

Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia

CALL FOR PAPERS

HYBRID AREAS OF WORK

Labour market transformations and forms of organizing

Call for paper for a Special Issue of «Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia», edited by Valeria Piro (University of Milan), Annalisa Murgia (University of Milan), and Christian Azaïs (Conservatoire National des arts et Métiers, Paris)

Scholarly debate has long focused on how processes of flexibilisation have eroded the «standard employment relationship» traditionally embodied in a (male) employee with an open-ended and full-time contract, and who enjoys the full protection of labour law and the welfare system. On the one hand, the diffusion of fixed-term contracts, temporary agency work and solo self-employment – increasingly mediated by digital platforms – is rapidly multiplying the risk of precariousness for an ever-growing group of workers (Castel 2009; Kalleberg 2009; Vosko 2010). On the other hand, these forms of employment are fostering an unequal integration into the labour market that not only exacerbates traditional gender, class, age and ethnicity divisions (Banks, Milestone 2011; van Doorn 2017), but also further undermines labour's rights and working conditions as a whole (Choonara *et al.* 2022), worsening the crisis of social reproduction in neoliberal capitalism (Leonard, Fraser 2016; Zanoni 2019).

Moreover, such changes have also prompted debates on the adequacy and effectiveness of collective forms of worker representation, given the difficulties faced by unions in dealing with the heterogeneity of work arrangements. Prominent in these debates is the question on how to engage the precarious workers, who have long been considered «un-organizable», in the political struggle (Murgia, Selmi 2012; Holgate *et al.* 2018; Keune, Pedaci 2019). Albeit at a different pace and in different national modalities, trade unions have increasingly recognized the need to address the organization and

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collective representation of the growing group of precarious workers, to better represent their interests (Doellgast *et al.* 2018; Simms, Dean 2014; Gumbrell-McCormick 2011; Pernicka 2005). An important aspect of trade union renewal concerns building alliances with societal actors, such as communities and groups, to create counter-hegemonic blocs that revitalise workers' power. In this process, unions are required to leave the comfort zone of classical industrial relations, to recognize and leverage their common interests with multiple constituencies (Atzeni, Ness 2016; Hyman, Gumbrell-McCormick 2017; Kesselman, Carelli 2020; Meardi *et al.* 2021; Mezihorak *et al.* 2022). At the same time, less institutionalised forms of collective mobilization are building new possibilities of resistance against precarization within social movements (Foti 2017; Mattoni 2016; Neilson, Rossiter 2005), as well as within alternative organizations, such as quasi-unions (Heckscher, Carré 2006) and cooperatives (Flecha, Ngai 2014; Graceffa, de Heusch 2017; Mondon-Navazo *et al.* 2021; Scholz, Schneider 2016), which are enacting novel processes that foster collective identity and political engagement.

The turbulence of the labour market on the one hand, and the vitality of old and new workers' organizations on the other suggests renovating the terms of the debate that conceptualizes labour and its forms of mobilizing. This Special Issue contributes to this attempt by proposing the concept of «hybrid areas of work» to grasp emerging work arrangements and forms of organizing, and challenge the hierarchy encoded in the dichotomies through which the labour market has been interpreted since the Fordist era (Ricciardi 2019). By leveraging the concept of hybridization (Azaïs 2019), the aim is to supersede the polarizations which counterpose «black» and «white», and to move towards a theoretical rethinking of the interpretative categories of work and employment. This will require questioning the historical binary opposition between employment and self-employment, standard and non-standard, formal and informal, paid and unpaid forms of work. In dialogue with the debate on «grey» zones of labour and employment and with the studies focused on the blurring of the employment relationship boundaries (Azaïs *et al.* 2017; Bureau, Corsani 2015; D'Amours *et al.*, 2017; Freedland 2003; Supiot 1999), we propose to use the concept of «hybrid» to capture the co-existence of multiple features that cannot be represented in a binary way (Murgia *et al.* 2020). Framed in these terms, hybridisation is a process that characterises the precarious and fragmented nature of

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contemporary labour, which is also affecting the level of social protection, as well as at the level of collective representation.

Moreover, the Special Issue aims at advancing our understanding of how hybrid areas of work and employment are articulated in both the Global North and the Global South. Ulrich Beck (1999), in his pioneering work on the new world of work, pointed out the risk of a «brazilianisation» of the Occident. By this he meant that issues related to «informal sector» approaches in the Global South could contribute to understanding tendencies in the North, in terms of the privatisation of public services, commodification of social benefits, loss of the influence of the state, etc., according to the Washington Consensus perspective and the Structural Adjustment Policies in the 80's. Nowadays, recognising that common features exist between Global North and South compels us to examine the new features of labour and employment relationships we have qualified as hybrid forms of work, within a general process of hybridization of labour market statuses, individual careers, and collective forms of representation.

Furthermore, the Special Issue invites us to dismiss the lenses that conceive contemporary precarious work as the linear result of progressive erosion of «standard work», by focusing on the boundaries outlining the emerging hybrid areas of work (i.e. formal/informal, paid/unpaid, productive/reproductive, leisure/work, production/consumption, etc.), both today and throughout history. Therefore, theoretical and theoretically grounded empirical papers are welcome on the following (but not exclusive) topics:

- How can the boundaries of emerging hybrid areas of work be drawn? Challenging traditional dichotomies to investigate the changing nature of work (formal/informal, paid/unpaid, productive/reproductive, leisure/work, production/consumption, etc.)
- The subjective representations of workers and the emergence of hybrid identities in contemporary societies, in both the Global South and Global North
- The hybrid work arrangements in the labour market, and their differences in the global landscape and through time from a socio-historical perspective, also in terms of employment regulation and social protection
- The configuration of hybrid areas of work in terms of gender, family status, migration status, ethnicity, national origin, class, age, skills, and level of education

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- Gendered and generational inequalities in hybrid areas of work, focusing on multiple recent crises and their impact on employment expectations and work motivations
 - The changing health and well-being conditions of workers experiencing hybrid forms of work
 - The blurring boundaries between employment and self-employment: defining new forms of autonomy and dependence
 - The rise of digital and platform work: an emerging employment sector or the redefinition of old patterns?
 - The forms of collective representation of workers with a hybrid status and the emergence of hybrid forms of organizing within both traditional and new collective actors (trade unions, employer associations, grassroots groups, cooperatives, etc.)
 - The theoretical lenses that can be developed to provide more sophisticated analyses of the hybrid areas of work and employment
 - Methodological issues related to the study of hybrid areas of work and employment, as well as proposals to address them (i.e. by questioning official statistics, as well as by experimenting with participatory research methods)

Deadlines and guidelines

Abstracts are due by **June 15, 2022**. All abstracts (500 words), with 5 keywords in English, should be sent as e-mail attachments (Word format) to: valeria.piro@unimi.it, annalisa.murgia@unimi.it, and christian.azais@lecnam.net.

Decisions concerning the selection of articles will be given by **June 30, 2022**.

Submission of first versions of articles to be refereed should be sent to the editor by **October 15, 2022**. Articles – written in English – should follow the Journal guidelines and be uploaded on the Journal platform at this link:

<https://submission.rivisteweb.it/index.php/ris>.

Communication from the editors concerning the peer-review process will take place by **December 15, 2022**.

Revised versions sent to the editors by **February 15, 2023**.

Publication in Issue **2/2023**.

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