Fighting at work: resistances, conflicts and collective actions

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Strikes at the Billancourt Renault plants at Lip or in Marzotto in Italy, or detentions of bosses, such as for the plant director of Sud Aviation in Bouguenais, belong among the symbols of May 1968, alongside student barricades in the Parisian Latin Quarter or the Berlin Easter riots. The next *Journées Internationales de Sociologie du Travail* in 2018, 50 years after this highly charged period of social criticism, provide the opportunity to question, on the one hand, the labour's central role in social struggle, and, on the other, the transformation of the character of workplace struggles. Far from being a mere commemoration, this Congress aims to shed new light on the stakes, the objects and the modes of action, struggles and negotiations we are witnessing today. During the last 50 years, the world of work has witnessed far-reaching changes whose effects we aim to assess. The working population has undergone a significant transformation: for example, the feminisation and aging of the labour force, "*salarisation*" and, during the last decades, the rising effects of precarity. Furthermore, the growing interdependence of economies on a larger scale has fostered migration flows countered by their raising control. Concurrently, the growing importance of the service sector as well as technological change (digitalization, automatisation) have had on impact on labour in its practical aspects. Those transformations to both the technical and organisational aspects of labour and employment have also had an effect on the way collective action is triggered in the context of contemporary conflicts.

Proposals for communications handling this wide range of means of contestation involving national or transnational cases are welcome. Five main streams of discussion will take up the main objects and themes of sociology:
- **Stream 1: Dynamics of the repertoire of individual and collective struggles**
- **Stream 2: Transformations of employment and new forms of contention**
- **Stream 3: Labour techniques and tools: Issues of struggle within organizations**
- **Stream 4: Spaces of action and of its regulation**
- **Stream 5: Changing work, challenging the society**

Stream 1: Dynamics of the repertoire of individual and collective struggles

For a long time, work related social struggles have been associated with what the historian Charles Tilly called an autonomous and national repertoire of collective action. Is this notion still relevant today? Some works suggest that a new collective action repertoire is being invented nowadays. It is supposed to be marked by the internationalization of struggles and the development of transnational networks, an increased use of expertise leading to a growing reluctance to delegate power, a growing use of the media, and a closer involvement between public policies and social mobilisation. Can these changes be empirically verified? If so, on what basis and with what intensity? Does this suggest the invention of a new repertoire of social contention about work and employment? In which ways are social classes, races or gender relations important for the organization modalities of struggles?

New research on strikes and work stoppages suggest more reflexive attitudes by questioning the modes of construction of the instruments used in order to both apprehend and assess conflicts (statactivism, involvement of the researchers in the struggles). What do we know about this today? Which methodologies are being developed? By whom and with whom? Do we have to incorporate this reflexive aspect in the formalisation of new action and mobilisation repertoires? The growth of digital communications (and social networks) play an important role in the relations between instruments and collective action repertoires. Has what some call the "digital revolution" transformed the forms, organization and effects of mobilisations? Is the digital transformation an instrument of labour convention de-regulation which hinders social struggles or does this also provide useful leverage for the invention of new mobilisation practices? Which actions and representations are emerging nowadays involving younger militants and more horizontal and decentralized organizations? On the other hand, does the digital transformation foster a social, and moreover an increasingly digital divide because of the unequal mastering of the codes of digital mobilization?

Thus, it is important to expand the study of collective and individual action by the working population, as well as the variety and innovation in the response of management, whether by an important entrepreneurs, SME leaders or by collective business action. From the "bonnets rouges" to the "pigeons", via the mobilisation of notaries in 2014, French business has proven its organizational capacity in order to avoid supplementary taxes. Employers may develop various techniques to directly repress union action and less visible forms to tame labour power such as using the support of company unions. In this context, the labour right can be considered in some cases as a resource for the labour struggle, but for others as an instrument of control when the right to strike is threatened or when labour actions face repression.

Lastly, what can be said about the effects of struggle both in terms of social gains as well as in terms of militancy building able to get re-mobilised at a further stage? Under which conditions does the aphorism "only struggle pays off" become empirically verifiable? What are the concrete outcomes of struggle?

Stream 2: Transformations of employment and new forms of contention

For many years, the transformation of the wage-earning status and the diversification of employment forms have challenged the traditional collective actors representing the labour force. Such changes may more generally recompose the forms of conflict between capital and labour. In what ways have the morphological evolutions of the working population changed contentious forms? How have feminisation, the growth of services, or *salarisation* modified the way workers and employees become mobilised? The persistence of mass unemployment in France and growing precarity in labour relations represents a constant threat to the working population. Does this threat discourage the involvement of the labour force? Is collective action the prerogative of the employed? Or, on the contrary, are we witnessing a growing capacity for mobilisation among the jobless? Do labour market policies, supposed to foster job creation or at least to contain job losses, have an effect in terms of social pacification?

How do the redefinition of companies, with multinationals dominating subcontracting companies or imposing their conditions on their suppliers or self-employed providers, transform the opportunities and venues of expression, resistance and struggle by the working population?

In the North and in the South, how can unions defend the interests of underemployed or precarious wage-earners, the new free-lance workers, the multi-activity jobbers who often combine self-employed and salaried status, or even more of the unpaid 'employed', interns or of the persons working on platforms?

Which new actors ("coordinations", cooperatives, associations, NGOs) are emerging in the labour struggles for income, social protection, and working conditions? What are the new ways explored by non-salaried labourers between integration into wage earning contracts, defence of self-employment or the invention of new cooperative forms?

In this context marked by swift mutations, regulated professions are being endangered and are fighting back (taxi or truck drivers in the USA for instance), whereas other professions are trying to establish their legitimacy. What role for public authority in the context of these entangled struggles? What is the function of labour law in the face of requalification claims by unions about outsourced labourers? Equally, what are the limits of national policy making in the context of employment regulation by supranational actors?

Finally, the public sector and public companies have long been a privileged place for social and union contention. How do the various reforms in public employment which aim to individualise and impoverish the resistance capacity of those labourers providing services of general interest? What opportunities are there in the struggle for recognition and qualification of their activities, for those whose status is unclear (volunteers, civic services)?

Stream 3: Labour techniques and tools: issues of struggle within organizations

Labour sociologists identify a growing influence of management practices on private, public and associative organisations. This means that not only are new machines introduced in companies but also organizational technologies (management devices, procedures, organization methods and organization). Those technical and organizational tools are ambivalent: they are on the same time factors of autonomy at the workplace but as well

factors of work intensification and increase of surveillance and control opportunities. What resistance and struggles do they trigger? What are the individual as well as collective forms of struggle and resistance in a context framed by physic and organizational technologies? How do these struggles proceed? Is their outcome a more general critique of work?

What relevance for forum of debates confronting the demands in terms of work quality by the employed and the management and possibilities to negotiate the objectives so that the individual workers do not face isolated ideal work standards impossible to achieve? Have such forums been documented so far? What analysis of these places? Are their effects convincing? Can they provide an improvement in working conditions and beyond of work place quality of life? What are the complementary forms of resistance and collective action enabling an improvement in employees' health?

Considering that technologies and management devices primarily aim at maximising investment returns, their systematic use aims to increase work productivity. The ideology is still centred on productivity via its latest forms in terms of performance and excellence. Are resistance and struggles against technical and organizational tools a challenge to this ideology? Do motives for action in terms of antagonism of interests or class struggle emerge?

Do FabLab based companies or micro-enterprises guarantee a sufficient work place quality of life as well as efficient forms of dialogue and dispute resolution? Are contention and their resolution in these companies original alternatives and truly innovative work transformation experiments?

Can the marketization of employment relations in digital service platforms resist to their workers' action? What kind of action are we talking about? French policies aim to regulate the way the digitalization of the economy is developing (see the cases of Uber or AirBnB). Various initiatives have been taken in this domain: are struggles (and which are they) a direct inspiration for the right/duty to allow time off? Do they allow companies to overcome the digital divide? Which types of resistance and struggle are innovative? What are the new stakes for social negotiation?

Stream 4: Spaces of action and of its regulation

Since international economic and financial interdependencies were proven essential during the 2008 crisis, the issue of the relevant spaces for contestation, the relevant scales for work and employment regulation, but as well for the crafting of the basic norms of this regulation has to be handled from that new perspective. Information transfer as well as the circulation of capital, services and workers are closely tied to markets, regulation and institutions. Since the 1980s, the making of continental or international free trade zones for a wide range of market products have triggered an important trend towards employment and work deregulation. Less systematically and less decisively, those trade agreements have been linked to the growing free movement of workers. More precisely, international organizations that enunciate those liberal rules have set three goals in terms of employment flexibilization, employment rate maximization and the replacement of welfare by work as a source of income for individuals. In most developed economies, a new hierarchy of work regulation norms has been established. There is generally more decentralization: national and branch regulations have been weakened to the benefit of company level regulation. Under which

conditions does this decentralization lead to forms of disenfranchisement of workers' rights? Could it eventually grant more power to the employed labour force?

What room is there for manoeuvre for collective and individual actors in the context of this systematic reform agenda that has focused the attention of most public and privately organized actors and institutions for decades? How can local, national, and transnational unions adjust to these new regulation scales? What norms, status, representations of work and employment have been framed or reframed in order to craft alternative spaces? Will the incoming crisis of free trade zones trigger a return to more traditional work and employment regulation? Is the transformation of embedding frames of labour a supplementary threat to collective labour regulation or a new opportunity for localized and experimental regulation? On the contrary, are multiscale regulations an opportunity for emerging social mobilizations?

Stream 5: Changing work, challenging the society

In France, as in other industrialized countries, the late 60s were politically characterised by strikes and workers struggles that went beyond the claim practices usually framed around the dual issues of wages/working time. The contestation of the Taylorist model of work organization, of established power relations at the work place, unrest related to working conditions, and the demand to counter arbitrary of power are issues which question power relations at company level. More generally, they show the aspiration of the labour force for social, political and union democracy. In other words, the aspiration to transform labour relations, in some cases taking the form of original and radical transformation (strikes, self-management, production and consumption cooperatives, etc.), has emerged.

However, the labourers' claim that it is possible to control decisions affecting work organization and the content of work itself is recurrent, even if weak throughout the history of modern capitalism. Being in a position to decide about what, when and how one produces questions the foundation of power in the capitalist production regime. Beyond those struggles emerges a dispute about the shape and content of work as an object, but equally about the social context which it is part of. Hence, the issues of the critique of work may foster a new view of society and of the relations it generates.

From this historical starting point, this stream of research questions the conditions of production of change in society *of* and by *the* labour. We can identify several pieces of evidence of new work struggles whose political and cultural meaning (in the context of the capitalist status quo and of its values) should not be underestimated. Via, for instance, the contestation of increasingly precarious employment, the struggle for the legalisation of illegal immigrants, claims to work gender equality, or the experimentation with anarchist or libertarian principles in the maker movement, labour remains at the heart of claims focused on emancipation, participation and social change. What is the role of labour in contemporary social movements? What are the organisational and symbolic connections with other movements (for example the environmentalist, feminist, and minority groups)? Conversely, what forms of competition between those movements emerge, particularly when job creation or protection are at stake?

Submission deadline for conference proposals : November 15th 2017

Please send a short CV (2500 characters maximum, including spaces and punctuation), outlining your conference proposal, the theoretical framework, empirical supports and key findings, before **November 15th, 2017**. Please upload your CV, preferably in French (or Spanish or English), to the SciencesConf platform. You will need to create an account to access this platform:

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Once connected to the JIST site, http://jist2018.sciencesconf.org, you will be able to post your abstract (Dépôts/Déposer un résumé) by copying your text in the box provided for that purpose. If you need help the site includes a section called « Aide au dépôt des résumés » in the section « Calendrier ».

The Scientific Committee will give an answer on **December 15th, 2017.**

The final paper should not exceed 6400 words (or 40000 characters, including spaces and punctuation) and must be uploaded on the platform before **may 1st, 2018**.

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