

# WoW–Work in the World! #2/2019

Newsletter of the RC30 Sociology of Work – Sociologie du travail – Sociología del trabajo

## SUMMARY :

WoW n° 2!

Sociology of Work past  
Events

Opportunities

Calendar &  
Forthcoming Events

Regional Insights

Theoretical Insights



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### Contacts

[maria-eugenia.longo@ucs.inrs.ca](mailto:maria-eugenia.longo@ucs.inrs.ca)

[flora.bajard@gmail.com](mailto:flora.bajard@gmail.com)

[delphine.mercier@univ-amu.fr](mailto:delphine.mercier@univ-amu.fr)

Dear colleagues,

We are launching the second issue of “Work in the World”, the newsletter of the RC30 ! You will find some information about our activities, pending the IV<sup>th</sup> Forum in Porto Alegre in 2020. Please note that we also have a [Facebook page](#) where you can read useful information about Sociology of Work in your region or others parts of the globe. Feel free to get in touch with us if you wish to spread any information with other members.

We look forward to meeting you again!

María Eugenia Longo (President), Delphine Mercier (Vice-President), Flora Bajard (Secretary)

Cher.e.s collègues,

Nous lançons à présent le second numéro de « Work in the World », la Newsletter du RC30 ! Vous trouverez ici des informations sur nos activités, en attendant la tenue du IV<sup>e</sup> Forum à Porto Alegre en 2020. Nous avons une [page Facebook](#) sur laquelle vous pouvez lire des informations utiles pour la Sociologie du travail dans votre région ou ailleurs. N’hésitez pas à nous contacter si vous souhaitez partager des informations avec les autres membres par ce canal.

Nous nous réjouissons de vous retrouver dans nos futures activités !

María Eugenia Longo (Presidente), Delphine Mercier (Vice-Présidente), Flora Bajard (Secrétaire)

Estimad@s coleg@s,

Ahora editamos el segundo boletín de información del RC30 “Work in the World”! Aquí podrá encontrar informaciones sobre nuestras actividades, en espera del IV Forum en Porto Alegre en 2020. También tenemos una [página Facebook](#) en la cual puede leer informaciones útiles sobre la sociología del trabajo en su región u otras partes del mundo. No dude en contactarnos si desea compartir cualquiera información por este medio.

Esperamos encontrarlos nuevamente !

María Eugenia Longo (Presidente), Delphine Mercier (Vice-Présidente), Flora Bajard (Secretaria)

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# OPPORTUNITIES

## Allocation of ISA registration grants for the 4<sup>th</sup> Forum of Porto Alegre:

Registration grants can be allocated to **individual ISA members** in good standing (i.e. who have paid the individual membership fee) who are active participants in the conference program registration.

To apply, an e-mail requesting a registration grant must be sent by the participants directly to Maria-Eugenia Longo and Flora Bajard **by January 31, 2020**: maria-eugenia.longo@ucs.inrs.ca ; flora.bajard@gmail.com

The Board of each RC/WG/TG will review all applications and recommend the allocation of available funds by February 15, 2020.



Requests can be submitted to only one RC/WG/TG ; multiple requests will not be considered.

For further information:

<https://www.isa-sociology.org/en/conferences/forum/porto-alegre-2020/registration-grants-2020>

## Other opportunities:

You may find other funding and grants opportunities on the ISA website. In addition with job openings, fellowships and prizes, funding opportunities are listed by themes and countries: more information [available here](#).

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# SOCIOLOGY OF WORK PAST EVENTS



## ALAST

The [9th Congress of the ALAST -Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios del Trabajo](#) was held in Bogota, Colombia (9-12th July 2019). Organized by the **Asociación Colombiana de Estudios del Trabajo**, it dealt with the issue of “Futuro del trabajo. Desigualdades, precariedades y modelos de desarrollo”. Several members of the RC30 were there !

## ALAS Congress

The [congress of the ALAS](#) – Asociacion Latinoamericana de Sociologia took place in Lima, Peru, 1<sup>st</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> December 2019). Among many sessions and working groups, see the [“Trabajo y restructuracion productiva”](#) one !





Sociology  
of Work

### NEW BOARD of the RC30 (2018-2022)

In the last newsletter, you could have a full insight on the new board members elected during the ISA Congress in Toronto in 2018.

If you wish to have access to the **full list of board members and regional coordinators**, please see the [official ISA page](#).



### 2019 ILPC Conference

The [37th International Labor Process Conference \(ILPC\)](#) was held in Vienna, Austria, between 24th and 26th April 2019. Each year the ILPC brings together researchers from a variety of countries with the objective of enhancing our understanding of contemporary developments relating to work and employment. The 2019 conference focused on 'Fragmentations and Solidarities'. Special streams were held on 'Work and Employment in the Global South', 'Artificial Intelligence, Technology and Work', 'Hybridisation of Labour Market Statuses, Individual Careers and Collective Forms of Representation' and 'Solidarity in Times of Crises'. With the participation of our Secretary Flora Bajard.

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## CALENDAR & FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The [IVth ISA Forum](#) will be held in **Porto Alegre, Brazil, 14-18<sup>th</sup> July 2020**. The RC30 Forum program coordinators (Flora Bajard, María Eugenia Longo, Delphine Mercier, Klaus Schmierl and José Ricardo Ramalho) received many interesting session proposals, and had to make a difficult selection (more than 30 abstract were submitted in some sessions!).



We therefore kept some traditional sociology of work topics and included some new issues ; we encouraged the participation of B and C country members, welcomed new participants and maintained the presence of historical members of the Board.

And of course, we tried to adjust the program to the global challenges raised in this Forum : intersectionality, environnement, inequalities and democracy!

### Classical sessions:



- The Linkage between Standard and Non-Standard Employment Relationships I
- The Linkage between Standard and Non-Standard Employment Relationships II
- Russia on the Threshold of Digital Economy: Problems of Quality of Employment and Humanization of Work
- Las Profesiones en el Orden y la Dinámica Social, más allá del Mercado
- Limits to Digitization of Work? Automation and Substitution Potentials of Digital Systems
- Regionalization, Migration and Workers' Organizing
- Africa in the Changing Context of Work
- Shift of Economic Power Relations - Will Work Become a Commodity?
- New Care Markets, Labor and Care Disputes: The Global Brokering of Domestic Care
- Work Intensity in the Post-Modern World of Work: Development, Causes and Consequences
- Work Intensification, Family Involvement and Intersectionality
- Labour Reforms in Latin America in the New
- Brazil in the Changing Context of Work
- AI, Gig Work, Digital Labor, and the New Economy I
- AI, Gig Work, Digital Labor, and the New Economy II
- AI, Gig Work, Digital Labor, and the New Economy III

### Joint sessions:



- Gender and Professions (*RC32 Women, Gender, and Society* / RC30)
- Professional Work in a Globalized World: Migration, Cross-Bordering and Globalization of Knowledge Workers (*RC52 Sociology of Professional Groups* / RC30)
- Precarious Youth (1): Rethinking Precariousness between Work and Everyday Life (*RC34 Sociology of Youth* / RC30)
- Precarious Youth (3): Expressing Precariousness between Work and Everyday Life (*RC34 Sociology of Youth* / RC30)

- Precarious Youth (2): Coping with Precariousness between Work and Everyday Life (*RC34 Sociology of Youth* / RC30)
- ‘Beyond the Factory Gates’: The Broader Context for Workers’ Rights and Representation (*RC48 Social Movements, Collective Action and Social Change* / RC30)
- Work and Languages (*RC25 Language and Society* / RC30)
- Environment, Employment, Livelihood: Links and Threats (RC30 / *RC24 Environment and Society*)

The [38th International Labour Process Conference](#), ‘*Critical Differences at Work*’, will take place between **15th and 17th April 2020** in Newcastle University, UK. The ILPC 2020 conference streams are: Gender, Diversity and Precarity ; Value and Labour Process Theory ; Younger and Older Workers in the Contemporary Labour Market. Here is the [call for papers](#).




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## REGIONAL INSIGHTS

This current issue of WoW - Work in the World is a great opportunity to implement the new line of the RC30 which has been promoted since the last conference last year Toronto: to build up a **regional structuration**. This aims at creating a more inclusive network with researchers from B and C countries, and also giving value and visibility to the theoretical and empirical richness of the work done in these regions, which used to be less visible.

- The first action taken to this purpose was to create ***new roles of “Regional Coordinators”*** within the RC30 Board. We are very enthusiastic that 5 areas should be represented: **Turkey** (Isil Erdinç), **Russia** (Guzel Baimurzina), **Asia** (Ya-Han Chuang), **Brazil** (José Ricardo Ramalho) and **Africa** (Ndeshi Namupala).
- In the line of such decision, the second action that has been taken is a selection of ***sessions which will highlight these areas during the next Forum in Porto Alegre***.
- And now, we would like to ***dedicate a section of this newsletter to these regions***, by pointing out the main challenges that they have to face, as well as special events, or noticeable news/political changes about work. Let’s give room to the regional coordinators team!

# Sociology of work in the Namibian and African contexts

*Where does one locate sociology of work in Africa?*

It is important to look at **Sociology of work in Africa** by locating the workplace within the prevailing economic and political processes. Many African countries are still dealing with structural problems resulting from colonial legacies, which continue to affect the social organization on the African continent, including the world of work. Some of these problems are reflected in the nature of industrial relations in Africa, often connected to liberation struggles and post-independence labour regimes in different African countries.

Many aspects of working life are shaped by the structure of a society, such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, age and power constellation between different social categories and groupings. Further, Africa continues to be characterised by severe inequality, reflected in access to basic social services and resources, as well as skewed wealth distribution. Work (as employment and unemployment) is connected to social welfare, especially in Africa where social policy is partial, unemployment rate is high, and the informal economy is bigger than the formal economy. Currently, the type of employment available and the quality of work continues to be transformed, leading to (and through) flexibility, casualization of work and subcontracting of work. The increasing digital technology and automation, information technologies have also shifted and challenging the nature of work. As these social changes continue, the role of sociology of work is to excavate their implications for the nature of work in Africa. Furthermore, many of the sociological theories are developed as responses and reflections on these social changes. As such, doing sociology of work in Africa therefore implies to seriously consider these specificities as well as some taken-for-granted notions of African society about what constitutes work.

*Locating sociology of work in the Namibian context:*

One of the **major challenges, particularly in Namibia**, is that sociological literature in general is sparse. The University of Namibia (UNAM) is the only University in the country that offers sociology as a major subject from first to final year level. This is rooted in the limitations imposed on various disciplines during the apartheid era. As such, the Namibian sociology is still in a 'roughewn stage' as it effectively shed off the historically banned academic ranks of pre-independence Namibia. Yet, rapid development of post-colonial Namibian society confronts sociology in the country, particularly the Department of Sociology at UNAM, with an overwhelming variety of contemporary and historically relevant social issues or phenomena that must be researched. Given the long and rich history of Namibia's labour movement, the contract labour system and the world of work in general, sociology of work and industry becomes imperative. This is because of their **contribution to liberation movement** and they continue to be the biggest popular organisation, hence, their continuous importance to democratic dispensation in Africa. They also have significant contribution to the prevailing work legislation and labour regimes.

The recent case of the 2018 UNAM strike shows that sociology of work is imperative in Namibia for in-depth analyses of labour processes and workplace relations. The UNAM strike is an enlightening example of the way sociologists must locate the event of the strike within the broader industrial relation context in Namibia and the prevailing labour regime in order to understand labour issues. When it took place, the management



took advantage of the lack of unity and organisation among workers (for example, by dividing workers with permanent contract from workers with temporary contract). Significant numbers of workers fell for the management threat to report to office due to lack of proper representation. Also, UNAM was allowed to use scab labour to do the work of striking staff in blatant violation of the provisions of Namibia's Labour Act. Though the workers belong to trade unions, they were unable to compel the management to adhere to labour legislation. One of the consequences of this weakness is that, though an increase in salary was achieved, the policy of 'no pay, no work' was enforced despite employees having done the work. Finally, beyond labour unions, the sociological understanding of work is important to the understanding of our contemporary society, because work remains the most important activity of human to the sustenance of society.

*Trifling scholarships in sociology of work in many African societies:*

The sociology of work should be concerned with sociological research and debates about the world of work and how industrial restructuring is affecting the social organisation on the African continent. However, the sociological study of work in countries such as Namibia is still inadequate and this creates **trifling scholarships in the sociology of work** in many African societies.

**Ndeshi Namupala**, Lecturer in Sociology, University of Namibia

## Increasing Precariousness and Racial Division of Work in a Regionalized Economy: the Challenge of Sociology of Work in East Asia

After four decades of predominance of the "made-in-China" economic model, **the East Asia region has entered in a new era of international economic division**. In 2013, Chinese president Xi Jinping announced the megaproject of "Belt and Road Initiative" (also named as "The New Silk Road" by the English media) to better connect Chinese and European markets by infrastructure building. Such initiative not only shows that China is no longer the "World Factory", but also its determination to become a "World Investor" – a tendency accelerated since the 2000s. The emergence and consolidation of the Chinese business communities in South-East Asian countries (also including investors from Taiwan and Hong Kong, two important localities of capital outflow in the beginning of China's economic reform in 1980's) have created the first important challenges for sociology of work : what is the scope of economic democracy and workers' movement facing Chinese investors? Will Chinese state's presence behind the capital inflows strengthen ethnic/racial division of work and create resentment, as cases were already observed in Africa? (cf. Lee 2017)

Whereas China becomes a crucial investor in the region, other advanced economies in East Asia (namely the "Asian tigers": Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, South Korea) are confronted with an increasing need for

migrant workers in the sector of care work, in order to take care of their aging population. Such **demographic evolution engenders a second challenge for sociology of work** in East Asia: how to analyze the sexual and racial division of work in the sector of care work and other service work held by **migrant workers**? What are the roles of migrant policy, labor laws and trade unions in these dynamics?

Finally, as in other advanced economies, the increased precariousness of service economy is the third challenge faced by East Asian countries. In the context of low unionization and highly informalized economy, to tackle the **strategies of workers' organizing in the service economy** will be the third challenge for sociologists of work in East Asia.

#### Reference

Lee, Ching Kwan. The specter of global China: Politics, labor, and foreign investment in Africa. University of Chicago Press, 2017.

**Ya-Han Chuang** (French National Institute of Demographic Studies - INED)

## Recent developments on work and sociology of work in Turkey

In Turkey, there are three main **trade union confederation** founded between the 1950s and 1970s), each representing a different political tradition (first nationalist, second socialist/social democrat and third Islamic-conservative). The influence of these three confederations on policy making processes is not the same as the government is promoting the Islamic-conservative confederation (Hak-İş). The nationalist confederation (Türk-İş) is becoming closer and closer to the government as well. Thus, the trade union confederations fail to produce common strategies, demonstrations and strikes.

As to the sociology of work in Turkey, one of its main challenges is that the **researchers are also involved with the discussions concerning labour issues** and the conditions of workers. The research on work and trade union issues is thus closely related to the political and economic developments in the country and conflicts between trade union confederations.

The recent negotiations on the wage rise of workers in public sector in August 2019 illustrates clearly this situation.

In June 2019, the president of the nationalist confederation Ergün Atalay opened the **negotiations** demanding a rise of 300 Turkish liras (TL, approximately 50 euros) and 15 % for all the workers within the first six-month period of the year. The offer of the government, however, was 60 TL and 5 % for the first six months and 4 % for the second six-month period. The president of the confederation refused this first offer of the Minister of family, labour and social services and declared a possible call for strike if the offer stands. In August 2019, in the end, Atalay agreed and signed an agreement with the government for 150 TL and 8 % for the first six months and 4 % for the second six-month period of the year. The attitude of the president of the largest trade union confederation Türk-İş (Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions) during the



negotiations and the decision of the Minister of family, labour and social services have provoked a discontent among the workers.

Moreover, a voice recording scandal has started to be diffused in the media. Not noticing that the microphone is still on, Atalay tells the Minister “If the negotiations go on, things will get complicated. At least, I closed the issue like that” and gets heard by the rest of the conference room. Atalay became thus the target of the activists and trade union representatives. On 20th August 2019, a group of researchers and professors in sociology of work and employment, labour studies, sociology of trade unions, political economy and labour economics published in the media a **declaration in order to point out the weakening of trade unions’ power on collective bargaining processes**. They co-signed a petition calling Atalay and the members of the central committee to resign from the direction of the Confederation. Addressing to the members and representatives of the Confederation on all levels (workplace, local, sectoral, national), they called everyone to do whatever it takes to make the central committee of Türk-İş resign. Atalay’s attitude has provoked a discontent within Türk-İş as well. The representatives of some of the Türk-İş affiliate trade unions have declared that what Atalay did was unacceptable and the central committee of the Confederation should change. However, the trade unions have declared not considering leaving Türk-İş and willing to continue struggling for the labour rights in Türk-İş.

The discussions are still ongoing. We will see what the next general congress of the Confederation will bring and if these protests, petitions of the researchers and disagreements will have impacts on the future composition of the central committee and the election of the Türk-İş president.

**Isil Erdinç**, Researcher at IRISSO, Paris Dauphine University, associate member of the Centre Européen de Sociologie et de Science Politique/ Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

## Modern challenges for sociology of work in Russia

**Contemporary socio-labor sphere of Russia** is characterized by significant changes that affect all the important aspects of life in society, which mostly predetermine its social structure, form new values, needs, norms and daily activities and life strategies. Observations show that the world of work and employment are transformed not only under the influence of **organizational and institutional reforms**, but also spontaneously, in the process of **adaptation of the population to the new changed conditions and search of optimal behavior strategies**. Researchers identify the following significant vectors of transformation of socio-labor sphere:

- increased flexibility of employment, pluralization of types of employment contracts and forms of labor organization;

- transformation of the structure of economy (expansion of the service sector employment, emergence of new industries and economic activities);
- changes in the gender, age, professional and qualification structure of the labour force (ageing of the population, emergence of new professions);
- changes in the structure of income, value of work and labor motivation;
- concentration of labour resources in large cities and fragmentation of local labour markets, etc.

Meanwhile, studies show that **the area of "gray", unexplored space in the socio-labor sphere in recent years** has been increasing, thereby narrowing the possibilities of effective state administration and control. The increasing flexibility of the world of work, the diversity of labor contracts, the digitalization of jobs, along with the development of entrepreneurship and self-employment, have formed new models of labor relations. However, in the absence of adequate regulatory norms and standards, they have institutionalized outside the formal sector and have led to the deformation of the social and labor space: the relationship between the working population and social insurance and tax systems has weakened; insecure (precarious) employment has increased; the direct and stable interdependence between the standard of living and education of the population has weakened; segmentation of the labor market, polarization of quality of workplaces, social inequality has raised, spatial differentiation of Russian regions has deepened.

In this regard, several **problems of high relevance and practical importance arise**: the search and development of new social indicators that reflect changes in the field of work; the study of the scope and depth of the above-mentioned transformational processes, their relationship with other spheres of life; the assessment of the prospects for their development and social consequences; the study of the dynamics of the social structure, the position of different social groups in the new reality; the search for new social reserves to increase labour productivity; the study of local labor markets and their interaction within the country, migration processes in conjunction with the competition of regions for human resources. Finding a complex solution to these problems is a great challenge for the sociology of work in Russia.

**Guzel Baimurzina**, senior researcher of the Bashkir Branch of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (BB – FCTAS RAS), PhD in Economics

## New Trends in Sociology of Work in Brazil

The **structural and dynamic character of work in contemporary society** challenges the sociology of work, that has to interact either with other disciplines of sociology (such as sociology of development, political sociology, economic sociology, sociology of sender, cultural sociology, etc.), or with other areas of knowledge (such as economics, administration, production engineering, anthropology, education, law, public management, health sciences etc.). In different times, these interactions have varied according to

the specific topics, perspectives and emphases. The tendency towards an **inter and multidisciplinary perspective in labor studies** is likely to become an imposition, as the discussion about work becomes more complex.

Work as an issue in constant change, with its various dimensions, needs to be looked through different angles of approach, from micro to macro levels, material to immaterial, formal to informal, industry to services and agriculture, productive systems to institutional arrangements, the sphere of production to the sphere of social reproduction, the actions of private actors to government policies ; and also, from the differences of class to differences of gender, ethnicity, race, generation, etc. Instead of choosing one pole, the discussion has been on how to adopt a deliberate relational perspective.

Sociology and other social sciences in societies such as the Brazilian one, of late capitalist development and, according to classical bibliography, established on dependent bases, have always dealt with the **problem of importing analytical models from Europe and the United States**. Taking the Brazilian case as an extension of a dictated socioeconomic dynamics from abroad, or adopting an analytical perspective focused mainly on the specificities of Brazilian society, sociology of work has tended to an intermediate position, pending to one side or the other; but the adoption of a relational perspective has prevailed. Even when, with the “globalization”, greater emphasis has been placed on exogenous factors, approaches that highlight the particularities of internal processing of new global trends are plentiful. This will probably continue to be a very important aspect, in the continuity of studies on the themes of work in the Brazilian case.

The **combination of various research methods and techniques** has been, and probably will continue to be, a crucial factor for the enrichment of the sociology of work, stressing the importance of establishing the points of interaction with other areas of knowledge. The great challenge is to make compatible and complementary methodologies, as disparate as those with the predominance of quantitative rationality over the qualitative ones.

The sociology of work in Brazil emerged from the 1950s to the 1960s in an effort to differentiate itself from the approaches of militants and memorialists on the theme of labor and workers. But it is also worth mentioning the dialogue that it was able to establish with strategic actors of the world of work (trade unionists, social movement leaders, NGOs, public managers and even representatives of business). Such dialogue will probably gain new tones with the political changes that have marked the national and international scenario.

**Roberto Vêras de Oliveira** (UFPB), **José Ricardo Ramalho** (UFRJ) and **Cinara Rosenfield** (UFRGS)

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# THORETICAL INSIGHTS

Here are 2 of the latest publications of RC30 members (please note that this is a non-exhaustive list ;-)

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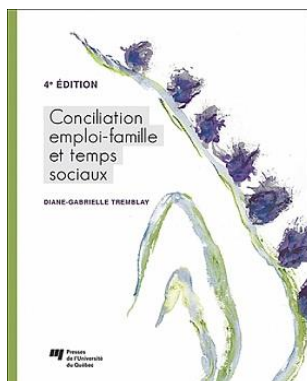
## The Palgrave Handbook of Workers' Participation at Plant Level

By Stefan Berger, Ludger Pries, Manfred Wannöffel (Eds.)

- An historical and comparative examination of plant-level workers' representations and models of social partnership
- Considers both European and non-European case studies, adding important insight on global trends
- Suggests future directions for sustainable and long-term innovation and growth in the knowledge era

Comprising the study, documentation, and comparison of plant-level workers' participation around the world, this volume meets the challenge of offering a global perspective on workers' participation, representation, and models of social partnership. Value chains, economic life, intercultural exchange and knowledge, as well as the mobility of persons and ideas increasingly cross the borders of nation-states. In the knowledge age, the active participation of workers in organizations is crucially important for sustainable and long-term growth and innovation. This handbook offers lessons from historical, global accounts of workers' participation at plant level, even as it looks forward to predict forthcoming trends in participation.

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## Conciliation emploi-famille et temps sociaux, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Québec, 2019

By Diane-Gabrielle Tremblay

This book deals with the relation between employment and family or personal life, or what is commonly known as Work-Life issues. After a theoretical analysis of this relation, the book analyzes the evolution over time and then goes on to the analysis of specific professional categories. It deals with the work-family conflict, and work-life measures, then deals also with the role of professional norms or professional ethos. It analyzes the diversity of work-life measures established in various sectors or professions, and their impact. The author also presents the various policies put in place in various countries, including Canada and Québec. As Québec is one of the few places where there is a parental leave policy similar to that of the Nordic countries, this is interesting as it shows that it is possible to adopt a parental leave policy as progressive as the Nordic countries, even in North America!

The book also shows how work-life and work-family issues have to be analyzed in a societal context and how mentalities and practices have an impact on the work-life situation in various countries. The author shows the diversity of approaches in various countries but groups them in three large categories, one being the 'laissez-faire' or one (male) earner model, another being the alternating model, where women either move in and out of the labour market or work part time, this being known as the 1,5 earner model, and finally the work-life reconciliation or cumulative model, where the professional and family-personal spheres can be brought together in the dual earner model.

The book is interesting for students, researchers as well as policy makers, union counsellors or human resources managers, indeed for all who want to act on the work-life issue and make the social situation of working and non-work times somewhat better.

Dianne-Gabrielle Tremblay is member of the ISA, part of the RC 30 executive and past president of RC 30.

