

CALL FOR PAPERS

A special issue of *RFS*

“Sociology of the firm and changes in Capitalism”

Coordination:

Pierre FRANÇOIS

(CNRS-Sciences Po/CSO; École polytechnique)

Thomas REVERDY

(PACTE/Grenoble INP)

Of all the actors involved in the field of economic activities, it is the enterprise that is probably the most important for sociology, if it is to take account of change in contemporary capitalism. This call for papers is based on the hypothesis that the organisational forms taken by firms and their strategies are important mediating variables for understanding the most general historical developments, such as those that concern employees, the international division of labour and by extension the changes within capitalism. The papers that we invite will thus be ones that offer an empirically-based perspective on these changes by making the firm, its strategy and its organisation their specific point of entry to the subject. This empirical analysis will be one that is based on recent data. It will be helpful to put them in a long term historical perspective.

The characteristic tendencies of contemporary capitalism lend themselves to certain questions, of which a few examples are given here, though without any claim to completeness: do modes of corporate finance and the restructuring of their shareholder base influence the conflict between the various functions that contribute to their strategic direction and their choice of organization? How are the relationships of power and interdependence between firms and states being reconstructed in the context of globalization? What forms are now being taken within firms by the struggles that constitute capitalism—to begin with, that which pits labour against capital? Do the contemporary changes in the forms taken by firms, especially that of the networked firm, still allow them to be compared to organisations? What is the influence of new prescriptive forces—such as that of financial analysts and consultants—in defining their strategy and their dynamics of modernization?

A theoretical question can also be added to this analysis of change: should the enterprise be constituted as a concept by sociological analysis? Disciplinary disputes divide economists and sociologists, with the former seeing the firm as the result of a *calculation* about optimisation (Williamson 1975; Jensen and Meckling 1976); whilst the latter see it as an organisation whose form cannot be understood unless it is placed within a space of *normative referents* of more general relevance (Scott 2001). Within the sociology of organisation, some theoretical perspectives see the enterprise as an *institution* whose importance they recognise (Sainsaulieu and Segrestin 1986) or whose *restoration* they recommend (Roger 2012), by emphasizing its role in community socialisation and integration. Others are

committed to analysing it as a space of *domination* (Clegg, Courpasson and Phillips 2006) or of *conflict* (Fligstein 1990; Roy 1997) where actors with opposing interests and normative referents confront each other. Papers will use these theoretical perspectives, and debate them or amend them. Other theoretical perspectives which cast new light on the enterprise will also be welcomed.

Pierre FRANÇOIS
CNRS (Sciences Po/CSO), École polytechnique

Thomas REVERDY
PACTE/Grenoble INP

-
- Clegg, S., Courpasson, D., Phillips, N., 2006, *Power and Organizations*. Los Angeles: Sage.
Fligstein, N., 1990, *The Transformation of Corporate Control*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
Hall, P., Soskice, D., eds., 2001, *Varieties of Capitalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
Jensen, M.C., Meckling, W.H., 1976, "Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs and Ownership Structure." *Journal of Financial Economics* 3(4): 305-60.
Roger, B., ed., 2012, *L'entreprise, formes de propriété et responsabilités sociales*, Paris: Éditions Lethellieux.
Roy, W.G., 1997, *Socializing Capital*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
Sainsaulieu, R., Segrestin, D., 1986, "Vers une théorie sociologique de l'entreprise" *Sociologie du Travail* 28(3): 335-52.
Scott, R. W., 2001, *Institutions and Organizations*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
Williamson, O.E., 1975, *Markets and Hierarchies*. New York: The Free Press.

Proposals for papers (min. 500 words–max. 1,000 words), in French or English should be sent to Christelle GERMAIN (christelle.germain@pouchet.cnrs.fr), editorial secretary, as well as to the two coordinators, Pierre FRANÇOIS (p.francois@csocnrs.fr) and Thomas REVERDY (thomas.reverdy@grenoble-inp.fr), before **30 September 2013**. They will be reviewed by the co-signatories of this call for papers and by a member of the editorial board. Notification of acceptance will be sent to contributors, at the latest by **31 October 2013**.

Contributors whose proposal has been accepted should send their paper, whose length must not exceed 75,000 characters (including spaces, figures and tables), at the latest by **31 March 2014**. Each article will be independently reviewed by the scientific coordinators of this topic and, anonymously, by the review board of the *Revue*. The latter will provide its final decision on acceptance to contributors at latest by **30 June 2014**.