

“Peripheral” occupations: Interactions, collaborations and professionalization

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Life expectancy has greatly increased during the 20th century, making old age a major challenge for the contemporary welfare state (Doutreligne, 2006; Fux *et al.*, 2006; Billaud & Brossard, 2014). The addition of several decades of life expectancy (WHO, 2018), changes in the structure of solidarity measures aimed at older persons, but also the increasing diversity in modes of ageing (Fux, 2005; Sauvain-Dugerdil *et al.*, 2005) - *ways to age* (Hummel *et al.*, 2014) - have led to the implementation of collective responses, among which the professionalization of help and support for the elderly feature prominently. Examining these professional activities and the women and men who carry them out thus seems important. This is why this special issue focuses specifically on the work carried out by professionals as well as volunteers active in the field of support for older adults, whether in care homes, geriatric or psycho-geriatric nursing homes, intermediary structures (day centres, assisted living apartments etc.) or in the context of home care.

Many of the studies concerned with ageing and the elderly focus on the intervention of health care professionals and on home care (Avril, 2006, 2008; Anchisi, 2008; Roberts *et al.*, 2012; Anchisi *et al.*, 2014); they deal primarily with the emotional onus of care on health care personnel (Aubry, 2010; Causse, 2006; Billaud & Xing, 2016; Lechevalier Hurard, 2015; Loffeier, 2015), with the interactions between care recipients, family members and professionals, or with the ways in which the health and social care interventions provided are perceived by the persons involved (Masotti & Hugentobler, 2020 ; Feyfant, 2018).

This special issue has the goal of broadening the focus to include an examination of the entire range of workers supporting the elderly, health care professionals or otherwise. In our view, little scientific attention is given to occupations seen as « peripheral », although they also play a part in the construction of « socially differentiated modes of ageing » (Hummel *et al.*, 2014, pp. 389-390). We are of course thinking of various professionals providing social support to ageing populations, from community workers and activity specialists to nursing assistants and care support workers, but also of catering personnel, cleaning staff, as well as chaplains, technicians and other service persons such as hairdressers, podiatrists, beauticians in care homes and others whose jobs involve interactions with the elderly on a specific, though occasional, basis. All these occupational groups, while they represent an integral part of ageing work, are often ignored (Loffeier, 2018) and passed over by scientific studies that choose to focus on the « health care professions ».

Including all these occupations means that attention can be given to the ways in which different professional groups provide help and support to the elderly, focusing particularly on professional cultures, on the emergence of new occupations, on borders between professions and on the types of collaborations that arise. More broadly, the role not - or not only - of health care personnel but of social care staff will be questioned; other forms of support are often most directly instrumental in enabling care recipients to maintain some degree of autonomy and of social participation. Considerations and analyses concerning occupations involving coordination of the various types of care provided are also welcome (occupations such as case managers or team managers).

Finally, when speaking of services and care provided to ageing persons by professionals and by volunteers, we invite authors to turn to the issue of care work. Researching care work and the range of tasks it involves enables us not only to highlight peripheral practices that are often marginalised and viewed as insignificant, but also to investigate questions pertaining to the professionalization of care work and its possible consequences: new forms of division of labour, new hierarchies of tasks and activities, as well as new attributions of duties to either professional or informal carers as well as changes in the social recognition of care work (Molinier, 2013, 2017 ; Paperman & Laugier, 2005). Focusing on care work also enables us to examine the gendered character of activities and the systematic assignation of certain tasks to women. Approaching care work in an inter-disciplinary manner, taking into account material, ethical, philosophical, socio-economic and psychological dimensions represents a worthy challenge to be taken up in the context of the proposed thematic special issue.

This issue thus has the goal of assembling academic studies as well as perspectives on reports of field experiences pertaining to these different professionals and volunteers and to their modes of intervention; it will focus more specifically on the social consequences of ageing and on its impacts on elderly care occupations. Proposals for communications can come from different disciplines and concern a wide range of themes and practices, as long as they concern professionals or volunteers providing services or support to the elderly.

Three main lines of enquiry, each giving rise to a series of questions, are put forward to structure the contents of this special issue. Proposals for articles should thus be articulated along one of the three following axes:

Inter-professional relations and collaborations

This first axis proposes to explore the ways in which professionals from different disciplinary fields provide help and support to the elderly, with special attention paid to differences or tensions between « health » and « non-health » personnel (Pichonnaz et al., 2020), between medically-focused and « alternative » approaches. There is in fact renewed interest in perspectives stemming from social work rather than medical bases, such as approaches focusing on defining long-term care institutions as « places to live » rather than « places to receive health care » (Lambelet et al., 2017). This growing focus on the importance of social support measures for the elderly can also fruitfully be viewed in the context of the health crisis caused by Covid-19: the strict health protocols implemented within care and nursing homes in order to contain the spread of the virus rendered « alternative » approaches de facto impossible to implement because of the primacy of medical and security measures meant to protect the vulnerable. Studies along this axis may pertain to tensions between health and other professions and whether they increased - as they likely did - during the crisis. More generally, this axis may deal with issues pertaining to differences, complementarities, tensions, conflicts and/or collaborations between different professional fields in a context of (de-)medicalisation, of de-institutionalisation, of delegation of responsibilities and skills and, in some cases, of questions raised about

the legitimacy and definition of professional fields. Contributions dealing with professional ethics of care in peripheral occupations, focusing on ways in which skills have been inscribed as « female », or with the stakes of negotiations taking place around definitions of care work, as well as with the manner in which some tasks are delegated - or relegated - to specific professional groups or occupations would be particularly welcome here.

Professionalization and perspectives on job content and status

While supporting elderly persons living at home or in an institutional setting requires interventions from a range of professional groups that are at once closely related and distinct (nursing aides, nurses, community workers and activity specialists, household staff, informal carers), the increasing diversity of housing and care settings (including for instance alternative housing or foster care) seems to lead not only to the emergence of new occupations in the social/health field but also to new definition of the fields of intervention of traditional actors in this sector (Saks, 2020 ; Hosoda, 2020). The realm of support and care of the elderly thus becomes reorganised with the advent of new job types such as social/community work assistants (Perriard & Castelli Dransart, 2016) or care support workers in assisted-living apartment buildings (Hugentobler, 2018). The largely invisible nature of work carried out by personnel with low-level - or no - qualifications is also a worthwhile lens through which to view the complexity of service jobs (Dussuet, 2005; Avril, 2014 ; Arborio, 2012). As a result, the limits and boundaries of tasks delegated to different care personnel are blurred, giving rise to a multitude of questions not only about the level of social and financial recognition granted to various activities but also about the division of labour in care work and the hierarchy of care tasks. This axis thus aims at shedding light on the emergence of new ways of being a care professional, as well as on how new professional groups define their mission, tasks and activities. Furthermore, how do these actors express their own vision of their job and the ways in which it exists - or rather co-exists - in a context of multiple professionals intervening in support of the elderly?

Proposed contributions may also question the ways in which individuals live through the invisibility of their tasks and the growing precariousness of the positions they occupy. Finally, articles in this axis might also analyse the impact of automation and IT on the service sector in general and on care work in particular. The introduction of digital technologies already plays an important part in the organisation of care work: digitalisation is used to transfer data concerning clients and patients, to plan work routines, to organise processes of evaluation and to document activities carried out (Orlikowski, 2016; Hielscher et al., 2015). Many tasks and processes are thus being adapted to technological solutions and digitalisation that may modify the content of activities and the skills required from professionals. Many questions come to the fore: to what extent will these changes empty care work of its meaning? Will pressures for ever-increasing speed be observed in the field? How will these transformations affect the service sector and more specifically care work, in terms of its feminisation and of the prestige - or lack thereof - granted to care work?

Impact of ageing on professionals and their work

The literature frequently frames the practical skills implemented by care professionals as revelatory of the characteristics of the type of ageing they construct to through their actions. This third axis aims at reversing the process and examining the ways in which old age and the presence of the elderly shape the occupations that gravitate around them.

Demographic change, as well as the increase in the number of persons requiring support, influence the expectations of the current and future public towards personnel in contact with the ageing population. We

wish to critically investigate the impact of ageing on various professions and on those who are in direct contact with the elderly population. More generally, we want to examine how training on the one hand and actual professional interventions could be adapted to this reality. How does old age impact the daily gestures carried out by (care) workers, and how do occupations adapt to this « new » clientele? What is the significance, for professionals, of working with the elderly and of adapting to this target group?

The whys and wherefores of these social transformations should be analysed and their impact assessed, as well as their consequences on occupations in daily contact with the elderly; an inter-disciplinary approach should enable researchers to study issues related to societal ageing in a more global way. Moreover, we would welcome considerations on the ways in which professionals are trained and mentored in this perspective, be they front-line staff or personnel charged with organising and managing (care) work for the aged. Above and beyond adaptations made to professional interventions and practices aimed at an ageing population, how is this experience translated into training programmes and work organisation?

General Reminders

The expected proposals may come from any discipline and any theoretical background. Foreign contributions or using a comparative perspective are welcome. Debates, controversies, as well as contributions aiming at reporting on past and/or future experiments are also expected and may contribute to the journal's "Perspectives and Feedback" and "Free Comments" sections.

Contributions may be submitted in French or English.

Only articles in French will be included in the paper version of the journal.

Articles in English will be included in the abstract and their summaries will be integrated into the paper version; they will be available in electronic version on Cairn <https://www.cairn.info/revue-gerontologie-et-societe.htm>. The journal is also accessible on the Cairn International website (<https://www.cairn-int.info/journalgerontologie-et-societe.html>).

English-speaking authors will be invited to have their article translated into French if they wish to be published in the paper journal.

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Submission schedule and procedures

Proposals of full papers, in French or English (40,000 characters, spaces included), accompanied by a **title** and an **abstract** (250 words maximum) are **expected by February 28, 2022**.

The **Editorial Board** informs the authors of the acceptance or refusal of the proposal to enter the editorial process in one of the **three sections of the journal**: "**Original Articles**", "**Perspectives and Feedback**", "**Free Comments**". Submissions in the "Original Articles" and "Perspectives and Feedbacks" sections are **then double-blind assessed by external reviewers**; articles proposed in the "Free Comments" section are evaluated by the editorial board.

Submissions must fall under one of the three journal sections and be **identified as such** on the first page.

For more information on the journal, its sections, editorial process and evaluation grids, please refer to: [scientific journal website](http://scientificjournalwebsite).

Submissions must be sent no later than February 28, 2022 to:

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Notes to authors are available at: ([ici](#)).

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