was for work involving "assistance with activities of daily living" (branch agreement of 29 March 2002 on job classifications), *i.e.* assistance to the person and not to the home (assistance with mobility, washing, meals, etc.). Professional recognition thus operates in a fragmented way: recognising the work and skills of certain people (personal assistance, *i.e.* help with educational activities with children, and help with so-called activities of daily living, according to the terms used in the collective agreement of the home help branch, *i.e.* help with washing, mobility, meals, etc., for elderly or disabled people) amounts implicitly to not recognising the work of others (Arborio, 2012). Professional recognition takes place through the objectification of only those tasks that fall within the scope of social and medico-social action standards (which concern personal assistance). Thus, for employees who do not perform this type of task for individuals, but who mainly perform tasks of assistance with maintaining the home (help with housekeeping, ironing), the levers for professional recognition do not exist. This division is based on the idea that carrying out activities, even mainly housework, for vulnerable groups does not require any particular professional skills, since no diploma exists in this area. It is not difficult to imagine another process, focusing on the users: intervening with fragile users requires specific professional skills and therefore qualifications, since household tasks are first and foremost supports for a more complex relationship and not an end in themselves (Jany-Catrice, 2010). This tension can be found in the representation of occupations in the following interview excerpt:

> "Often people's families take us for cleaning ladies. The people we're helping know and see that we are more, that we are there for them, and not simply for housekeeping. But it's not the same thing with the families. They're not present often, and think of us as cleaning ladies. But we are there for their parents, so when they're depressed, it's us they talk to. Sometimes the grannies even prefer to talk to me than to their daughters, they feel freer, I don't know… "
>
> (Home help, 2012 [Lamotte, Powerful, 2013])

This division of professional recognition may be reinforced by the organisation of work in certain entities; in this case, this generates strong competition between employees. The fact that skills are recognised and formalised in the context of a diploma, while this diploma is not a barrier to entry into the sector, has led to differentiated qualifications for home helps.[15] Today the only way to make the transition to the skilled category is no longer through seniority, but by earning a State diploma. Although the DEAVS diploma is available for the validation of acquired experience (it was the first diploma, in 2002, to be available under the VAE programme), we have

15. The 2012 collective agreement for the home help branch (private non-profit sector) picks up from the branch agreement of 29 March 2002, which defined four categories of home helps: 1) A: home help, no qualification, 2) B: home help, in the process of validation of prior learning or a technical diploma (*Brevet d'études professionnelles*, BEP - *Brevet de technicien supérieur*, BTS), 3) C: homecare assistant: holder of the State diploma of a homecare assistant – which no longer exists since 1 January 2016, and 4) D: technical agent for social and family intervention for assistance to children in families in difficulty.

shown in previous work (Puissant, 2010) that in a sector made up of women who have often had a complicated relationship with school and studies, the fact of committing to a VAE approach proves to be problematic for many. Formalising a professional practice can be a difficult exercise for many home helps, which explains why a large proportion of them self-censor by refusing to engage in a VAE process, or by not validating all the modules. Thus, a home help with more than twenty years of seniority, but without an official qualification, will be in category A – unqualified. Some employees sometimes speak of "betrayal", interpreting this categorisation as a way of not recognising the work they have been doing for a long time, and for which they have sometimes taken training modules.

> "I've been doing this job for more than fifteen years. I know that I know my job, I'm not going to go get a diploma. They're not the ones who are going to decide whether I know my job. All they have to do is go and see the people I'm going to, they're happy. I know that I know my job. And when the girls graduate, they feel they've moved up, they don't want to empty the rubbish bins anymore! As if it was me who had to empty the rubbish bins every time!"
>
> (Home help, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

The resentment is all the more acute as the categorisation of home helps does not lead to concrete differences in the work that each of them does. In fact, employers lack qualified workers to accompany ageing and the increasing incidences of disability: unqualified employees therefore continue to work in the homes of dependent users, as shown in the following extract.

> "On weekends, we intervene only in the homes of people who are very dependent. So, if I'm only supposed to do housework, why do I work all the time on weekends? So now they don't mind that I don't have a diploma and that I'm paid the minimum wage to help with their toilet!"
>
> (Home help, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

This kind of slippage in tasks and competition between professions sharing a workspace is not specific to personal services, and comparable phenomena can be observed in social and medico-social housing (Nirello, 2015), and even in hospitals (Arborio, 2012).

These forms of fragmentation are also increasingly found in public services, such as maintenance jobs in secondary schools. An analysis of the organisation of maintenance work in nineteen secondary schools in a *département* that is experimenting with the use of subcontracted staff (Devetter, Steinauer, 2017), highlights the fact that in these establishments the cleaning activities are carried out by employees with four different statuses: the most stable are civil servants in the local civil service; next come contract workers hired for periods of ten-and-a-half months; then employees on subsidised contracts; and finally cleaning staff employed by a service provider. These four forms of employment are assigned to broadly comparable tasks, although the personnel concerned have neither the same resources (training, experience, occupational

integration, equipment, etc.) nor the same job conditions and wages. Monthly pay can thus vary by as much as twice, depending on the employee status (with pay scales that are more or less advantageous), but above all depending on the working time allocated to clean a given area (from forty-one hours to twenty hours per week for equivalent areas). This example shows that the existence of a plurality of statuses for carrying out the same activity (dividing and weakening the employees' negotiating capacities) is not specific to personal services alone.

The people in these service professions thus share the characteristic that they are divided between a wide variety of statuses and occupations, yet are called on to perform the same tasks and fulfil the same missions.

The Weakening of Work Collectives

In addition to this "statutory" division, the organisation of work is often fragmented, which tends to isolate employees and block the emergence of work collectives. This situation is mainly found at the level of employment agencies, but also arises because of unfavourable public regulations.

Indeed, the low-skilled service professions have been significantly influenced by the flexibilisation policies that have been implemented over the last twenty years: the facilitation of part-time work, the development of flexi-time, the increase in self-employment, etc. These measures are not aimed specifically at low-skilled service jobs, but they have been particularly widespread in this type of employment: for example, there are significant numbers of self-employed entrepreneurs in personal services (Thiérus, 2014), the cleaning sector (Denis, 2018), and delivery services.

In personal services, the characteristics of the activity and the fact that it takes place in the home of the beneficiaries "naturally" tend to isolate the women workers. However, forms of organisation that counteract this isolation, such as the triangular model – user/employee/association – invented within the associative framework (Puissant, 2010), have made it possible to create collective work spaces, which are essential for the constitution of a professional group (Artois, 2015). However, this triangular organisation (where an employer structure is inserted between the user and the employee) has been increasingly challenged since the 1990s, and especially since the early 2000s. Public policy has strongly encouraged this challenge, first through incentives in favour of direct employment, and then by favouring for-profit "service providers" whose sole role is to arrange the employment relationship (with the employer's function reduced to the legal dimension alone). The creation of a personal services market in 2005 further weakened the service provider mode, by encouraging competition and putting pressure on costs. Although the Borloo plan initially encouraged the rapid growth of for-profit service providers through various tax and social security exemptions, this momentum was then curbed. A study by a consulting firm warned as early as 2010 about the closure of private for-profit companies which,

without major exemptions, were running large losses as soon as they set up outside the major metropolises (Belze, 2011).

Several studies (Vatan, 2014; Le Roy, Puissant, 2016) have since drawn attention to the fact that the reference economic model implicitly followed by the public authorities (or *départemental* councils for the care of the elderly), particularly in terms of pricing, corresponded to the situation of direct employment. Several *départemental* councils thus use the "productive" working time indicator to establish their rates and the working time they are prepared to finance out of public funds. However, this so-called productive time does not take into account working time spent outside the home, even when it is part of the service provided there (Puissant, 2010; Lefebvre, 2012; Dussuet, 2013). As a result, the total time that constitutes one of the specific features of the service provider model tends to be sharply reduced, and is no longer funded. A collective system, with positions for coordination and middle management, training time, meeting time, the right of expression, etc., is inevitably more costly than direct employment, where only activities that take place in people's private homes are taken into account. This competition is increasingly encouraging local authorities to include in the hourly rates they set with the agencies only so-called "productive" hours (*i.e.* the hours of intervention in the home, which represent around 80% of the overall volume of work in the service provider entities; Aube-Martin *et al.,* 2010).

These developments are affecting HR policies and the organisation of work: the rationalisation observed since the mid-2000s in the associations is accelerating and spreading to the entire service provider mode. This can be seen first of all in the tendency to question "usages" in the agencies, *i.e.* the gains resulting from local negotiations, which represent informal improvements to what is provided for in the collective bargaining agreements and branch agreements (break times, recognition of travel time exceeding a quarter of an hour, recovery days, end-of-year bonuses, etc.). This then translates into the calling into question of collective work spaces: the reduction of coordination positions (their number and prerogatives), of time for exchanges with colleagues, and of collective working time. Finally, this is being accompanied by the generalisation of control tools, such as remote management, which contribute to increasing work rates and de-skilling work:

> "With remote supervision, our capacity for judgment is no longer recognised! While we used to think that we might need to stay fifteen minutes longer than we were supposed to in a person's home, well, now we can't, we're controlled!"
>
> (Home help, 2016 [Devetter *et al.,* 2016])

These strategies are sometimes found very explicitly in HR policies, which aim to maintain the isolation of employees more or less deliberately:

> "No gatherings. I'm all for keeping them separate. This is the voice of experience speaking, about everything to do with labour unions, works councils, and all that. The more people are separated, the less they talk, the less they criticise the boss or

management. I continue to make sure that they are split up and come together as little as possible."

(Company head, 2008 [Devetter, Rousseau, 2009])

Once again, these mechanisms, summarised in Table 2, can be seen, beyond personal services, in most degraded service jobs. We have already mentioned the case of multi-skilled maintenance workers, who are divided among several statuses (Devetter, Steinauer, 2017). These workers are also often the subject of work organisation measures designed to avoid the emergence of work collectives: in the context of outsourcing their activity, the *départemental* council explicitly requires separate premises (for breaks and storing equipment) for private and public sector employees; the organisation of this subcontracting deliberately establishes two distinct categories of personnel, who are invited to think of themselves as being opposed to each other, with a clearly defined "them" and "us".

Table 2 – **Synthesis of the Mechanisms of Non-Recognition of Qualifications in Home Help Services**

Mechanisms of non-recognition of qualifications		**Level of decision and implementation**	
		Public Policy	**Human Resources Policies**
Denial of the qualities used	Naturalisation of skills and absence of "entry barriers"	Late and ambivalent recognition of qualifications	Recruitment criteria outside the professional sphere and non-degree courses
	Euphemisation of hardships	Difficulty in taking into account hardships; restrictive calculation of pricing; absence of prevention policy	Relativisation of the issue of working conditions; restrictive calculation of working time
Construction of excess supply	Putting "mothers", immigrant women, to work	Specific guidance by employment intermediaries	Employment of "moms"; use of "ethnic" networks
	Making underpaid work acceptable	RSA and PPE (*Prime pour l'emploi*) income supplement benefits; workfare: "making work pay"	Selection of "unemployables" or temporary employees
Division of the workforce	Competition between employers	Encouragement of a plurality of employers and wage conditions	Plurality of collective bargaining agreements; multiplication of agencies; use of intermediary agencies
	Competition between "professions"	Division of professional recognitions	Work organisation that exacerbates day-to-day competition between skilled and unskilled workers
	Weakening of work collectives	Direct employment; competitive pressures; restrictive pricing	Calling into question collective time; rationalisation in the organisation of work;increases in work pace

Source: Authors.

While the ranks of female graduates from secondary and higher education continued to grow rapidly during the 1990s and 2000s, the trends in job qualifications have been more ambiguous: growth in highly qualified jobs (especially those with management status) but also a resumption in the creation of jobs considered as low-skilled or unskilled. Public policies aimed at reducing the cost of labour are not unrelated to this phenomenon (Gautié, Margolis, 2009; Jaehrling, Mehaut, 2013), but the role of public policy and employers' HR management strategies has gone well beyond mere economic support and has encouraged job polarisation, driven by the growth of jobs in degraded services at least as much as by the decline in industrial jobs with intermediate qualification levels.

Thus, several mutually reinforcing mechanisms have been involved in maintaining numerous service jobs in the "unskilled" categories: the denial of the qualities used and the hardships endured; the orientation of a fragile and "cheap" labour flow towards these segments; and strategies to divide the workforce that render it *de facto* impossible to take collective action or raise collective demands. Based on the analysis of these three mechanisms, which have repercussions in terms of both de-skilling and "invisibilisation", we have shown that the secondary segment of the labour market is not, as sometimes presented more or less explicitly in approaches to labour market segmentation (Doeringer, Piore, 1971; Marsden, 1999), an "unorganised" market or a form close to a market with pure and perfect competition. On the contrary, it is the result of a social and political construction.

While we have highlighted the fact that a number of mechanisms involving the non-recognition of skills and even the de-skilling of work also exist in other segments of so-called secondary employment, further progress can be made in understanding the dynamics of low-skilled or unskilled segments of service occupations. Indeed, the home help sector, and more generally the field of personal services, has a strong heuristic value for understanding the real barriers to qualification in major occupational segments in which women are over-represented. The facilitation of direct employment (and then the use of highly flexible service providers) and budgetary pressures on service provider jobs have undoubtedly contributed to a laboratory for the deregulation of the wage relationship, as is evidenced by the rapid spread of statuses that allow the expansion and diversification of work situations outside any collective work framework, particularly with regard to the development of digital employment platforms.

This development is reminiscent of the processes described and analysed in detail by radical American socio-economists in the field of industrial jobs (e.g. Marglin, 1974; Braverman, 1976; Gordon *et al.,* 1982). The development of certain commercial services required the creation of a social category (female and precarious), just as industrialisation in the 19th and early 20th centuries was grounded in the creation of a low-cost working class.

There are nevertheless two important differences that distinguish the current situation from the period of industrialisation in the past centuries. The first concerns the trajectory followed, both individually and collectively: the entry into the labour market

of female labour, which is considered low-skilled (Daune-Richard, 2003; Dwyer, 2013), is also part of a dialectical process of a (partial) reduction of the exploitation of female labour by men within the context of patriarchal society (Delphy, 2015). Thus, just as wage labour may initially appear to be a step forward from serfdom, so the female precariat could be viewed as a first step towards the recognition of the value of women's labour. The second difference concerns the interpretation in terms of long-term obstacles to the recognition of service occupations: the activities covered by the title "unskilled employee" are generally relational and consist of social interactions where the difference between work and service is minimal, unlike in industry where the machine and the organisation of labour are important mediators between the consumer and the employee. This relational aspect has a greater impact on the quality of the result than on its "volume". It is more difficult to identify the existence of productivity gains (in the industrial sense of the term), and the meagreness of these gains "to be shared" consequently makes the conflict more bitter and reinforces the import, for those who benefit from them, of seeing to it that the quality – and therefore the skill – of the services rendered and the work performed is not recognised. The construction of a social compromise in these relational services can thus be achieved only through the growth of a "willingness to pay" expressed by consumers and even more so by the broader community.

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Appendix – Main Empirical Materials

Title of the report	Year	Field	Sponsorship/ Funding	Number and type of interviews conducted
La précarité dans l'emploi, nouvelles formes d'emploi et de travail [*Precarity in Employment – New Forms of Employment and Work*]	2007-2010	Home help	FSE, State and Rhône-Alpes Region	64 interviews (mainly salaried employees, but also managers)
Quelle gestion des ressources humaines dans les structures prestataires de services à la personne ? [*How do Personal Service Providers Manage human resources?*]	2008-2010	Personal services companies and associations	MESHS	19 employers (companies and associations)
Recourir à une femme de ménage : motivations et pratiques [*Using a Cleaner: Motivations and Practices*]	2010-2011	Individual employers	FEPEM	33 employers and customers of personal services agencies
Sécurisation des parcours professionnels et dialogue social territorial dans le secteur de l'aide à domicile [*Securing Career Paths and Territorial Social Dialogue in the Home Help Sector*]	2010-2013	Home help	FSE, State and Rhône-Alpes Region	42 interviews (employees, trade unions, employers, Regional chamber of social welfare, Regional health agency)
Qualité du travail, qualité des emplois et qualité d'accueil dans les métiers de la petite enfance (Cresson *et al.*, 2011) [*Labour Quality, Job Quality and the Quality of the Provision of Child Care Services*]	2009-2011	Childminders	CNAF	54 childminders
Les inégalités territoriales dans le champ de l'aide à domicile [*Regional Inequalities in the Home Help Sector*]	2016	Home help association employers	*Collectif de l'aide à domicile* (Home help collective)	13 interviews (association network managers and association employers)
La qualité des emplois dans la crise : comparaison des secteurs public, privé et associatif [*Job Quality in the Crisis: Comparing the Public, Private and Voluntary Sectors*]	2016	Employment in associations (particularly in the health and social sector)	DARES	46 interviews with employers and salaried employees (home help and Ehpad nursing homes)
La qualité de l'emploi dans les activités de nettoyage [*Job Quality in the Cleaning Sector*]	2014-2018	Cleaning occupations (PCS: 525A; 525B; 525C; 525D; 561F, 563B; 563C and 684A)	ANR (Young researcher programme)	101 interviews (employees, employers, union and management representatives)
L'expérimentation de l'externalisation de l'entretien des collèges [*Experimenting with Outsourcing Secondary School Maintenance*]	2017	Cleaning of secondary schools	*Départemental* council	58 (service agents, management teams of establishments, cleaners, cleaning sector managers)
Le travail des aides à domicile : prescriptions et temporalités [*Home Help Work: Standards and Temporalities*]	2018	Monograph of a home help association	--	12 interviews (management, sector managers, employees)

An Illusory March towards Equality between Women and Men

"Biographical Availability" and Career Inequalities Among Flight Attendants[*]

Anne Lambert,[**] *Delphine Remillon*[***]

This article offers a comparative analysis of the careers of men and women flight attendants in air transport. Using personnel records, collective agreements and interviews with flight attendants, we show that the picture of improvements in career equality in the airline studied here is illusory. For earlier cohorts, the massive prevalence of women as flight attendants has been accompanied by growing access to positions of in-flight responsibility (cabin manager) and on the ground (base manager), while repeated cross-sectional data indicate a narrowing of the gap between men and women in entry and exit conditions over time. However, our longitudinal analysis of a cohort of flight attendants who entered the company more recently (between 1998 and 2001) reveals gender inequalities in the likelihood of promotion, to the disadvantage of women. Career models are also highly gendered, with women notably more likely to work part-time. Rather than countering this tendency, the shift from a system of promotion based on seniority to one based more "on choice" reinforces gender inequalities, contrary to the claims associated with the equal-opportunity policy implemented by the airline, as of the early 2000s. This is because the new system is more heavily based on employees' investment in the company throughout their careers, and thus on "biographical availability", which is greater among men than women.

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Career inequalities between women and men are increasingly well-documented. While vertical and horizontal occupational segregation mechanisms limit women's chances of promotion (Marry, 2004; Laufer, 2005; Guillaume, Pochic, 2007), the concept of gendered organizations (Acker, 1990; Mills, Tancred, 1992) has recently made it possible to emphasize the role of work organizations in the production of these inequalities (Acker, 1990; Angeloff, Laufer, 2007; Buscatto, Marry, 2009). Masculine standards, often presented as neutral, structure employees' relationship to work, frame careers and govern promotions (Dunezat, 2006). Transport professions appear to be emblematic of such gendered organizations. They are largely embodied by male professional groups, such as merchant navy officers, train controllers or truck drivers (Guichard-Claudic, 2006; Rodrigues, 2010; Bonanno, 2014), and have experienced limited feminization, being perceived as not very compatible with the roles of mother and wife because they require extensive "biographical availability" (McAdam, 2012) on the part of their employees.

The expression "biographical availability" stems from work in political sociology on mobilizations and activist engagement (Siméant, 2001; Barrault-Stella, 2014). It provides a way of understanding how individual and private situations structure public engagement in changing institutional contexts (McAdam, 2012). The term thus initially designated "the absence of personal constraints which increase the costs and risks of participating in social movements, such as a full-time job, a marriage or a family" (McAdam, 1986, p. 70). In this article, we propose using this notion in a dynamic and constructivist perspective, to analyze the way in which the family and professional lives interact, conditioning career development and career advancement over time. From our point of view, biographical availability does not constitute a simple objective indicator of the quantity of time available after deducting family and household commitments: it is not a substantial factor. On the contrary, it is produced by institutional context, in this case, work organization, by the formal rules which govern career development, and by the implicit standards which help to define a "good" commitment to work, which is in fact eminently gendered.

Paradoxically, the sociology of work has made little use of this analytical tool, despite the importance of research into professional commitment. Feminist sociologists who are interested in the balance between the "two-lives" of women as mothers and as employees have emphasized its effects on women's mental load and psychological suffering. Yet they have analyzed less its effects on the development of professional careers (Haicault, 1984). The notion of the "time availability for work" (Bouffartigue, 2012) most closely resembles that of biographical availability. But it aims to analyze the subordination of human time to professional time from a socio-historical, global and critical perspective (Thompson, 2004). If the duration, flexibility and predictability of working time – produced by productive structures and the law – condition employees' labor supply (their "working time availability"), then such supply takes different forms according to workers' places in the division of labor. The understanding of gender differences remains sketchy, however, as

shown by the following remark by Paul Bouffartigue (2012, p. 9): "Flexible but autonomous workers are mainly highly-qualified men; the flexible, heteronomous employees are mainly women from working-class backgrounds […] and female immigrant workers".

Some empirical research has specifically sought to objectify the time availability of women and men at work. While women's time availability appears shorter than men's at the start of their careers – in particular because of family responsibilities – it also takes different forms (fragmented working hours versus long hours and night work). Moreover, women's work suffers from less recognition by employers in terms of pay (Devetter, 2006). However, François-Xavier Devetter notes the difficulty in measuring the long-term effects of time availability at work on career development, due to the absence of longitudinal data on working time. This is precisely what analysis of personnel records, backed by interviews have allowed us to do (Box 1), by comparing the careers of women and men in the same profession, subject to similar hourly schedules.

The comparative analysis of the careers of hostesses and stewards in air transport is based on a relational approach to gender in the professional and family spheres. It is interesting from several points of view. Air hostesses make up two thirds of cabin crew. They exercise a profession that is classified in a category of employees, in France's nomenclature of professions and socio-professional categories (PSCs), and which is based on "naturalized female skills": the reception of passengers on board planes, the serving of meals and snacks, care and first aid, but also diffuse empathy towards clients (Hochschild, 2017 [1983]). At the same time, the working conditions of the cabin crew are characterized by large geographical displacements implying a chronic level of time and distance away from home (nights spent away), and by a de-synchronization of ordinary social rhythms linked to time changes, night flights, the seasonality of work, as well as to the irregularity of the schedules.[1] In the company studied here, working hours, which are subject to France's Transport and Civil Aviation Codes, are thus defined by collective agreements negotiated every three years. The hostesses and stewards are "immobilized" twelve days per month (for a full-time contract), and fly in cycles of one to six consecutive days, depending on the geographic sector (short, medium or long-haul). The maximum working time is set at 92 hours per month, but the cabin crew members' activity schedules vary from month to month, depending on the needs of the company.

1. Compared to other transport professions, work in air transport also has its own constraints – jetlag and altitude – which are physically disruptive and affect, for example, fertility. The company studied has in fact implemented working time arrangements for women engaged in a medically assisted reproduction program.

Box 1

The Survey and Material Used

The monographic study of a major French airline allowed two types of material to be collected between 2014 and 2016, on which this article is based:

(1) The personnel records of cabin crew members (CCMs) were made available under a specific research agreement. They included all the CCMs working in the company between 1998 and 2015: after recoding and selection of the sample, nearly 25,000 people were identified as being present for at least one year between 1998 and 2015, of which around 14,000 people joined the company during this period. Constructed from the extraction, sifting and recoding of these records, the resulting CCM database made it possible to study career development in the company, within a relatively stable institutional perimeter (especially after the integration of another company). The variables available were socio-demographic (gender, age, number and date of birth of children), and related to employees' careers in the company (rank, geographical sector of assignment [long or medium-haul], type of contract [full or part-time] and working hours, date and reason for terminating a contract, age at entry and type of contract on entry). These records are produced for personnel management purposes, and do not contain any information relating to employees' professional or personal situation before entering the company, such as their level of diploma, social origin or work experience.

There are several ways of entering the CCM profession: holders of the certificate issued by France's civil aviation authority join the company directly with a permanent contract (*contrat à durée indéterminée*, CDI). Other staff have entered with a qualification contract or more recently on a work-study basis (*i.e.* with a fixed-term contract [*contrat à durée determinée*, CDD]), and have obtained a permanent contract or tenure (generally after only one CDD). They stand out from others who have also entered on fixed-term contracts, so-called complementary on-board staff (COBS), including students hired to help cabin crews on planes during activity peaks, especially in summer. The latter often have several fixed-term contracts (on average 2.8 CDD, and a quarter of them have even had more than five CDD) over one or more years, but very rarely join the company afterwards. Of cabin crew members actually working for the company between 1998 and 2015 at some point, only 16% (around 4,000) had experienced this type of fixed-term contract; and we removed them from our dataset. The dataset used therefore covers around 21,000 CCM staff whose entire career between 1998 and 2015 was identified. The various variables were taken from separate administrative records which may have different degrees of coverage. Pairing with the dataset that describes network assignments (medium or long haul) slightly reduced the number of individuals: all persons "eliminated" had joined the company before 1998. Matching with another dataset describing working time further reduced the field to around 16,000 individuals. Here again, the majority of "eliminated" persons were relatively old cabin crew members: 91% had joined the company before 1998, and 38% in the "resumption" grade; *i.e.* they came from another company. To avoid such coverage problems and to study the experience a CCM cohort recruited under similar conditions, we selected CCM staff who entered the company between 1998 and 2001 (around 5,000), for whom a maximum career of eighteen years was observed (until 2015).

(2) The career analysis was also based on the **collection of qualitative material**, allowing careers to be placed in their social and family context. Thirty in-depth biographical interviews were thus carried out with the cabin crew on permanent contracts with the company; both women and men of various ages and family status (see the Table below). Half of them were hostesses or stewards, the others being cabin managers (CMas) or chief cabin managers (ChMas). These interviews aimed to reconstruct the ways of entry into the profession and their associated representations, by situating them in a longer biographical history. They also sought to bring to light the system of social and family resources on which individuals can rely to pursue "a career", or which weighs on their career (social origin, diploma and previous profession, the possible professional status of a spouse, etc.). Institutional archives (collective agreements for CCMs since 1997, annual social reports, comparative situation reports and three-year agreements relating to professional equality between women and men) as well as the interviews conducted with staff and management representatives finally made it possible to examine differences between the rules governing personnel advancement and the selection practices operated by local managers (in flight), sector managers responsible for examining cases (on the ground) and the joint committees responsible for promotions.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the CCM Staff Set Interviewed

	Sample (N = 30)
Gender	
Women	17
Men	13
Rank	
Hostesses/Stewards	15
Cabin managers	13
Chief cabin managers	2
Age	
< 35 years	2
35-39 years	4
40-44 years	10
> = 45 years	14
Number of children	
0	10
1	5
2	10
3 and +	5
Qualification level	
High school diploma *(baccalauréat)*	7
2 or 3 years of higher education	18
Master's degree, 5 years of higher education	5

It may therefore be asked whether women actually exercise this profession in the same way, for the same duration, and with the same chances of promotion as men. Do the latter benefit, as in other highly-feminized tertiary professions, from advantages linked to organizational factors, sometimes called the "glass escalator" (Williams, 1992; Angelof, Arborio, 2002; Guichard-Claudic *et al.* 2008; Buscatto, Fusulier, 2013; Louey, Schütz, 2014)? And how have the differences in mobility opportunities between women and men changed in line with changes in the company's human resources policy? Indeed, the cabin crew members studied work in a "semi-bureaucratic" company context (Pochic *et al.*, 2011), where careers are organized around advancement based on seniority, which is characteristic of the public services (advancement by rank and scale depending on the date of entry into the company). This is often presented as being less discriminatory against women.[2] Nevertheless, the privatization of the airline in 2003 was accompanied by the introduction of more individualized workforce management methods, with an expansion of "choice-based" promotion, essentially a form of selection by management after consultation with the company's employee unions (in 1997, only 25% of annual promotions were based on "choice", whereas since 2003, 50% of annual promotions have been chosen on the basis of proposals by sector executives and unions, following a formal opinion by the joint committee). These changes in the promotion rules took place at the same time as agreements on professional equality were signed. In this context, it may therefore be asked whether career inequalities between women and men have actually been reduced.

The Unfinished Standardization of Hostesses and Stewards' Careers

The employment and working conditions of hostesses and stewards were initially separated, but have gradually been merged and harmonized. Since the beginning of the 2000s, a policy of professional equality between women and men has also been implemented, although the economic context has deteriorated sharply at the same time.

From Hostesses and Stewards to Cabin Crew

Civil and commercial aviation developed in France at the end of World War II, and used to have two types of personnel with different statuses, skills and remuneration on board planes: i) stewards, or former barmen of transatlantic shipping companies who were responsible for preparing meals in line with the tradition of itinerant hotel services; and ii) flight attendants, whose status was created in 1946, and who were

2. "At first glance, the public sector often appears *a priori* to be more egalitarian and conducive to women's careers, due to the rules governing recruitment, remuneration and professional promotion" (Marry *et al*., 2015, p. 4). See also Alber, 2013. However, "glass ceiling" phenomena have also been observed here (Marry *et al.,* 2017; Fremigacci *et al.*, 2016).

mostly recruited from former Ipsa professions.[3] The latter came from the middle and upper classes, as borne out at the time by their medical skills and their command of English. They ensured the safety and well-being of passengers, providing first aid on board aircraft.

> "During this first period, which lasted until the institutionalization of the cabin crew staff in 1954, transatlantic stewards and Ipsa personnel lived together on planes. Each had its own defined role, and even its territory at certain times: thus at the beginning, stewards had no contact with passengers and only prepared services."
>
> (Barnier, 1997, p. 22)

In 1954, the professions of hostess and steward merged into a shared profession of cabin crew, replacing the former name of complementary on-board staff (COBS).[4] The first common training course for hostesses and stewards took place in the same year. The presence of cabin crew on board airplanes henceforth became compulsory and regulated by law: jobs were conditional on obtaining the rescue safety certificate (RSC) issued by France's General Directorate for Civil Aviation (decree of May 24, 1955). At the same time, the salaries and classifications of hostesses and stewards were standardized within the same salary scale.

However, the institutionalization of the CCM profession and the standardization of statutes only led to a partial homogenization of careers between women and men. As a research report from the Ministry of Transport noted in 1982, "the job of hostess was never considered a 'real profession' but rather just as an employment: *i.e.* a job with limited pay over time, and no career prospects, according to the commercial arguments of the airline companies" (Florence-Alexandre, Ribeill, 1982). In particular, until 1959, it was compulsory to reclassify hostesses for a ground job after eight years work; while until 1963, women who married were required to resign (Barnier, 1997). There was also a different age limit for hostesses and stewards.[5]

The terms of hostess and steward refer to historically separate and gender roles. Yet these are still in force in the collective agreements for cabin crew members which govern working conditions and pay, even if the functions of both are now completely identical. By definition, "hostesses and stewards are responsible for ensuring cabin safety and passenger services on board" (the collective agreement of cabin crew members, 1997). They are subject to the same rules of recruitment, pay and promotion that make up the first rank of cabin crew, before those of cabin manager and chief cabin manager (Box 2). Only questions related to maternity and leave help to differentiate hostesses and stewards in company agreements on cabin crew.

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3. Ipsa (*Infirmières, pilotes et secouristes de l'air*) was a professional body created in 1934 within the French Red Cross, of nurses, pilots and air rescuers.

4. COBS refer henceforth only to students on short-term contracts (CDD), *i.e.* summer jobs during seasonal activity peaks, especially in July and August. They are not responsible for passenger security like CCMs, but only provide customer services, meeting customer expectations as well as possible.

5. Limited to 35 years old until 1955, the age limit was extended to 50 years in 1969, but only for men. It has been progressively harmonized between men and women, reaching equality today.

Box 2

Cabin Crew Careers

The rules for career development vary from one airline to another. However, the hierarchy remains the same, with promotions from the rank of hostess and steward to that of cabin manager and finally chief cabin manager on long haul routes. Cabin managers and chief cabin managers have supervisory staff status (they ensure the distribution of work among employees under their authority on board and under their supervision), while hostesses and stewards are classified as administrative employees in the company nomenclature of professions and socio-professional categories. All hostesses and stewards, cabin managers and chief cabin managers are supervised on the ground by cabin crew managers, who were themselves former cabin crew.

Two types of principles govern the organization of CCMs in the company studied: progress and promotion. Hostesses and stewards are recruited with at least a high school diploma (France's *baccalauréat*) along with a Cabin Crew Attestation (CCA). They are first placed in an adaptation class for eighteen months, before entering the CCM rank as a 4th class hostess or steward. Each year, on the 1 January, seniority is taken into account for progressing to the next class, according to the rules defined in the CCM convention. On the recommendation of her or his superiors, a CCM may also benefit from a fictitious increase of twelve months in seniority within a class.

After four years of seniority as a CCM in the company, a hostess or steward is eligible to be promoted and become a cabin manager. Promotion to the post of cabin manager or chief cabin manager (*i.e.* moving to the next rank) occurs in two ways. The cabin crew member may be put forward for selection by her or his superior or may submit an application. A person succeeding in becoming a cabin manager of chief cabin manager is then deployed on flight routes according to the needs of the company. If she or he is not satisfied during the trial period, the employee may return to her or his home flight division. The programming of selection campaigns depends on the company's human resources policy.

The rules of progress and promotion as presented here are taken from the last collective agreement for cabin crew members (having evolved over the course of the company's history).

Changes in the Company's Human Resources Policy: The Gradual Cessation of Recruitments and Measures for Professional Equality

The company studied here underwent a number of changes in its human resources (HR) policy over the period, linked to general changes in the economics of the airline sector, and to legislative changes obliging large companies to negotiate on professional equality measures between women and men. The period was thus characterized by a context of significant hires, particularly at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s, before the sector went into crisis in 2009. This is borne out by our analysis of personnel flows and the reasons given for entering and leaving the CCM profession between 1998 and 2015. From 1998 to 2001, entries into permanent or tenured CCM

posts were on average five times greater than the departures. The number of hostesses and stewards was growing strongly. Then, from 2002 to 2008, the entries decreased but remained higher than the exits, even though the latter increased. The stock of CCMs continued to grow, but more slowly. In 2009, the entries and exits of incumbents were more or less balanced, yet since then, exits have always been more numerous than entries, while there was even a total stop to recruiting tenured staff from 2012 to 2015. The rare entries during this period only concerned seasonal staff (COBS). The reasons for leaving the company were also changing, with a large share of exits from 2002 to 2012 being due to retirement (retirements at the time represented between half and three quarters of leavers, depending on the dates; apart from leavers with fixed-term contracts), and also the emergence of voluntary departure plans (VDPs) at the end of the period (accounting for two thirds of leavers between 2013 and 2015). These changes reflected developments in the French air transport sector. While flourishing for a long time, established companies experienced a marked slowdown from the mid-2000s with the arrival of low-cost companies in the medium-haul sector (Europe) and Gulf airlines in the long-haul sector. The aviation sector as a whole, and particularly the company studied, have therefore experienced a major change in their operating environment, with important effects on the careers of in-flight staff, as we shall see.

The period was also characterized by the development of a policy on gender equality. In fact, from the 2000s onwards in the airline studied here (as in most large French companies) taking account of professional equality between women and men became a legal obligation. This has been implemented in company agreements or in *ad hoc* documents drawn up by personnel management services. Given the legal obligation for firms with 50 or more employees to publish a comparative situation report (CSR), the airline stepped up the drafting of texts (charters of good practice, agreements and action plans) relating to workplace equality, noting that "the publication of the annual report on the comparative situation of women and men (CSR) is part of a broader policy framework aimed at promoting professional equality" (CRS 2014 CCM, p. 3). Specifically, the implementation of this policy has involved: the signing of three triennial agreements between 2002 and 2014; the establishment of an action plan for 2014-2015; and the inclusion of this issue in salary agreements since 2008. Two statistical indicators have been monitored mainly: i) gender pay gaps at equal rank (measured by the gross annual tax income of CCMs, cabin managers, chief cabin managers and executives); and ii) the number of women and men promoted annually to various management positions. In addition to these legal indicators, set by decree nationally, a series of indicators has been adopted following proposals by the company's professional equality commission.[6]

6. These indicators are: the share of employees on alternating time (detailed by type); the share of hires on permanent contracts (CDI); the share of CDI recruits tenured after fixed-term contracts (CDD); the breakdown of reasons for leaving; the taking of sabbatical leave exceeding six months; the number of training hours followed annually; and access to local services (child-care). Most of these additional indicators are not broken down by gender, with the exception of alternating time, but by staff category.

On the whole, the CSRs emphasize the "small pay gap" between hostesses and stewards, in the order of "€162 gross per month in 2014", although these gaps widen with promotion into management positions. They are then explained by the differences in effective flight time, with women resorting more frequently to alternating time, [7] and so automatically losing a large share of their salaries, which are linked to flight bonuses and daily allowances received during flight rotations. In addition, the reports highlight the equal number of women and men promoted annually to different ranks as a sign of progress in standards and practices of professional equality within the company. However, the finalization of the 2011-2013 triennial agreement stumbled on the integration of *relative* promotion indicators requested by the main flight attendants' union: *i.e.* indicators which report the number of women and men promoted each year relative to the number of people of each gender eligible for promotion from the lower cohort.

These relative indicators, although of central importance, provide a truncated view of careers. To analyze the differences in careers between women and men, it is necessary to analyze their entire career paths: entries, progressions and exits. Have changes in the company's HR policies thus led to a convergence of women and men's situations at different stages of their careers?

The Apparent Convergence of Women and Men's Careers among Cabin Crew

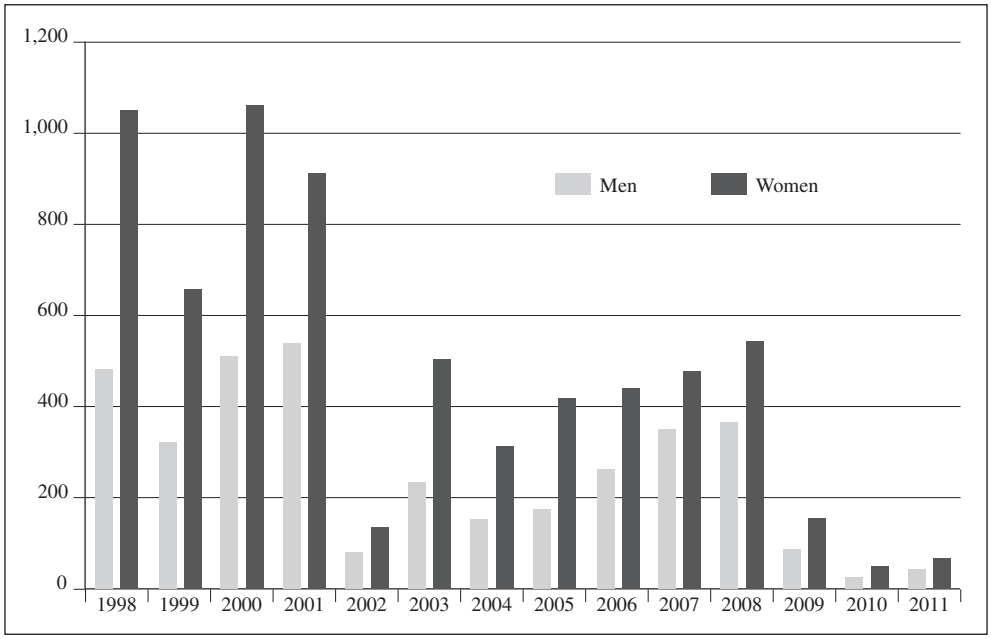
Initial indicators, based on cross-sectional statistics from personnel records, suggest there has been a convergence of careers between women and men. This was confirmed by the interviews.

A Fall in the Proportion of Women, a Higher Entry Age into Careers and a Convergence in the Reasons for Leaving

During the period studied, the conditions of entry into careers as hostesses and stewards have tended to converge, according to personnel records. Thus, women represented 67% of the all cabin crew over the period 1998-2015. But their share of incoming flows was greater than or equal to 67% between 1998 and 2000, and then decreased to around 58-60% in 2007-2008 – a historically low level (Figure 1). At the same time, the median ages of career starts increased and converged, with a slightly more marked increase for women (up from 24 years in 1998 to 27-28 years in 2005-2008,

7. This is a form of part-time work specific to the airline sector. Alternate working-time involves a succession of periods of activity and inactivity without pay, with quotas equal to 50%, 66%, 75%, 80% and 92% of full-time work, per calendar year. For example, a CCM on a 75% quota works for three months, followed by one month of inactivity without pay.

FIGURE 1 – **CCM Entry Flows of Women and Men, 1998-2011**



Interpretation: In 2001, about 500 men and 900 women obtained permanent contracts as CCMs or fixed-term contracts which led to tenure.
Field: First entries as permanent CCMs or with fixed-term contracts that led to tenure, 1998 to 2011.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

and even 29 years at the end of period) than for men (up from 26 years to 28-29 years, and then to 29 years at the end of the period, the same as for women).[8] Finally, the family composition at career starts differed little between women and men, a very large majority having few or no children when taking their first position.[9] This was the case for example of 98% of the men and 99% of the women who joined the company as CCMs in 1999.

The models of entry into CCM careers have historically been differentiated between women and men, and have therefore evolved over time and seem to be converging, albeit in a context of economic crisis which has led more varied profiles of men entering the profession. Indeed, the increase in the median age of career entry suggests a change in recruitment profiles over time, towards higher educational levels[10]

8. However, the criteria for recruiting cabin crew remained unchanged during the entire period: candidates have to be 18 years old or more, hold a high school diploma, have French or EU nationality, pass medical tests successfully, know how to swim, speak fluent English, and have a clean criminal record (source: company agreements).
9. The personnel records include an employee's child or the child of a partner, whether it is a child of the partnership or not.
10. The diploma variable is not included in the database, as diplomas are not a determinant for entry into the CCM profession, in which all new entrants start as hostesses and stewards in the same class. It is therefore not possible to establish a statistical link between the median age of recruitment and the diploma level of recruits. However, the interviews conducted strongly suggest that new recruits are more qualified than former generations.

or recruitment of candidates with previous work experience. While only a high school diploma is legally required for recruitment as a CCM, interviews with stewards reveal the prevalence of higher education diplomas (master's degrees in law, in social sciences, second tier business schools, two-year vocational tourism diplomas, etc.). In addition, interviews with HR managers show that as recruitments have slowed down, the company has sought to hire cabin crew with some work experience and/or who have completed two-year vocational higher education (especially France's two-year *BTS tourisme*). As entering the job market has become more difficult, this profession has been able to attract graduates due to its employment and pay conditions. These often dominate in job choices put forward by the men interviewed, ahead even of the attractiveness of aviation or a taste for travel. This is what Stéphane said:

> "I have always wanted to work for X. The company is a reference in France in terms of working conditions and pay, as well as all the extras, on CVs, etc. Socially speaking, it's still a great company."
>
> (Stéphane, 41, cabin manager, Master's degree in law, no children)

In comparison, the women interviewed presented their choice of being a hostess, if not as a vocation (which was relatively rare), then at least as being self-evident, a kind of "logical continuation" of studies focused on tourism and/or service sector professions (with a Bachelor's degree in applied foreign languages, a two-year vocational diploma (*BTS tourisme*), or a BTS as a trilingual secretary, or even a Bachelor's degree in psychology), with a focus on customer relations (passenger care), smart presentation (wearing a uniform, training in body care, etc.). The possibility of travelling was also sometimes presented as being emancipatory vis-à-vis parental authority and the family norms that weigh on women (pressure to be in a couple, to marry and have children). Entry into the profession often took place in successive stages, first as a seasonal worker or on short-term contracts in second-tier companies (charter carriers, etc.). This was the case of Noémie, the daughter of a teacher and a postman, who started working on flights while studying English at university:

> "At the time, I was leaving boarding school, I was not very serious. I partied a lot. In tutorials and everything, it was… I was there. I was present, but I was too relaxed about work. And when I got to university, I found out how you actually learn to fly! I regret it, because I could have completed my bachelor's degree. But well, I have a job that suits me completely, meeting people, talking with them…"
>
> (Noémie, 38, cabin manager, high school diploma)

In this case, the interviews carried out with the hostesses often reveal a limited projection of their careers over time: work as a flight attendant is presented as an occupation which gradually becomes a profession:

> "I travelled very little as a child, and so I dreamt about it. It is true that in the beginning, you say to yourself that you are going to do this for a while, and then in

> fact the advantages, the way of life, the standard of living also mean that, well, you rarely stay one or two years."
>
> (Sylvie, 43, cabin manager, BTS in technical marketing and a two-year diploma in law)

> "Me, I always lived it as a job of an epoch [*sic*], for a moment. When I joined X, I knew I wouldn't spend my entire career here, it was a job for my twenties and thirties, I didn't want to go on until retirement."
>
> (Maïté, 45, hostess, Master's degree in English literature)

These representations of careers as cabin crew were reconstructed *ex post* in biographic interviews. They thus reveal a certain difference between men and women. Whereas the former immediately consider the job of CCM over the long term, the latter do not seem to make such long-term projections, or else anticipate an adjustment in mid-career when having a first child, which on average occurs at a later age for hostesses than in the rest of the French population. The words of these hostesses contrast with those of David, son of an aviation mechanic:

> "So why did I choose to join X? Because with X, you're on track until retirement!"
>
> (David, 48, steward, BTS land use planning)

These differentiated time projections are also visible in the distribution of reasons for leaving and the distribution of exit ages between men and women (Figure A1 in the Appendix): for the period 1998-2015, men on average left the company three years later than women (at 50 compared to 47). More often, departure was due to retirement or as part of a voluntary redundancy plan (aimed at employees at the end of their career). On the other hand, women are over-represented among job resignations, which are few (voluntary quits accounted for only 18% of the exit reasons for hostesses who left between 1998 and 2015). But these occurred fairly early in their careers (at 34 on average for women). Hostesses also retire on average at a younger age than stewards. Reclassifications on the ground are very rare (less than one percent of the reasons for leaving); they concern situations where the cabin staff lose their license to fly. These differences in the reasons for leaving between women and men were significant at the start of the period studied, but subsequently declined: in 1998, 73% of the hostesses left the company by resignation, compared to 57% for stewards; in 2008, the first reason for leaving for both genders was retirement (68% for hostesses and 76% for stewards) even though women were still over-represented among resignations (16% of reasons for leaving, compared to 10% for men). In 2015, this over-representation of women in resignations was no longer observed and resignation had become almost non-existent (1% of exits of both men and women). Instead, in 2015, 90% of exits for both sexes occurred as part of a voluntary redundancy plan.

An Increase in the Share of Women in Management Positions and of Part-Time Work for Both Sexes

The ways of entering and exiting the careers of hostesses and stewards therefore appear to have converged in the period from 1998 to 2015. So, what about their working conditions and access to management positions?

Table 1 sets out the distribution of men/women across different career ranks, from the lowest (hostesses/stewards) to the highest (ground managers), by looking at the stock of cabin crew members at different dates. While women are in the majority at the lower levels, their share decreases moving up the hierarchy. Their share in higher ranks has nevertheless increased recently, to stabilize around at 64% in the positions of cabin manager (CMa) and 60% for chief cabin manager (ChMa). While women still appear to be slightly under-represented in management positions, the glass ceiling seems to have weakened from the beginning of the 2000s for access to the CMa rank and more recently to that of ChMa.

TABLE 1 – **Distribution of the Stock of CCMs by Gender and Function**

In %

	1998		2002		2008		2015	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Hostess/steward	29	71	31	69	32	68	32	68
CMa	41	59	38	62	36	64	36	64
ChMa	54	46	54	46	48	52	40	60
Manager	54	46	53	47	48	52	48	52
All ranks	34	67	34	66	34	66	33	67

Interpretation: In 1998, 71% of CCMs (hostesses and stewards) were women, while they accounted for 59% of cabin managers (CMa) and 46% of chief cabin managers (ChMas) and managers.
Field: CCM stocks including persons on fixed-term contracts who get tenure or who are in "resumption" in 1998, 2002, 2008 and 2015.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

Regarding working conditions, the distribution of men and women between medium and long-haul routes shows a slight over-representation of women for medium-haul: the gap between men and women is statistically significant, but it is small and is not increasing (Table 2). Women are clearly over-represented in part-time work, especially in the lowest hourly quotas (50%, 66% and 75%). Part-time work increased over the period for both genders, but more clearly for women, especially for "long" quotas (83%, 92%). This is linked to the incentives given to employees by the company, in particular through the "alternate time" measure to manage over-staffing related to the decline in short and medium-haul activity.

In short, the cross-sectional data suggest a certain convergence in the careers of women and men, and in particular a weakening of the glass ceiling for the generations recruited before the 2000s, and probably even before the 1990s. Women were the overwhelming majority of hires at that time. Some of them automatically acceded to

TABLE 2 – **Distribution of CCM Stock by Work Position Characteristics**

In %

	1998			2002			2008			2015		
	Total	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**	**Total**	**Men**	**Women**
Network												
Medium-haul	34	29	36	31	29	32	25	23	26	23	19	25
Long-haul	66	71	64	69	71	68	75	77	74	77	81	75
Hourly rate												
50%	5	1	7	5	1	7	6	2	8	6	2	7
66%	5	1	7	6	1	8	5	1	8	5	1	7
75%	6	3	8	6	2	8	8	3	11	9	3	12
83%	2	2	3	4	3	4	7	4	8	10	5	12
92%	5	5	5	5	4	5	7	6	8	9	8	10
100%	76	88	71	75	88	68	66	84	57	61	81	51

Interpretation: In 1998, 36% of women CCMs were on medium-haul flights compared to 29% of men, and to 34% for all CCM staff. 71% of women worked full time, compared to 88% of men.
Field: Stocks of permanent or tenured CCMs, 1998, 2002, 2008 and 2015.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

managerial positions, given the rules for promotion by seniority. However, differences in the chances of promotion seem to persist between men and women, as the latter remained under-represented in managerial positions, even in 2015. We then tried to explain this persistence, by comparing the cohorts of women and men who joined the company at the same time, and by observing at what point career inequalities were established. In addition, the convergence of recruitment conditions between women and men more recently, within a context of promoting professional equality, raises questions about *changes* in the chances of promotion, according to gender for CCMs recruited later (in the late 1990s to early 2000s).

Career Models Remain Gendered with Fewer Promotion Chances for Women

The comparative analysis of the careers of a cohort of hostesses and stewards recruited at the turn of the 2000s shows that the chances of promotion for men remain higher than those for women, especially for men without children. The differences in promotion chances according to gender are linked not only to a different relationship to fertility between hostesses and stewards, but they are rooted in gendered career models, with an over-representation of women working in part-time careers for family reasons.

A Glass Escalator for Childless Men

To compare and analyze the development of careers within a cohort of recently-recruited CCMs, we selected entries between 1998 and 2001, for whom we could therefore observe up to eighteen years of their career (through to 2015). This cohort entered the company at a time of strong economic and workforce growth. Two-thirds (66%) of this cohort's entrants were women and began their careers with fixed-term contracts (Table 3). A similar yet low percentage (around 7%) of women and men in the cohort had left the company before 2015. While 98% of the stewards and 99% of the hostesses in the cohort did not have children on entering the company, the gap widened during their careers: 25% of these women still had no children in their last year of observation (2015), compared to 46% of men. Above all, hostesses' chances of promotion were lower: 16.1% of men in the 1998-2001 cohort were promoted during the observation period, compared to 8.7% of women. So, it may be asked at what point in their careers did these gaps arise and what were the associated factors? Can we establish a link with the differentiated relationship hostesses and stewards have with fertility?

TABLE 3 – **Description of the CCM Cohort Entering the Company between 1998 and 2001**

	1998	1999	2000	2001
Breakdown by year of entry	28	18	28	26
% Men	32	33	33	37
% Women	68	67	67	63
Median age at entry				
Men	26 yrs	26 yrs	26 yrs	27 yrs
Women	24 yrs	25 yrs	25 yrs	26 yrs
% Of entries on fixed-term contracts				
Men	83	89	59	48
Women	89	90	50	39

	Men	Women
% with no children at entry	98.0	99.0
% with no children at exit	46.0	25.0
% promoted	16.1	8.7
% of exits before 2015	6.5	7.0

Interpretation: Between 1998 and 2001, about 5,000 cabin crew joined the company. The men's share of admissions tended to increase slightly, from 32% in 1998 to 37% in 2001. The median age at entry of both men and women also increased. Only 7% on average (6.5% of men and 7% of women) quit their jobs as CCMs before 2015, the last year of observation.
Field: Cohort of new entrants as CCMs into the company (on fixed-term contracts or fixed-term contracts leading to tenure) between 1998 and 2001.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

A simple model for duration before the first promotion (the actuarial method) shows that during the first seven years after recruitment, members of the cohort (both women and men) did not experience any promotion (Figure A2 in the Appendix). The rules governing promotions within the company do indeed impose minimum lengths of

service (generally four years), which have tended to lengthen in the poorer economic context. Then, the curves representing the time lapse before the first promotion by gender diverged gradually, but "promotion events" remained relatively rare for the whole cohort, while the chances of promotion were not constant during the whole period of observation: promotions were numerous from 2006 to 2008, then slowed down markedly until 2014.

The same model for the "final" number of children (recorded at the last observed reading) seems to indicate that CCMs with children are less likely to be promoted than those without. Moreover, differences in the speed of promotion according to the number of children seem greater among men than among women. In addition, the advantage of being childless has for the chances of promotion seems to be higher for men than women – the slope of the male curve is indeed steeper than that of the female curve. We have also seen that a greater proportion of stewards remained childless compared to hostesses. Furthermore, the "accelerator" effect of being a man on the chances of promotion may be due, at least in part, to different fertility rates between women and men among CCMs, and we must try to isolate this effect from other explanatory factors for the higher chances of promotion for men, by using a regression model.

Moreover, these initial models of duration consider the fact that certain individuals are not observed throughout the maximum observation period because they left the company early: some data are therefore truncated or censored. However, the models assume that this interruption process does not provide information about what we are trying to measure. Yet, we can assume that some cabin crew members leave the company because they are not promoted, especially persons whose departure is recorded for certain administrative reasons (such as resignations), and we have seen that the distribution of these reasons differs between women and men. To take into account these two possible outcomes – promotion and exit from the CCM profession – and to analyze the effect of the different variables, *ceteris paribus*, we implement a discrete-time multinomial logistic regression model (Allison, 1982).[11] It allows the probability of identifying an event to be modelled (here promotion or exit), knowing that it had not been identified before. Certain explanatory variables introduced are constant over time (gender, age at entry, etc.), others are not (full-time work duration, long-haul duration and number of children). The results (Table 4) show that women have, other things being equal and in particular with regard to the number of children controlled for, lower chances of promotion than men, but do not show a significantly higher probability of leaving. Individuals who became CCMs at a younger age have more chances of promotion, yet this is even more so for older-entry personnel. We may assume that the latter are more qualified or more experienced professionally before joining the company. Individuals who entered on fixed-term contracts are promoted less. Having children, regardless of the number, reduces the chances of promotion compared to persons who are childless. Moreover, in separate models for women and

11. This type of model is particularly well-adapted to time discrete data, as in the case here (one observation per year), and it allows concurrent events to be modeled by using multinomial regressions.

TABLE 4 – **Multinomial Time-Discrete Logistic Regression (*odd ratios*)**

Risk of… (ref = neither observed promotion nor exit between CCM entry and 2015)	**Promotion**	**Exit before 2015**
T	1.21***	NS
Gender		
Woman	0.67***	NS
Man	*ref.*	*ref.*
Entry age as CCM		
< 23 years	1.31**	NS
23-25 years	*ref.*	*ref.*
26-27 years	NS	NS
28 years or more	2.36***	NS
Number of children		
None	*ref.*	*ref.*
1 child	0.67***	0.58***
2 children	0.69***	0.60***
3 children or more	0.64**	NS
Entry with fixed-term contract (CDD)	0.79***	0.78**
Duration of work on long-haul routes	0.97**	0.94***
Duration of full-time work	1.14***	0.95***

*: significant at 10%; **: significant at 5%; ***: significant at 1%. NS: not significant.
Interpretation: *Ceteris paribus*, being a woman reduces chances of promotion; becoming a CCM at age 28 or more increases promotion chances.
Field: Cohort of entrants as CCMs into company (fixed-term contract or fixed-term and tenured), 1998 to 2001.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

men (not shown here), this negative effect of children on the chances of promotion increases with the number of children for women, while it is only significant for one child for men. Finally, the duration of full-time work increases the chances of promotion, while the duration of long-haul work decreases them.

In short, the differences in promotion opportunities between women and men seem to be rooted in different career models. At this stage, two gendered career models seem to stand out: i) part-time work for women hostesses who have children; and ii) full-time work and promotion for men who have less children. However, additional analyzes are necessary to understand better the diversity of careers and the way in which they are structured.

Hostesses' Part-Time Careers for Family Reasons

To account for the diversity of cabin crew careers and their gendered nature, in particular concerning links between career type and chances of promotion, we created a typology of careers for the cohort of cabin crew members recruited between 1998 and 2001, and still with the company in 2015. We therefore exclude here, by definition, hostesses and stewards who left the company before 2015: *i.e.* CCMs with short careers whom we have seen were relatively few in number, as well as being women and men

in equal proportion. The aim is to highlight different career models among persons with comparable seniority in the company. To create this typology, we summarized career paths using synthetic quantitative indicators (duration, number of transitions) for various career dimensions: ranks, working time and assignment to different types of networks (long or medium-haul; see Table A3 in the Appendix).[12] These indicators are the active variables of an ascending hierarchical classification. We distinguished five career classes that we described by analyzing the over- and under-representation of each active variable in the different classes. By crossing the classes obtained with the socio-demographic variables (additional variables), in particular the number of children or gender, it is also possible to characterize better each of the classes (Table 5). These are also illustrated by typical cases from the interviews.

TABLEAU 5 – **Typology of Careers**

	Class weight in cohort	**Description of classes**
Class 1	56%	Full time, long haul, no promotion. Average seniority (CCMs entered in 2000/2001, often on a CDD). Few children for women (1.42 on average) and for men (1.11).
Class 2	10%	Full-time, medium-haul, no promotion. Lots of network changes. Average seniority (CCMs joined in 2000 and 2001, not on fixed-term contracts). Few children for women (1.19 on average) and for men (1.12)
Class 3	18%	Part-time (alternating, parenting), long-haul, no promotion. Hourly quotas (66%, 75%, 83%) strongly over-represented. Very few network changes. CCMs who joined in 1998 or 1999, often on fixed-term contracts. More children for women (1.72 on average) but not for men (1.05).
Class 4	10%	Full-time, promotions, medium-haul slightly over-represented. Cabin managers, chief cabin managers, executives. CCMs in 1998 and at an older age than average. Low number of children on average for both men (0.85) and women (1.11).
Class 5	7%	Part-time (alternating, parental, other part-time), medium-haul. Some promotions to cabin manager, but rare (9% of individuals in the class). Many changes in hourly rates. Particularly over-represented quotas: 50%, 92%. CCMs joined in 2001, not on fixed-term contracts. More children for women (1.72 on average) but not for men (0.74).

Distribution of men and women in the classes

In %

	Class 1	**Class 2**	**Class 3**	**Class 4**	**Class 5**	**Combined**
Men	40	33	15	51	12	34
Women	60	67	85	49	88	66

Field: CCMs recruited as CCMs between 1998 to 2001 (fixed-term and permanent contracts) and still CCMs with the company in 2015.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

12. The data were centered and reduced and Ward's criterion was used for aggregation. Indicators were standardized to take into account different careers depending on the year of entry as a CCM (1998, 1999, 2000 and 2001).

The first class makes up the majority of the cohort (56%). It includes full-time hostesses and stewards, on long-haul routes, who were not promoted: 98% were still hostesses or stewards during their last year of observation. On average, 87% of their careers were spent long-haul, and 89% full-time (96% of that of men and 84% of that of women). Men are over-represented in this class: they made up 40% of the class compared to 34% of the overall cohort (Table 5). The average number of children is 1.11 for men (42% have no children) and 1.42 for women. Persons in the cohort with the least seniority (who entered in 2000 or 2001) and who started on fixed-term contracts were over-represented. This class not only includes individuals who show a certain distance to work, and who have detached themselves from career ambitions. The size of the class is also boosted by the slowdown of the company's internal labor market as of 2009. The career path of Jules, a 45-year-old steward living with a partner but without children, appears emblematic of this category. He joined the company in 1998 after obtaining an engineering diploma in aeronautical maintenance: he worked for a year and a half on medium-haul routes before moving to long-haul:

> "I don't envisage this job on medium-haul. For me, that would not be interesting at all. The advantage for me is to travel, to go to places, to have a little time in stopovers…"

At the same time, he quickly became a union delegate, which enabled him to cope better with the fatigue associated with long-haul flights:

> "It was too tiring. I didn't see myself doing it all my life. I would have liked to have worked alternating time like some do, but I was not earning my living enough. So I stayed there. I found this solution with the union."

After almost fifteen years, Jules presents himself as a "simple steward". He analyzes, with a certain bitterness, the interrupted dynamics of his career:

> "Today, I am a steward. I had six selections to be a cabin manager, and each time, I was turned down. And I still haven't become one through seniority… With my union mandate, I have been able to negotiate a lot. All that, well they leave me alone. But now it is costing me. It's true – well, I've never really had a career."

The second class is made up of careers that were also full-time (91% of the duration of careers in this class on average), this time on medium-haul routes (more than three quarters of a career on average). This class accounts for 10% of the cohort, 67% of whom are women. The latter are therefore very slightly over-represented. Almost all of the CCMs in this class had not had a promotion (99% were still hostesses or stewards in 2015). Full-time cabin crew can choose to work in the medium-haul sector when they have children, to have as few nights away as possible in their flight schedule (this is also one of the two classes that has the most network changes: 3.4 on average for women and 3 for men). This was a choice made by Marie-Pierre, 40, cabin manager and mother of two children, who had been doing this job for fifteen years, after having obtained a Bachelor's degree in applied foreign languages. She had

flown medium-haul for a long time, and for more than three years had been working on domestic day flights:

> "It was easier for me to take care of my daughters. I had asked to do mainly morning flights. It's quite intense, because we do four flights a day. It was quite… quite tiring. For the others, for my family, it was very good [*laughs*]."

She recently switched to 80% alternating time, a temporary measure of subsidized part-time work linked to over-staffing. This gave her two months "off", yet she planned to resume full-time work thereafter for financial reasons. More generally, this class includes CCMs who are still quite young in their careers (who often entered in 2001 or 2000), and who often do not (yet) have many children (1.12 on average for men and 1.19 for women), and so managed to reconcile their private or family lives with full-time work on medium-haul routes. But we can see that this position seems more tenable for men with children than for women in the same situation. In fact, men with one or two children are over-represented in this class compared to women with no or one child.

The third type of career (Class 4) covers almost all staff who were promoted, for both women and men: 93% were cabin managers in 2015, 5% were managers and the rest were chief cabin managers. Men are very largely over-represented, making up more than half of the class (51%). These CCMs had worked full-time for almost their entire careers (86%) and had spent a large part working on long-haul routes (71% on average). However, all of them had experienced more network changes than the CCM average, and the time spent on medium-haul routes was slightly over-represented. This is the class where the average number of networks that CCMs had worked on is indeed the highest (4). In both cases, women and men in this class had few children, which is an indication of the link between family availability and the fact of "pursuing a career": this is indeed the class where the average number of children was lowest for women (1.11) and the second lowest for men (0.85). The oldest along with CCMs who joined the company in 1998 were also over-represented in this class, which testifies to the role of seniority (or even diploma and previous job experience) in promotions. François, 55, is characteristic of this type of career. He had been a cabin manager for thirteen years on the long-haul network, had always worked full-time since joining the company in 1998, after training as an industrial designer. He had no children, was divorced and dedicated a large part of his free time to aeronautics (he was training as a private pilot) and to horse racing. He would have liked to become an airline pilot but had failed the selection several times. In an interview, he stated he was satisfied with his work, which in his eyes combines good pay and free time:

> "I often ask for flights to X because I ride a horse, it costs me a fortune. And so, to pay for my hours of riding, I go to X. I take a good book, the hotel is nice, there is a swimming pool, there is sport, I take walks outside, in a Zen park, and when I get home I have €250 to pay for groceries."

He also enjoys cabin service, especially business class in which he often works.

The last two career types correspond to two classes in which the cabin crew frequently work part-time. Part-time work has been encouraged by the company in recent years. These two classes concern women more often than men: women represent 85% of the workforce in Class 3, and 88% of Class 5. Class 3 is a part-time class (alternating or parental time) for long-haul routes, and accounts for 18% of the cohort's workforce. In this class, the average length of time working on long-haul routes was the highest (88% of the staff careers). On average, only 35% of CCMs' careers in this class had been full-time. Medium to long part-time quotas (66%, 75% and 83%) were particularly over-represented. The crew members concerned had a higher number of children than the average: 1.05 children for men and especially 1.72 for women. Men with one child were over-represented, as were women with two or three children or more. The vast majority (99% of women and 98% of men) in this class had not been promoted. However, the CCMs who joined the company in 1998 or 1999 and who are relatively old were over-represented. The career path of Marie-Christine, 43, hostess, appears typical of this category. Joining X in 1998 on long haul routes, after obtaining a Bachelor's degree in psychology, she had three children, which had led her to stop flying for almost ten years. Returning from parental leave, she resumed her part-time long-haul activity. In her eyes, this was "why [her] career had not taken the turn that [she would] have liked". Marie-Christine finally left the company in 2015, as part of a voluntary redundancy plan, due to the lack of prospects for professional development, linked to the airline's poor economic situation and her irregular career.

The last typical career also concerns a class of part-time work (be it alternating, parental or other part-time work). But it is more atypical, covering 7% of the cohort's workforce, operating mainly on medium-haul routes. Only an average 37% of CCM careers in this class were with full-time work (40% for men and 36% for women), and three-quarters concerned medium-haul routes. The very short part-time quotas (50%) and very long quotas (92%) are over-represented in this class, the former mainly involving women and the latter men. This shows up two different uses of part-time work according to gender. For women in this class, part-time seems to be the same as classic part-time work for family reasons: also, women have the highest average number of children (1.72), and women with two, three or more children are over-represented. Moreover, their rate of part-time work (frequently 50%) is high. Julie, 46, was a hostess who graduated from a second tier business school. She is divorced and the mother of two teenagers. She has worked part-time on medium-haul since the birth of her daughter. She worked 75% for twelve years, to the detriment of promotion:

> "I always worked 100% until Juliette was born in 2004. And I almost went to working 66%. And, then as I got divorced, I said: 'No, no, no, this isn't going to be possible. I'll try to stick to 75% and that's it.' I stayed at 75%. […] I have been able to manage the children since I was divorced, having joint custody. But as I'm not on 100%, I never made it to being a cabin manager, because, well, I have the hostess seniority which allows me to have a little more… For the rest, it's a choice of life. For me, being promoted was not an end in itself. My personal life was more important."

The men who belong to this class have a relatively atypical profile: they work part time, on short or long hourly quotas (50%, 75% or even 92%) but obviously not for family reasons since childless CCMs are over-represented in this class: the average number of children for men in this class is 0.74, the lowest of all classes. In addition, they work alternate time or part time. For staff representatives and management alike, this provides a "month for surfing" that men devote to their leisure activities. The CCMs who entered the company more recently (in 2001) and the older staff are over-represented, it is possible that these men have responded to the company's recent incentives to work part-time, in order to combine a leisure activity or a second professional activity with their main job. Some stewards have thus developed paid activities on the side, in real estate brokerage, sports coaching or even in the hotel industry, which require a regular but not continuous presence with customers and clients, and which can be managed with flying on routes that have limited time differences. This investment in ancillary activities is probably to the detriment of their career advancement within the company, as the vast majority of CCMs in this class (91%) have not had any promotion. That said, men in this class make up the majority of the very few flight attendants who are promoted to cabin manager.

This classification therefore makes it possible to distinguish different types of careers and to show that CCMs who do manage to make a career in this cohort are more generally childless and therefore able to be available for the company (to fly full-time, to make frequent network changes, etc.). Women work part-time much more frequently than men, on long or medium-haul flights, primarily for family reasons. This is also the case for some (very rare) men following part-time careers, on long haul flights. By contrast, the part-time careers of men on medium-haul routes seem to be due to other reasons: these childless stewards choose to invest their time in additional income-generating or leisure activities, rather than in pursuing a career in the company. Finally, we note that stewards with children are more successful than hostesses in the same situation in continuing to work full-time: in the two full-time work classes without promotions (classes 1 and 2) the average number of children is highest for men; while for women it is highest in the two classes of part-time work (classes 3 and 5). This persistence in full-time work provides stewards with higher pay, even if it does not allow them to get promoted – for the time being.

Gender Rules: The New Promotion System Accentuates Inequalities between Women and Men

The different career models and promotion opportunities, as identified in the above analysis, are linked to the rules governing advancement.

Selection Procedures and their Evolution

The analysis of selection procedures for promotion clarifies the role of gender norms and organizational constraints in the shaping of career inequalities. Promotion to the ranks of cabin manager and chief cabin manager takes place in two phases: eligibility and admission. Initially, CCMs must meet the regulatory, eligibility conditions for promotion: they must have the required seniority; have applied by registering for the annual promotional campaigns; and have not failed any language tests or aviation safety/security tests in the twenty-four months preceding the closing date for registrations. Finally, candidates must not have received any "unfavorable opinion" from their division managers: opinions being "based on objective and precise data from candidates' professional records, including in particular in-flight assessments and instruction flights over the past two years".

Candidates whose application is declared "admissible" during the admissibility phase then undergo a day of "testing", including so-called "qualitative" tests with "in-situ simulations" and "verification of professional knowledge". A comparison of different CCM collective agreements shows that the nature and content of these tests have varied significantly over time, with the proportion of criteria aimed at assessing technical skills (level of English, safety and aviation safety tests, group simulation tests) taking up less space in comparison to tests intended to assess employees' degree of personal motivation and commitment to work. Thus, "professional group and/or individual tests" have been gradually included, as has a motivational interview conducted by a recruitment officer belonging to an external organization and by a cabin crew member (following the 2003 CCM collective agreement). During the examination of candidates' records by the joint committee in charge of promotions,[13] the report produced at the end of the individual interviews is used as supporting material in a candidate's record, in which all her or his actions in the company are recorded, including, in particular: not having refused a promotion beforehand; not having been subject to disciplinary sanction; the absence of "critical absenteeism"; and not having received a negative opinion from a division head. Also included in candidates' records are all the written contributions that CCMs have been able to submit, on a voluntary basis, to sector managers, aiming for example to improve on-board service or documenting any flight incidents. These "memos" or "reports" are produced at the initiative of employees. They are not mentioned in the collective agreements covering CCMs, but they are taken into account in individual evaluations as an indicator of the knowledge of the staff's working environment, as well as an indicator of employee motivation.

These changes took place in a context in which the seniority promotion system has been partially replaced by a promotion system based on "choice", concerning 25% of the staff promoted. In 2003, this system was extended to half of all promotions. For each selection campaign held by the airline, a list of eligible candidates is thus established which includes 50% of the positions offered according to the descending

13. The joint committee is made up of the Director of Human Resources for CCMs and union representatives.

order of CCMs' seniority, and 50% of the positions offered "according to the choices of the management". In other words, CCMs do not apply, but are put forward for selection by their superiors, with division managers then being responsible for examining candidates' records and defending them before the joint committee.

The data show that this new method of selection reinforces certain career inequalities. While average seniority at promotion was the same for women and men during the first period (1998-2002), during the second, promotions based on choice expanded, and men were promoted on average with less seniority than women, regardless of rank. In addition, at the rank of cabin manager, which makes up the vast majority of promotions due to the firm's job structure, the percentage of women among those promoted decreased very slightly between the two periods, in a context in which the absolute number of employee promotions fell. For 2015 alone, when the last selection for cabin managers took place in the company, detailed figures show that 45 women were promoted to cabin manager on the basis of seniority, compared to 49 men. By contrast, only 15 women were promoted to cabin manager through "choice", compared to 49 men.[14] Thus, the promotion system based on choice seems to have reinforced the weight of gender norms: it accentuates the role of internal social capital within the company, which women have more difficulty in accumulating structurally.

From Selection to Self-Selection

Several filters seem to play a particularly powerful role upstream and downstream of the selection process itself. First, the self-elimination of women from selection processes is fueled by career management policies and by the rules surrounding promotion. Indeed, newly-promoted candidates are assigned to medium or long-haul routes, according to the needs of the company, and lose the possibility of flying part-time during the first year of their tenure as cabin managers. They also have no choice about geographic area of their flights. Moreover, newly-promoted staff lose seniority benefits for leave requests and scheduling arrangements. Due to this constraint, many women do not enter promotion campaigns, in order not to destabilize the often complex family organization they have managed to implement with their friends and relatives to make up for their absence when flying (Lambert, 2018). Recent studies (Lesnard, 2009; Pailhé, Solaz, 2009; Brousse, 2015; Villaume, Virot, 2016) have recalled that mismatches in individual and marital timetables weigh particularly on women who manage the continuity of running households, even if men appear to be more involved in parental work when mothers have atypical schedules: "the fathers mainly play a role of being [temporary] care takers of children" (Briard, 2017, p. 1).

Indirectly, greater competition in the airline's internal labor market, linked to the reorganizations undertaken by since 2009, seems to limit women's enrollment for promotion selection. The continued deterioration of the company's turnover since

14. The human resources department accepted to provide staff data broken down between these two forms of promotion, but only for the year 2015.

2005 has slowed down promotion campaigns, lengthened seniority lists and toughened competition between CCMs (a recurring subject of discussion in airplane cabins). Women seem less willing to apply for promotion, being more exposed to gendered socialization at school or at home, and so shy away from professional competition. This was clearly indicated in the interview with Valérie, 40, a long-haul hostess, holder of a BTS diploma in international trade:

> "And have you passed selection to become a cabin manager or… ?
> – No, not at all. […] There is clearly no room for that at the moment, as they are sacking people through voluntary redundancy plans, well, there are less places. So, on this, I have other priorities."

Moreover, women are fully aware of the role of peer co-optation, and recognize that passing technical tests is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for promotion. They thus criticize certain informal aspects of this selection in the name of moral values they consider as superior. Émeline, 40, a hostess on long-haul routes with thirteen years of seniority, stated clearly that she values solidarity between cabin crew rather than competition, self-promotion and denunciation. She is thus representative of the way women withdraw from competition:

> "There is a lot of denunciation, [by] people returning from flights: 'I'm coming back from this flight, it was great and all. But at the same time, I noticed that on this flight, the chief cabin manager, this happened, she managed the thing badly.' And bang, go on and I'll snitch on you! You don't even need to make an appointment. You go up to see your sector manager, there is always someone. And these people are then chosen on the basis of their records to become a cabin manager or chief cabin manager. It makes up record, like 'I'm involved, blah blah blah'… Our managers are quite fond of this kind of thing. Because that's the way it is: they have to find 25 hostesses among 13,000! That's why considering a career in all that – it's not my thing. No thanks."
>
> (Emeline, 40, long-haul hostess, married, childless, business school graduate)

Finally, women tend to internalize the idea of their limited chances of professional success more than men do, given the context of fewer promotion campaigns. But they also reject certain aspects of the selection process. Some women who are promoted even attribute their success more to luck than to individual technical and managerial skills. This is not the case for men who have been promoted, as shown by comparing the following two extracts from interviews carried out with two cabin managers, promoted on the basis of "choice" in 2015. Marie-Pierre, 40, with a BTS as a trilingual secretary and a Bachelor's degree in applied foreign languages, joined the company at the age of 25. She was struggling in taking on her new role as cabin manager, while also keeping some distance with the careerist dimension of her promotion:

> "I accepted the promotion. But it's really a fluke when you are promoted through 'choice'. I had just happened to fly with my instructor two months in a row, otherwise he wouldn't have known me. I flew with him two months in a row and we got on well. There are some people who don't see their instructor for years! But for the rest, I'm not a super hostess. I don't make a big deal [about the job]. I'm very nice to the

people on board, yes, but I'm not here to get ahead…, I don't go down and kneel. I don't have a career plan."

(Marie-Pierre, 40, cabin manager, married with two children)

By contrast, Stéphane, a 40-year-old steward, was openly happy with his promotion. It was a goal he had set himself. He is sure of his relational and managerial skills and draws on colleagues' opinions to justify his professional success, apart from his sector manager's decision:

"I'm young and on seniority, I surely wouldn't have been promoted. So, it was only by 'choice', and therefore the choice of the management. So, my instructor had to coach me, to introduce me in Paris. And it went well. For me, in any case things have always gone very well, always. There are always people who question the choices. Why him, why not me? For me, legitimacy was never in doubt. On the contrary, people told me: 'It's normal, we are happy for you. You will be a cabin manager. You deserve it a hundred times.'

– And concretely, how did things go?

– So, the manager sees it in your investment, in your professional record, he sees you when he comes on board to see you working. So, he looks at the position you have in the team, the distance you have with the job, the way you speak, the interaction you have with customers, with the crew. He looks at all of that. In my case, she said to me: 'If there is one, it will be you.' Beforehand, I did what was necessary, that is to say I worked for my record for ten years; I invested myself in many missions for the company. I trained for five years. I participated in training courses. I am 100% on the job. You see? As it has been a goal I wanted to achieve."

(Stéphane, 40, cabin manager, without children)

"Reporting to Office": the Conditions for Accumulating Social Capital

Analyzing the effects of the worsening economic context on the selection processes (and self-elimination) of women should not lead to ignoring the structural effects that persist and that are linked to the composition of the group of local managers – sector executives and instructors. The share of men increases going up the ranks (Table 1). Moreover, the introduction of promotion by 'choice' has reinforced the weight of local managers and co-optation by peers in the promotion process. Cécile, 54 years old, who was promoted late from hostess to cabin manager, after having suffered a first refusal of support from her superiors, points to the determinig role of her sector manager and interpersonal affinities in the chances of getting a promotion:

"In 2007, I passed the cabin manager selections. I had the necessary qualifications, but I was not chosen because my manager told me: 'We don't know you at the office; I can't pass you.' So, I said, 'Listen, I'll never pass then, because I have a life, when I get back from flights, I go home. I'm not going to hang around the office.' And I then went to see my new manager, and she got me promoted on 'choice'. She was very

austere, very severe… I don't know, maybe, precisely, she was less into cronyism, you see. She was fair."

(Cécile, 54, cabin manager, married, one child, a Bachelor's degree in geography)

The importance of local managers thus raises the question of the conditions for accumulating relational capital within the company, which is necessary for promotion. In fact, hostesses and stewards are all the more likely to be spotted and promoted by the hierarchy if they work full time, in a sector where checks and in-flight controls are frequent. This may also partly explain the negative effects which time spent on long-haul routes has on the chances of promotion (Table 4). According to an interview carried out with a manager in the HR department, people on medium-haul routes often have the most "complete" records (containing more reports), than persons who fly long-haul: as the flights are shorter, the chances of flying with a manager are indeed greater.

But the in-flight evaluation and the proper execution of one's duties are not enough to guarantee promotion. Candidates must also provide proof of willingness to work, assessed in terms of the time worked on the one hand (limited absences, etc.), as well as their material and moral investment in the life of the company (participation in continuous training, writing memos aimed at improving the quality of service on board, volunteering to do replacements outside mandatory availability periods; for example during activity peaks at Christmas, during school holidays, etc.).

"I applied for the selections to become cabin manager. But now, there haven't been any for seven years. So, I got the marks, what was needed and all. Yet few people were admitted… and the problem is that when you're a mother, often, when a child is sick, it's the mothers who take parental sick leave [to look after the child]. In our case, I ask for them. So suddenly there are stoppages, work stoppages too. And when you're single, a single man, well… the result is that in Nice, they chose a man… I'm not making any value judgements; it's just an observation. But in fact, this is also the reality. When you're single, you have more time to devote to the company than when you have a family life… Even if you love what you do, it's more difficult."

(Noémie, 38, medium-haul hostess, married with two children)

Finally, the possibility of mobilizing "personal" time for the company, in order to do the relational work necessary for promotion, amplifies gender inequalities in a professional context in which employees live far from their airport base and do not have access to fixed office space. This situation recalls more broadly the question of employees' "biographical availability". The fact of spontaneously reporting "to one's sector" after each flight, in the offices occupied by the managers of a CCM's home division, increases the chances of being identified as a serious employee involved in the life of the company, and worthy of promotion – although the rules relating to flight service do not require this.[15] The interviews show how "dropping by the office", as the expression goes, is an essentially male activity. Reporting on one's activities to colleagues and fleet managers, beyond the mandatory summons and annual interviews

15. CCMs go on board from a specific building, where they clock-in and clock-out after every flight.

was more often done by men than women, on the basis of the interviews we conducted. Few women say they "drop by the office" when they return from their flights, even though they are familiar with this informal practice and are aware of its importance for career advancement. Women are far more likely to go directly to their cars in the airport basement car parks, without "going upstairs", so that they can pick up the children in daycare or take over from a nanny or a spouse who has been busy at home for several days.

The availability of time for work is therefore central to analyzing career dynamics. Indeed, its role in career advancement even appears to have been reinforced by the promotion rules and the socio-demographic composition of the company's sector managers, who are mainly men.

In sum, this article describes the *trompe l'œil* process at work when considering the gender gap between cabin crew members (CCMs) in air transport. The data on the flows of entries, exits and the stock of women and men CCMs, at different dates, show a degree of convergence in the careers of women and men over time. This has occurred concomitantly to changes in the company's economic situation and its HR policy, leading to: i) an increase in the proportion of men in hiring; ii) a convergence in the entry and exit conditions of the company, for both genders, in a context of scarce hiring and increased departures (higher entry ages, voluntary redundancy plans which become the main reason for leaving for both men and women); and iii) the expansion of part-time work for all the employees. We also observe an undeniable increase in the proportion of women in management positions, for the generations who arrived before the 2000s, or even before the 1990s. This is synonymous with a relative erosion of the glass ceiling, and it is largely explained by changes in the demographic composition of CCMs, as well as the promotion rules in force: a proportion of the many women recruited in the past automatically gained access to in-flight management positions due to seniority.

Yet the chances of promotion remain lower for women. Moreover, a change that *a priori* is independent of equality issues between genders, such as the development of promotions based on "choice" (*i.e.* selection), has tended to reinforce the inequalities between women and men, despite the company's policy of supporting professional equality. The unequal "biographical availability" of women and men in fact results in different career paths, in particular as women opt for more part-time or medium-haul routes, and make investments in the company that are less favorable to promotions. Indeed, women even self-eliminate with respect to promotion procedures. While it would be wrong to say that the issue of biographical availability does not affect men's careers (see for example the different promotion speeds among men depending on their number of children), women and men do not manage the articulation between this particular job (characterized especially by nights away and atypical schedules) and

their personal lives in the same way: a greater proportion of stewards than of hostesses remain childless, and women leave the profession more frequently by resignation than men do, fairly early in their careers. In addition, almost all women with children who remain in the profession move to part-time work, reducing their chances of promotion. This is what our analysis of career developments of a cohort of cabin crew members recruited at the turn of the 2000s has shown, along with a set of biographical interviews.

The legal requirements and injunctions concerning professional equality have therefore not made it possible to reduce significantly career differences between women and men in the company. "Gender performance" (SCHÜTZ, 2012) is said to be more favorable to the hostesses than stewards in aircraft cabins, yet actually plays a secondary role in career advancement, compared to other factors that meet the company's needs. These include accepting the strong flexibility of flight schedules linked to the cyclical nature of the airline activity, as well as accumulating relational capital with colleagues and local management.

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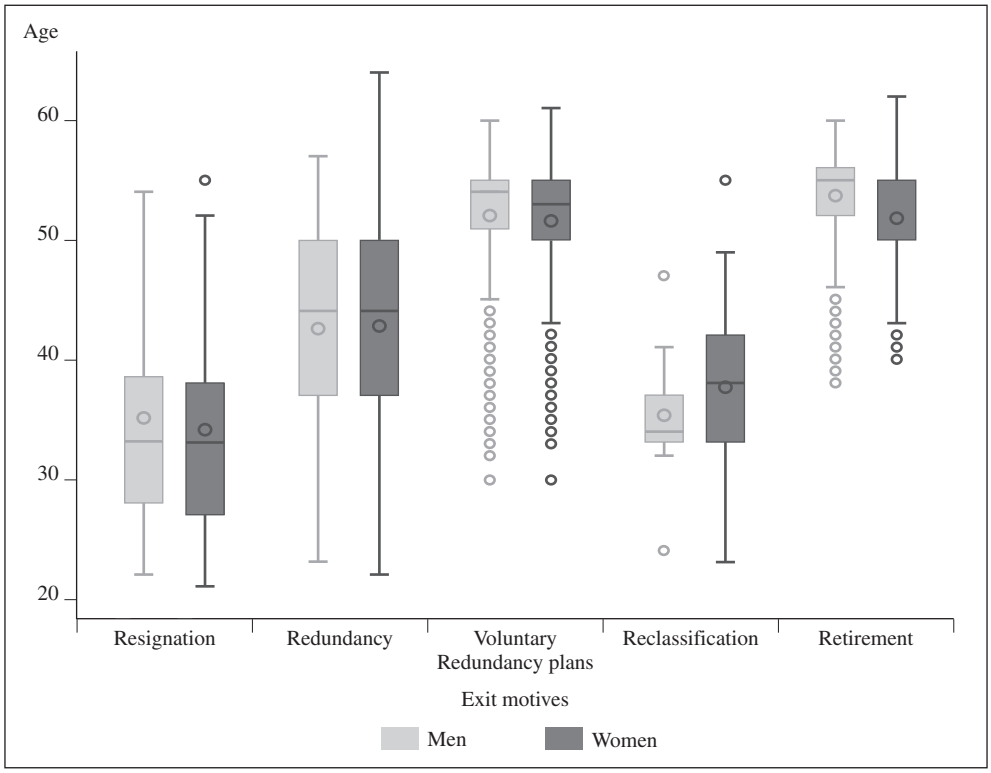
Appendix

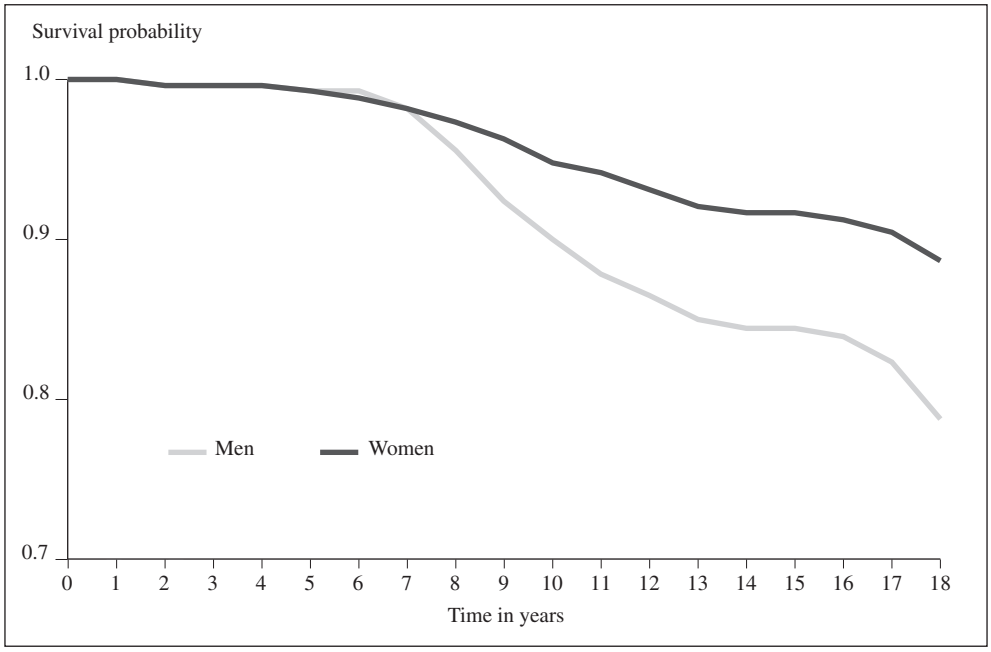
FIGURE A1 – **Frequency of Exits and Age at Exit by Reason for Leaving the Company for Men and Women**

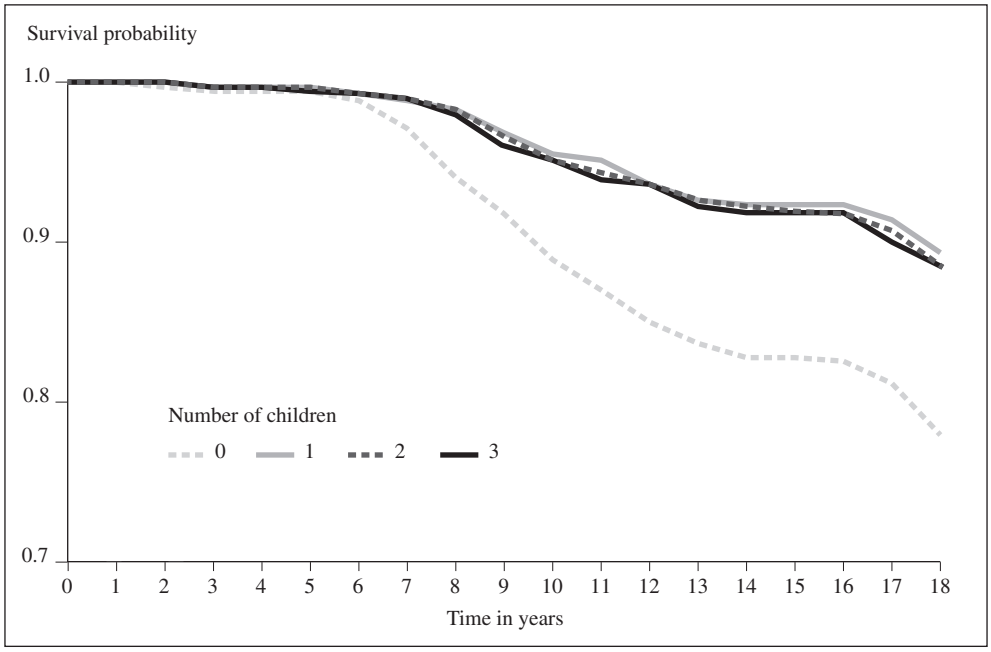


	Men	Women
Exit motives *(%)*		
Resignation	10	18
Redundancy	16	16
Voluntary redundancy plans	19	17
Reclassification	0.5	1
Retirement	54	47
All motives	**100**	**100**
Median age at exit	53	50
Average age at exit	50	47

Interpretation: Between 1998 and 2015, 1,800 men and 3,200 women quit their jobs as CCMs (excluding end of fixed-term contracts and deaths). The average age of women on exiting was 47, and for men was 50. The age of exit was lower for resignations than for redundancy. For resignations, the average age of leaving for women was slightly lower than for men (respectively 34 and 35).
Field: Exiting the CCM profession, except for "death" and end of fixed-term contract, between 1998 and 2015.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

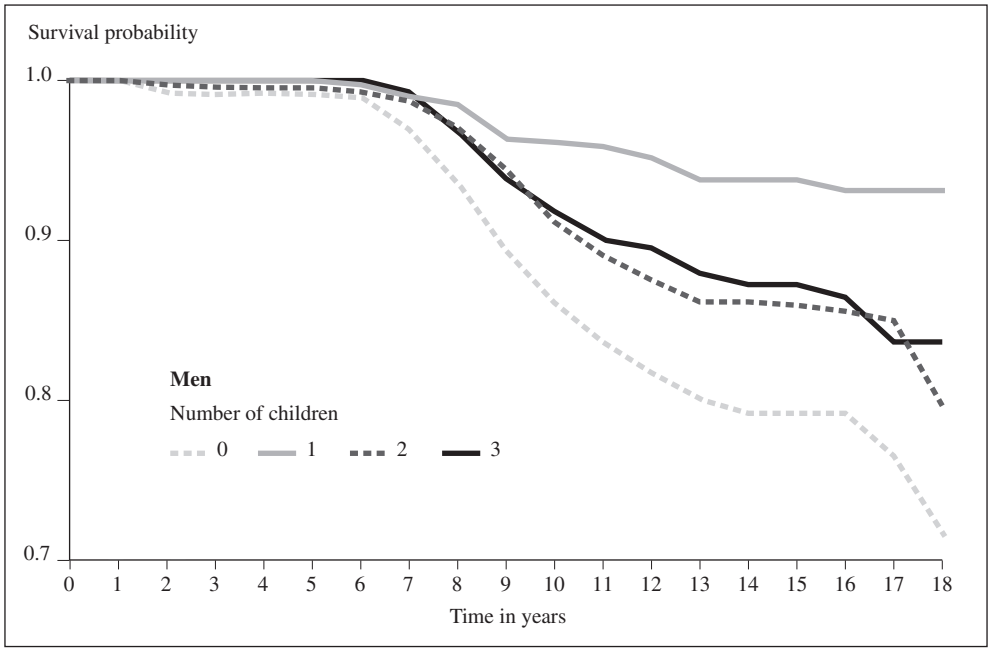
FIGURE A2 – **Length of Time to First Promotion by Gender and Number of Children (Actuarial Method)**



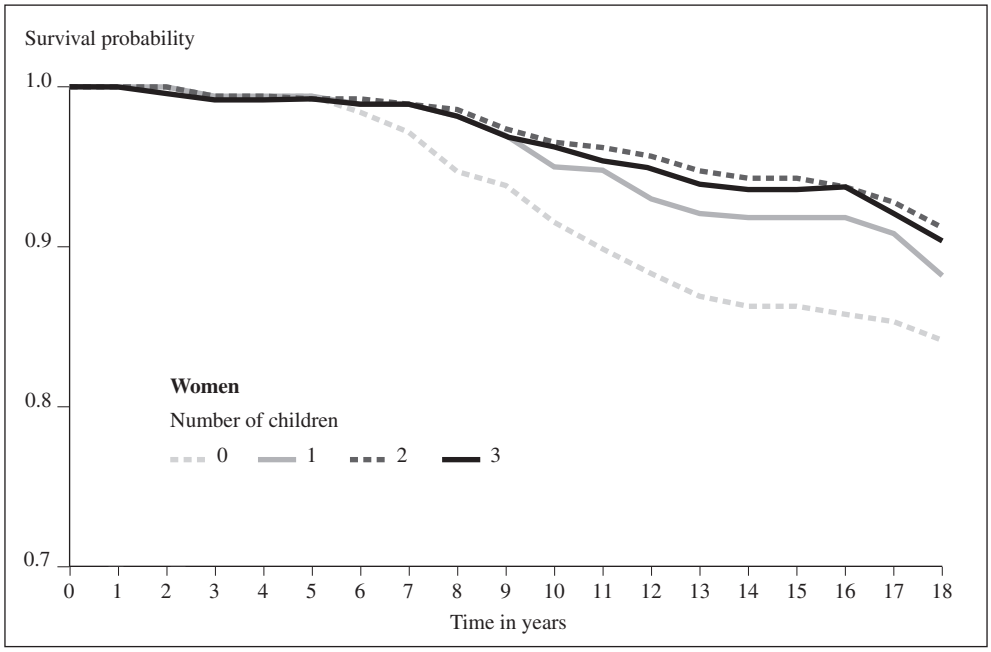


Note: To make the graphs more readable, the scale here starts at 0.7 and not at 0.
Field: Cohort of entrants as CCMs in the company (on fixed-term contracts [CDD] or CDD that are tenured) from 1998 to 2001.
Source: Company personnel records (authors' calculations).

Men



Women



Note: To make the graphs more readable, the scale here starts at 0.7 and not at 0.
Field: Cohort of entrants as CCMs in the company (on fixed-term contracts [CDD] or CDD that are tenured) from 1998 to 2001.
Source: Company personnel records (and authors' calculations).

TABLE A3 – **Active Variables in the Career Typology**

Duration indicators	**Indicators of number of changes**
Duration as manager	Number of changes in rank
Duration as cabin manager	Number of changes in hourly quotas
Duration as chief cabin manager	Number of changes of networks (long/medium-haul)
Full time duration	
Alternating time duration	
Alternating part-time duration	
Part-time duration (other than parental or alternating)	
Duration at 100%	
Duration at 50%	
Duration at 66%	
Duration at 75%	
Duration at 83%	
Duration at 92%	
Duration on long-haul	
Duration on medium-haul	

Mompreneurs

Economics, Parenting and Identity*

*Julie Landour***

Mompreneurs is a movement that appeared in France towards the end of the 2000s. Its members define themselves as women who create a business when their baby is born, abandoning paid employment in favour of an independence supposed to insure a better work and family balance. The movement may seem insignificant when only the members of its "certified" networks are counted, but it involves deep and transversal processes of individuation, as well as the ongoing public celebration of individual economic initiatives and the stress put on parenting, particularly among the middle and upper classes. Based on three years of research carried out in one of the French Mompreneurs collectives, this article summons up these women's words, attempting to grasp – given the objective conditions of the independent professional activity they have chosen to practice – what they expected by giving up their salaried employment. After sketching the identity of an entrepreneurial adventure in the guise of "perfect mother", we will see how the family and its eventual fluctuations affect the life-courses of initially privileged women, revealing the part of fragility hidden beneath that promised, exalting, global enterprise of self.

In 1979, France saw the advent of Business Procedures Centres (*Centres de formalités pour les entreprises,* CFE),[1] of Assistance for the creative unemployed and business take-overs (*Aide aux chômeurs créateurs et repreneurs d'entreprise*, ACCRE),[2] and the National Agency for Entrepreneurial Creations (*Agence nationale pour la création*

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* Traduction: Gabrielle Varro. Article published in French in *Travail et Emploi*, no 150, 2017.

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1. As an interface between business creators and administrators, the CFE makes the first steps towards self-employment easier: https://www.service-public.fr/professionnels-entreprises/vosdroits/F24023, consulted January 27, 2021.

2. The ACCRE "consists mainly in exonerating a creator from paying into social security for one year and maintaining the social minima"; source: https://travail-emploi.gouv.fr/emploi/creation-ou-reprise-d-activite/, consulted January 27, 2021.

d'entreprise, ANCE),[3] all measures and institutions meant to enhance entrepreneurial activity in order to boost employment and growth. Since then, the successive governments have continued to promote employment, and their determination even increased considerably during the years 2000, when a series of laws aiming to make creating a business simpler were voted in (Darbus, 2008; Abdelnour, 2013).[4] Though not directly targeted by those measures, women are one of the main objectives, since they count for approximately 30% of non-salaried workers.[5] Institutional and professional decision-makers have multiplied the initiatives – charters, reports, collectives[6] – to promote feminine business ventures.

The Mompreneurs Collective is one such initiative. Inspired by a movement that emerged during the 1990s in the United States, it appeared in France in 2008. Defining themselves as women who create a business when a baby arrives, the Mompreneurs began to come together *via* the Internet, by exchanging on blogs or on Facebook, then meeting informally in groups that quickly became volunteer associations all over the country. By claiming to be both a training and business development organisation for women company directors and businesswomen who refused to choose between their family life and their professional ambitions,[7] they marked their resolve to be seen as a new professional group, and, by including the supremely feminine figure of the mother, seemed to be subverting the figure of entrepreneur, traditionally presented as male (Ahl, 2004).[8] But the mother figure was also transformed by an unprecedented connotation, in which motherhood triggers the realization that the stability of salaried employment must be foregone in favour of risking independence.

Basing ourselves on a three-year study carried out in one of the French Mompreneurs collectives (see Box), we will be considering, from a broad and materialistic point of

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3. In 1996, the ANCE became the Agency for Business Creation (*Agence pour la création d'entreprises,* APCE), which then, in 2016, became the *Agence France entrepreneur,* AFE. To discover its missions, see: https://www.afecreation.fr/pid15040/qu-est-ce-que-l-agence-france-entrepreneur.html, consulted January 27, 2021.

4. We should mention, among others, the Dutreil laws of 2003 (law for economic initiative) and 2005 (law in favour of small and middle-sized firms), or yet again the law of 2008 that modernised the economy and set up the system of self-employment.

5. Including family help, they represented 31.5% of the non-salaried workforce (*Employment* survey [*enquête Emploi*], 2016).

6. Examples are: the "Charter for female entrepreneurship: 20 propositions to promote businesses created by women"(« *Charte pour l'entrepreneuriat féminin: 20 propositions pour faire avancer l'entrepreneuriat féminin* ») conceived by the *Laboratoire de l'égalité* in January 2013; the work in progress document by Claire Bernard, Caroline Le Moigne and Jean-Paul Nicolaï titled « *L'entrepreneuriat féminin* » (April 2013), published by the *Centre d'analyse stratégique*; the Awareness-raising week for the young on female entrepreneurship, launched in May 2013 by the Ministry of Women's Rights in collaboration with the APCE; and the upsurge of networks of female company directors, studied by Marion Rabier (2013) for her thesis in sociology.

7. See the website of the association, consulted January 2014. For reasons of confidentiality and to preserve their privacy, the exact address of the website cannot be divulged and the original formulations have been changed to limit the possibilities of precise identification.

8. Helen Ahl produced a stimulating analysis of research bearing on "entrepreneurs": first, by reviewing the work of economists and management researchers, she accounts for the implicitly male quality that surrounds the description of the entrepreneur. Then, turning to work mainly carried out in the field of the managerial sciences, more particularly on businesswomen, she shows how gender relations have been revisited in research.

Box

Methodology

This article calls on research carried out in one of the French Mompreneurs associations between 2011 and 2014. They appeared in France towards the end of the noughties (cf. *supra*), at the same time as the regime of auto-entrepreneur was created. Two separate organisations were founded by two socially privileged, though quite different, women. Very quickly, the two associations became rivals, one defending lobbying, the other mutual assistance among members (Landour, 2015a). We will be studying the latter: at the time of the study, the association had nearly 500 members spread out in twenty regional subgroups. On the one hand, it was the most widespread Mompreneurs association in France and, on the other hand, one of the most numerically important networks of businesswomen in the country.

Our research methods combined several approaches: document analysis, observing various types of meetings (yearly conventions, monthly branch meetings, etc.), following up members' profiles and exchanges on Facebook, semi-directive interviews, carrying out a quantitative survey, etc. The 54 semi-directive interviews of the members of the Mompreneurs collective in the Île-de-France region (n = 37) and the Hérault region (n = 17), and the quantitative online survey of the entire association done between September 17 and October 6, 2013 (thanks to its membership file) are what contributed the most to the results presented here: 268 of the 417 women responded to the entire questionnaire, *i.e*. a rate of 64% return, with a sample closely resembling the profile of all its members.

view,[9] this feminised form of non-salaried work, in which independence is considered the ideal way to combine work and family. We wish to enable the reader to hear the Mompreneurs speaking, to try and grasp the meanings they attach to independent labour, while exposing the objective conditions that prevail in the non-salaried professional activity they decided to pursue.

A first point, here, will consist in showing why creating an independent activity is deemed so precious by these formerly salaried employees, who felt prevented from engaging in their work as much as they would have liked: disappointed with or excluded from paid employment, they chose the entrepreneurial adventure along with that of accomplished mother. The second and third parts of this article will confront that dimension of their identity to their professional and more broadly socio-economic situation: several cases will permit seeing how, within a stable family context, a woman's occupation is pushed into the margins by an intensive, domestic and parental workload, to which they are personally committed as much as (re)assigned. In conclusion, we shall examine more closely the situations of those whose family structure is changing, particularly due to a separation or divorce: that is when the objective, individual

9. Following *e.g.* Christine Delphy (1998, 2015), by "materialism" I mean the stress placed on the material conditions that surround a social fact, in particular the economic and social structures which surround its production.

devaluation of these women appears, despite their privileged status, revealing the frailty of the promise underpinning their enterprise to be exalting, not only financially, but in the most intimate aspects of their lives.

Self-Realisation Through Independence

"We have resolved to create our activity in order to have more freedom and, above all, to balance our personal and professional lives": that is how the association's website presents Mompreneurs' "mindset". The rhetoric of the individual as master of his destiny is markedly present in the words of the women we met during the study. Though such rhetoric calls for further comment, it is also important not to sweep it under the carpet: it does in fact account for the sense that individuals make of their acts, and participates in the analysis of their positioning. This part of the article therefore returns to Mompreneurs' words concerning the professional trajectory that led them out of salaried work and into independence, by first exposing their "feminine" critique of salaried employment, then the meaning they attribute to actually exerting an independent professional activity.

A Feminine Critique of Salaried Employment

Though Mompreneurs present their access to independence as their own choice, their bifurcation nevertheless confirms their conspicuously compromised participation in the job market, as our quantitative survey showed: of our respondents, 28% had been unemployed before becoming Mompreneurs, half of them in long-term unemployment, a clearly higher ratio compared to all women aged 25 to 49 (9.1% in 2015)[10]. Also, 8% had no professional activity and 2% said they were students. Besides, those who had a contract with a salary were not systematically at work: the 65% who were had just returned from a maternity or parental leave,[11] but 9% were still away on maternity and 15% on parental leave. Lastly, of the 205 women who really became self-employed after having occupied a paid job, 24 (11%) were approaching the end of a short-term contract (CDD, temporary work, etc.) and 96 (47%) had signed a breach of contract by mutual consent.[12]

In fact, of all the respondents, only 40% had occupied a paid job before going independent; this echoes the difficulties encountered by women seeking to enter the

10. Source: INSEE, *enquête Emploi* 2015.
11. In 2010, 28% of mothers whose children were under 8 stopped working for at least one month by taking a full-time parental leave, while 21% worked part-time (source: *enquête Emploi*, annex on work and family balance 2010). Though the figures do not exactly correspond to those we obtained, they seem to indicate that Mompreneurs take parental leave less often than the overall female population.
12. The fully accepted and favourable nature for the employee of this sort of breach of contract was challenged from the start in the first evaluations (Berta *et al.*, 2012; Dalmasso *et al.*, 2012).

labour market (Maruani, Meron, 2012), particularly after one or several pregnancies (Meurs *et al.*, 2010; Pailhé, Solaz, 2006, 2012; Régnier-Loilier, 2009), but, in light of the Mompreneurs' social characteristics, it deserves closer examination. For, although quite diverse, these women form on the whole a privileged group: according to the categories of our survey, 55% declared that, in their previous jobs, they were engineers, managers, directors or self-employed, and therefore fell into the higher categories;[13] 23% declared that they belonged rather to the intermediate classes (supervisor, technician or similar) and 22% to the lower classes (worker or similar, office worker, sales or service personnel). Therefore, Mompreneurs would be three times more numerous in the higher categories than the entire national female population in France (17% in the 2008 census). We might add that their favourable situation is even reinforced by their conjugal configuration: 86% live in a couple and 77% are married.[14]

Such diverse situations introduce nuances in the ways these women relate to salaried employment. Some never managed to hold a job in any permanent or satisfactory manner: it was so with Nathalie, the daughter of a skilled labourer and a stay-at-home mother, whose "destiny was not brilliant" when her husband left her. Nathalie, who sought to differentiate herself from her family milieu by her fervent dedication to the arts and letters, registered in a literary programme at university but, not well equipped to succeed, "missed the boat" during her first year. She then launched upon a series of small jobs, married early and divorced rapidly, while at the same time entering a curriculum to become a professional in communications. With her technician's diploma (*Brevet de Technicien Supérieur*, BTS), she went to Paris and devoted herself to several cultural projects, but none that, despite all her efforts, ever allowed her to land a stable position. At 30, "morally and physically exhausted", while planning a baby with her second husband, an IT manager, she decided to give up salaried work and create her own, independent activity:

> "I wanted to change my life. That meant of course having a baby, changing my occupation, stop being cannon fodder. I knew I couldn't get myself hired, I had no degree, I didn't want to go back to school, I wanted all that to stop, so I told myself, my chance might be to go independent."
>
> (Nathalie, 38, Corporate Services Company [*société de services aux entreprises*], interviews July 24 and August 6, 2013)

Others, who originated from more privileged families and boasted more degrees, had no difficulty finding stable jobs (with open-ended contracts, *contrat à durée indéterminée* [CDI]), frequently in a managerial capacity or an intermediate profession, or as employees. In those cases, what went wrong and prevented them from staying with it, were the mishaps that befell them during any working day, which could be of two kinds: either the company encountered economic difficulties and could no longer guarantee an otherwise satisfactory position: that was what happened to Florence, an

13. According to the modalities proposed in our study.
14. For further details, see Landour, 2015a.

all-round, self-taught manager in a small company near Paris. When she was laid off for economic reasons, she and her husband Hugues, whose professional career was more unstable, already had three children. She tells the tale:

> "After I was laid off, […], I said to myself: 'OK, what do I do now?' I thought of trying a VAE [Validation of Competences Acquired Through Personal Experience, *validation des acquis de l'expérience*], yeah, I think that's what it was, and Hugues has been telling me for years: 'Florence, open your own business, open your own business!' All of a sudden, I thought: 'Why not, after all?' My boss also asked me to create my own company so he could pay me to work for him, […] so right then and there, I decided to be my own boss."
>
> (Florence, 40, Corporate Services Company[(*société de services aux entreprises*], interview April 10, 2012)

But, more frequently among our interviewees, it was the women themselves who often already had children and could no longer put up with the fast pace linked to their managerial status. More often employed in large-scale companies, they were confronted to an organisation of labour which made no sense to them, and subjected to pressures that their bodies and minds could no longer handle. That is what Rebecca describes. A top executive in a large cosmetic firm, she was married to another top manager who already had two children of his own. The couple have three children in common. Rebecca, who comes from the petite bourgeoisie in the Paris area and has a master's degree in civil law, ran up against the competition that is typical in that sort of company – noting that it worsens with every new pregnancy – until her body gave up and made it impossible for her to continue on the job; she was away sick for several months and ended up negotiating an economic dismissal:

> "There was a very rough meeting with the girl who was stealing my files […]. I told her where to get off, she complained, there was a meeting with our marketing director and she treated me something terrible: she came out with all sorts of horrors, I stood up for myself and sent her packing, and then we went back to our office and she got all sweet and lovey, as she's always been with me because she's such a hypocrite, she says 'So you had a good holiday? [imitating a honey voice]', whereas we had just scratched each other's eyes out! It was unbelievable – I bugged. I burnt out."
>
> (Rebecca, 36, Corporate Services Company [*société de services aux entreprises*], interview 26 October 2012)

Lastly, others were well integrated in the workplace (with open-ended contracts and in positions that did not represent any particular hardship) but could no longer muster the energy that sort of job requires to find self-fulfilment. They start imagining ways to build somewhere else the means to a self-accomplishment that takes all the spheres of their life into account. Sonia is a good example: she was an executive secretary in a very large communications firm, her husband worked in a public company and they had two children. She was, all in all, pleased with her situation and her relations with her co-workers, but wanted to get ahead in the Company and, to that end, registered in several training schemes. But despite her requests and the backing

of the director she worked with, "I was given to understand that I'd never be able to advance." Her mother's situation – a former dressmaker who was divorced and living a life of deprivation – incited Sonia to imagine a way to attain the professional responsibilities to which she aspired and at the same time create a job "made to order" for her mother. To launch her activity, she took advantage of the voluntary redundancy plan the Company had set up.

Behind these life-courses, a globally damaged relationship to salaried employment is discernible, which takes different forms according to these women's original social characteristics (qualifications, age, etc.), to how they fit into their jobs (type of company and economic viability of same, position occupied, etc.), and according to their conjugal and family situations. A critique of salaried labour equally appears, which they no longer see as desirable. That criticism, however, is more feminine than feminist: though the difficulties they encountered were largely linked to their inferior position within the system of social sex relations (the importance of qualifications to integrate in a workplace, horizontal and vertical segregation, productive and reproductive burdens, etc.), the women we questioned speak of them in terms which are too personal to allow them to interpret their situation politically.[15] And, too, the supremacy they confer to their individual, personal case extends to the perspectives they envision for the business they are about to create.

Independent Work As Self-Fulfilment

In the wake of the difficulties experienced in salaried work, it happens that our interviewees sometimes fall into a black hole, *i.e*., withdraw for a shorter or longer period of time from all professional activity. Though they occupy without a doubt the more privileged precincts of French society, they consider work as a powerful vector for their own identities: their words constantly return to the loathsome figure of the housewife, and long-term unemployment is implicitly assimilated to a form of welfare, that they also severely criticize. Focalising on the importance of professional activity for one's identity is compounded by their intimate relationship with self-employment: among Mompreneurs, 72% say they know one or several self-employed persons. More precisely, among them, relatives in independent occupations are clearly over-represented: their own fathers were in independent occupations nearly twice, and their mothers nearly three times more often than in the general population, as are their partners, among whom 16% were artisans, merchants or company directors *vs*. 8% of the active male population.[16] These women therefore have the advantage of being plunged into an "entrepreneurial bath" – actually a way of life for those

15. We might add that the word "Mompreneurs" and its incompletely feminised form – in French, to be a feminine word it should end with the suffix -eures – have never been disputed. There is great ambivalence in discussions about feminism in general, and actual practices as observed show a strong impregnation of sexual roles. For further details, see Landour, 2015b.

16. For more details, see Landour, 2015a.

who have independent families as well as partners. That socialisation contributes to transforming independence into the most enhanced way of exercising a profession and freeing oneself from paid work, criticised for sometimes being so exasperating. It must also be noted that the interviewees barely mentioned the social protection attached to salaried employment, or when they did, more often than not they attacked it – as *e.g.* retirement. In our quantitative survey, 56% declared they created their business to practise an activity corresponding to their values; 24% saw independence as a way of practicing their dream occupation: the activities they chose translate idealised visions of self-accomplishment.

In that way, some of them are seeking to reconnect with a sublimated form of work (Dujarier, 2006) that mixes body, mind and feeling. Artisanal occupations in particular seem meaningful to them (Osty, 2003), whether or not they are put into practice. Aside from the fact that, to be best performed, such occupations demand extreme virtuosity, they reconnect with quintessential feminine qualities such as meticulousness, organisation and taste (particularly in the case of fashion, whether in clothing, decoration or linked to the latest gastronomical trends), of which Laurence is an example: a former sales employee married to a police officer and mother of one child, she has been making jewellery for years. When she was laid off, she launched her activity and a brand-name to sell the creations she made by hand with "passion" and "enthusiasm", deriving great "pleasure" when seeking out various providers to look for the raw materials she needed, inventing new models and working on materials and objects.[17]

Another characteristic of the activities chosen by the Mompreneurs consists in wanting to help others[18] – but not just any others. None of them, for instance, bifurcated towards the public health or social sector and none have joined a charity. Frédérique's case is typical of the determination to help "similar others": a teachers' daughter married to an IT executive, Frédérique was a secretary in a small business in the South of France, which dismissed her during the three-year parental leave she took when her second child was born. At the end of her leave, during which she had "really appreciated the time spent with her children", she decided to create a business which would allow her to stay at home, and rediscovered what, as a teenager, she loved to do: "What I did was write people's memories, individuals', family memories and all that, since I was 15, I really liked that." She decided to become a public writer, but not in any social or legal capacity, which she saw as arid and uninteresting: "Things like justice, like…, talking about problems and all, that's not really my thing, I'm too…, well, anyway, you either feel it or you don't." These women therefore aim for activities that might be classified as "care", but a caring one might call "clean", for people who are not very far from their own situation – in other words, who are neither sick nor in any great economic or social need.

17. Cf. Jourdain, 2017, presenting the situation of female artisans.
18. Once again, a trait essentialised as feminine.

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Putting one's self forward, sometimes totally, is the main point of the activity they create, and some do not hesitate to make themselves the very object of their sales pitch. They then frequently give their own name to their activity. Mélanie, daughter of a pharmacist and a Spanish teacher, who declares she has always refused the "contract-shackle" (*CDI-cadenas*) which, besides, she had great pains to obtain after her Master's degree in graphic identity, presents a very extreme version of self-accomplishment that practicing an independent activity allows. For example, she baptized her self-enhancement company "Richness of Self": her offer consists in accompanying independent workers in their communications, through collective training and periods of individual coaching aimed at "creating coherence" between one's personality and one's activity. But Mélanie's self-enhancement goes even further: laid off after a stormy relationship with her boss, she decided to create her own activity – at the same time, her partner died of a staggeringly rapid cancer. Though she remains relatively discreet on the subject, the various posts on her blog often mention the resilience she was capable of mustering after that tragic event. She even turned it into a proof of the quality of the advice she sells to the self-employed people she accompanies… of whom many are Mompreneurs:

> "For a long time I told myself it was 'normal': life had been hard enough on me so that at least I should be serene in my business. But nothing is ever 'normal'. It has nothing to do with my lucky star or optimism or self-esteem. In this world, where it's good form to say that the crisis is everywhere, my business and my life are really good. Even when my life was hell, my business was good. Why, and why me? Someone said not long ago: 'It's unbelievable, with all the catastrophes you've been through, you always manage to transform things so they go your way.' Surely, it's because I don't think in terms of business plans, targets, obstacles or difficulties; that vocabulary's foreign to me. That doesn't mean it doesn't exist. It means I see things differently."
>
> (Excerpt from Mélanie's blog, published April 9, 2015)

The work they achieve as independent workers is therefore mainly thought of in terms of self-accomplishment. Mompreneurs' professional bifurcation in many ways recalls the conversions analysed by Pierre Bourdieu among members of the "new petite bourgeoisie" (1979, pp. 409-421), principally its female members. They aim for new professions, on the border between the private and public spheres, where self-expression and self-presentation are key. Mompreneurs usually have more diplomas than their parents (as a result of mass education) and are more economically active than the women studied by P. Bourdieu, they share an appetite for culture and domestic ethics, and are enthusiastic consumers. Starting a business – in the sense of creating an activity – is in their eyes a factor that sets them apart, facilitating a greater amount of self-expression and "authenticity", where taking risks is more prestigious than paid employment, which they often see as anaesthetising. Mompreneurs disdain the instrumental sides of work (remunerations, various social protections, etc.), the more as they are masked both by a psychological vision of social relations and a conjugal security that dilutes the autonomy of resources and what each partner contributes to

the household. When analysing Mompreneurs' stories, their family circumstances must be particularly taken into account, not only because independent work is in fact an economic-family structure, but also because parenting is an absolutely central part of that work.

Professional, Parental and Domestic Commitments in Competition

As their name indicates, Mompreneurs assert their resolve to place work and motherhood, professional and parental commitments, on equal footings.[19] To understand it, it is necessary to look closely at what parental and more especially maternal commitment implies, that makes the category unprecedented, even though mothers at the head of independent activities are an ancient and well-documented reality. The first part of this section concentrates on the ways Mompreneurs manifest their parental commitment by word and deed. In the second part, we describe its consequences, *i.e.* the dynamics of being reassigned to the domestic sphere.

A Demanding Conception of Parenting

Our interviews and observations permitted us to collect the various components of the parenting Mompreneurs actually do. At first determined to assert their professional existence, they do not give motherhood a central place in their discourse, whereas it is definitely central in their life-course. The fact that the women who had difficulties to become mothers are over-represented in the survey casts light on the subject. Carole, who has a degree in real-estate business law and is married to a CEO specialized in IT, adopted a child. Though during her interview, she insisted above all on her professional commitment, she admits that adoption was an obstacle course that governed her entire life, even to make her quit her job. After accumulating unpaid holiday time during the adoption procedure, then a parental leave when her child arrived four years later, she can no longer put up with "being able to see her daughter only twenty minutes a day". Parents' – more particularly mothers' – availability is in fact at the heart of these women's definition of what parental work entails (Landour, 2016).

19. We prefer using the term parental rather than maternal, based on the idea that all the tasks listed under the term "parenting" can be done indifferently by a man or a woman (aside for the work connected to pregnancy and giving birth *per se*). That those chores are more often done by the mother or the father remains to be seen according to the results of the study and must be analysed like a social fact in its own right. We therefore consider that parenting signifies everything that adults do around their child. We include health work (feeding, care, etc.), but also education (*e.g.* learning good manners), schooling (supervising homework) and everything that, concretely but also mentally, comes under the concept of caring for a child. Parenting evolves over the different stages of life, marked by institutionalised levels and places (entering school and its various rhythms), and by more or less predictable events (evolution of the family framework, etc.). We might add that parenting can also be carried out by adults other than the parents (other members of the family for example, or professionals such as mothers' helpers or childcare assistants).

Beyond the words employed, the obligation to be available, which is part of the Mompreneur ethic, impacts their itineraries to a great extent. When the children are small, for instance, the various sorts of care a child demands require a greater or lesser amount of physical and mental availability. The most time-consuming chores figure regularly in Mompreneurs' narratives: giving birth at home, carrying the baby in a scarf, sharing the bed with the baby, prolonged breastfeeding (sometimes until age two) and other nurturing and care procedures (washable nappies, home-made baby-food, etc.). Then, later on, being there for the children can also become very necessary, especially where school is concerned, as we saw earlier in Frédérique's story. Despite having been laid-off, she claims she had a "wonderful time" with her children during her parental leave, being able to give them lunch, keeping the youngest at home in the afternoon, or participating in the school parents' association. During her interview, when she listed all the activities she had organised for her children, she pointed out the cases of mothers who seemed not to feel obliged to do the same for theirs:

> "You've got mothers who stay at home and don't know what to do with themselves, that's true too. I have a chum who's a house mom and she counts the days until the next vacation. She'll say: 'Another week to go.' When you hear that you think, alright, it's true she likes being at home but at the same time, her kids drive her mad. On top of that she's not one for walks or outings, so they don't know what to do with themselves either, and when that happens…"
>
> (Frédérique, 39, Corporate Services Company [*société de services aux entreprises*], interview June 11, 2013)

Frédérique blames the laziness of some stay-at-home mothers, whom she tries not to resemble, but she is equally critical of the mothers who have remained active, who "don't know how to stop", even for a "salary that's not so great", blaming their lack of availability for their children. The pleasure she gets from being with her children – also a distinguishing factor compared to other mothers – is what prompted her to resume an independent activity, which was both gratifying and could be adjusted to the complete and dense personal presence she wanted for her children:

> "That's the side… I have a professional activity to develop, it's my thing, straight out of my gut, it's my desire. I really want to do everything it takes to make it work and it *will* work because I believe in it so much it can't fail, and at the same time I have children and I want to manage it all at once: but my children mustn't suffer from my absences, I must be there for them because that's what I like, to fetch them at lunchtime so we can eat together, I fetch them at school at 5, I love going to their shows. I love it all and I am all that at the same time. I'm an available mom and I'm the girl who creates her own professional activity too!"
>
> (Frédérique, 39, Corporate Services Company [*société de services aux entreprises*], interview June 11 2013)

Parallel to creating an economic business, which as we have seen, also expresses their identities, by their involvement in intensive parenting, Mompreneurs are at the head of a parental enterprise too. Though the latter is structured round child-centred activities (Garcia, 2011), the women use it to distinguish themselves from other mothers (Landour, 2016). These life-courses are therefore the end-result of a global business of self (*entreprise globale de soi*) (Ehrenberg, 1991), and the salary setback is apparently cancelled out by an individual initiative that no longer concerns work alone but the family as well and more broadly everything in the personal domain. Nevertheless, socially speaking, the initiative does not always prove absolutely successful. In particular, for the observer with a materialistic set of mind, Mompreneurs' dual commitment has very real consequences for their life-course: it triggers a greater assignation of these women to the sphere of domesticity.

A Global Throwback to the Domestic Sphere

Engaged in an independent activity, aimed above all at self-fulfilment, Mompreneurs simultaneously deploy an intensive form of motherhood (Hays, 1996), in the shape of a strict mothering which has itself become a source of social positioning. If it can be taken for granted that the job of parenting, though it may be visible outside the home, is done mainly in private, our survey shows that 74% of the Mompreneurs practice their professions at home. True, that fact must be connected to the weakness of their initial investment: of the 66% who say they invested less than 8,000 euros, 45% invested less than 2,000 and 48% between 2,000 and 4,000 euros. By investing mainly their personal and family savings to create their activity (only 20% claim to have asked for a loan and only 11% a bank loan), Mompreneurs do not dispose of much room for maneuvering, which does not allow them to invest in another workplace than their own home.

Mompreneurs tend to attach great value to working conditions that permit them to work while watching their children, especially when they are babies, supposed to sleep all the time. In fact, many of them indicate that they find it impossible to really focus on their work when the children are there – the fathers are for the main part absent during the day; that is what Lili explained to us. A graphic designer who "loved corporate life", Lili was forced to accept a breach of contract right before becoming pregnant and moving into the Greater Paris area with her husband, a clothing store manager. Her former employer gave her occasional assignments, which incited her to become self-employed during her pregnancy, a status that became permanent "somewhat by chance", depending on the contracts that turned up. After her baby was born, she tried to work from home but found it difficult to juggle everything at once, because the fact she couldn't take care of the baby in spite of being in the same house with it was contrary to her principles and how she wanted to raise her child:

> "Last year was really awful. I had done my accounting and she stayed one and a half hours alone in her playpen, all alone: she was playing but I don't want a rump

> child, I don't want to leave her sitting alone in her pen. What I like best is painting with her, but I like a lot of other things too, playing, reading, singing songs, I want her to be lively and awake, I'm not going to set her in front of the telly, that doesn't interest me one bit."
>
> (Lili, 32, Corporate Services Company [*société de services aux entreprises*], interview June 23, 2012)

As we saw above with Frédérique, Lili wants to stimulate her child, and that depends on being constantly present to multiply the number of awareness-raising activities. She is therefore incapable of fulfilling her parental obligations while working and had to resign herself to leaving her daughter with a "nounou", at first part-time, then full-time, when her child was only five months old but she too was obliged to work full-time.[20] But it was never really a full-time: her spouse looks after the little one on Wednesdays, but, as Lili explained, she found it terribly hard to work with the whole family there. Aside from parenting, Lili is also for a large part responsible for the household: her partner takes care of the shopping but she does the laundry (a very demanding chore when there is a baby), keeps the house in order and does the rest of the housework. When she asked her partner to help more, he suggested they take on a cleaning lady two hours a week. But Lili feels guilty and always makes sure the apartment is in good shape before the cleaning lady arrives:

> "It doesn't seem like much because she only comes for two hours, but for her to be able to clean, everything's got to be put away, because she's not supposed to do that. So you're obliged to put everything more or less back in place, to keep things in order. So in the end, when she comes, it's really to do the cleaning, whereas when *I* do the cleaning, I put things away at the same time."
>
> (Lili, 32, Corporate Services Company [*société de services aux entreprises*], interview June 23, 2012)

We should stress that, contrary to what the notion of reconciling the different spheres of life suggests, superimposing the professional and family domains does not at all go without saying. By setting up their activity in a space shared with the entire family, Mompreneurs are also forced to give the family, when they are present, access to that space, which is also theirs: before opening up her shop and her laboratory, Caroline, formerly a manager in the Paris Region, married to a logistics engineer, launched into the food trade, transforming "her house into a factory". She invested in specific equipment such as "a progressive cooling oven, a cabinet she had made to order for the house, exchanged the drawing room tables for market tables that fold up when there's a lot of volume to deal with", or transformed the office into a "store room" and the washroom into a "cold-room". Not only "our home" was "no longer home!", the way the space was organised impacted the rhythm of the work as well:

20. Contrary to Frédérique, Lili's partner worries about their couple's economic situation and forces her to keep up a lucrative activity, particularly so as to contribute to reimbursing the loan they took to buy the apartment.

> "Beginning at 5:30, everything gets put away, the table is cleared and cleaned, the whole kitchen is cleaned, the cakes are piled up so we can eat later on, etc., we go pick up his son, etc. and if the cakes aren't finished, we pull everything out again at 9 and finish at 11 p.m."
>
> (Caroline, 33, in the food trade, interview July 16, 2013)

Since their activity takes place mainly in the home, Mompreneurs' work tempo is impacted, both as to its continuity, and in terms of duration: while 61% of those working at home work at least a 30-hour week, it is the case for 79% of those working away from home. Those who answered our quantitative survey have on the whole significantly shorter working weeks than the independent workers: 27% of the Mompreneurs declare more than 40 hours a week; 19% between 35 and 40 hours, *i.e.* equivalent to a full-time; 46% less than 35 hours (part time). Among the latter, 30% work the equivalent of a part-time job or less, 43% more than a part-time but less than four-fifth time, 27% between a four-fifth and 35 hours. The *Time Use* surveys (*enquêtes Emploi du temps*) reveal that the category of independent workers has the longest working time (6 hours 51' *vs.* 5 hours 16' a day on average, *i.e.* nearly 47 hours a week);[21] both their free time and the time spent on domestic work are reduced, this last variable demanding further scrutiny according to gender.[22] Finding themselves thrown back into domesticity, Mompreneurs seem on the whole to give themselves less to their professional time than independent workers do.

Maternal Independence, Between Economic Risks and Downward Social Mobility

Though being available for their children and self-accomplishment are the Mompreneurs' priorities and markers of their identities, they nevertheless are obliged to consider their social and financial situation. Behind their words, we will be examining more closely the economic consequences of their itineraries as Mompreneurs, by attempting to identify the different levels of "success". A case by case assessment shows that these strata are masked by a privileged conjugal situation, so that it is difficult to determine which partner, in the couple, provides more income and protection.[23] Since Mompreneurs in their couple are not spared by the need to negotiate, nor by the reconfigurations that affect the contemporary family today, in this last part we will be looking at the consequences that the eventual loosening of family ties might generate for the social and economic situation of these originally rather privileged and protected women.

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21. Source: INSEE, *Time Use* survey 2009-2010.
22. See the article by Amandine Barrois and François-Xavier Devetter (2017) for an in-depth investigation of the working time of independent female workers.
23. We did not have access during the study to the details of couples' incomes. However, in most of the cases, one guesses that the male partner is the main financial provider.

Rival Commitments that Undermine the Economic Perspectives of a Business

During the vast movement promoting individual economic initiatives and self-enhancement that has swept over France since the end of the 1970s, the media have often put the accent on the access to financial responsibility, that creating a non-salaried activity such as the Mompreneurs' seems at first sight to signify. But what really is the case? In order to evaluate the Mompreneur category from an economic point of view, we have decided to apply two principles: we ask ourselves first if the activities they created allow them to pay themselves an individual salary (where pertinent, this takes into account their unemployment benefits); we then examine the level this income represents and the protections it entails.

Our quantitative data call for several remarks: of the 268 women who responded, 194 declared an annual turnover of less than 15,000 euros; 72% thus pay themselves a monthly salary that *a priori* falls below the monthly minimum wage for a full-time job (*Salaire minimum interprofessionnel de croissance*, SMIC, *i.e.* 1,480 euros).[24] Among them, 40 (21%) had created their activity more than two years before our study and were therefore not eligible for the dole (limited to twenty-four months for the under 50 years old). Forty-four women (16%) declared an annual turnover above 30,000 euros. Between those two extremes, only 10% of our respondents declared a yearly income that oscillated between one and two Smics (not subtracting the various employer costs involved). Between representing a little more "butter on your bread" and a certain degree of economic affluence, very contrasting financial situations exist among the Mompreneurs, which depend on several factors. Two cases – Christelle's and Marion's – permit us to spell them out more clearly.

Daughter of a serial entrepreneur and a mother executive in interior decoration, partner of a cash-flow specialist with whom she had two children, Christelle rose to an executive position in a firm of the paper industry that "interests her immensely". She missed out on a promotion and, when she asked what the reason was, was told it was because she only worked part-time; she "exploded" – but as member of the Health and Security Committee of the company, where she had been working for approximately six years, she managed to negotiate a painless dismissal. Determined to create a family e-commerce in the paper sector, in which her partner – on the dole at the time – could work too, she obtained a training scheme in the conception and management of websites. While he found a new job, Christelle continued setting up her business in the refurbished garage of the house they own: importantly, she became a member of a production cooperative (*Société coopérative de production*, SCOP), keeping in touch with her former clients and suppliers. She reinforced that professional base by adding a web-indexing activity, for which she worked very seriously, even to obtaining a certificate. By having her various resources – professional, institutional, organisational and domestic – fructify, she could declare a turnover of

24. See https://www.urssaf.fr/portail/home/taux-et-baremes/smic.html, for updated amounts, consulted January 27, 2021.

over 100,000 euros per year, that her lifestyle confirms (she owns a new SUV, tells of her many trips abroad, etc.). When she began creating her activity, Christelle was already a mother for several years and, though it is she who largely runs the household, she delegates part of the housework to a cleaning lady and shares many parental tasks with her partner. Getting him, for whom the entrepreneurial project had been intended in the first place, to participate, is also a contributing factor to its financial success.

In her thirties and mother of a little girl, Marion left her native town to settle in the South of France, far from her parents and especially from her father, an artisan (a characteristic, as we have seen, of the Mompreneurs, whose parents were often independent workers themselves). She and her partner found it difficult to land a stable job in the region, which has a high level of unemployment. After a first attempt at creating a cultural activity as a couple, Marion, then pregnant, landed a permanent (CDI) job in a small local company. But work relations there were vile and, even though she was elected personnel representative with a colleague to whom she was close, both women had trouble resisting the pressures placed on them. Determined to leave the company come what may, they ended up accepting a breach of contract negotiated *a minima*. Caught up in parenting with her daughter and claiming that she loved drawing since she was a little girl, Marion decided to self-publish two volumes of children's stories with her friend; an agency of the Unemployment Bureau directed them towards a business incubator specialized in art, which provided them with a legal structure as well as a technical assistance in accounting. The two friends, who lived on their unemployment benefits, put up the 3,000 euros out of their own pockets and published two albums without having to ask for a loan. One and a half years later, of the 2,000 volumes printed, they had sold 400 (300 of the first album) and still had to bring in 1,000 euros to recover their upfront investment. On the economic front, the project was a failure, meaning that when their contract with the incubator came to a halt in November 2012, it was no longer possible to dream of going independent with that activity. At the same time, in 2013, Marion's two years of unemployment benefits ended, forcing her to find an income urgently. During the interview, though she continued to highlight her non-salaried project, she said that she had in fact never stopped looking for a job, without being able to secure a single contract, given the limited number of offers in the region. Her entourage tried to help: her aunt, for example, used her network of acquaintances to get her contracts in computer graphics. In order to be able to emit invoices, Marion registered as an *auto-entrepreneur* in January 2013, but her activity remained limited (she declares she had practically no work at all during the first three months of the year) and her contracts depended largely on personal connections ("things start rolling between April and May, above all thanks to people I know, friends, family, friends of the family"). She feels that the month preceding our encounter (May 2013) was her best, because she managed to glean an "almost satisfactory salary".

> "Between the little I paid myself out of the association, a mission and a few little orders on the side, I must have earned 1,400 euros, which was good for a start, because I had only begun very recently."
>
> (Marion, 32, self-employed, Corporate Services [*services aux entreprises*], interview June 17, 2013)

Marion does not dispose of the same resources as Christelle (she is not married, for example), and she cannot count on the financial support of her entourage. It is true that her partner, who had inherited from his family, was able to buy cash the house where the family lives; however, Marion's professional situation remains shaky.

There are therefore very different situations among the Mompreneurs, from objectively comfortable circumstances backed up by considerable resources intensively capitalized, to cases that are clearly more uncertain on the individual level. But those differences are masked by their life as a couple: Marion, for example, claims she can live comfortably with 1,000-1,500 euros a month, because she benefits from her partner's income and property. But what happens when these women lose their family's support?

When the Family Is No Longer a "Common Cause"[25]

The longitudinal survey permitted us to see how the situations of the Mompreneurs we met evolved, for better or for worse. Several of them testify to failures of various sorts. It sometimes happens that an independent activity comes to a halt; some Mompreneurs went bankrupt, particularly those who had launched a commercial activity and found themselves with unsold stock on their hands and suppliers they could no longer pay. That is what happened to Delphine, married to a public servant, herself a former executive in a service company. After being laid off, she created a limited liability company (*Société à responsabilité limitée*, SARL) in the para-pharmaceutical sector: parallel to creating her e-commerce website, she fixed up a room in the family house where she hoped to organize olfactive workshops. One and a half years after our first meeting, she admitted her activity was not as successful as she had hoped, which greatly preoccupied her partner; in reaction to his worries, she took a job as part-time salesperson in an organic store close to their home. She explains she had decided to put an end to her activity and had looked again for a paid job, but after several rebuffs for executive positions, she ended up accepting a job as sales assistant at four-fifth time in a very small local firm.

Though Delphine no longer enjoys all the benefits of salaried employment, she remains protected by her family situation, despite marital difficulties to which she alluded discreetly. In other cases, however, when the family falls apart, for instance, it is the woman's freedom itself which is called into question, as Barbara's case will allow us to see. She is nearly 50 and has a little boy 8 years old. Daughter of an engineer

25. See Roy, 2005.

and a stay-at-home mother, amateur dancer, she tried to enter the world of dance, without success. She then worked as hostess in several haute couture salons, until she met a businessman established in the South of France. She became his partner and collaborator for several years, with no status, either conjugal or professional; when he died, her situation became very hazardous: she lived for several years on the welfare allowance known as the active solidarity income (*Revenu de solidarité active*, RSA). Then she met the "father of her son", an independent IP engineer. During her interview, she lets fall the information that the child was a "miracle": at more than 40, desperate to become a mother, she decided to have a child even though she knew that "her couple wouldn't last very long". When the baby was born, the couple had already separated, but continued to live in the same house (that belonged to him). Barbara says she lived like a "bourgeoise in her home" for several years: while caring for her son, she took courses and followed several training schemes in psychology. She talks very calmly about her relationship with the father of her son, with whom she shares a house, as well as several bank accounts:

> "One day he ordered a bank-card for me on his account and he gave me his card and since then I never gave it back and he never asked me to […] and there is something, something natural in that, yes, even more so since I became a mother. In fact, it's as if it was my work and my salary to make sure there is enough to eat in the house, to take care of my son, that he should be well brought up […]. And it is because he trusts me completely, and he can, believe me."
>
> (Barbara, 48, independent company of services to individuals [*services aux particuliers*], interview June 11, 2013)

Consequently, she says she appreciates the "comfort" of her situation, finances not being "her problem". But several factors darken the picture: her parents are anguished because they feel she is in a "frighteningly precarious situation"; what is more, she now has trouble finding a new partner (the men she meets think her situation is "too weird"), and seems quite isolated in the education of her son, who does not seem to see his father much on a daily basis. As self-employed, Barbara also started an independent coaching activity, completed by gym classes. She hopes that developing that double activity will allow her to rent an apartment in a few months, a sign that she would like to get out of a situation which is not that comfortable after all. Though Barbara's case is in many ways atypical, it reveals the conjugal dependency of Mompreneurs who exert a not very – or even at all – profitable independent activity: it should be recalled that 72% of these women working full-time earn less than a monthly SMIC (minimum wage). The quest for self-realization which motivated them incites a good number, among the less privileged and those who were furthest from the world of independent work in the first place, to give priority to activities that are doubtless rewarding, but less remunerative than a paid job with a regular income. Behind the creation of a business, there therefore lurks the risk of an individual, economic downgrading, that the figure of entrepreneur covers up. In case of divorce, the women are extremely dependent financially on the solidarity of their ex-spouse, and it is well known that

this never makes up for the comfort that living as a couple guaranteed and which is now lost (Bonnet *et al.*, 2015). Finally, in the long run, these women see their level of social protection, particularly as concerns retirement, reduced by the weakness of their turnover.[26] Under cover of a global enterprise of self, a classical, gendered hierarchy remains effective, and even seems to deepen. Between work, market economy and family, the Mompreneur promise of attaining personal responsibility and being capable of reconciling all the spheres of life is more of a mirage than a miracle, including for the women who would have the necessary resources to mitigate their domination within the system of gender relations.

At the end of this study, it appears that entering the world of independence is, for Mompreneurs, an identity issue above all; it allows them to practice an activity that is more expressive than instrumental but also to develop an equally identity-ridden relation to parenting. Nevertheless, they are tightly relegated to the home, and it is only when they manage to activate the many and well-adapted resources which were theirs from the beginning, that some of them manage to achieve a relative stability, while others find themselves entirely dependent on their partner. On the whole, those who do not succeed in making their activity profitable enough to pay themselves an income, find that they have slipped downward on the social ladder; and those who, besides, see the support of their family and spouse waver are exposed to the risk of economic and social demotion in the longer term.

For all these reasons, the phenomenon calls into question several facts at the crossroads of work, family and public policy: the amplification of parental norms, which still for the main part target the mother, challenges the women's capacity to stand firm in a job requiring an ever higher level of performance. Creating a business, due to the apparent flexibility it augurs in the management of one's schedule, can of course be used as a system they had not anticipated to manage the different times of life. Nevertheless, Mompreneurs' trajectories show that a professional activity and parenting, even when carried out in the same place, are in reality more comparable than superposable. Mompreneurs also sharply question the public systems of activation, such as those conceived to stimulate the creation of an independent business, which demand mobilising the totality of an individual's resources: within this relatively privileged social group, those resources are not only collective – *e.g.* financial assistance to create a business or an offer of professional training – they also include the biographical capital of individuals predisposed to accept themselves as such. Concerning women

26. It should be remembered that, though independent workers' social benefits have gradually come to equal those of salaried employees, a minimal turnover is nevertheless required to validate their working time (in the French system, this time is calculated on a quarterly basis). For example, in 2017, to validate two trimesters, a service activity had to declare an income of 4,190 euros (source: https://www.rsi.fr/cotisations/ae/protection-sociale.html, consulted October 6, 2017, which no longer exists).

specifically, studying the Mompreneurs reminds us that, within the system of gender relations, they remain trapped in an inferior position, which structures the way they relate to work, renewed by the job of parenting and legitimatised by the norms of parenthood, still today conjugated in the feminine form. Their capacity for individuation and emancipation is therefore all the more difficult to implement, even for the most privileged among them.

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"Back to the Land" among "Neo-Rural" Farmers: The Price to Pay

Working Couples and Women's Invisible Work*

*Madlyne Samak***

The article deals with the social processes that incite "neo-rural" women – *i.e.* who do not themselves originate from agricultural families – to become fruit and vegetable farmers alongside their partners and work in their shadow, with no professional status. It shows, first, the extent to which their decision to become independent workers is sometimes governed by family rather than professional considerations. Secondly, it exposes the causes of their statutory invisibility: beyond the feeble economic resources that constrain small farmers and limit their ability to pay into social security schemes, they largely ignore the existing systems and the risks incurred, and they mistrust the established forms of social protection, preferring to count on couple solidarity and develop individual strategies in compensation.

"Agricultural workers entertain professional and family connections in which work relations are both sex-related and generational" (BARTHEZ, 1982, p. 124). Produced by Alice BARTHEZ at the start of the 1980s, this analysis still applies today: agriculture, in France, continues to bear the strong imprint of family collaboration. In 2010, 71% of the work was carried out by the active members of a family – manager, co-manager, manager's partners, family assistant,[1] family employee – while permanent, salaried workers, who have no family connection to the manager or co-manager,

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1. The status of family assistant is reserved for persons at least 16 years of age, ascendants, descendants, brothers, sisters, or blood relatives to the same degree as the farm manager or his/her partner, who live on the farm and take part in the work but without having the status of employee.

represented 17%,[2] and seasonal workers 10% (Laisney, Lerbourg, 2012). Property and know-how are usually transmitted inside the family, another particularity of the agricultural sector, characterized by the permanence of family undertakings (Bessière *et al.*, 2008).

However, despite that stability in the organisation of labour, women's place and status in agricultural production have not remained static, and gender inequalities in the sector have diminished.

On the one hand, over the past thirty years, woman farmers' situation has considerably improved from the point of view of autonomy and professional recognition. Until the early 1980s, farmers' wives were not recognized as full-fledged workers, they were considered to be "helping the family": the work they did on the farm remained invisible and they had absolutely no professional or social security except as their husband's beneficiary. Their professional and matrimonial status were one and the same (Lagrave, 1988; Caniou, Lagrave, 1988), and their social entitlements, especially as regards retirement, non-existent.[3] Since then, legislative changes have slowly but surely brought about the recognition of female farmers' work. In the first place, the agricultural law of July 4th, 1980, created the status of co-manager, which theoretically allowed women to have the same rights and responsibilities as their husbands. Though, in practice, few women accessed that status, the creation in 1985 of Private, Limited Liability Farming Companies – (*Exploitations agricoles à responsabilité limitée*, EARL), which allowed a husband and wife to be the sole partners of a company,[4] was followed by an increase in the number of female co-managers.[5] In 2010 in France, women's share in the manager and co-manager categories amounted to 27%, as against 8% in 1970 (Laisney, Lerbourg, 2012). Today, there are more woman managers or co-managers (42.6% in 2007) than wives working on the farm with or without an official status (34.4%) (Bisault, 2009). Lastly, the agricultural law of 1999, by introducing the status of "collaborative spouse" (which replaced "spouse participating in the farm-work")[6] also permitted a professional recognition of women's work, at the same time as it increased their social benefits.[7] This status gives them the possibility of being eligible for a proportional pension and insured in case of a labour injury. True, the law does not give the woman a voice in decisions concerning the farm, where she is "put on the index", *i.e.* excluded (Caniou, Lagrave, 1988) – woman farmers' rights are only derivative (they remain their husbands' beneficiaries and are therefore inactive

2. Seasonal labour is measured according to the number of yearly work units (*unités de travail annuel*, UTA), not the number of active workers.

3. For an historical analysis of the specific case of female agricultural employees, see Escudier, 2017.

4. As opposed to the Agricultural Groups of Joint Farming (*groupements agricoles d'exploitation en commun*, GAEC).

5. "Developing corporate forms and their corollary, managerial positions, gives woman farmers the opportunity to access positions of responsibility. Mothers become their sons' partners in Agricultural Groups of Joint Farming, and wives become their husbands' associates in private, Limited Liability Farming Companies (*exploitations agricoles à responsabilité limitée*, EARL)" (Bisault, 2009, p. 1).

6. Before the creation of the status of collaborative spouse, the status of spouse participating in the farm-work was part of the agricultural law of 1980; it meant the person was entitled to a fixed amount of pension upon retirement.

7. Since 2005, this status is available to persons united by a Civil Solidarity Pact (*pacte civil de solidarité*, PACS).

from the point of view of labour law) – but it did diminish the number of wives working on a farm with no status at all.[8]

Since the 1980s, though agricultural labour remains family-connected, an ever-growing number of farmers' partners have chosen to enter the labour market as employees. According to the *Employment* survey (*enquête Emploi* 2000), only 43.4% of farm managers' wives declared they were "active" farmers, *i.e.* eleven points less than ten years earlier (Giraud, Rémy, 2008, p. 30). As to the agricultural census, in 2010 it revealed that nearly three-quarters of wives under 40 do not work on their husband's farm (Laisney, Lerbourg, 2012). Clearly, the conjugal farm model is on the decline (Dufour, Giraud, 2012). But though man-woman parity is not an option in agriculture (Rattin, 2006), it is nevertheless undeniable that farmers' wives, by working more – and more often – away from the farm, or by accessing co-manager status, have gained in independence and professional recognition over the past thirty years.

That strong trend nevertheless conceals places where farmers' wives continue to model their professional activity on their partner's, and to be active without any professional visibility. The survey carried out among organic fruit and vegetable producers in the Alpes-Maritimes Region revealed this totally different reality. For most of the male and female farmers interviewed (Box 1), a working couple remains the norm, and the die-hard notion that agriculture is a "conjugal activity" (*métier de couple*) (Barthez, 1982) is even more striking among "neo-rurals", *i.e.* farmers who do not themselves originate from farming families but have created their agricultural activity *ex nihilo*. This result is not surprising when replaced in its sectorial context – compared to other sectors, market gardening is largely an activity carried out by a couple (Dufour, Giraud, 2012) – but it is more surprising if one takes these farmers' social characteristics into account. For, though one might expect these "neo-rural" woman farmers, who are mainly middle- or upper-class, highly educated urbanites (Box 2), to reinvent gender norms in agriculture, it turns out, on the contrary, that, in this group, not only are the near-totality of the farms run by a couple, but the invisibility of the woman's work is due to the fact that, officially, it goes undeclared. In this article, we propose to present and explain these paradoxical results, and more precisely, attempt to grasp the social logics that lead these women to become farmers alongside their partners and work in their shadow, with no professional status. Gender inequalities at work among "neo-rurals" (farmers, artisans) have been pointed out in other research (Léger, Hervieu-Léger, 1979; Bajard, 2014), but rarely explored under the angle of their production and reproduction. The aim of this text is thus to underscore the fragility of women's professional achievements, by showing to what extent, and why, certain social groups of farmers remain impervious to women's work and in fact tend to reproduce gender inequalities in their own professional activity.

8. In 2007, they still amounted to 21.3% of the women active in agriculture (Bisault, 2009).

Box 1

A Survey of Organic Vegetable Farmers in the Alpes-Maritimes Region

The data presented in this article stem from a study of organic market gardeners in the Alpes-Maritimes Region carried out between 2009 and 2012 as part of a doctoral dissertation. Aside from several corpora of administrative archives and the secondary analysis of a statistical survey, our study rests mainly on *ca*. sixty semi-structured interviews and the observation of a variety of collective situations, such as sessions of professional training and information bearing on "converting" to organic farming, or periods of commercial activity – selling on the market, or distributing vegetables in Associations to Promote Natural Farming (*Associations pour le maintien d'une agriculture paysanne*, AMAP). The interviews, principally carried out in the person's home, were often accompanied by a visit to the farm and occasional participation in the farm-work, whereby I was able to both observe the workplace and learn how things are actually done.

Born in the early 1960s in some of the region's fruit and vegetable farms, organic cultivation first developed notably in the 1990s, then experienced a second period of growth towards the end of the noughties: 181 farms received the "organic farming" (*agriculture biologique*) label in 2012. In 2011, market gardening was the main specialty of organic farmers (45% *vs*. 34.3% of all the farms in the region), well ahead of olive growing, fruit production and dairy farming (goatmilk). Though the small numbers of certified organic farmers do not allow for the exploitable agricultural statistics that would enable us to characterise the local organic agriculture with any precision, it is important to note that the twenty-two farms we visited during our survey represented a great variety of socio-economic situations, from the micro-farm, measuring less than a hectare in an elevated mountain zone, to the 7-8 hectares estate in a valley, comprising large numbers of greenhouses near a densely populated area.

Gender relations at work were not initially at the heart of our research, but the data collected on the life-courses and professional status of the women and men we interviewed permitted us to grasp certain aspects. Though the invisibility of work in an agricultural context classically refers to the lack of professional recognition and the fragmentation of tasks women do (Lagrave, 1988), in this article we mainly consider it from a statutory point of view.

Women Becoming "Neo-Rural" Farmers: Between Professional Rupture and Family Project

Our fieldwork confirms the notion that, in the domain of agriculture, labour is family-driven: of the twenty-two fruit and vegetable production units we visited (Box 2), fifteen were run *en famille* – the seven others were generally managed by a farmer – man or woman – working alone. In most cases, the family dimension was not the result of intergenerational relations, it was limited to the couple. There are several reasons for this: on the one hand, for *ca*. half of the persons interviewed, becoming a

farmer meant setting up a new farm: though their parents sometimes helped, they never participated physically or lastingly in the production process. On the other hand, at the time of the survey, the market gardeners who have taken over a family farm were

Box 2

The "Neo-Rural" Farmers of the Survey

Of the twenty-two farms covered by the survey, ten belonged to farmers – men or women – who did not themselves originate from a farming family; they had become vegetable farmers after having worked in a non-agricultural sector for a more or less long period of time. The corpora presented here is composed of the interviews carried out with these "neo-rural" farmers.

I have chosen to leave the expression "neo-rural" between quotation marks in order to convey my scepticism concerning the popular image sparked by the notion. As Ivan Bruneau (2006) has shown, these farmers, though not themselves daughters or sons of farmers, are not as unfamiliar with the rural milieu as one might think. More specifically, within the framework of the survey, those men and women designated as "neo-rural" often possess a knowledge of or an experience in agriculture: some have relatives in the sector (grandparents, uncles, aunts), others trained in a vocational school to become professional gardeners.

In the diversified social space we analysed, "neo-rural" farmers occupy middle or low-ranking positions, typically in small or average-size farms high up in the mountains (where only a seasonal production is possible), and therefore more or less remote from the main consumer basins. They have a relatively high level of schooling in common. Of the eighteen individuals active on the "new" farms at the time of the survey, fourteen had a school leaving qualification with a diploma (*baccalauréat* level or a technical, vocational or farm-manager certificate). Among them, half had gone to university (in psychology, biology, English, economics) or been enrolled in a *classe préparatoire* (not all of them finished). Four farmers only have a vocational certificate: they are the oldest of the "neos" and also those who were the oldest when they launched their activity.

However, these "neo-rurals" do not make up a homogeneous social group. On the one hand, though fathers' professions reveal a predominance of individuals of middle-class extraction (six farmers had fathers in the intermediate professions, four came from families of independent workers), there were also four whose fathers were executives in a private firm, or teachers, and three whose fathers were workers or employees, their mothers generally home-makers. On the other hand, for those whose installation as farmers represented a career change, a variety of previous social situations are also notable: three of our interviewees had occupied intermediate positions; four farmers had been merchants or artisans (among whom three self-employed gardeners) and one a factory worker; four farmers had been previously employed, three as executives or teachers. Consequently, it is difficult to define a typical social position for these "neo-rural" agrobiologists (see the appendix for a detailed presentation of the farming couples interviewed).

on the average too old[9] for their parents or parents-in-law to still be on the farm – the latter being either too advanced in age, or already deceased. Lastly, when visiting those family farms, I did not observe that the sons and daughters of the farmers interviewed were working with their parents: they were away studying, or in jobs that had nothing to do with agriculture. In short, in our study, the conjugal farm model was clearly dominant. In fact, of the nineteen partners we encountered,[10] only four (all women) were employed outside the farm and did not regularly participate in the farm-work.[11] Aside from those four women, twelve partners worked full-time on the family farm and had no other professional activity; three (one man and two women) worked in a different sector of activity altogether, while contributing on a regular basis to work on the farm, intending to get more involved and, eventually, totally or partially, quit their salaried employment.

The result is hardly surprising if one considers the fact that farmers' wives generally work on fruit and vegetable farms (Dufour, Giraud, 2012), and on multifunction farms (Laisney, Lerbourg, 2012), where certain tasks still require considerable female attention (Bessière *et al.*, 2014).[12] But, in the light of our study, it can also be interpreted as a product of the deliberately conjugal nature of the "back to the land" movement or of build-a-new-farm projects. In fact, the conjugal farm model is even more popular among "neo-rurals". Of the ten "new" farms we visited during our survey, only one was managed by a single woman (Table), and another by a market gardener who was married but worked alone. The eight other farms were run – or would soon be run – by both members of the couple. A working couple would thus seem a necessary condition for setting up in agriculture. How then does accessing independence fit in with the professional farming trajectories of these men and women?

Table – **The Place of Conjugal Work on the Farms Covered by the Survey**

	« Neo-rural men and women »	**« Men and women taking over a farm »**
Single	1	2
In a couple but working alone	1	3
Working as a couple (or planning to do so)	8	7
Total	**10**	**12**

Field: Totality of farms covered by the survey.
Source: Survey Samak, 2014.

9. The men and women farmers interviewed were on the average quite advanced in age, a fact that is linked to their demographic rather than their professional situation; due to urbanisation and the high rate of disillusionment with agriculture, the farmers in the Alps region were on the average 58 years old (Agreste, *Enquête sur la structure des exploitations 2005*).

10. Three women were single or divorced.

11. As in the case of the bakers studied by Isabelle Bertaux-Wiame (1982), women's refusal to enter the family business is all the more likely if they occupied a stable position before their husband created his enterprise.

12. Tasks such as milking or selling on the market imply very set and rigid schedules; it is difficult to find personnel to carry out such tasks for a salary.

"Neo-Rural" Farmers: From Rural Community to Professional Conversion

Though the social and political motivations for setting up as "back to the land" adepts reveal a certain continuity – an alternative to urban living and salaried employment, and a rejection of the consumer society (Bruneau, 2006) – one is obliged to acknowledge that becoming a "neo-rural" farmer today is not exactly the same as twenty years ago.

During the 1980s and 1990s, a "neo-rural" installation did not reflect a true career conversion. It usually came in the wake of living in one of the rural communes that cropped up following the events of May 1968.[13] It was also sometimes a prospect contemplated upon leaving school, after having been significantly marked by the "back to nature" ideology. In our survey, such was Stéphane Muller's case.[14] Born in Germany in 1959 of a father who was a minister and a housebound mother, towards the end of the 1970s, when he was 18 and after a short time in college, he was taken by his brother (who was a little older and had already travelled in France) to Tournot, a small town in the Alpes-Maritimes, where he met several members of the "neo-rural" community that had formed in the village. Very quickly, Stéphane and his fiancee of the moment decided to settle as farmers in the region and took over a small herd of cattle. In 1986, when given the chance to buy a piece of land in Tournot, Stéphane, his brother and their two partners jumped at the opportunity and bought it jointly. Stéphane decided to go in for vegetable farming, took his degree in agriculture, obtained subventions, and created a farm in his own name.

During the years 2000-2010, in most instances, setting up as a "neo-rural" marked the end of a professional bifurcation. There were two classic cases.

In the first and most frequent case, agriculture looked like a promising new path for aspiring artisans who found it difficult to enter the job market. Since market gardening does not require any particular, formal training (on condition one has the sufficient economic resources to acquire a piece of land),[15] to young people wishing to exert an artisanal activity, it looks like a good opportunity to readjust their professional ambitions and become independent without having to go through the stage of being employed that such activities often require. For example, Julia and Laurent Faure's professional perspectives were quite uncertain before convincing their parents, top executives in private firms, to buy somewhat more than a hectare of land. Born towards the end of the

13. As of the early 1970s, Danièle Léger and Bertrand Hervieu-Léger (1979) described the itineraries of former commune members setting up in agriculture. See also Pagis, 2015.

14. Names and place names have been changed to respect the anonymity of the persons interviewed.

15. Though market gardening seems a likely alternative, all the more as it only requires a small amount of economic capital compared to other agricultural specialisations, these bifurcations are made possible by the deployment of resources, generally institutional or family. Through mechanisms such as donations, inheritance or availability of property, it is frequently our interviewees' parents who make it possible for them to set up in agriculture. In the rare cases when no sort of family capital is available, institutional resources can contribute to enhance individual savings, such as unemployment insurance accumulated during the pre-establishment period or property or land that can be rented from local public authorities.

1970s, Julia dropped out of school after her eleventh year and tried in vain to get a job as an apprentice baker, then became pregnant at 18 and concentrated on taking care of her son full time. At the end of the 1990s, after failing his examinations, Laurent's idea was to become a cabinet maker. But he rapidly realised that only the carpentry sector could offer him work and perhaps training. After a few months in a woodworking firm spent discovering the world of repetitive, "boring" labour, and difficult work relations ("the more I got ahead, the less I wanted to be employed"), he dropped his first idea. After two years out of work, he got himself hired in a building and construction firm, first as unskilled labourer then as project manager, for approximately one year, but he was "not very convinced". For the young couple, aspiring to become artisans but with no qualifications of any sort, setting up in agriculture seemed like a credible professional alternative, the more desirable as it promised a future of independent work, allowing them *a priori* to attain their ideal, a "self-sufficient family life".

In the second case, less common among our interviewees, setting up in agriculture meant withdrawing from a stable professional position (Landour, 2012, 2017; Perez, 2014), such as manager, permanent employee, or even merchant. It was more like a professional rupture (Denave, 2015), motivated by the desire to experience "real work" (Bidet, 2011) and/or by the desire to live "differently" by changing one's milieu and way of life. For instance, by becoming a farmer, Laure Castain (age 46),[16] former executive in a company of public works, sought to realize her "vocation" (of which her father, also an executive, had frustrated her when she was a child), as well as to break out of a professional situation that had become "idiotic", because it was neither sufficiently "gratifying" nor allowing her to balance her professional and family life:[17]

> "I was constantly on the road, in my car all the time. My sectors covered half the country. That too started getting on my nerves, it was tiring to be on the road all the time. I didn't find it very gratifying to eat miles of tarmac eight hours a day. […] It's a stressful job, with people working in very hard areas, a lot of unknowns. […] I was glued to my cell-phone, my son on one side, the maxi-cosy and the telephone on the other, ridiculous."

Experiencing a problematic work situation, which for some means bad working conditions (instability, stress, but also a glass ceiling or conflicts with the hierarchy), and for others a lack of sense (boredom, ethical conflicts),[18] seems to be a recurrent factor today in professional conversion trajectories: at the junction of multifaceted and complex biographical processes that put into play the various spheres of life, becoming a farmer is more and more akin to a form of professional *exit* (Hirschman, 1995).

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16. Interviewees' age was calculated with reference to the year 2010.
17. This argument refers to the impact of gender (here represented by the sexual constraints imposed by childcare) in the itineraries of professional withdrawal, as pointed out by Julie Landour (2012) in her work on the executives of a polling institute.
18. Cases of professional conversion due to ethical conflicts in the workplace were observed during a survey done after my doctoral dissertation. For example, Ludovic, an engineer specialised in air quality control, quit his job because he was politically opposed to the direction taken by his firm. His story is described in Samak, 2016.

The Gendered Mechanisms of Convergent Professional Aspirations

If a "neo-rural" undertaking can be the end result of a professional fork in the road – reorientation or rupture – how is one to interpret the fact that the new professional project is carried by both members of a couple? In the case of the Faures, it is evident that working was a problem for both Julia and Laurent since both found it difficult to enter the job market. From the outset, the couple also shared the same desire for independence – she as a would-be baker, he as a cabinet maker – and for living close to nature. Other agricultural couples have found themselves in the position of being mutually dissatisfied or professionally insecure, which goes along with aspiring to work less or "differently", and a determination to change their way of life or turn daily life into an ecological and social alternative (Pruvost, 2013). Jean-Paul and Suzanne Fèvre (55 and 52), settled since 1999 on a one-hectare farm, were both more or less inactive when they became farmers. Their professional insecurity turned out to be a factor that permitted their professional aspirations to converge, the better as they corresponded to Jean-Paul's desire to work the land and to their shared "back to nature" ideal – part of the political socialization that was their common inheritance.[19] Based on the pre-existing professional dissatisfaction of both partners, and on their mutual aspirations in terms of lifestyle, these installation itineraries worked out easily, without strife or discord.

But setting up a business in agriculture also sometimes supposes, for the women of the survey, that they must give up stable and comfortable professional situations to allow their partners to reconcile their family life and professional project. In that case, it represents a last resort, reflecting family-induced logics rather than a fully consented professional exit, as the life course of 33 year-old Chloé Mongin illustrates. I met her in 2009, during a technical training session organized by the professional association of organic farmers. As the daughter of expat teachers, Chloé grew up and studied the economics of health abroad. At the start of the years 2000, she landed a position of research engineer in an international organization based in Cameroon. At the time, she considered living there and bought a house that she renovated from top to bottom ("I did some phenomenal work on it!"). After several years of professional experience, she even registered in a doctoral programme (by distance learning at a Paris university) to advance her career as research scholar. Yet, in 2008, she decided to return to France and settle down as a fruit and vegetable farmer on a one-hectare piece of land belonging to her partner Gautier's family. During our second interview in 2010, she was still attached to her employer by a part-time contract,[20] while continuing

19. Jean-Paul and Suzanne belong to the cohort of organic farmers born between the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1960s, who had lived during a time that fostered critical minds and a tendency to challenge the social order. In their particular case, commitment to their Union (*Confédération française démocratique du travail*, CFDT) in the 1970s, as well as taking part in "alternative" or socially committed projects (co-ops, holiday camps for orphans, a humanitarian mission in Nicaragua), were at the origin of their spirit of revolt and contributed to their aspiration to become farmers and radically change their way of life.

20. That temporary situation corresponds to an economic strategy that makes it possible for the couple to create their enterprise, as the excerpt from their interview illustrates. In fact, farmers' wives' salaries are often the economic resource that permit a farm to survive (Bessière, 2010).

to administer the farm (a one-man company declared in Gautier's name), filling out forms to obtain a loan, creating a website, setting up an AMAP. But she planned, once her ongoing pregnancy over, to end her contract and dedicate herself completely to the work on the farm:

> "We decided we wouldn't stay in Cameroon, but at first I continued to work at a distance and in the country; I go there approximately every three months on average. When I'm here, I work at a distance part-time, which gives us a salary and an income that at least makes up for the slowness of the administration [to give them the green light], and to survive all their stupidities. Now that I'm pregnant, I mean to stop after my maternity leave and stay here because traveling with a baby… I have many friends who've done it, I see what… it's complicated, it's hard on the couple, it's hard from many points of view and I don't want any of it. So we're going to see if we can both live here and make a living… My idea, for instance, is to create a saffron-factory, the land here lends itself to that… It's very intensive but I'd do it by periods, so it's possible to do it along with other activities, olive-growing, market gardening, they're pretty complementary."

Though Chloé seemed rather enthusiastic at the idea of becoming a farmer and already imagined herself developing a self-enhancing production of saffron within the conjugal enterprise, it remains that her choice was prompted by family and marital rather than by professional considerations. On the one hand, if she accepted to leave the city and the life she loved, it was first of all to make her relationship with Gautier a durable one. He did not want to settle in Central Africa due to his visceral attachment to his own environment: "I was too connected to stay [in Africa], I'm just a peasant, I admit […] I'm attached to these valleys. […] I'm a country lad, the city is really hard on me."[21] On the other hand, if Chloé chose to give up her job and her salary, it was mainly because she was reticent to raise her future child in her present working conditions, and share her child's education in ways that would be "hard on the couple". Teleworking, with regular trips to Cameroon while raising children, was not for Chloé a desirable prospect, all the more as she planned to get involved in her child's upbringing in rather innovative and considerably time-consuming ways.[22] By setting herself up as a farmer next to her partner, Chloé was not leaving an unfulfilling job, but rather seizing the opportunity to become a "good mother" (Gojard, 2010), while giving Gautier the chance to be fulfilled both professionally and personally, as well as to become a "good father".

It is also likely that leaving Cameroon was made easier by the fact that the village where Gautier planned to live offered an "exceptional quality of life"[23] and was barely a few miles distant from her own parents, retired teachers whose presence would be

21. It is also plausible that Gautier wanted to stay near his daughter (born of a previous marriage), but he did not mention it himself when he gave his reasons for not wanting to settle in Africa.

22. For example, Chloé planned to speak English with her child on a daily basis to allow him/her to become an early bilingual.

23. Artisans who settle in rural districts sometimes consider that their living conditions are a valuable social retribution for the work they do (Bajard, Perrenoud, 2013).

welcome in view of her future maternal status, a way of drawing closer to the family support networks. The nearness of family as well as Gautier's local anchoring – both his grand-father and great-grand-father had been "renowned" cabinet-makers in the village – may also have represented native capital (Retière, 2003), giving them access to a clientele and a better social position.[24] All these factors were probably decisive in Chloé's decision to become a farmer – a decision that objectively placed her in a downward spiral, socially and economically, and led her to sacrifice the professional career on which she had embarked.

The same sort of logics, between building a social future (Bertaux-Wiame, 1982) and family responsibilities, prompted Samia Verdier (38) to throw herself into the idea of creating a farm with her partner. As the daughter of modest immigrants (father blue-collar worker and mother homemaker), Samia grew up in an industrial town of eastern France. Towards the end of the 1980s, after earning her *baccalauréat* and two years of higher education that she did not complete at a school of economics, she met Florent, the son of employees (father accountant and mother secretary), who was then registered in a professional training programme, and married him. Not terribly keen on their studies, and aspiring to live in the mountains, Samia and Florent left for Savoie and at first lived on irregular, seasonal jobs. After a few years, Samia obtained an open-ended contract (CDI) in a large retail firm where she became floor manager, while Florent did small jobs and renovated the house they had bought together. Tired of not being able to find stable and satisfying employment and wanting to be professionally independent, Florent decided at the start of the years 2000 to aim for agriculture; buying a two-hectare plot of land where they could have a wooden dwelling built was done thanks to the sale of their house and a bank loan.

My first encounter with Samia took place in 2009, and during the interview, I could see that, though she did not call herself a "vegetable farmer", her role on the farm was crucial:

> " – How do you share the work between you?
>
> Samia: – At first, we didn't really know but little by little it turned out that he's the vegetable farmer. […] So he gets the land ready, because it's him with the machines, he does the planting, the irrigation, and I weed. That's it. That, and the markets. The vegetables, we do together. The market is me because he doesn't… He likes to talk but he doesn't like working in the market.
>
> – And the work in the house?
>
> S.: – Oh that's me [laughter]! Go on! It's really to despair. Because it's not considered work. Cutting wood for heating, that's work, but cleaning, putting things away, washing, that's not work."

24. Sybille Gollac (2013) highlights what being a native signifies in the strategies deployed by the lower classes aspiring to rise on the social ladder. They do so not by accumulating scholarly capital but rather by obtaining a promotion inside the company or creating their own business, strategies that bring into play social capital and local family prestige. Although neither Gautier nor Chloé come from poor families (Chloé's parents were teachers and Gautier's public servants), their installation resembles those analysed by Sybille Gollac.

Samia's personal involvement in her husband's farm was not limited to selling on the stands in the market, an activity that seemed to give her much satisfaction, she also participated in harvesting and did most of the weeding – a considerable part of working in the fields consists in weeding the crops – and took care of most of the paperwork to manage the farm. Yet, when her spouse decided to set himself up as a fruit and vegetable farmer, Samia was not sure she wanted to work with him. She thought of finding a job. Though both aspired to live in the mountains, agriculture was not part of her plans:

> "Florent: – At first, when we settled in, Samia didn't really know… She didn't know if she wanted to do that. We didn't know if we'd make it, etc. So we kept our options open and thought: maybe you'll find a job. And for two-three years we were undecided.
>
> Samia: – No, we were undecided but we had our nose to the grindstone, so…
>
> F: – As a result, you never really thought: "I want to do it." Well, she continues doing it, but in fact we've never really spoken about it again.
>
> S: – Well yes, because bit by bit when you sell, and people come back, you think oh well, we've done something they seem to like, it works, it would be stupid to drop something good to run after some unknown thing… on top of it all, it's very gratifying. That's it, it's true that in the end I must love the land because if I didn't I wouldn't have stayed, don't you think? It's stupid to drop something that works.
>
> F: – In any case, I left it up to her. At first, she wasn't really enthusiastic…
>
> S: – Ah no, it wasn't really my thing."

And further down in the interview:

> "S: So we arrived with three kids, a baby and I had to do it [the farm] all at the same time. It was hard […] because to find myself there with three kids was hard, it took us such a long time, well… not that we neglected the children completely, but as a mother I felt that I wasn't giving them the attention I should."

One might say that Samia was swallowed up by her husband's professional project. The prospect of having to face the huge amount of construction implied by building a house and then a farm, and at the same time raise three young children was daunting, and in the end she had neither the time nor the energy to wonder whether or not she wanted to be a farmer, nor to weigh the pros and cons of farming or taking a job with a salary. Yet, since arriving in Savoie, her family and professional situation had vastly improved: after several years of precarious and subordinate jobs, she had attained a stable and responsible position with an "almost satisfactory" salary, and her husband took care of their second child while working on the house. But, even though she did not particularly aspire to become a farmer ("it was not at all my thing"), she put her own professional existence on the back burner in order to make her husband's project feasible, which caused her to undergo a radical gender shift back into domesticity.

However, she gradually became attached to working the land and to the social recognition she obtained on the markets; she would find it "stupid" today to give up the family business. But in the last analysis, it is really in order to allow her partner to

realise his professional ambitions and make his dream of independence come true that Samia had become a farmer: in order to become part of her own professional trajectory, that activity had to fit in with family contingencies – helping her husband and raising her children – it was not what she herself hoped for professionally.[25]

Carole Martin (30) became pregnant in 2012, and, though she claims to be a "passionate orchid lover", all of a sudden left her job as paid manager-and-accountant at her cousin's flower-shop in order to assist her partner Christophe Tissot set up a three-hectare farm in a lowland zone. If maternity appears to give women the incentive to involve themselves more deeply in their partner's enterprise, it is because farm-work seems to make reconciling professional activity and childcare simpler, albeit their choice generally implies moving farther away from family networks and cooperation.[26] It is probable that "neo-rural" woman farmers are, from that point of view, less likely to refuse participating in their partner's enterprise than the daughters or daughters-in-law of female farmers, because they are less aware of the sacrifices and dependencies entailed. As Céline Bessière has shown, if young farmers' partners are so keen on working away from the farm, it is because they do not want to "have the same fate as their mothers-in-law, who 'slaved away their life'", and consider that being employed outside the farm is the instrument of their emancipation (Bessière, 2010, p. 162). On the contrary, "neo-rural" woman farmers do not have farming mothers or mothers-in-law as counter-models and probably feel the need to free themselves from a condition they can only imagine far less.

In the end, it is striking that, when a woman creates a farm after a professional conversion, both members of the couple *do not* automatically change their professional orientation. If Jean-Pierre Revel was willing to follow his partner, formerly a hair-dresser near Paris, and accept her idea to build a vegetable farm, it is because he himself aspired to retire and sell his business, and saw it as an opportunity to change his own way of life. For Laure Castain, on the contrary, the choice of agriculture was not devoid of conjugal complications: her partner was a top executive in a company of public works and did not wish to give up his career and embrace her project, despite the fact there was a small child in the family. The couple did not survive the difficulties triggered by her agricultural project: Laure ended up divorcing and obtained custody of her son. This example shows that, on the ground, the "common cause" (Gollac, 2003) comprised of childcare and building a social, professional and familial future does in fact function as a factor permitting "neo-rural" farmers' aspirations to converge – but they converge above all in one direction: women who were working for a salary are incited to quit their jobs and support their partner's agricultural project.

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25. These results confirm those obtained by Marie Gillet and Dominique Jacques-Jouvenot (2004) on woman farmers who had not inherited agricultural property: for these women who come from other social milieus, their occupation is the result of a conjugal rather than a professional choice.

26. Chloé's case is an exception, since Samia and Carole, as well as Laure and Julia, settled far from their own and their partner's families.

Towards a Recurrence of Woman's Invisible Work?

Concerning their professional standing, "neo-rural" woman farmers' situation sometimes exacerbates the differences observed between men and women in the more old-fashioned establishments.

The difference was already perceptible in the enterprises of the "take-over" farmers we visited, since women's professional standing there is rarely equal to their husband's. With the exception of one of the women interviewed, whose aged father had urged her to take over the farm alone when she was 19, and who today runs the family EARL (company) together with her husband, farming couples usually prefer the status of collaborating spouse. The women do not challenge that subservient status, even though they are sometimes the vectors through whom the property and know-how get transmitted (particularly when it is a son-in-law who takes over the farm), because to them it seems to be part of an immutable and legitimate, gendered order of things.[27]

But among "neo-rural" working couples, the statutory inequalities between women and men are even more noticeable. Excluding situations where one of the partners did not declare farming as their main occupation because they occupied another, more advantageous status as employee, independent worker or pensioner, we noted that five of the eight women-farmers interviewed simply do not have any professional status at all, and are not even declared to be working on the farm.

The Absence of Status: A Limitation and a Resource

How should these women's peculiar position be interpreted, given that before becoming farmers, four of them had occupied stable professional positions? On the one hand, if these farming couples never envisage the status of co-farmer, collaborating spouse or employee, it is due to the economic constraints that weigh on them. The social security contributions induced by co-farming are at a cost that these small farmers do not think they can support, given the modest benefits generated by their activity.[28] It is then nearly always[29] an unthought-out, automatic, masculine supremacy that casts the man as head of the business and the woman as invisible worker.

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27. This is hardly surprising since, as Philippe Cardon (2004, p. 124) suggests, "women reproduce the very conditions leading to their own exclusion from inheriting the profession, because subconsciously they acknowledge that transmission along the male line is the legitimate way".

28. On these farms, invisible work does not only concern women: the local expression "lending a hand" can refer to unpaid work carried out by friends and relatives as well as to undeclared labour done by anonymous workers (Samak, 2016).

29. Except for the Faures, a couple in which Julia is manager and Laurent undeclared. The disparity between the professional statuses of "neo-rurals"' woman partners may correspond to their different levels of education and previous professional standing before becoming farmers, but our data do not permit verifying that hypothesis, since almost all have similar levels of education (*baccalauréat* and over) and occupied relatively equivalent positions in the social order (hair-dresser, skilled employee in a supermarket, a co-op, a printer's shop). Then too, the case of Julia Faure is a counter-example, because, even though she has few educational credentials and never had another occupation than that of vegetable farmer, in her couple she is the only one in the couple to be declared.

On the other hand, in their interviews, the women concerned by that professional invisibility justify their situation as much by their own carelessness at the time they had decided to become farmers – sometimes a source of regrets – as by their lack of faith in the social system guaranteed by the State. Brigitte Serres (62) is a former 1968 "activist" (*« soixante-huitarde »*) who fell into agriculture by way of the "back to the land" ideologies that flourished at the time. Born into a merchant family and with a university degree in psychology, she first started her career as a teacher in the Caribbean, before returning to mainland France after her marriage broke down, a few months before May 1968. She then participated in the creation of a rural commune with a group of friends in Tournot, a village where for several years she lived on subsistence farming and raised her children. In the mid-1980s, once the commune had disbanded, Brigitte and her partner Gérard decided to make market gardening their occupation: they rented plots of land from a farmer which they cultivated, and created an individual farm in Gérard's name. After a few years, they had the opportunity to buy a three-hectare piece of land and took out a loan of 800,000 francs, which forced them to considerably step up their production. Brigitte's activity was crucial for their business: she took care of most of the sales (serving four markets each week), transformed fruit into jam and the rest of the time did the actual farm-work (sowing, weeding, harvesting). Her role on the farm was reinforced when, towards the end of the 1990s, Gérard fell sick and was forced to curtail his activities and work only part-time. Though the couple could count on many friends and family members to "lend a hand", Brigitte was nevertheless, because of the debts they had accumulated, obliged to work doubly hard. She has never been officially declared as a farmer, and though today she seems to somewhat regret her carefree attitude, she also expresses – tongue in cheek – the little faith she has in the way society protects peasants:

> "I'm nothing here, I'm not declared. […] True, I realize it wasn't the best choice. But, well, when we settled in there weren't many… in the world of agriculture, you have to get married. But since I'd already been married once and it was a bad experience, I'd sworn never to marry again. There you have it, it's dumb but that's the way it is, I stuck to my decision, I didn't get married [laughter]. Which means I don't have a status. I do have medical coverage, but that's all, no pension… And when I realised… I told myself: 'Alright, now's the time to make things legal, because things have changed a bit.' But when I realized what a peasant's pension amounts to, I thought that, in the end, the minimum pension, you know, well, it's not worth much [laughter]."

Brigitte's words underscore the correlation in French law between the professional and the marital status. She never had a status because she didn't want to marry. The failure of her first marriage, and experiencing life in a commune, where the traditional conjugal model is discarded and marriage is considered a "bourgeois institution", had convinced her to cohabit with Gérard under common law. It is only since 2005 that unmarried couples (united by civil law or simply concubines) can request the status of collaborating spouse. That is why she never really worried about her professional status. Besides, her words convey the low esteem in which she holds the socialised

system of social protection: noting the scantiness of farmers' pension schemes, Brigitte decided it was best not to pay into the system and preferred to build a guesthouse instead, to give herself some extra income. Lack of confidence in the State is common among small farmers and independent workers, who prefer to rely on solidarity networks rather than on the State to keep their business going.[30] However, though Brigitte is a university graduate and grew up in the city, she is also the daughter of merchants and the grand-daughter of farmers. It is not impossible that living in a commune as she did in the seventies – which depended on pooling together the money some earned in a job and on the domestic production (subsistence farming) of others – and its ramifications, such as the artisanal or agricultural activities various members of the community did on the side – also went towards bolstering her belief in interpersonal solidarities, and in "making do", to the detriment of formal modes of working and of sharing resources. In the same way as she continues today to barter and exchange with members of her entourage – "neo-rurals" or "peasants from around here" – and to resort to non-commercial forms of doing business (receiving or lending a helping hand) (Weber, 2000, 2009) and "close protection" (Castel, 1995), she is convinced she will be able to support her couple when they retire by running a guesthouse together, supposed to secure them an income. Apparently, the failure of her first marriage and the erstwhile breaks in her conjugal relationship with Gérard have not ruined her idealized image of conjugal solidarity.

It was the same story with the Verdiers; there too, the fact that Samia's work was not declared was a foregone conclusion:

> " – When you established the farm, were you both declared as main managers?
>
> Samia: – I don't exist. I have no status.
>
> – And what is the reason?
>
> S.: – Well, at first I didn't want to declare farmer as my main occupation because I didn't want to multiply our expenses. Oh yes, because if you double the cost, you can't make it.
>
> Florent: – The problem with the MSA (Farmers' Mutual Insurance [*Mutualité sociale agricole*]), is that you pay but when you see what they give you, you fall flat on your face. If there's an accident, if you have a labour injury, you just fall over.
>
> S: – How much does he pay, 3,500 euros a year? 3,500 euros of contributions, multiplied by two, well you've got to produce 3,500 more in goods. It's *pff*…
>
> F: – So we thought what we're going to do for our pension in any case, we're going to build a guest-house. That's the idea. Instead of paying… Anyway, we're against speculation, even before the crisis. Whatever they're offering, investments, whatever. So whatever we have, we invest it in the land. And next year we'll start on the

30. As Florence Weber (2008) pointed out, informal labour exists mainly in economic sectors with a large proportion of (very) small enterprises, dependent on seasonal labour and where profit is never guaranteed (restaurants, construction and public works, agriculture). What is more, in artisanal activities, commerce or agriculture, the limit between an invisible, unpaid domestic economy and paid labour is unclear, and entrepreneurs frequently resort to different family members for work which is more or less remunerated, claiming they occasionally "lend a hand" (see, among others, Weber, 2008; Zarca, 1993; Guichard, Poussou-Plesse, 2017).

guest-house. […] We thought, it'll be a bit of our pension. If we have health issues, it'll be a bit of an income. And then, whatever happens, we're together, we're married, everything we've got is both of ours, anyway we don't want to pay, we don't want to pay the MSA.

S: – It's true I could have been a contributor, if only as a farmer's wife.

F: – Maybe we should get some information. [Addressing me] I don't know if you know…

S: – This has been going on a while, every time the subject comes up, *pff*… I don't bother."

Married, and co-owners of the land and the house they built, Samia and Florent at no time even think of breaking up. Their economic strategy is based on the solidity of their couple – their marriage, the guesthouse in view of their retirement – rather than on society as a whole. They do not see the fact of not declaring the woman's work as a moral issue. It is part and parcel of an economic rationale deliberately pushed to the side-lines, a deviation from the dominant norm – they are opposed to speculation and reject the idea of basing their pension on it, for example by taking out a life-insurance policy – but also a deviation regarding the State, which to their mind does not represent a system of true solidarity. From that standpoint, gender inequalities in professional statuses can be considered one of the possible manifestations of the "alternative" ethos of "neo-rural" farmers. Since their economic resources are hardly sufficient to pay for medical coverage for each member of the couple anyway, these farmers turn their backs on both the economic structures and the public social security systems, while placing their trust in personal relationships and inter-individual solidarity.

The Consequence of Ignoring the Systems and Risks that Exist

If these woman farmers think their social protection can only be entrusted to their own couple, it is also because they disregard both the risks actually incurred and the existing systems of social protection. As Florent Verdier's words on the status of collaborating partner illustrate, we observed they were sometimes relatively ignorant concerning the official systems available and their entitlements. In their situations, marriage and co-ownership (of the house and/or the cultivated land) blind them to the institutional, collective systems of social security ("we're together, we're man and wife, everything that's here is both of ours").

In addition, these farmers do not measure the economic risks incurred by a divorce; in particular they do not know that women's economic contribution to the farm, whether productive or simply financial, is largely underestimated by the judge when it comes to a legal separation (Bessière, Gollac, 2014). That is what emerged from Anne Ragon's experience: she woke up to her own statutory non-existence when at age 46 she saw the effects of her brother-in-law's divorce on her ex-sister-in-law. The daughter of cattle raisers in the Vendée, Anne lives with Stéphane Muller mentioned earlier, the vegetable grower of German descent settled in the village of Tournot since

the 1980s (cf. *supra*). But she was not there when Stéphane first set up his farm with another woman. When she arrived in Tournot in the early 1990s, it was the end of her exiting the agricultural sector, which she managed to do by traveling abroad (in Austria and "all over"), by being employed (in a printing shop), by living in the city (Paris), by taking a two-year degree in philosophy (*Diplôme d'études universitaires générales*, DEUG), and by being active in a protest movement against poor housing. At first an unpaid volunteer on Stéphane's farm, she was to remain more than fifteen years an undeclared worker on her own partner's farm: the couple only decided to marry[31] and register Anne as collaborating spouse at the MSA in 2008. In fact, in 2007, Stéphane's labour injury caused him to be inactive for several months, which pushed Anne to review her situation: she understood that it was important to be officially protected in a way that corresponded to her status as full-time worker. As already mentioned, she also became aware of the shakiness of her status as invisible worker when her brother-in-law Alain divorced Nila – they occupied an attached house and shared the property of the land on which they all lived – Anne and Stéphane as organic fruit and vegetable farmers, Alain and Nila as ewe breeders. The conflicts surrounding the management of the flock generated by the divorce made Anne aware of the need to protect herself *a minima* against that possibility:

> "Before I got married I was an outlaw, though I paid, I worked, and all. OK, you don't care for a while but one day you think maybe, you never know, you can't tell what'll happen. And then they started fighting up there and you think wait a minute, listen, Nila too was collaborating spouse and then, all of a sudden, nothing. No more power. It's a real mess, even though everything they had they'd done together. That's what gave us the idea to make it all legitimate. So I should at least be protected a minimum."

Her case thus reveals the potentially temporary nature of the invisible work of the women interviewed. As soon as they become aware of the risks, and once the economic conditions required to pay for the social contributions are met, the statutory recognition of these woman farmers becomes a possibility. Samia Verdier and her partner Florent, as well as Suzanne Fèvre and her partner Jean-Paul, said during their interview that they had already thought of fixing that situation of statutory invisibility – but without acting on it. Rather than a cause for conflict between women and men, or of male opposition to women working (Zarca, 1993), to these farmers, preoccupied above all by the fragile economic balance of their enterprise, gender inequality is a "given", a non-priority. But the danger is that the realization comes too late to have any real economic and social impact, as the case of Brigitte Serres (above) made very clear, and that therefore the women remain dependent indefinitely.

31. Under the community of property matrimonial regime, which gave her the ownership of one eighth of the farm (after Stéphane had bought back the part belonging to his ex-wife).

Over the past few decades, women's situations in the French agricultural sector have improved from the point of view of social recognition, and their professional trajectories have become increasingly less dependent on their partner's. But the phenomenon comes in different shades and shapes and certain situations are characterised by the persistence of couples working together and by the fact that women's work remains invisible. In this survey, conducted among organic fruit and vegetable growers in the Alpes-Maritimes region, it appears that nearly all the "neo-rural" women work in couples, frequently without any professional status. Wondering what social logics preside over their decision to become farmers next to their partners and work in their shadow, as it were, led us to cast light primarily on the fact that, if indeed "neo-rural" installations today are the outcome of a professional rupture or reorientation, the long and short of it is that they have set up as couples, which points mainly to family-driven logics. In the first place, though having children and building a social, professional and family future does show that the professional aspirations of "neo-rural" farmers converge, they nonetheless seem to converge mainly in one and the same direction: the women are incited to give up their salaried employment and throw themselves heart and soul into their partner's agricultural project. Secondly, their statutory invisibility is primarily the result of economic constraints: being more often than not in situations of economic subsistence, these farmers are obliged to accept configurations that are unequal in terms of gender. But those inequalities may also be due to their relative ignorance of the risks involved and the ways to protect themselves, and to real misgivings as to the formal systems of social protection that exist, which lead them to put their trust in conjugal solidarity and develop individual strategies as a compensation. In such situations, resorting to emotion (the marital commitment), mutual support and reciprocity, or yet again to the argument of the non-mercantile and "alternative" nature of their economic choices, is a convenient arrangement that allows neutralizing the practical and symbolic tensions those gender inequalities could generate.

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Appendix – List of the Farming Families Interviewed

"Neo-rural" farmers (men and women)
CASTAIN ♣ Farm: 1,8 ha market gardening ♀ Castain Laure: manager, age 46*, father executive in the private sector, mother homemaker ∞ Marital status: single, divorced
FAURE ♣ Farm: 1 ha market gardening ♀ Faure Julia: manager, age 31, father executive in the private sector, mother homemaker ♂ Faure Laurent: undeclared, age 32, father executive in the private sector, mother executive secretary
FÈVRE ♣ Farm: 1 ha market gardening ♂ Fèvre Jean-Paul: manager, age 55, parents railway workers ♀ Fèvre Suzanne: undeclared, age 52, parents shopkeepers
MÉRIEUX ♣ Farm: 1.4 ha market gardening ♂ Mérieux Michel: manager, age 62, father railway technician, mother schoolmistress ∞ Marital status: married, partner works outside the farm
MONGIN-ROSTAN ♣ Farm: 1 ha market gardening ♂ Rostan Gautier: manager, age 38, parents tax officers ♀ Mongin Chloé: part-time employee outside the farm (temporarily), age 33, parents teachers
MULLER-RAGON ♣ Farm: 1.5 ha market gardening ♂ Muller Stéphane: manager, age 51, father minister, mother homemaker ♀ Ragon Anne: collaborating spouse since 2008, undeclared from 1992 to 2008, age 46, parents farmers
MARINI-SERRES ♣ Exploitation: 2.2 ha market gardening ♂ Marini Gérard: manager, age 60, father army officer, mother homemaker ♀ Serres Brigitte: undeclared, age 62, parents merchants
REVEL ♣ Exploitation: 0.5 ha market gardening ♀ Revel Monique: manager, age 55, father industrial designer, mother homemaker ♂ Revel Jean-Pierre: retired, age 58, father mason, mother homemaker
TISSOT-MARTIN ♣ Exploitation: 1.2 ha market gardening ♂ Tissot Christophe: manager, age 36, father technician in industry, mother homemaker ♀ Martin Carole: undeclared, age 30, parents' profession unknown
VERDIER ♣ Exploitation: 1 ha market gardening ♂ Verdier Florent: manager, age 40, father accountant, mother secretary ♀ Verdier Samia: undeclared, age 38, father blue-collar, mother homemaker

* It was agreed that interviewees' ages would be calculated with reference to the year 2010.

Farmers (men and women) who took over a farm
BRUNO ♣ Farm: 2 ha market gardening ♂ Bruno Patrick: co-manager, age 51, father accountant (employee), mother homemaker ♀ Bruno Christine: co-manager, age 46, parents farmers
CARATTI ♣ Farm: 8 ha market gardening ♂ Caratti Paul: manager, age 74, father overseer in a factory, mother homemaker ♀ Caratti Mireille: collaborating spouse, age 68, parents farmers
CARDAN ♣ Farm: 1.5 ha market gardening ♂ Cardan Philippe: manager, age 50, parents farmers ♀ Cardan Sanya: collaborating spouse, age 43, parents farmers
GARRIDO ♣ Farm: 2.5 ha market gardening ♂ Garrido Antoine: manager, age 56, parents farmers ♀ Garrido Élise: collaborating spouse, age 60, father head-waiter, mother homemaker
LAMY ♣ Farm: 1 ha market gardening ♂ Lamy Victor: manager, age 56, parents farmers ∞ Marital status: married, spouse works outside the farm
MASSIERA ♣ Farm: 1.2 ha market gardening ♀ Massiera Marie: manager, age 51, father blue-collar worker, mother public employee ∞ Marital status: single, divorced
MURET ♣ Farm: 0.8 ha market gardening ♂ Muret Pierre: manager, age 57, parents farmers ∞ Marital status: single, divorced
OLIVETTI ♣ Farm: 4.7 ha market gardening ♂ Olivetti Éric: manager, age 52, father executive in industry, mother homemaker ♀ Olivetti Florence: collaborating spouse, age 50, parents farmers
PRÉVOT ♣ Farm: 0.8 ha market gardening ♀ Prévot Janine: manager, age 57, father works manager, mother school teacher ♂ Prévot André: manager (in a tree nursery next to the farm), age 57, parents farmers
PUJOL ♣ Farm: 4.5 ha market gardening ♂ Pujol Roland: manager, age 52, parents farmers ∞ Marital status: common law marriage, spouse works outside the farm
ROSSO ♣ Farm: 3 ha market gardening ♂ Rosso Bernard: manager, age 62, parents farmers ∞ Marital status: married, spouse works outside the farm
SOREL ♣ Farm: 0.4 ha market gardening ♀ Sorel Colette: manager, age 46, parents vegetable farmers ∞ Marital status: married, spouse works outside the farm (but plans to work on the farm part-time)

Abstracts

Changes in the Intensity and Hardships of Hospital Work in France (1998-2013)

Samia Benallah, Jean-Paul Domin

This paper looks at the evolution of working conditions in France's hospital sector over the fifteen years to 2013. The issue is important in view of the extensive reforms undertaken in the sector since the early 1990s, which have led to profound reorganizations. We start by reviewing the state of knowledge and data of working conditions in hospitals. In the light of the last three editions of France's *Working Conditions* survey (*enquête Conditions de travail*), we then look at the changes in the pace of work and in the different forms of hardship at work that occurred in French hospitals between 1998 and 2013. We then compare these with observations for other sectors. Finally, we analyze, *ceteris paribus*, the current specificities of the hospital sector in terms of exposure to work pace, staggered schedules, physical hardships and a worsening working environment. We observe that there was an acceleration in work pace faced by hospital staff in the period studied. This was accompanied by a slight alleviation of physical hardships. However, working conditions in hospitals remain particularly stressful.

Keywords: hospitals, working conditions, intensity of work
JEL: L32, J81, J28

Results of a Quantitative Assessment of France's *Garantie Jeunes* Programme

What Target Groups, What Kinds of Support, and What Beneficiary Trajectories?

Mathilde Gaini, Marine Guillerm, Solène Hilary, Emmanuel Valat, Philippe Zamora

France's *Garantie jeunes* ("Youth Guarantee", GJ) is a local support programme that targets young people who are in precarious situations and neither in employment, education, or training. It was set up in October 2013, initially on a trial basis. This article presents the results of a quantitative evaluation of the scheme. A panel survey conducted among young people who participated from the beginning of the trial in the areas first trialling *Garantie jeunes* reveals a very fragile population. The programme offers a high level of support, especially during the collective phase at the start. The evaluation of the scheme takes into account the fact that it was initially set up in only part of the country. Estimates concerning the participants in the first *Garantie jeunes* target areas indicate that the programme has had an impact on their life trajectories. It has intensified support and has had an impact on beneficiaries' employment rates, an impact that continues in the months following the end of support.

Keywords: Youth Guarantee programme, counterfactual evaluation, social and job search assistance, labor market entry, young people
JEL: C21, I38, J13

Economic Mechanisms Explaining Low Wages in the Personal Services Sector

An Analysis Focusing on Home Help Workers

François-Xavier Devetter, Emmanuelle Puissant

The purpose of this article is to show how low wages in home help services, a sector where jobs are considered "low-skilled", result from an array of mechanisms that themselves are the fruit of a socio-political and socio-economic construction. These mechanisms flow from both public and private strategies, which we seek to clarify by synthesising empirical work in the field of personal services. Three mechanisms involved in the non-recognition of these professions are identified (denying or reducing the "qualities" used; developing an abundant labour supply; and dividing the workforce), with each of these being applied in both national policy guidelines and employer human resources strategies. The home help sector appears to be illustrative of trends at work in many other highly feminised service activities (cleaning, hotel and catering, and retail).

Keywords: personal services, skills and qualifications, home helps, services, women, low wages
JEL: J24, J31, L84, M51

An Illusory March towards Equality between Women and Men

"Biographical Availability" and Career Inequalities Among Flight Attendants

Anne Lambert, Delphine Remillon

This article offers a comparative analysis of the careers of men and women flight attendants in air transport. Using personnel records, collective agreements and interviews with flight attendants, we show that the picture of improvements in career equality in the airline studied here is illusory. For earlier cohorts, the massive prevalence of women as flight attendants has been accompanied by growing access to positions of in-flight responsibility (cabin manager) and on the ground (base manager), while repeated cross-sectional data indicate a narrowing of the gap between men and women in entry and exit conditions over time. However, our longitudinal analysis of a cohort of flight attendants who entered the company more recently (between 1998 and 2001) reveals gender inequalities in the likelihood of promotion, to the disadvantage of women. Career models are also highly gendered, with women notably more likely to work part-time. Rather than countering this tendency, the shift from a system of promotion based on seniority to one based more "on choice" reinforces gender inequalities, contrary to the claims associated with the equal-opportunity policy implemented by the airline, as of the early 2000s. This is because the new system is more heavily based on employees' investment in the company throughout their careers, and thus on "biographical availability", which is greater among men than women.

Keywords: career, gender inequalities, promotions, organizations, biographical availability, personnel files, mixed methods
JEL: J16, L93, M51

Mompreneurs
Economics, Parenting and Identity

Julie Landour

Mompreneurs is a movement that appeared in France towards the end of the 2000s. Its members define themselves as women who create a business when their baby is born, abandoning paid employment in favour of an independence supposed to insure a better work and family balance. The movement may seem insignificant when only the members of its "certified" networks are counted, but it involves deep and transversal processes of individuation, as well as the ongoing public celebration of individual economic initiatives and the stress put on parenting, particularly among the middle and upper classes. Based on three years of research carried out in one of the French Mompreneurs collectives, this article summons up these women's words, attempting to grasp – given the objective conditions of the independent professional activity they have chosen to practice – what they expected by giving up their salaried employment. After sketching the identity of an entrepreneurial adventure in the guise of "perfect mother", we will see how the family and its eventual fluctuations affect the life-courses of initially privileged women, revealing the part of fragility hidden beneath that promised, exalting, global enterprise of self.

Keywords: independent work, gender, family, identity, life course
JEL: L26, J23, J62

"Back to the Land" among "Neo-Rural" Farmers: The Price to Pay
Working Couples and Women's Invisible Work

Madlyne Samak

The article deals with the social processes that incite "neo-rural" women – *i.e.* who do not themselves originate from agricultural families – to become fruit and vegetable farmers alongside their partners and work in their shadow, with no professional status. It shows, first, the extent to which their decision to become independent workers is sometimes governed by family rather than professional considerations. Secondly, it exposes the causes of their statutory invisibility: beyond the feeble economic resources that constrain small farmers and limit their ability to pay into social security schemes, they largely ignore the existing systems and the risks incurred, and they mistrust the established forms of social protection, preferring to count on couple solidarity and develop individual strategies in compensation.

Keywords: independent worker, men and women farmers, family and conjugal labour, invisible work, gender inequalities
JEL: L26, J23