ISA RC52 INTERIM MEETING 2024

Sapienza University of Rome
Rome (Italy), 24-26 June

NAVIGATING TURBULENCE
PROFESSIONS IN AN ERA OF MULTIPLE CRISES

Call for Papers

Over the last decade, numerous global challenges have emerged. From financial crises, unemployment, rising precarity, and retrenchment of public funding through the COVID-19 pandemic and workplace changes, including digitalization, to wars and violence, professionals have had to navigate turbulence. Nonetheless, professionals continue to play a critical role in interpreting change and defining and applying norms and rules, thereby giving meaning to social life. In the context of change, however, professionals experience profound alterations in their careers, roles, and tasks, which require them to reshape their own professional identities. On a global scale, processes of differentiation associated with growing inequalities can be observed across professions.

RC52 invites submissions of **paper proposals** addressing the issues above in all professional areas, whether theoretical or empirical in nature and based on multiple or single case studies or comparative analyses.

The proposals must be sent in a Word file, be written in the English language, and include:

- Preferable session (see the **list and detailed descriptions of the sessions** below);
- Title of the paper;
- An abstract of no more than 200 words;
- Name(s) and contact details (affiliation, country, e-mail) of the author(s).

Please submit your proposal via e-mail (rc52rome2024@gmail.com) no later than **1 April 2024**.

All submitters will receive an e-mail notification on the acceptance or rejection of their proposals by 19 April 2019.

Online registration will open on 22 April 2019.

Please note that **all presenters and session organizers have to register and pay the conference fee**.

The conference website is now available: https://sites.google.com/view/rc52-rome-2024

The **Call for Papers** will also be available on the RC52 website and blog:

http://www.isa-sociology.org/rc52.htm

https://researchcommittee52.wordpress.com/

Save the dates!

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*** The list and descriptions of the sessions follow on the next pages ***

DIPARTIMENTO
DI SCIENZE SOCIALI
ED ECONOMICHE

SAPIENZA
UNIVERSITÀ DI ROMA

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S1. Change humans in an era of crises to change jobs

Mohammed Meri, Strasbourg University-Laboratoire Sage, France

Proposing a hypothesis for changing people in times of crisis to change professions always remains an ambition. Change means becoming different; we change over time: our ideas and values evolve, people change, businesses change, societies change, and everything needs change to constantly adapt to the demands of life and work. If they do not change, then the failure of change will pose the problem of survival and the continuity of their existence. Some changes taste good, and others resist some changes because they prefer them on their terms, but the waves of change sweep away all who stand before them, and human history bears witness to this. So, change is not just a phenomenon external to us, occurring in our environment; change is rather a perception of the world, such that if many things around us change, it is largely because we believe they are changing. As for the change that takes place at the organizational or societal level, this also involves conflicts of interest and contradictions between its components. Finally, applying human change during crises to evolve employment and professions in companies requires profound change at the individual level of humans, organizations, as well as society.

S2. Professions in times of artificial intelligence

Nina Weimann-Sandig, EHS Dresden, Germany
Christiane Schnell, Universities of Frankfurt/Dortmund, Germany

In the face of rapid technological advancements, global connectivity, shifting societal norms, and poly-crisis, the study of professions has never been more crucial. At the same time, new technologies, in particular artificial intelligence, force their way into contemporary societies, questioning traditional understandings of knowledge and knowledge production. Obviously, professions are drivers of these developments as they are driven, challenged, and transformed. The session will focus on the relationship between professionalism and AI on a theoretical as well as an empirical level. What impact has AI had on professional work? How far has the knowledge-power nexus been transformed by new technologies? Which professions are winning or losing in light of these changes?

S3. Professions, governance, and the State

Tracey L. Adams, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada

Professions have long been tied to state institutions, although state-profession relations have varied widely across time and place. While there is evidence that professions are more accountable to state bodies and subject to more oversight than in the past, some researchers emphasize that professions continue to contribute to governance, policy, and reform. This session invites papers exploring professions and the State, governance, and/or regulation in any respect.

S4. Professions in crisis: prospects for reenchantment

Nancy Côté, Université Laval, Quebec, Canada
Jean-Louis Denis, Université de Montréal, Quebec, Canada
Jean-Luc Bédard, Université TÉLUQ, Quebec, Canada

In this proposed session, we look at the workforce crisis from the viewpoint of professions within contemporary societies. We contend that such a crisis is both intriguing and revealing of profound changes that are taking place in numerous professional fields. These changes both affect the status of professions within

societies and the day-to-day experience of professional work. For decades, being a professional symbolized personal achievement coupled with a strong vocational commitment to work. Professionals were highly valued in many societies and sectors. Current lack of attractiveness, labour shortages, and turnover, absenteeism, occupational reconversion picture a very different representation of professions in many sectors of activities. We propose to explore this emerging malaise, the basis of a crisis of professions in today's world. While these phenomena are experienced at first at the individual level, it is interesting to examine how they are linked to broader social changes, such as the crisis of core societal institutions, the managerialization of work settings, and norms and values related to work and others forms of aspirations within the private and public spheres. Despite the apparent magnitude of the phenomenon, which affects several professions and professionals, little is known about how this crisis is likely to transform professions in a significant way. The session looks at three questions: How do we define this crisis of professions? How to describe and assess its manifestations and impacts? What strategies can revigorate professions and the experience of work?

S5. Professions and collectives in times of turbulence

Gilles Verpraet, Sophiapol Université Paris Nanterre, France

The session focuses on the place and the contribution of the collective in the professional world. Professional work is accomplished by collectives inside organizations, such as deontology (Freidson, Dejours). Professional work also includes collectives of cooperation (Sennet, Fisbach) and collectives of collaboration (Adams). These capabilities concern today social and educational works, environmental and civic works in debureaucratized domains, where collectives are developed inside and outside organizations (Verpraet). The cooperation is dispatched between multiple social networks (Latour). They configure multiple assemblages with specific styles of cooperation and coordinated expertise (Delanda, Eder Vass).

The first question intends to specify the function of these collectives in professional tasks: defensive collective, collective of deontology –collective of mobilization, collective of cooperation.

The second question specifies the dynamics of professional cooperation in these networks of extended assemblage and linked professionalism facing the dynamic of turbulence.

The third question concerns the professional contributions by networks of linked cooperations (specialization, mediation, guidance, coordination). What are the social conditions and the grounded domains in which these cooperative professionalisms are developed (health, education, environment)? How do they negotiate with the competitive professionalism on international service networks? Do they enrich the typology of professionalism?

S6. Professionals and technologies

Wei Zhao, University of California, Riverside, CA, USA

Fast technology development is a defining feature of our era. From computational techniques and telecommunications to AI, technologies can shape or restructure professional work, organizations, and fields. Along with technology development, professionals gain new opportunities but also face tremendous challenges. This session aims to understand the processes, mechanisms, and implications of technology development and changes in the professional world. For example, what are the key factors affecting the adoption or resistance of certain technologies among professionals? How do professional tradition, work, or identity shape the adoption processes and use patterns of technologies? What are the environmental and institutional factors that influence technology development, adoption, and diffusion in a professional field? What are the organizational processes in affecting technology adoption and use? How do technologies reshape professional work, identity, and organizations? What are the impacts of technology adoption on professionals' well-being, work performance, and organizational structures? From a comparative perspective, what are the institutional

factors that influence technology adoption and use across different societies? What are the global implications of technology development for professionals? These are just some examples related to the theme of this session. Different theoretical perspectives and empirical analyses in various settings and at multiple levels are welcome.

S7. How to cope with an unstable world? Contemporary changes in the legal professions

Corinne Delmas, Université Gustave Eiffel (Marne La Vallée), France

Faced with an unstable world, the legal professions must adapt. The aim of this session is to gain a better understanding of these challenges and changes from a comparative perspective (based on geographical and national contexts).

These changes are linked to a combination of several factors: legal (developments in the law, soft law, judicial reform, etc.), technological (such as the digitalization of legal acts and activities, growing role of AI, smart contracts), economic (globalization of trade, financialization of the economy, rise of business law), political (liberalization, changes in the role of the State, reforms of the legal professions), educational (in particular the changes in the university system and legal training), social (societal and socio-democratic changes...), environmental (ecological and climate crisis) and health (covid crisis, pandemic episodes...).

The session will focus on the challenges facing these professions today and the ways in which they are tackling them in terms of demographics (getting younger, feminization, openness, etc.), recognition (changes in professional expertise and its recognition, relations with laypeople, for example), group boundaries (between legal professionals, but also with accountants, and even with new emerging professions), conditions and structures of practice (as the capital concentration), activities and working conditions (as the distance working).

S8. Professionalism in care professions: still a gender issue?

Lara Maestripieri, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

Care professions, namely childcare 0-3 and elderly care, have been expanding steadily in correspondence with the increased labour market participation of women. Care, which was once performed for free by women within families, has now become an expertise in its own, with processes of professionalization consolidating in most of the advanced capitalist countries. In fact, the turn of Social Investment has given more centrality to what was once considered a "women" job and, as such, degraded to a semi-profession. However, relatively few studies have investigated the impact of these changes on professionalism and its complex relationship with the gender segregation that characterizes both childcare 0-3 and elderly care.

This session welcomes empirical and theoretical contributions that focus on professionalism, professionalization, and gender segregation in care professions. We invite studies that empirically analyze how practitioners in childcare 0-3 or elderly care claim/build their professionalism, as a single case study or in a comparative perspective, as well as theoretical reflections on the consequence of professionalization on them. Studies that investigate the gendered nature of this profession (with quantitative or qualitative techniques) are particularly welcomed – especially if applying an intersectional analytical framework.

S9. Transnational professionals: mobility, status, identity

Elyesa Koytak, Istanbul Medeniyet University, Turkey

Transnational professionals have been the subject of research as an increasingly important yet ambiguous group in the last decades. Transnational professional elites not only work in multinational companies and institutions in their home countries but also possess knowledge, resources, know-how, and skill sets that transcend national borders. Physicians, lawyers, engineers, academics, architects, and other professionals are the leading groups in this context. As the migration of professionals from the Global South is becoming increasingly diversified, there is also a phenomenon of return migration of skilled labor from the West.

This panel invites current studies on transnational professional elites. The key overarching question is how the working conditions, professional identities, and trajectories of these professionals vary in terms of social and spatial mobility. Is there a one-way flow from so-called underdeveloped to so-called developed countries? To what extent do official regulations and market conditions, which vary from country to country, integrate or exclude professionals? How are professionals' identities, ethics, and habitus structured in transnational socialization and working conditions? How are the elite positions of professionals in terms of income, education, and status shaped and changed by migration? We invite theoretical or empirical contributions, including comparative studies, whether focusing on a specific profession or on a particular country or region where professional migration patterns occur.

S10. Changes in social work practices with communities

Elena Carletti, University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy
Maddalena Floriana Grassi, University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy
Roberta Zonno, University of Bari Aldo Moro, Italy

In the last decade, social work has been significantly shaped by profound social changes, which have necessitated a continuous adjustment of social workers' practices to address the emerging needs of communities effectively.

Constant adaptation to the changing social, economic, and technological dynamics has become essential to ensure that the profession continues to play a crucial role in supporting and empowering not only individuals but also communities in times of change.

How social workers deal with the effects of these changes in terms of rethinking their intervention from a communitarian perspective is the question at the core of this panel.

The session particularly seeks papers that look at practices adopted in response to the effect of global challenges in local contexts and that have become structured.

Two specific areas are considered:

1) Social work and organizational well-being, considering changes promoted by technological advancements and the use of digital platforms and electronic information management.

2) Social work intervention in the field of migration and poverty, considering the growing income disparity and economic challenges that have led to a rise in the demand for social services, prompting social workers to reconsider their intervention strategies and focus on more sustainable and inclusive solutions.

S11. Health professions in a turbulent era: challenges and future perspectives

Elena Spina, Polytechnic University of the Marches, Italy
Enrico Maria Piras, Bruno Kessler Foundation (FBK), Italy

In recent years health professions, especially in the public sector, have faced several transformation processes. Due to rationalization and managerialization, organizational contexts have changed (Muzio & Kirkpatrick 2011), and the wide technological development (Calvillo et al. 2015; Neri 2019) progressively changed professional practices, interprofessional relationships as well as the relationship with patients and caregivers, Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic crisis changed the times and the rhythms of work; the progressive femininization (Adams 2005, 2010; Neri et al. 2020) and the generational turnover (Lim & Epperly 2013; Kiedik et al. 2023; Elenga & Krishnaswamy 2023) are changing expectations, values, professional identity and models of prevailing professionalism (Evetts 2011; Noordegraaf 2015, 2020). All these processes seem to have jeopardized healthcare professions, which appear to be going through profound turbulence (Azzopardi-Muscat et al. 2023), as demonstrated e.g. by the Great Resignation (Gittleman 2022; Stanton 2023), or the increasing burnout among professionals. Against this backdrop, the session welcomes theoretical and/or empirical contributions that address the challenges posed to traditional professionalism and how new forms of professionalism are enacted to counteract, resist, or adapt to the evolving landscape of the healthcare sector.

S12. Professions and professionalism from a gendered perspective

Andrea Bellini, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
Marcella Corsi, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
Silvia Lucciarini, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

The session aims to unravel the relationship between gender and professions. We invite scholars to submit papers that highlight the gender barriers and boundaries within professions and professionalism.

The session seeks to critically discuss the assumption that "profession" is not a generic concept but rather a gendered project existing within masculine/feminine relations. It aims to explore the gendered divisions manifested through exclusion, inclusion, demarcation, segregation, and closure in the public sphere, within organizations, and from a subjective perspective.

We encourage submissions rooted in various scientific debates, including, for example, relational theory, neo-institutionalism, labor process theory, feminist studies, and research on inequalities and stratification. By discussing these perspectives, we aim to foster a deeper understanding of how gender shapes and is shaped by professional domains.

S13. Rethinking professionalism to manage risk and uncertainty towards sustainable futures

Andrea Bellini, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
Maria Grazia Galantino, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
Giulio Moini, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy
Giuseppe Ricotta, Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

The risks stemming from modernization are inherent features of contemporary societies. These risks, anthropogenic in nature, have exerted pressure on social, economic, and political systems, impacting advanced and developing countries in their increasing interdependence. Presently, issues like climate change and international conflicts dominate public discourse. However, disruptive phenomena have emerged in the past

decades, from terrorism to pandemics, through economic crises. These globally scaled phenomena have outlined uncertain scenarios associated with a sense of insecurity.

Risk management now operates within the realm of sustainability, typically defined as the capacity to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this context, professionals play a pivotal role in interpreting, encoding, and regulating processes that expose individuals, organizations, and the environment to potential adverse effects in the future.

This session aims to address the above issues by soliciting theoretical or empirically based contributions on the evolution of professionalism within the framework of risk management oriented towards the development of sustainability models.

Examples encompass strategies and practices deployed to combat the emergence of infectious diseases, mitigate environmental pollution, limit the effects of hydrogeological instability, advance renewable energy systems, or develop sustainable agri-food systems. Contributions assuming critical theoretical perspectives, such as environmental/ecological social work, which focuses on the symbiotic relationship between individuals and the ecological systems in which they reside, are also welcome.

We warmly encourage contributions reflecting on the formation of necessary skills and competencies to address change, on the emergence of new professions or the evolution of established professions engaged in change processes, on the relationships between agents of change and between them and citizens/users, and on the dynamics of identity formation and the formation/transformation of professional communities such as epistemic communities.

S14. Towards a platformized professionalism?

Francesco Bonifacio, Catholic University of Sacred Heart, Milan, Italy
Lara Maestripieri, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain

Digital platforms are much discussed for having established new forms of algorithmic labour control, legitimising bogus self-employment, and challenging forms of workers' representation. Less attention has been paid to their impact on professional groups. On the one hand, the open structure of platforms seems to erode the boundaries of existing professional fields and redefine their internal stratification. New regimes of visibility and the centrality of clients' ratings reduce the authority of professionals, reinforcing historical processes of proletarianisation, which were once associated with professionals working within big organisations. On the other hand, platforms offer new opportunities for professions at the margins and open the field to the emergence of new occupations – e.g. content creators. The connective possibilities and symbolic resources they afford pave the way for the cultivation of professional projects that do not follow a linear trajectory of professionalisation. In this intricate scenario, platforms may be conceived as privileged loci of boundary work, hence a territory of conflict and resistance among fields' incumbents and newcomers. Embracing the ambivalence of these processes, this session aims to foster dialogue between platform studies and the sociology of professions, bringing together empirical and theoretical contributions that look at the "platformization of work" from a professional perspective.

We particularly welcome contributions aligned with the following topics:

- The boundary work configured, enabled, and enacted by internal and external actors;
- The role of digital platforms in organising and disciplining professional work;
- The role of digital platforms in (de-) legitimising professional practices;
- The role of digital platforms as "private regulators" of professional groups;
- Emerging models of professionalism associated with digital platforms' socio-technical characteristics;
- Coalitions and conflicts arising across digital platforms' boundaries.

S15. Open session

Tracey L. Adams, University of Western Ontario, London, Canada

This session is intended for papers that do not fit under any of the themes proposed in other sessions. If you would like to present a paper at the 2024 RC52 Interim Meeting but do not see another session that is suitable, you are encouraged to submit a paper to this "open" session.