

Call for contributions for a thematic issue of the review *Travail et emploi*: *When the hardships of work are brought home*

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Recent years have seen a considerable development of social science research on **occupational health**. Most such work falls within the classical perspective of studying work *in situ*, centred on the place, time and nature of work activity, or concerning institutions which have an authority over life at work (unions, health and safety committees [*Comités d'hygiène, de sécurité et des conditions de travail* (CHSCT)], labour inspection, occupational medicine, etc.). Where research has been concerned with **life outside of work**, with family life, it has usually been oriented towards understanding how such dimensions of daily life could be affected by occupational health issues and in particular by the hardships and discomforts—the drudgery—of work.

The review *Travail et emploi* is planning a thematic issue dedicated to the study of the relationship between what happens “at home” and the hardships and discomforts of work, **reversing the usual perspective**, that is to say, by studying the role of close relations in helping to “cope” with difficult work, but also in becoming aware of difficulties in working conditions or in mobilizing around this issue (the fact that this angle is preferred does not, however, exclude addressing how work difficulties affect family life, since these dimensions are closely related). **The calendar of this call for contributions (see below) takes account of the unusual nature of the question and encourages (re)considering past and ongoing studies in this new perspective.**

Ethnographic sociological studies of the working world illustrate the importance of taking into account elements outside of work so as to understand what happens at work itself, including the merits of home interviews in exposing working conditions.¹ Similarly, a materialist perspective on gender relations shows that understanding the relationship of men and women to their paid work cannot be divorced from the study of the distribution of unpaid domestic work.²

Beyond its current regulatory sense, e.g. the “hardship account” device, we understand hardship as a generic term encompassing the idea that both men and women workers face working conditions which are difficult, exhausting, and hazardous to health and / or are perceived as such. This includes non-standard hours, night or weekend work, and the obligation of taking work home.

What takes place “at home” can be understood through direct surveys of workers and their families, but also through institutions and actors who are “peripheral” to the workplace and who may also have access to the privacy of family life, or at least to records and stories

¹ M. Pialoux (1995), “L’ouvrière et le chef d’équipe ou comment parler du travail ?”, *Travail et emploi*, n° 62, pp. 4–39.

² Collectif 1984, *Le sexe du travail. Structures familiales et système productif*, Saint-Martin d’Hères, Presses universitaires de Grenoble ; D. Kergoat (2005), “Rapports sociaux et division du travail entre les sexes”, in M. Maruani (ed.), *Femmes, genre et sociétés : l’état des savoirs*, Paris, la Découverte, collection “L’état des savoirs”, pp. 94–101.

interspersing working conditions and personal life, e.g. judges, general medical practitioners, etc.

Since such a perspective on occupational health conditions is unusual, this call for contributions is also a call for young as well as more established researchers to examine or re-examine their empirical material from this angle. This is why we have made a series of indications that could be explored (see below):

Describe the distribution of hardships in the household

Do spouses and children of people facing hard work usually have difficult working conditions themselves? How are such hardships distributed within the household? Is this distribution the same throughout the social space? What are the links between working conditions and their effects on health and family situations? There are currently very few statistics concerning these questions, although there are increasing numbers of innovative devices such as the Health and Professional Career Survey [*Santé et itinéraire professionnel*] which is rich in biographical and longitudinal data. Whether based on statistical or qualitative surveys, some employment situations such as those of independents, child-minders, or of executives working at home, where professional and domestic constraints are interwoven, could be an interesting starting point for a description of work hardship outside of work.

When relatives help (or not) at coping with work

The idea of an individual capacity of resistance to hardships is challenged by studies in sociology, psychology, and ergonomics, which emphasize the role of collective work groups, of mutual support among colleagues in coping with hard and difficult working conditions. Similarly, it is interesting to study how relatives in the household bring resources and constraints that more or less help in coping with difficult working conditions. For example, should we take into consideration such “family groups” in the process of coping with hardship at work? In particular, the assurance that assistance is available or that there is support in dealing with domestic work can play a role in one’s ability to cope with one’s work.³ In this regard, women and men are not equal in their work load and in the degree of support on which they can rely.

Awareness of working conditions through the eyes of relatives

The fact that some aspects of an activity are isolated and identified as “working conditions” is not self-evident. Nor is this the case, a fortiori, in the realization that some of these working conditions might be painful, difficult, dangerous or even intolerable.⁴ This identification is observable at different levels: in a collective mobilization; a long-term change in work organization or the hiring of new workers; or following the evolution of changing regulations. But to what extent does this development also take place at home, in discussions with other family members? We will be interested in how work is (or is not) discussed at home—a highly variable practice according to the social milieu⁵—in comparing / confronting one’s work with that of one’s family (spouse, parents, children, etc.) and their perception of what would be desirable, tolerable, or on the other hand, painful, unacceptable, etc.

³ A.-M. Daune-Richard (1983), “Travail professionnel et travail domestique : le travail et ses représentations au sein des lignées féminines”, *Travail et emploi*, n° 17, pp. 49–55.

⁴ M. Gollac, S. Volkoff (2000), *Les conditions de travail*, Paris, la Découverte, collection “Repères”, first edition.

⁵ M. Bozon, Y. Lemel (1989), “Les petits profits du travail salarié. Moments, produits et plaisirs dérobés”, *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. XXX, pp. 101–127.

Occupational health mobilization, a family story

Beyond the question of the awareness of hardship at work, what role do workers' relatives play in demanding better adapted work stations or in the "quiet" mobilization for improved working conditions?

Beyond individual demands, contributions may also concern collective mobilization around occupational health conditions (psychosocial risks, suicides, exposure to carcinogenic products and fumes, etc.), especially those based on judicial action (demands for recognition, compensation, and for legal sanctions): what role do employee's relatives play in the development of these mobilizations (from the awareness of a danger to its denunciation); in their logistical support (administrative and judicial procedures, analytical development, and daily activist activity); and in maintaining these actions over the long term until the end of the proceedings?

Contributions can be from various disciplines (sociology, history, economics, industrial and organizational psychology, etc.) and rely on various methods (statistical, interviews and observations, archival work, etc.). They must be based on original empirical primary material, and may not have been previously published elsewhere in a close or related form.

Applications and timetable:

Contributors are invited to initially propose a plan (either in French or in English, for native speakers of either of these two languages) for an article of approximately 5,000 to 7,000 characters (three to four pages), clearly presenting the research question investigated, the materials and methods used for the collection of these materials, the analytical tools mobilized, and, to the degree that the material has been exploited, the expected results.

Plans for an article should be sent by email, as an attachment file, to the review's editors at travail.emploi@dares.travail.gouv.fr and copied to christelle.avril@ehess.fr and pascal.marichalar@gmail.com by **10 February 2015** at the latest.

The auteurs whose projects have been selected will then send their completed article in Word (or equivalent) by **10 September 2015**.

For more details on the stylistic norms used, please read the article "[Normes graphiques](#)" on the review's website.

Articles will be evaluated by referees in line with the procedures adopted by the review's editorial board (see "[Procédure d'évaluation](#)").