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TITLE

Configurations of atypical and
precarious employment in
Switzerland

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Research Paper

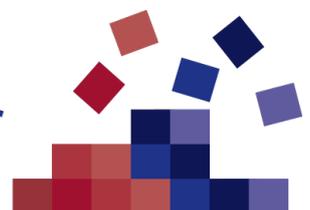
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Abstract

Also in Switzerland, atypical and precarious employment has become an increasingly important issue in the last 30 years. Atypical work is deemed to break up social cohesion, to render impossible a long term biographical planning, to corrode one's character and to lead to social suffering of an ever increasing proportion of the Swiss population. At the same time atypical employment includes a series of very heterogeneous forms of work and is difficult to capture theoretically and empirically. In this paper we propose a configurational approach in order to overcome these difficulties. We conceptualise the labour market as a field and investigate the data of the 2004 sweep of the Swiss Household Panel with a multiple correspondence analysis. We discover four configurations of atypical work and then relate these configurations to possible explanatory factors (individual, occupational, familial) and possible consequences (satisfaction, well-being, political attitudes). Our findings show that only one, very specific configuration of atypical work leads to social suffering and vulnerability: jobs that combine the absence of biographical prospects, forced flexibility and low wages. These are jobs we can call precarious – and not only atypical. People in these positions are devoid of all possible resources, are dissatisfied and politically disillusioned. Other atypically employed fractions use their specific resources to deploy compensation strategies which render atypical employment socially bearable.

Keywords

Atypical Employment | Precariousness | Configurations

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1. The Mercurial Character of Precariousness

In the past 30 years, the employment relationship has undergone deep changes. The continent of the standard employment relationship—full-time, nine to five on weekdays, indefinite, at the employer's place of business, and under the employer's direction—has shrunk and an archipelago of atypical and precarious employment has emerged and gained land (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Castel, 1995; Gallie, 1998; Castel & Dörre, 2009; for Switzerland: Prodolliet, 2000; Juhasz et al., 2007; Pelizzari, 2009). By atypical employment, we understand a series of heterogonous employment relationships such as part-time, work on call, fixed term, night and weekend work, temporary employment, and multiple jobs. Precarious employment is hereafter defined as atypical employment which is accompanied by social suffering, psychological problems, social isolation or political disillusionment.

Schematically, the literature explains this historical evolution as follows. After the termination of the Bretton Woods system in 1971 and the oil shock in 1975, the economies of the Western world slid into a profound crisis that forced the shareholders and managers of the leading corporations to rethink the Fordist organisation of employment (Kalleberg, 2009). The increased international competition and/or the wish to redistribute revenues differently led the economic elites to reorganize corporate structures, to introduce more flexible forms of employment and to outsource and shift labour-force-intensive work to lower-wage countries. This has been made possible by technological advances in the work organisation and profits from changes in the labour laws. In many countries, the standards of regulation of the labour market eroded, the influence and the membership numbers of unions waned and the politics of workfare or activation forced people to accept badly paying jobs or precarious work conditions (Kalleberg et al., 2000; 2009; Flückiger, 2000; Caritas, 2001). These structural changes were backed by ideological and discursive evolutions. Flexibility and individual responsibility became key virtues and the horizontal and versatile network was praised as the new form of future organisation of the economy (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999). This ideological shift encouraged people to accept flexible jobs, eroded the boundary between autonomous and forced flexibility and favoured the short over the long term (Bröckling et al., 2000; Ehrenberg, 1998; Sennett, 1999).

If we sharpen artificially the opposition between the two positions in the recent literature on atypical work, we can distinguish a theoretical and holistic approach (strongly represented in French sociology) from an empirical and particularistic approach (widespread in the American sociology). In the first perspective, scholars such as Castel and Paugam examined atypical work through historical and philosophical lenses and

argued that atypical work is a specific expression of current forms of capitalism¹. For Castel, for instance, contemporary forms of precariousness correspond to functional zones of exclusion and vulnerability and have to be conceptualised relationally. He argues that even the secure core of the labour market is constantly menaced and put under pressure by the zone of vulnerable jobs (Castel, 1995). The people in this zone, in turn, are constantly under the pressure of being replaced by those in the reserve army of the unemployed. By tying his argumentation to the Durkheimian theory of the 'lien social' and anomy, Paugam shows that the erosion of stable employment forms (as a source of income) and the decreasing social recognition of work (as a source of meaning and identity) potentially contribute to the disintegration of societies (Paugam, 2000; 2009). As convincing these theories are, it has proven to be difficult to analyse them empirically and to detach them from the French context (Barbier, 2005). This string of reflexion that began in the late 1990s has been paralleled (but was seldom in exchange with) a more pragmatic and empirical stream of contributions on 'precarious employment' (Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989), 'bad jobs' (Kalleberg, 2000; 2009), or 'contingent work' (Polivka & Nardone, 1989) in American sociology. In these contributions, different forms of atypical work are empirically analysed concerning their historical development; their causes in terms of gender, class or education; and their consequences in terms of health, psychological well-being and social participation. Even though the phenomena are often neatly and precisely measured in these cases, the scholars struggle to embed their results into a historical and—even more—an overall theoretical reflection that would relate these phenomena to each other and explain them functionally.

To improve our understanding of atypical work, it will be important to bring closer together American empiricism with French theories. However, a major problem of those who try to understand atypical and precarious employment is its heterogeneous and mercurial character. Let us give three reasons for this.

Firstly, atypical work is defined negatively against standard employment. Therefore, atypical work can consist of part-time work, fix-term and otherwise temporally limited contracts, work at home, work in pseudo self-employment, work on call (and all other forms of forced flexibility), night and weekend work, several jobs, poorly paid jobs or underemployment, etc. Not only are these atypical employment situations very different, but they can have completely different explanations and different consequences on the lives of those who are in such a situation. Whereas for example work on call renders it difficult to have a social life (i.e., to meet friends, to organise a family or to participate in a club), a fixed-term contract raises problems with respect to the planning and foreseeability of life events (starting a family, having children, and buying a house).

Secondly, it is often not one of those forms of atypical work, but the combination of two or more of them that makes them 'precarious'. In other words, most of these forms of atypical work are also part of employment arrangements that are not considered precarious. Part-time work, for example, can give people more freedom and flexibility, but if it is involuntary, it can be a problem because the wages are not high enough or because it is more easily shuffled around during the day. The same is true for independent contractors for work at home or weekend work. All these forms of work are part of employees who feel very much at ease at their employment and enjoy a great deal of freedom. But they are also part of jobs in which self-employed people have only one client (which, in fact, is their real employer), work at home in order to save infrastructure costs or are forced to work shifts only on nights and weekends.

Thirdly, Castel has underlined in his contribution that precariousness cannot be understood in itself, but must be systematically related to the proportion of those who are in a) stable forms of employment and b) in unemployment. What defines precarious work positions is not only the nature of this employment relationship, but their link to stable and excluded positions. This is particularly important when it comes to understanding international comparisons of precariousness (Barbier, 2005). The relative status and the meaning of employment with a temporary agency or a fixed-term contract, for instance, vary widely according to the protection enjoyed by those in a stable non-fixed-term contract. If the labour law makes it relatively easy to lay off workers, then an employment with a temporary agency might not be very problematic. To the contrary, if there is a strict separation between well-protected core employments on the one hand and very contingent work on the other, the meaning of being employed by an agency is different (Rodgers, 1989).

This paper's goal is twofold: firstly, we seek to analyse atypical and precarious employment in Switzerland, and secondly we try to develop a configurational approach to study precariousness that is able to cope with some of the aforementioned difficulties when it comes to grasping this phenomenon. The remainder of this paper will be dedicated to the following points of enquiry: To set the fundamentals, we will develop what we mean by 'configurational approach' and ask what are the typical configurations of atypical work in the Swiss labour market. When we examine the work hours, forms of flexibility, fixed-term contracts, work at home, work at night and weekends and low household incomes—which of these characteristics typically appear together and which are hardly ever linked? Then we will analyse the social characteristics that are related to these configurations. We look at individual factors (gender, nationality, education and age) and structural factors (economic sectors, occupations and family constellations). We are trying to test if certain configurations of atypical employment can be explained by

individual reasons, others by structural reasons or specific—probably even more likely—combinations between individual and structural factors. Next, we will analyse how these configurations are interpreted by the actors and what consequences they have in terms of work satisfaction, general well-being and political attitudes. To conclude, we will summarise the results and try to make a meaningful distinction between atypical employment and precarious employment.

2. Catch me if you can—a configurational approach?

The mercurial character of atypical work, such as depicted above, causes difficulty for all scholars. The issues have been addressed by several strategies:

1. *A separate logic.* In this logic, different forms of atypical work are considered and studied separately (Rodgers, 1989; Kalleberg, 2000; Pelizzari, 2009). This is not only a descriptive approach, but often is also the one chosen for causal models that try to explain the reasons for these situations of precariousness. Within this perspective, scholars examine, for example, fixed-termed contracts or work on call without necessarily being interested in how these situations relate to other forms of potentially precarious work. This strategy is important, as it allows scholars to sketch the historical increase of these different forms in past years. However, it struggles to understand heterogeneity and combinations of precariousness—which are crucial for understanding the phenomenon.
2. *Gradual and additive models* (Rodgers, 1989). Gradual models of atypical work try to discern degrees of precariousness and vulnerability that will vary from one group of workers to another, or may affect the labour force as a whole. Additive models, as an example, count the number of vulnerabilities (often independently of their exact nature) and then define a threshold beyond which an actor is counted as precarious. (Marti et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2010).
3. *Typological models* combine different forms or different dimensions of precariousness in a deductive typology. In such an attempt, Paugam, for instance, combined the dimensions of employment security and work signification and distinguished several forms of insecurities: assured integration, unsure integration, cumbersome integration and disqualifying integration (Paugam, 2000; 2009). With Paugam, each of the four forms has specific origins and specific social and political consequences for those who are concerned. The blend of different types can, according to Paugam, vary in international comparison, according to, for example, the labour law or the form of welfare state.

In this contribution, we propose a configurational approach to catch the mercury and to sketch for the first time an overall picture of precariousness in Switzerlandⁱⁱ. Our goal will be to identify typical configurations of atypical employment, to find explaining factors for these configurations and to understand which feelings and attitudes are typically related to them. This descriptive approach will be based on the use of multiple correspondence analysis (MCA). This method allows us to understand the field of precarious employment as system of relations between positions characterised by specific configurations of work conditions. MCA is a graphical multivariate method that makes it possible to take into account a large number of rather varied variables. The different forms of atypical employment, therefore, do not need to be separated analytically but can be investigated jointly. This makes it possible to identify typical combinations and configurations of the forms of atypical employment. Such a configurational analysis can give the first hint of the social meaning of the different forms of atypical work. For example, we will be able to identify which forms of atypical employment are systematically connected to low wages or which forms tend to combine and corroborate each other. On this basis, we can get a first impression of which forms are only 'atypical' and which are really precarious (and are likely to have psychological and social consequences).

What is more, MCA is an intrinsically relational method (Bourdieu, 1984; De Nooy, 2003). It is therefore better suited to understand the relational nature of atypical and precarious employment situations. By drawing the different configurations of atypical employment in a graph, we will be able to identify some of the relations between the configurations and fractions. For example, we will identify relations between more secure and less secure configurations, but also potentially relations of complementarity between employment situations within the couple. The configurations identified in the framework are not the result of deductive reasoning. They emerge from an empirical examination. In this way, we can avoid importing typologies that strongly root in a specific national context, but because of the relational nature of precariousness make no sense in others. The typology of precariousness developed by Paugam, for instance, reflects very much the French situation (Paugam, 2000), but it is unlikely that it manages to capture the situation in Switzerland (which concerning the labour market regulation is rather different). Finally, MCA allows the researcher to relate the configurations of atypical employment to potential causes and consequences. According to the concept of homology, the social space, the space of employment and the space of representation can graphically be laid on top of each other and thereby certain configurations of atypical work can be related to specific causes and consequences (Bourdieu, 1984).

3. The homology of spaces

To understand the configurations of atypical employment, we will conceptualise the labour market as a field (or a space). A field is a space that is endowed with a structure, rules, stakes and positions that engender strategic practices (Bourdieu, 1984). The positions within that space correspond to specific configurations of atypical forms of employment. We assume that no single group accumulates all forms of atypical work and that, on the other hand, none is completely spared. Rather, we think that certain forms of atypical work are systematically coupled, whereas others might be mutually exclusive. To give an example, whereas those who work on call might also have a tendency to work at night, those who work 100% might rarely have more than one job (even though this is not excluded, of course). Each of these configurations may be occupied by actors with particular social characteristics and a particular blend of resources and capital. Mechanisms of allocation of positions to specific individuals work along with differences of gender, education capital, ethnicity or age. But certain configurations may also be more common in specific sectors or occupations—independently of the individual capital endowments of those who occupy the position. What is more, a configuration of employment can also reflect a specific position within the couple or the household and therefore must be considered as complementary to the configuration of the partner. In other words, we postulate what Bourdieu called a structural homology between the space of employment positions and the social space of the individuals who occupy those positions. A homology is the assumption that structural positions through an isomorphic relation correspond to a certain social origin and socialisation on the one hand, or to certain attitudes, preferences or practices on the other (Bourdieu, 1984). In this sense, people who occupy certain employment configurations not only share social characteristics, but tend to think and act in a similar way—mostly as a consequence of similar employment experience. A second homology is therefore postulated between the space of atypical employment and the space of psychological and political dispositions. We will analyse indicators of employment satisfaction, psychological well-being and political attitudes and relate them to the configurations of the space of employment. Let us now describe each of these spaces more thoroughly.

3.1. The space of atypical employment

As shown in the Introduction, atypical work is an assemblage of rather heterogeneous forms of work. In order to construct the space, we first must discuss and decide which aspects of atypical work we deem important enough to be taken into account.

Firstly, atypical employment concerns jobs that are limited in time and do not allow for long-term plans or to create affective, professional, political or associative projects. With

respect to this point, one must beware that in Switzerland, as a result of the relatively liberal labour law, the standard employment is comparatively insecure and 'polarization' is for legal reasons rather weak. Even though an employment with a temporary agency is less secure, in regular employment situations, people can be laid off relatively easily. But fixed-term contracts, internships or employment for a temporary agency are forms of atypical work that guarantee even less biographical security and therefore can deeply affect the lifestyle of the concerned.

A second aspect refers to compatibility with daily and weekly social rhythms. Shift work, work on call, other forms of forced flexibility, evening or night employment and irregular overtime or weekend work are all forms of work that potentially hinder the organisation of everyday life and make it difficult to synchronise one's own rhythm with that of other people. This can cause issues for the organisation of family life and of friendship relations, and it also represents a potential obstacle to religious, political and social participation.

Unusually low or unusually high amounts of employment are a third form of atypical work. A very small amount of work can create legal and financial problems, as people with small employment lack certain social protection (BVG). As for underemployment, it can also be the reason for small wages and can force people to adopt several jobs. Too much work, even when it is 'chosen', can create problems in the social organisation of daily life and lead to stress, health problems and psychological difficulties, especially if night work and weekend work are involved.

A fourth dimension of atypical employment is small wages. Following Marti et al. in this point, we think that those whose household income lies below a certain threshold are not only atypically employed but are precarious in their status (Marti et al., 2005). Without a certain household income, it is impossible to participate socially and politically. At the same time, not every individual low income is a problem, as it can be completed for by the incomes of other members of the household. Therefore, the household equivalent income might be an adequate measure to examine the material situation of a person.

Finally, we will also examine work at home and employment in several jobs at the same time. Both are indicators of potentially difficult time coordination and a blurring of the boundary between employment and leisure time.

3.2. The location of atypical work in the social space

One of the central debates within the literature on atypical employment concerns its location in the social space (Marchart, 2010). Does it touch only a small group of marginal and excluded actors, can we identify certain zones of precariousness or has it

spread out to the whole society? It is therefore important to know where the vulnerable people are located in the social space in terms of social origin, educational capital, gender, etc. The international literature has brought forward a host of information about the attributes that render people particularly likely to become precarious. These include the biographical situation, in particular the young entering the labour market and those in transition to retirement seem to be concerned. We also try to understand whether women are more vulnerable on the labour market than men, especially with respect to part-time work (which in Switzerland is known to be particularly feminized; see Strub, 2003). Furthermore, we will take into account the educational capital and examine if atypical employment is particularly widespread among poorly educated people or if—following the hypothesis of the generalisation of precariousness—more and more well-educated actors are also concerned. Last but not least, we are interested in the relation of atypical employment to the ethnic origin. We will distinguish between foreigners from traditional southern-European work emigration countries (such as Italy, Portugal, and ex-Yugoslavia), foreigners from richer north- and west-European countries (Germany, France, etc.) and Swiss citizens.

Secondly, it is known that individual factors do not account for all situations of atypical employment. Therefore, we are keen to distinguish institutional factors that produce atypical employment situations, such as economic sectors or occupations. Gastronomy and transport are, in fact, sectors where people rather normally must work at unusual times of the day or at weekends. Thus we can expect people in these sectors to be exposed to atypical employment—independently of their age, gender or educational resources. The same is true for certain occupations. Occupations such as farmers (because of their dependence on the rhythms of the nature) or security workers seem to be structurally exposed to atypical employment, but not because those who have these occupations are particularly young or poorly educated. Thirdly, we are examining family and partnership constellations of the atypically employed. According to Crouch (2010), certain configurations that are atypical, can be completed by a household member (often the partner) who is employed in a more secure contract. Depending on the employment of the other household members, a small employment of a someone can have a radically different meaning. It depends whether it is only a complement to the salary of a well-earning partner or if it is the only, pivotal income of the household.

3.3. How employment configurations engender a space of attitudes

In many studies, scholars make assumptions about the psychological and social repercussions of atypical employment (Paugam, 2000; 2009). It is generally deemed that atypical employment is psychologically difficult to bear, that feelings of insecurity translate themselves into dissatisfaction or depression. Sennett states that certain forms

of employment corrode the character, and Castel compares insecurity at work to a 'virus' that dissolves social links and undermines the psychological structures of individuals (Senett, 1998; Castel, 2003: 29) Certain researchers even assume that people in atypical positions adopt specific political attitudes and/or become disillusioned with politics all together and retire from political and social activity. This is why, in a third step, we relate the space of atypical employment to attitudes, feelings and participation practices. Firstly, we will examine, inspired by theories such as Paugam's (2009), the work satisfaction and the feelings of insecurity linked to the employment situation that people report in different configurations of atypical work. We wonder whether objective biographical insecurity is related to the subjective feeling of insecurity, such as is suggested by Paugam's typology on insecure employment. Such an analysis will also reveal if insecurity and dissatisfaction are widespread in the space of employment (such as suggested by theories of general spread of precariousness) or if it concentrates in specific configurations (such as posited by theories of exclusion and marginalisation). Next, we will investigate whether certain atypical configurations cause psychological problems, for example, by leading to depression or a general lack of energy. This is a popular assumption of recent research on atypical work, which assumes that the lack of social recognition leads to psychological vulnerabilisation (Sennett, 1998; Paugam, 2000). Finally, we address the political orientation of the people who are employed in atypical conditions: Do they adopt positions of the traditional left (such as articulated in terms like 'precariat' and the May-Day manifestations) or are they rather becoming politically indifferent (Paugam, 2009)?

4. Data and Methods

In order to study atypical employment, it is preferable to rely on surveys with representative samples, detailed information on the employment situation and a wide range of other, namely psychological or familial, informationⁱⁱⁱ. In Switzerland, the Swiss Labour Force survey (SLFS) is doubtlessly one of the best representative surveys available. It includes about 50,000 individuals and from 2000 on oversamples of immigrants from traditional employment emigration countries such as Italy, Spain and ex-Yugoslavia. In addition, it is part of a group of coordinated surveys in Europe and therefore is suitable for international comparison. However, compared to Swiss Household Panel (SHP), the other potentially suitable survey for studying precariousness, its information on the employment conditions are less detailed and—more importantly—it features not one single so-called 'subjective' indicator (Voorpostel et al., 2011). In other terms, the SLFS features no information on the feelings and attitudes of those working in atypical situations. This is a serious shortcoming, and more so as central theoretical

advancements on precarious employment (Paugam, 2009) deem the feelings of insecurity to be a central component of precarious work. The lack of information on other aspects than work and employment—for example on political participation or membership in associations—only reinforces this deficiency of the SLFS.

What is more, the information on the household structure and the employment situation of a potential partner or the number of children is also less developed in the SLFS than in the SHP. However, this information matters pivotally, as individuals are also carried and protected against precariousness by their families and networks (Crouch, 2010). On all these points, the Swiss Household Panel is, as a matter of fact, better suited to examine precariousness, as its only flaw is its comparatively small sample, the lack of an oversampling of those potentially exposed to atypical employment and the attrition rate that is particularly high for those who are precarious or marginalised (Voorpostel, 2010). In order to respond to these weaknesses, we will use the wave 2004 of the SHP. In this year, the sample has been augmented with a second cohort and is not yet touched by the attrition of the following years. In our eyes, the wave 2004 of the Swiss Household Panel is one of the most appropriate samples to understand atypical and precarious work.

The three spaces that we have described in the Introduction have been operationalised with three sets of variables. The first and pivotal of these sets of variables is about employment conditions. It includes seven active variables, which for illustrative purposes have been completed by a number of partially redundant passive variables.

- (1) Firstly, the number of effectively worked weekly hours (not the employment rate, which is only added as an illustrative passive variable) is divided into the categories 1-15 hours, 16-30 hours, 30-45 hours and 46+ hours. This renders it possible to capture those who only work a few hours, but also those who work very long hours—a form of atypical work that can cause serious incompatibility with social rhythms of others (but which has received little attention so far). Secondly, I have chosen the variable 'flexibility of work'. Crucially this variable takes into account the flexibility and its forced or autonomous character. This distinction is important, as it distinguishes between those who are forced to be ready to work at every moment without knowing if and how much they will work and those who can autonomously choose their flexibility. The modality 'shift work' has been excluded as it was redundant with the variable 'night and weekend work'. This variable has been created, after tests about a separate use of 'night work' and 'weekend work' suggested it makes more sense to unify it as a single variable. We have distinguished night and weekend work yes from no. The next variable concerns homework and pseudo-self-employment. Homework can concern farmers, managers who work at home or freelance workers. Tests

revealed that pseudo-self-employment and homework were redundant, but that the second variable was able to reflect a wider variety of situations. Therefore, we use homework as an active variable and pseudo-self-employment as a supplementary passive variable. The answer 'office at home' is only used as a passive answer, as its proportion was under 5%. The fifth variable used was the number of jobs, which tells those with one from those with more than one job. Sixth, we used the questions of the duration of the current employment contract. As the SHP in this wave features no specific question about the employment by a temporary agency, I have chosen to oppose those with a temporal limitation of contract (of different forms) to those with a temporally unlimited contract. In addition, fixed-term contracts were introduced as a passive control-variable (here fixed-term contracts are only one of several possible forms of temporally limited contracts). The seventh variable concerns the household equivalent income. This measure indicates the income per person in the household and can help us to distinguish between precarious employment and a precarious situation in general (Marti et al., 2005; see also Kraemer, 2008). According to a (modified) proposition from Marti et al., the variable was divided into the categories 0–42000, 42001–66000, 66001–90000, 90001–12000 and 120001 and more—the last category only being used passively.

(2) When it comes to the social recruiting space of atypical employment, we distinguish between individual and structural factors. Among the individual variables, we introduce gender (men vs. women), cohorts (15–24 years, 25–39 years, 40–54 years and 55–64 years) and educational capital (compulsory education, apprenticeship/high school, higher vocational education and university/applied university). Another important individual factor for precariousness is nationality (Pelizzari, 2009; Marti et al., 2005). However, as in these past years the working-class migration from southern countries in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s has increasingly been completed by a group of better-educated immigrants, often from northern European countries, and so we have distinguished between Swiss, poor countries and rich countries. As rich countries we counted for example Germany, France, Britain or the US, as poor countries Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ex-Yougoslavia, Greece, Albania or most African and Asian countries.

The structural factors are themselves divided into three groups: firstly, we examine the economic sector. It is known that in certain sectors such as gastronomy, transport or retail employees are more than in other sectors asked to

work irregular or marginal hours as these sectors provide services that are used by the majority outside of working hours. In order to control for the influence of economic sector, we employ a detailed version of the Swiss NOGA nomenclature that distinguishes between 16 categories: agriculture and forestry, education, real estate, finance and insurance, public administration, social and personal services, extraterritorial activities, health and social work, electricity gas and water, construction, manufacturing, wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants and transport and communication. Secondly, we use a fine-grained typology of occupations according to ISCO^{iv}. It includes about 129 different occupations and allows us to make very fine distinction between different levels of occupations (professions vs. associate professions) or between different members of a same family of occupations (such as, for example, locomotive driver, motor vehicle driver, flight attendant or ship driver). Often such specific occupations, even though requiring a higher educational level, have atypical timetables and forms of employment and can therefore be another source of atypical employment. Thirdly, we include a typology of household constellations. This typology is constructed as a blend of marital situation (single without ever having been married, in partnership, or separated/divorced) and the presence of children in the household. In this way, we can both study the potential incompatibility of atypical employment with the daily and weekly social rhythms of the family and examine potential situation of complementarity between the incomes of the two partners.

- (3) To understand the psychological, social and political repercussions of the different configurations of atypical employment, we introduce a series of passive variables that are mainly based on standardised questions on well-being and politics. The first group includes questions about general job satisfaction, income, interest in the task, amount of work and the atmosphere at the workplace. All of these variables propose a scale of 11 answer items going from 'not at all satisfied' to 'completely satisfied'. In the graph, the two opposed categories are represented. In addition, we have also included two variables about job security and the risk of unemployment. The question about the individual job security estimation is composed of four items, going from 'job is very secure' to 'job is very insecure'. The question concerning the risk of the possibility of unemployment in the next 12 month has 11 items, spanning from 'no risk at all' to 'a real risk'. In both cases, only the polar items are represented graphically.

The second series of variables is not work-bound, but concerns indicators of psychological well-being in general. The variable on satisfaction with life in

general life goes from 'not at all satisfied' to 'completely satisfied' in 11 steps. This question is completed with two variables on the frequency depression and energy: The first asks how frequently the respondents face 'depression, blues and anxiety', the second how frequently they feel energized and optimistic. Both scales go from 'never' to 'always', through 11 answer items. Finally, we integrate a series of questions about political aspects: the first is about the political position on an 11 item right-left scale, from 'left' to 'right'. Then we use the questions whether the respondents are interested in politics (from 0 'not at all interested in politics' to 10 'very interested in politics') and if they believe to have an influence on politics (0 'no influence' to 10 'very strong influence'). In all three cases, only the extreme positions are represented in the graph. Finally, we also employ a question about associative participations (yes vs. no).

5. The space of atypical employment in Switzerland

As a first step, we display and then interpret the space of atypical employment in Switzerland. We limit ourselves to two dimensions. The eigenvalue on the first axis is 0.23, and the one on the second axis 0.19. The categories that contribute strongly to the construction of the horizontal axis (above average) are in **bold**, and those who contribute strongly to the vertical axis are in *italics*. Those who contribute strongly to both axes are in ***bold italics***.

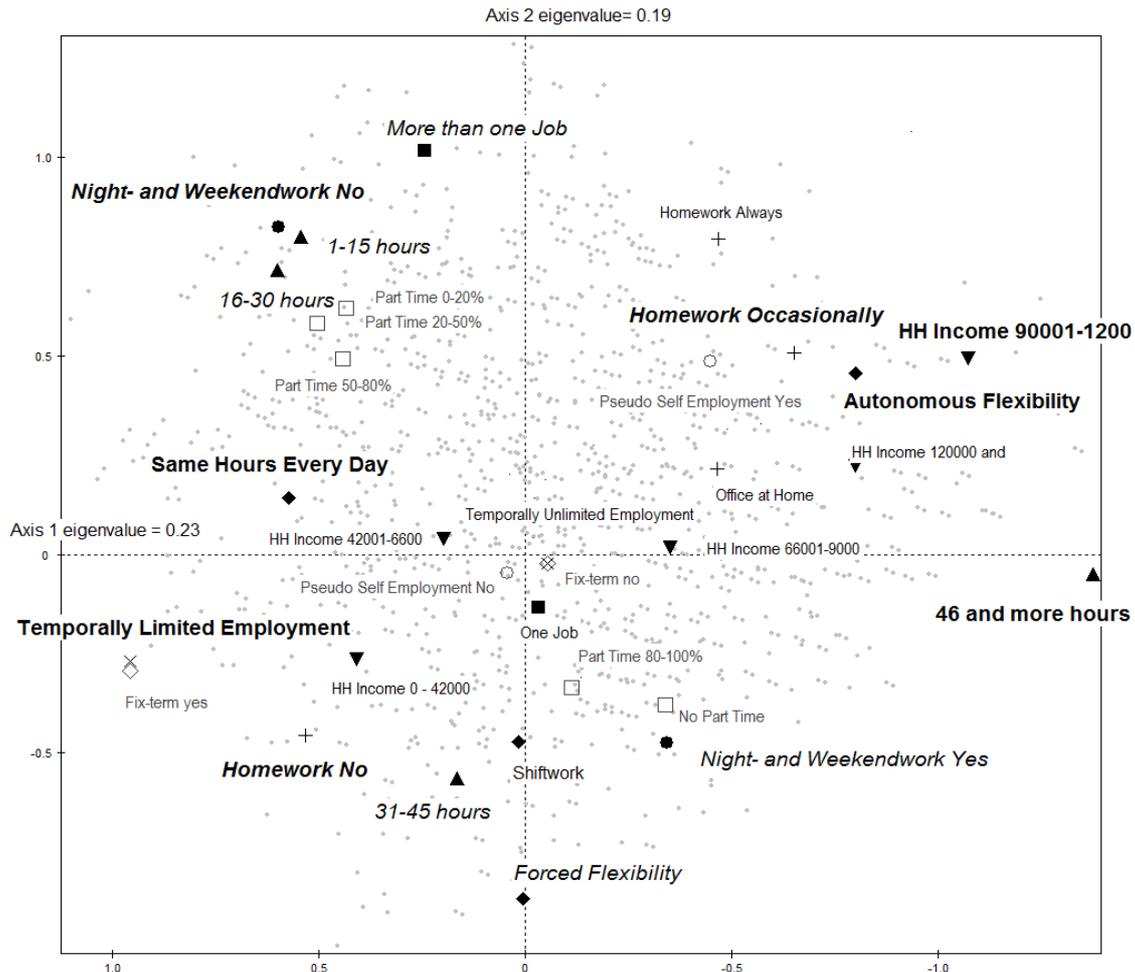


Figure 1. The Space of a-typical employment in Switzerland (2004)

The following three questions contribute above average to the variance of the first axis: number of weekly hours (28.8%), form of flexibility (20.9%) and homework (18.8%). Together they add up to 68.5% of the explained variance of the first axis. The eight categories for the interpretation of axis 1 (in bold) amount to 81.1 % of its variance. On the right side can be found 46 and more hours (21.1%), autonomous flexibility (12.2%), homework occasionally (8.4%) and household Income 90,000 to 120,000 (5.5%). On the left side can be found Homework no (9.3%), Same hours every day (8.7%), night and weekend work no (8.2%) and temporally limited employment (7.7%). With 86.0%, four questions contribute above average to the second axis: night and weekend work (29.2%), number of weekly hours (23.5%), homework (18.0%) and form of flexibility (15.7%). The following nine categories have been retained to interpret the second axis, adding up to 86.2% of the explained variance. In the upper half are situated night and weekend work no (18.6%), More than one job (8.9%), 16–30 weekly hours (7.6%), 1–15 weekly hours (6.7%) and homework occasionally (6.1%). In the lower half can be

found night and weekend work yes (10.7%), forced flexibility (10.3%), 31–45 weekly hours (9.1%) and homework no (8.2%).

Taking the interpretation a step further, this means that the first horizontal axis distinguishes a hard-working and well-earning group *in the upper-right quadrant*. Even if this group is not completely spared from any form of atypical work, here atypical employment is only sporadic and—most importantly—autonomous. When this group works a lot at home, at night or at the weekend, it seems to be a more or less autonomous or at least a consenting choice of the actors. In addition, for this group the willingness to accept typical employment conditions is rewarded with a relatively high salary. In *the upper-left quadrant* can be found a group of people who work rather a few hours (and, in fact, is employed up to 80%) and occasionally hold several jobs simultaneously. At the same time, this group has regular working hours and must not work on nights and weekends. Even though household income is rather low in this group, the members seem to enjoy a certain stability both biographically and when it comes to the weekly social rhythms. In other terms, the group is hardly exposed to fixed-term employment and neither forced nor unforced flexibility. In the *lower-left quadrant* we can identify a fraction that is touched by three central factors that feature in most of the definition of precariousness: employment is limited in time (mostly fixed-term), it involves forced flexibility (shift work, work on call, etc.) and it pays very poorly (household income 0 to 42,000). This cumulativeness seems to indicate that this configuration probably is particularly difficult to live with. However, we also have to add that this group does not work at home, hardly ever has more than one job and usually works between 31 and 45 hours per week (no overtime, no small employment). Finally, in the *lower-right quadrant* we find a configuration that is characterised by forced flexibility and night and weekend work. As shift work (as a passive category) is also located in this area, we can make the assumption that this fraction works regularly at marginal hours. At the same time, these positions seem to be biographically more stable, better paid and do not involve several jobs or homework.

Overall, it is noteworthy that *no single group is touched by all forms of atypical work*. In particular, it seems that, for example, biographically insecure employment (contract limited in time) is, for instance, coupled to otherwise regular hours, a reasonable amount of hours and the absence of night or weekend work. And those who have small hours do simultaneously enjoy regular work hours and are not concerned by forced flexibility or night work. The only group that potentially accumulates several relevant forms of atypical work is employed in positions that are simultaneously limited in time, characterised by forced flexibility and poor pay. Furthermore, *almost all employees are concerned by at least one form of atypical work*. Atypical work, indeed, is everywhere

(Bourdieu, 1998). Even well-paying positions are characterised by atypical forms of work such a large amount of work, work at home, flexible work or work at night and at weekends. The question is now if these forms of atypical work can be considered as precarious work. If we can make such a distinction, then it will be interesting to investigate which configurations are only atypical and which can be considered as precarious. To make this next step, it will be necessary to investigate the location of atypical work in the social space.

6. Factors related to atypical employment

In this next step of analysis, we project a series of individual and structural factors as passive variables into the space constructed above: socio-demographic factors, economic sector, occupations and family occupations. The aim of this section is to investigate if certain ones of the identified configurations of atypical work can be explained by specific variables. According to Le Roux and Rouanet (2010: 59), in this space of individuals, distances greater than 0.5 will be deemed to be "notable"; a deviation greater than 1, definitely "large".

6.1. Individual resources and capital

Firstly, we introduce different resources and capital into the space with which usually precarious work is explained: age (as a measure of experience), gender, educational capital and nationality (as a form of cultural capital). In the case where these resources are organised in a gradual way (age, educational level), we connect the categories of the variable with a line.

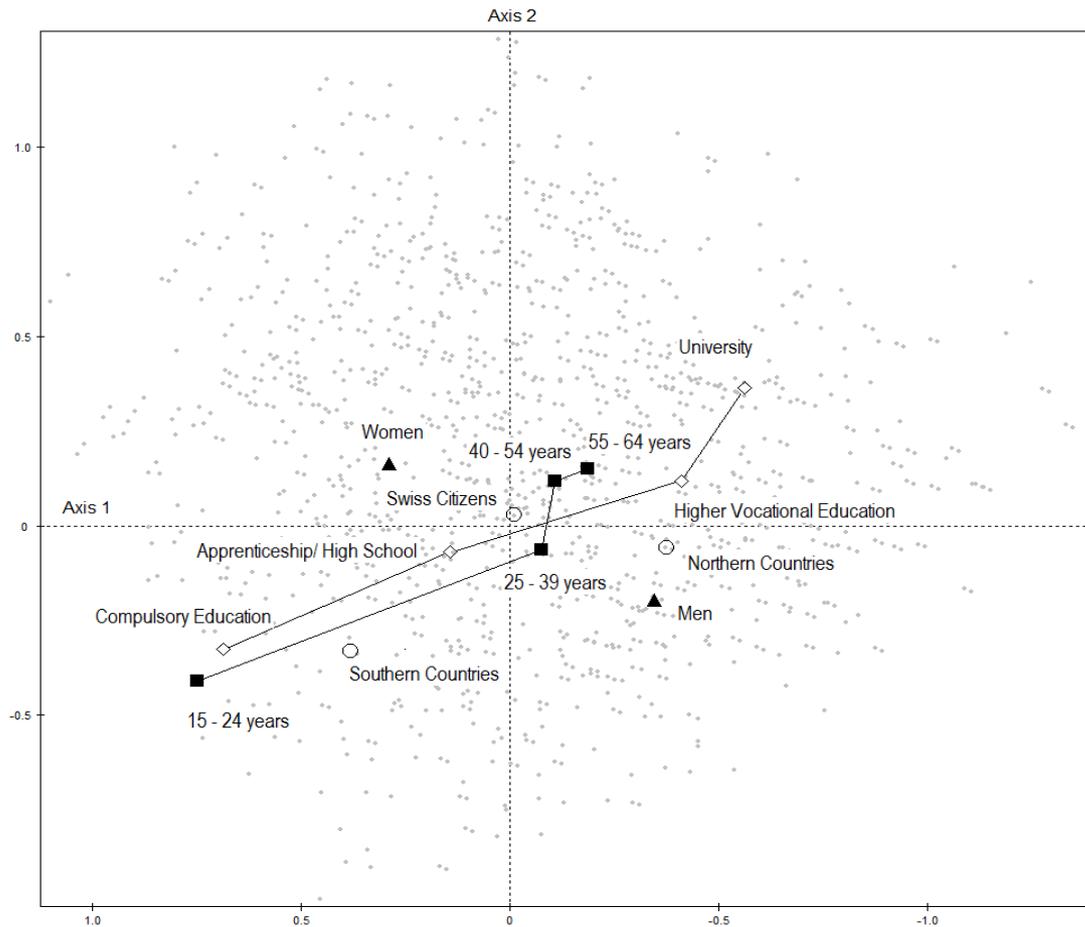


Figure 2. Socio-demographic variables: sex, educational level, cohort and nationality (2004)

Age, educational resources and, to a certain degree nationality, form a diagonal axis from the lower-left to the upper-right quadrant. Poorly educated young adults stemming from traditional countries of working-class immigration are situated in the lower-left quadrant, whereas older employees with a university degree coming from northern countries are situated in the upper-right quadrant. These variables explain the difference between a configuration of temporal limited contracts, forced flexibility and low income on the one side and a group of well-earning, long-working and autonomously flexible fraction on the other. Only men and women are distributed according to a different pattern: women seem to be closer to part time occupations in the left-upper quadrant and men can be found in the lower-right quadrant, characterised by full-time employment with night and weekend work. What is conspicuous when we examine the whole space is that certain zones are hardly related to this distribution of individual characteristics, in particular, the distinction of the vertical axis, night and weekend work, forced flexibility and more than one job. These configurations seem to have no common individual characteristics—they

are not particularly young or old, they are not bad or well-educated and neither are they typically female or male. In order to explain them, we might turn to structural factors, such as the economic sector or the occupation.

6.2. Economic Sector

For this purpose, we plot the Swiss typology of economic sectors into the space constructed by variables of employment. As they have no specific gradual order, they are not connected by a line.

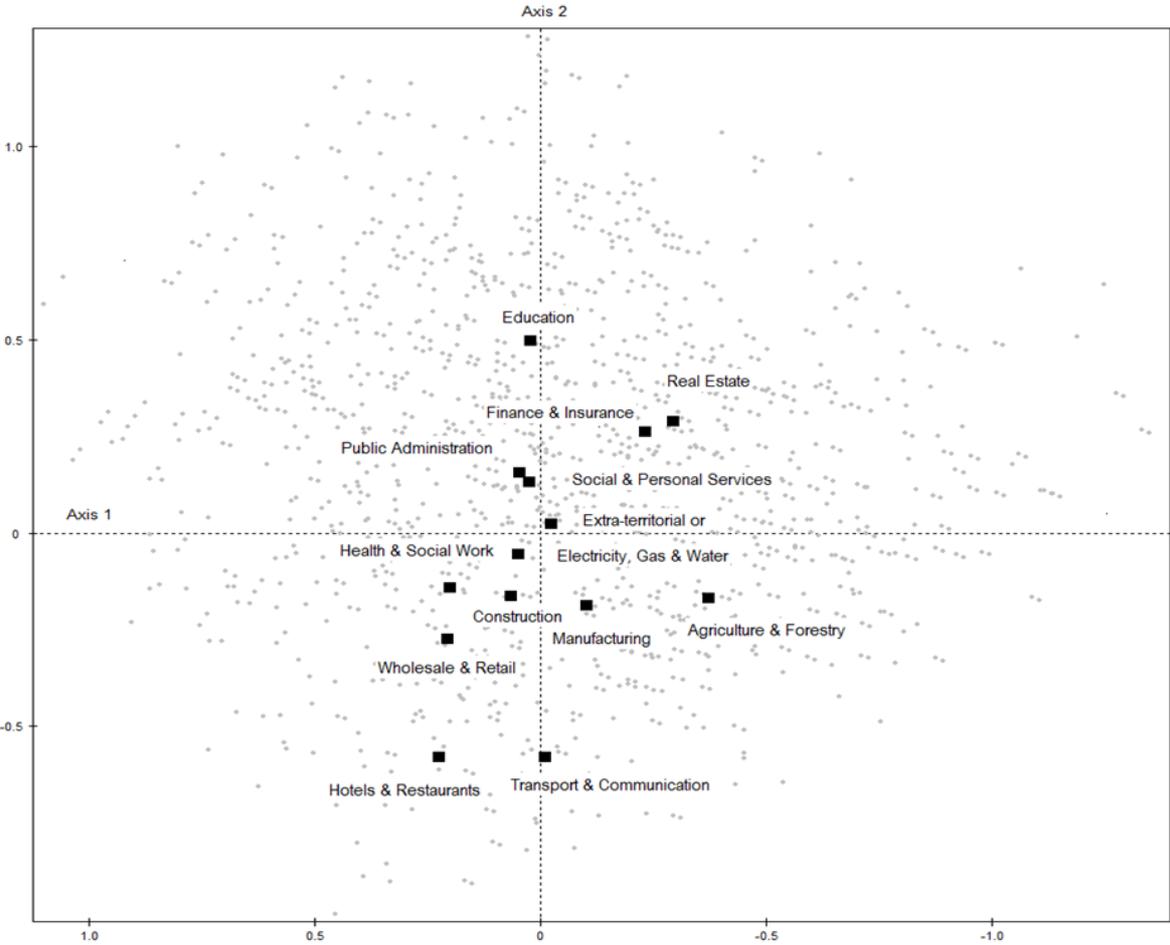


Figure 3. Structural Factors: (1) The Economic Sectors: explaining forced flexibility

Indeed, we can see that, complementary to the individual factors that cover the horizontal axis, the variables of the economic sector are rather distributed along the vertical axis. The following sectors are particularly notorious for forced flexibility and night and weekend work: restaurants and hotels, transport, storage and communication and, to a lesser degree, wholesale and retail. This means that in a sector like gastronomy even well-educated employees are forced to work flexibly or at hours that are

incompatible with normal social rhythms. When it comes to more than one job or small employment, only the education sector seems to be important. This upper half of the space is also not particularly well explained by the economic sector. And, in general, the horizontal axis, defined by an opposition between well-earning and autonomous employees and temporally limited employed, on the other hand, is not well explained by economic sectors. Individual endowment with capital has thus an influence on atypical employment rather independently of the sector in which the people are working.

6.3. Occupations

It is possible that it is not particular sectors where all the employees are concerned by similar employment conditions, but that it is only specific occupations (which are evenly spread among all sectors) that are more frequently touched by atypical work conditions. To test this assumption, we projected the occupations of a detailed ISCO classification as a passive variable on the space of atypical employment.

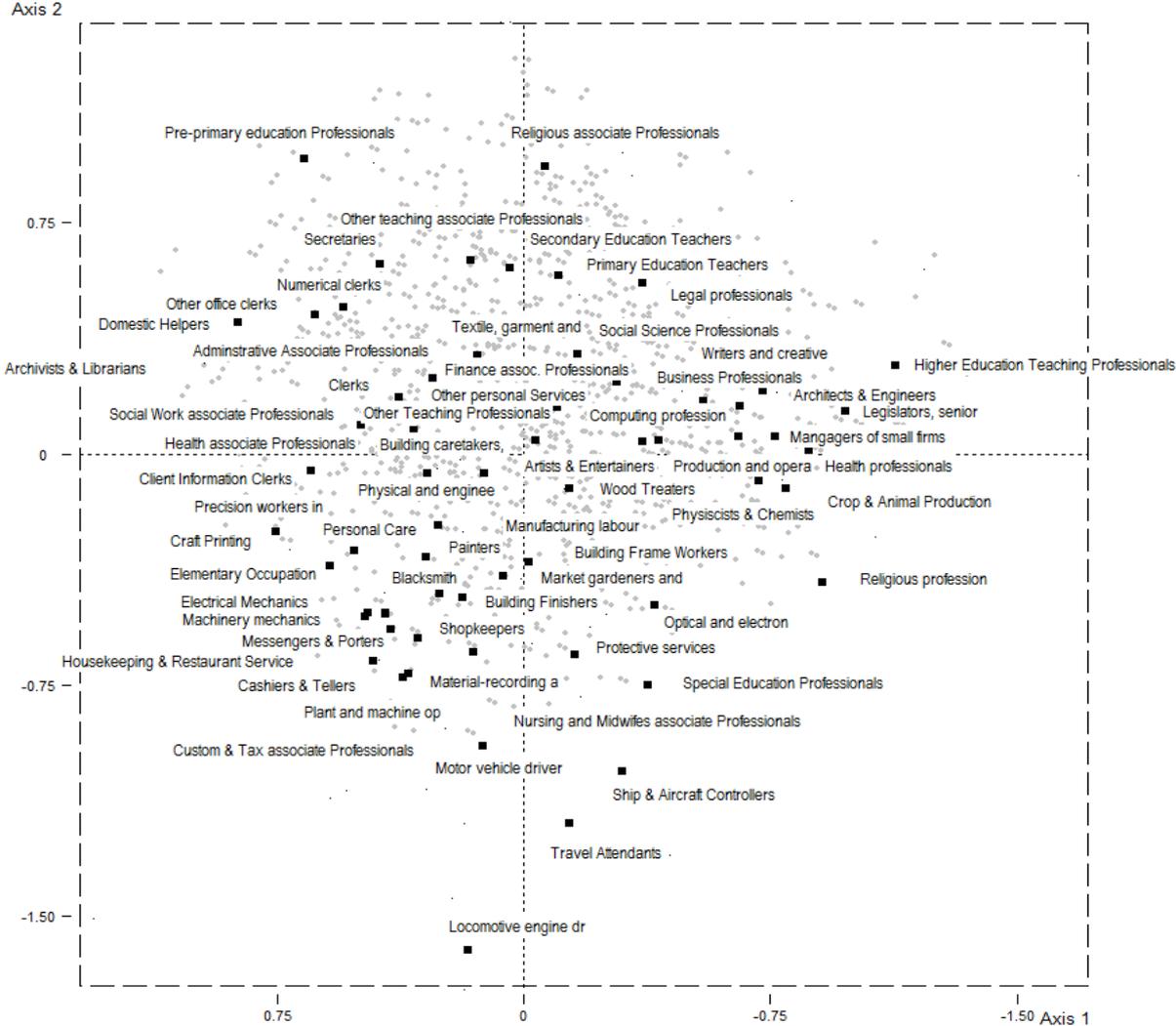


Figure 4. Structural Factors: (2) A selection of Occupations: female occupations and agriculture

The inclusion of occupations complementary to economic sectors seems to confirm results that we already reached, but, in addition, sheds light on zones that have so far not really been well elucidated. When it comes to forced flexibility, we see that this is a common problem of drivers and travel professionals of all sorts: train drivers, travel attendants, lorry drivers or controllers on ships and planes are the most concerned. Also midwives and nurses, people working in security jobs or special-education professionals are confronted to specific forms of forced flexibility. The group in the lower-left quadrant that is both touched by forced flexibility and temporally limited contracts is much more heterogeneous. It includes both non-manual service workers (cashiers, personal care, restaurant services, messengers and porters) and manual industrial workers (machine operators, mechanics, printing workers, etc.). In other words, it comprises both occupations of the traditional industrial male working class and those working in new routine service occupations (Oesch, 2006). The employment in the upper-right quadrant could so far not be related convincingly, neither to individual factors nor to the economic sector—it only seems that these jobs are more feminised than others. In fact, the analysis according to occupation confirms that in this quadrant are mainly situation female occupations: firstly, secretaries, clerks and administrative professionals; secondly primary school teachers, archivists and librarians and associate teaching professionals; and finally social workers, associate health professionals, domestic helpers and other personal services. The configuration characterised by small but regular employment is dominated by female occupations and professions and not by certain sectors.

6.4. Family constellation

In order to deepen our understanding of the gender dynamic of atypical employment, we introduce the family constellation as the last factor. This is important because certain employments that would individually be considered as precarious are not if they are completed by the employment of the partner. In this sense, we can observe that the women in typically female professions in the left-upper quadrant are not among those who earn the least, even though they are employed part-time.

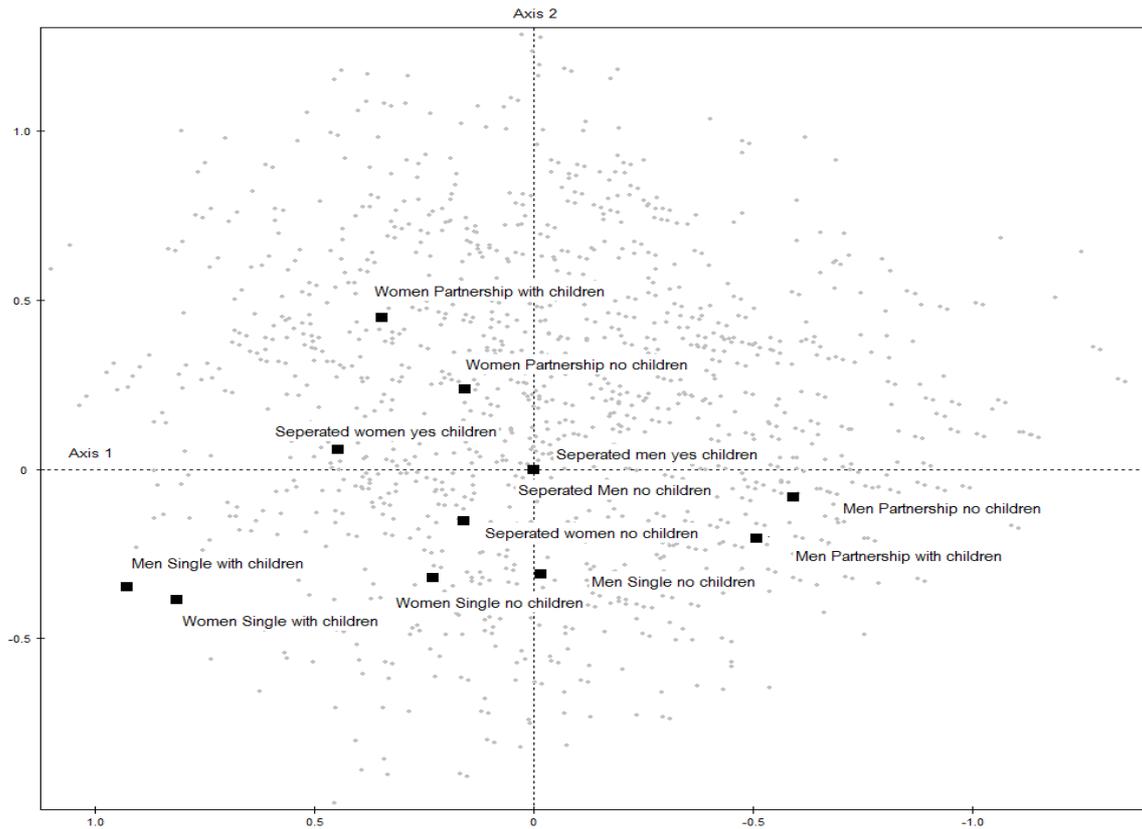


Figure 5. Structural factors (3): Family Constellations

At the same time, we know that single parents are one of the groups that is most threatened by atypical work (Strub, 2003). Indeed, it seems that the women who work as clerks, teachers or in personal services are often living in partnerships and together with children. Their small employment may be atypical, but insofar it complements the salary of their male partners, it is often not a source of precariousness. These professions are not only typically female, but also complementary within the couple. The group earns relatively well on the household level, even though the employment rate is sometimes rather low. Secondly, we see that having children, especially for younger men and women who are not living in a partnership, can reinforce the risk of sliding in a particularly difficult situation. Little biographical security, forced flexibility and a small salary on the household level are particularly prevalent for this group of young single mothers.

7. Consequences and repercussions of precariousness

In the next section, we will investigate how specific configurations of atypical work are related to work satisfaction, feelings of depression and well-being, political attitudes and forms of participation. Again the question will be if, for instance, work dissatisfaction is widely spread to the whole space or if it is concentrated in specific constellations of atypical work. Addressing issues raised by Paugam (2009) about the link between precariousness and political and social participation, we hope also to get some tentative answers about political attitudes and social participation in different configurations of atypical work.

7.1. Work satisfaction and the feeling of insecurity

As atypical forms of employment are very widespread, we can assume that employment dissatisfaction can be found in the whole space. As it is possible to not only investigate a general indicator of satisfaction, but its various sub-dimensions (such as income, atmosphere, work conditions, etc.), we might expect in different configurations also different dimensions of dissatisfaction to be virulent.

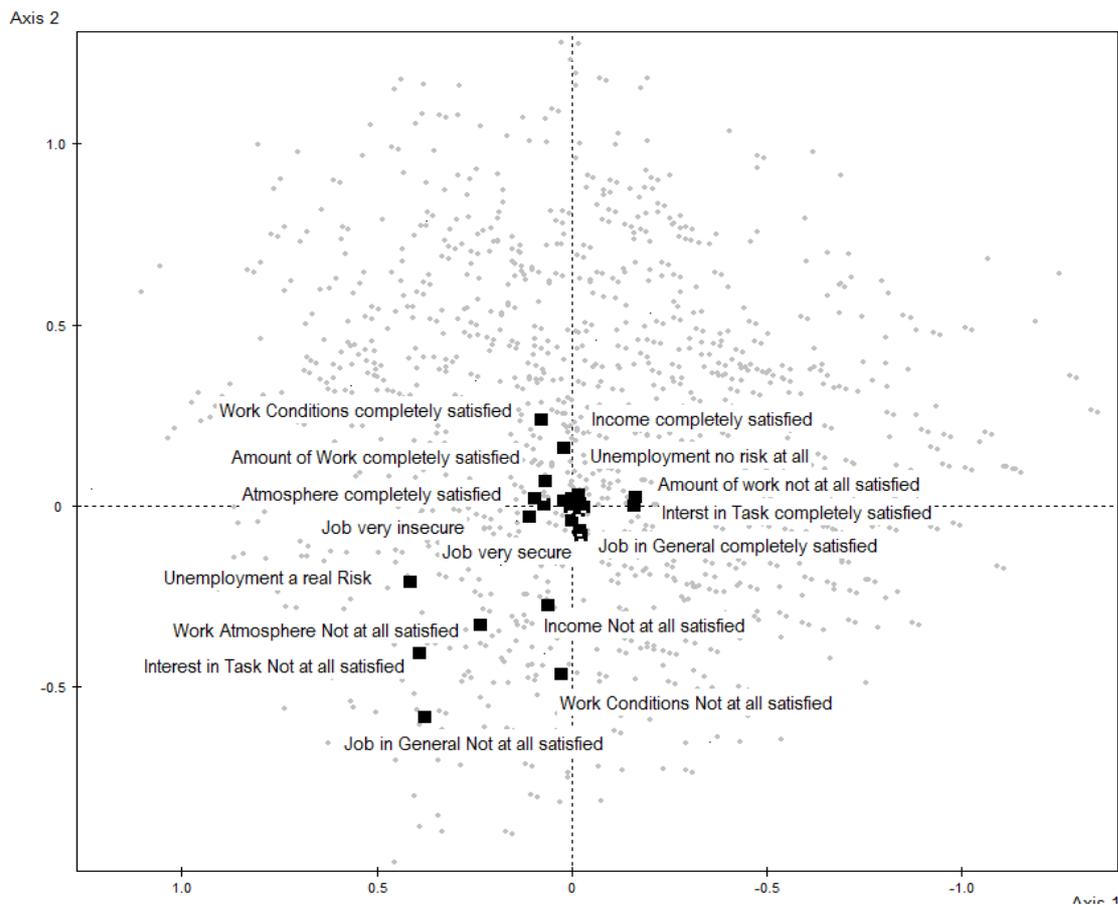


Figure 6. Consequences of atypical employment: (1) Work Satisfaction and the feeling of insecurity

When we examine the distribution of those who are satisfied with their work, we see that a high salary or autonomous flexibility is not positively related with a higher work satisfaction. This means that we cannot speak of a linear relationship between work satisfaction and jobs that are usually considered as 'good jobs'. Also these good jobs, one could conclude, seem to have certain downsides, notably that they are chronically linked with a high work load, sometimes night and weekend work and occasionally work at home. On the other hand, there is clear relation between certain—but not all!—forms of atypical employment and job dissatisfaction. In general (but also with most of the sub-dimensions of dissatisfaction), there seems to be a link with forced flexibility and temporal limitation of the employment contract. People in the lower-left quadrant are dissatisfied, in general, with the work atmosphere, the work conditions and the interest of their task. Opposed to this, configurations of small and regular employment in the upper-right quadrant do not cause work dissatisfaction and, for certain dimensions, are even the configurations where people are most satisfied. In addition, we have also examined how the feeling of employment security is distributed in this space of atypical work. It turns out that in Switzerland, with a relatively liberal labour law, the differences are not large between those who occupy well-paid jobs with autonomous flexibility on the right and those with precarious jobs on the left^v.

7.2. Depression and energy

To go beyond the employment-related satisfaction, we have integrated two complementary psychological indicators on depression and energy as a measurement of a more general well-being.

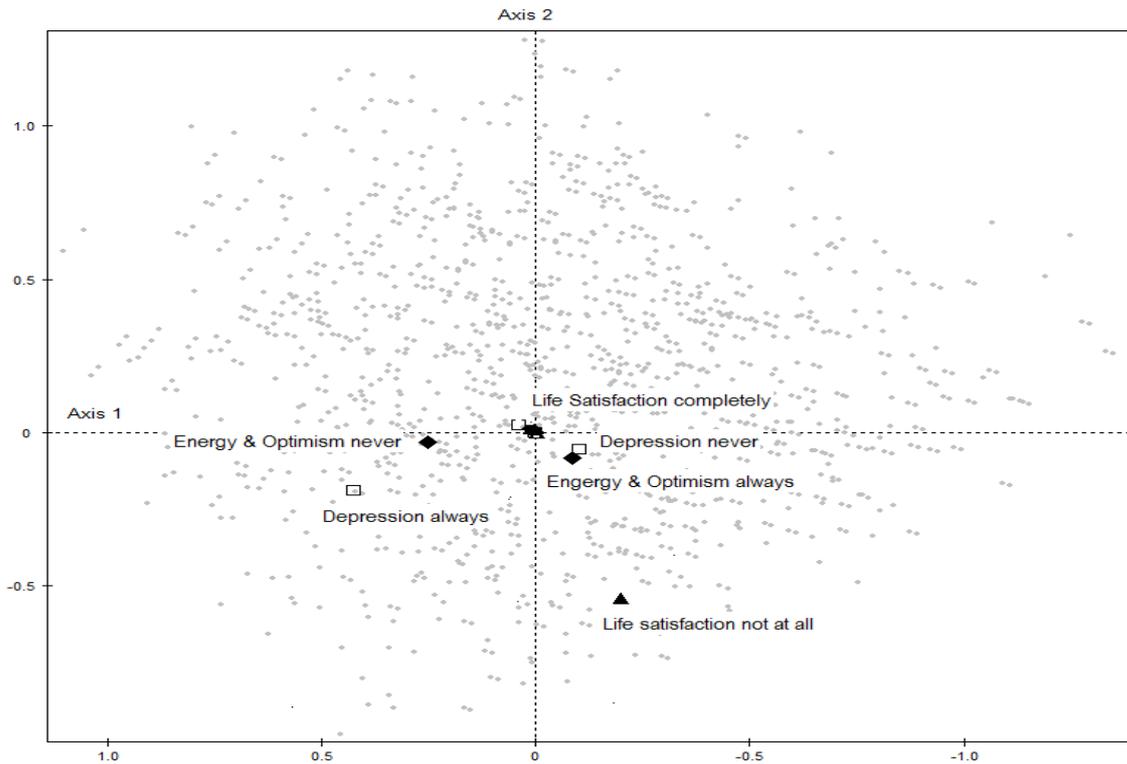


Figure 7. Consequences of atypical employment: (2) Depression and Energy

The situation is similar to work satisfaction when it comes to the positive side—satisfaction with life, absence of depression and presence of energy and optimism. People on the right side of the plane are not particularly rarely depressed or frequently full of energy. On the other hand, those who are employed in situations where biographical insecurity is coupled with forced flexibility are more often depressed and less often bursting with energy. Dissatisfaction with life is particularly prevalent in configurations with forced flexibility. In general the relation between these variables and configurations of atypical employment is less clear, the distances hardly going beyond 0.5.

7.3. Political interest, influence and associative participation

As a last dimension, we consider the position on a left-right scale, the interest in politics, the impression of having an influence on the political life and the participation in social association. All these aspects are mobilised by Paugam, who makes the hypothesis that certain employment conditions can contribute also to the adoption of specific political positions and social participation in general (Paugam, 2000).

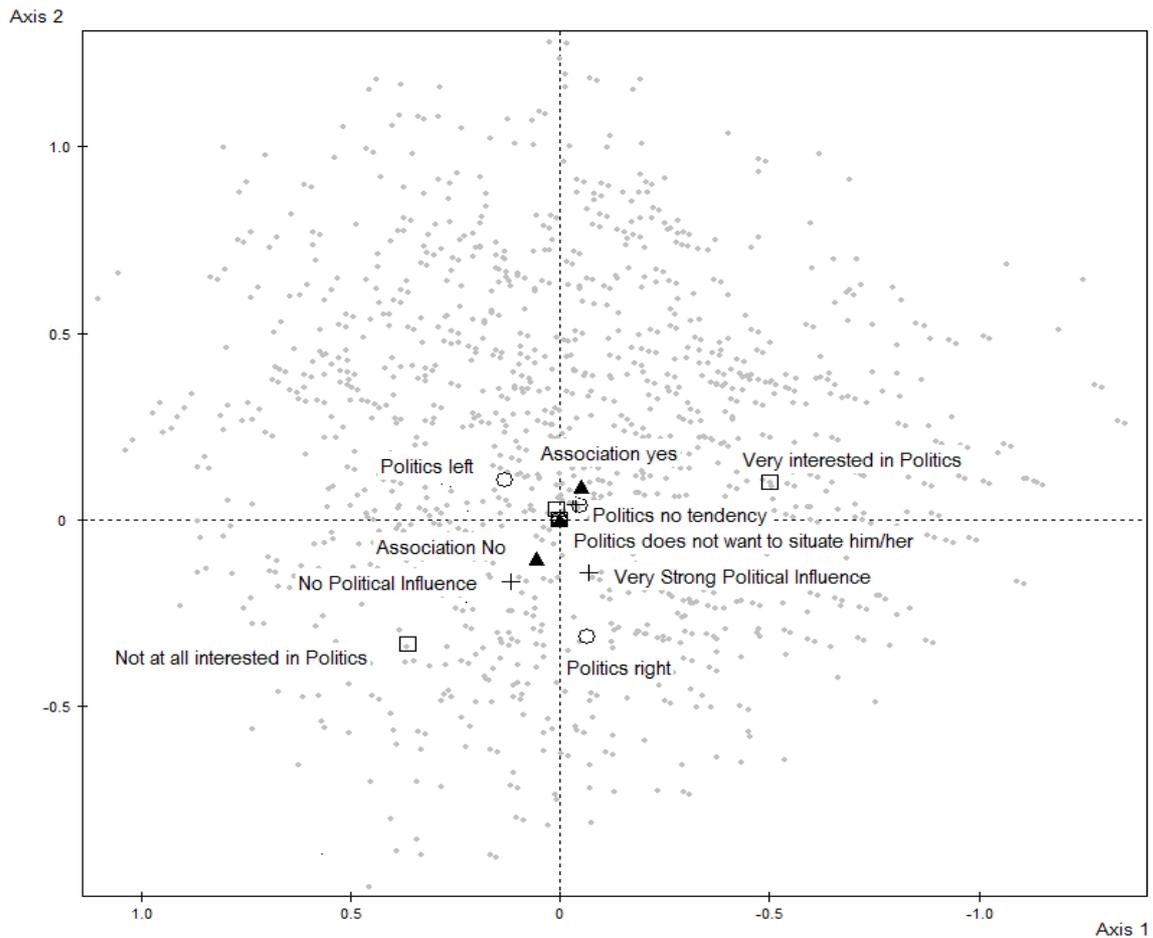


Figure 8. Consequences of atypical employment: (3) Political interest and influence

Again we see a common pattern. Whereas most of the individuals, irrespective of their position in the space of atypical employment, occupy no specific position related to these political aspects. Those in the lower-left quadrant, however, characterised by temporally limited contracts and forced flexibility, lack conspicuously in political interest. Those on the right side brim with interest in politics. Left and right political positions are distributed differently and all other attitudes do not follow a very clear pattern along configurations of employment. At least in Switzerland, employment configuration is probably not a good explanation for political behaviour and it even seems that the non-interest in politics of those in temporally limited and/or forced flexible employment situations is due to their socio-demographic characteristics (young, foreign nationality, badly educated).

8. Atypical work is everywhere! Precarious work is at a special place!

Starting from the assumption that scholars frequently struggle to grasp atypical and precarious employment empirically and to describe it theoretically, we tried in this paper

to get hold of it with a configurational approach. Based on a multiple correspondence analysis and the relation of homology between the spaces of atypical employment, the larger social space and the space of attitudes and practices, we studied atypical forms of employment in Switzerland, based on the data of the sixth and first augmented Swiss Household Panel wave in 2004.

We show that in Switzerland atypical work is rather widespread and touches, in particular, the occupations that otherwise are considered as prestigious and well-off. For example, the liberal professions, such as lawyers, architects or physicians, often work at home, work at nights and during the weekends and much more than 45 hours per week. At the same time, no single group accumulates all forms of atypical work and suffers from the cumulative weight of all these disadvantages. In other words, there is no linear and gradual relationship from one pole that reunites all disadvantages of atypical work to another that is spared from all those disadvantages. This is theoretically important as it shows that a simple count of different atypical employment situation says little about its quality (Marti et al., 2005; Walker et al., 2010). Gradual and additive models of atypical employment must therefore be replaced by configurational models that show which forms of atypical employment typically appear together and which can explain what these configurations mean socially. Roughly, our analysis revealed four of those configurations:

- The first of these configurations is defined by forced flexibility, a temporally limited engagement and material insecurity. In other words, it accumulates three forms precariousness, the inability to plan the future, the inability to accord weekly social rhythms and the inability to make ends meet with the income. These people work, however, not at night or on weekends, not at home and do not have several jobs.
- A second form of atypical employment seems to combine night work and forced flexibility, in most of the cases in the form of shift work. Here the income situation is better and the long-term security is assured as well. There is no work at home and only one main job is necessary.
- Thirdly, there seems to be a form of atypical work that could be called small employment, which involves often also several jobs. In these situation, there is not night and weekend work required and no forced flexibility, for example, work on call.
- Finally, we observe a situation that is characterised by overtime, occasional homework and autonomous flexibility. In addition to the fact that these positions are very well paid, it seems that as the flexibility is chosen and homework only occasional, these take another social meaning (compared for example to forced flexibility).

Each of these constellations of atypical work can then be related to a specific location in the social space: the known relevant individual resources explain well the diagonal axis going from the lower-left quadrant to the higher right quadrant. Low educational resources, the lack of experience in the labour market and an origin from a poor country are related to the configurations characterised by a combination of forced flexibility, biographical insecurity and low wages. A university degree, an origin from northern countries and, to a certain degree, a higher age (and therefore a longer work experience), explain the combination of high income, overtime, autonomous flexibility and occasional homework. However, constellations of small but regular employment (higher left quadrant) and the combination of forced flexibility and night and weekend work are not accounted for by those individual variables. Small employment and regular employment can be related to two things: female occupations (such as clerks, teachers, assistant teachers and other service occupations) and the family constellation. It seems that this configuration is typical for women who work in often subordinate female occupations that are often linked to part-time and that offer only few career opportunities (Wetterer, 1992). These jobs are biographically relatively stable, require no night work and have often regular hours. This could be one reason that explains why these configurations are frequently associated to married women with children— in Switzerland, the fact of having children is still often linked to a reduction of the employment rate of women (whereas men stay in full time employment) (Bühlmann et al, 2010). As indicates the relatively good household equivalence income of these married mothers, often these configurations are combined with main male employment. This mitigates the impact of the relatively low wages due to small employment but represents also a poverty risk in case of a separation. The best explanations for the combination of forced flexibility and night and weekend work in the lower right quadrant are not individual. Even though men are more frequent in this zone, it is mainly in the sectors of transport and communication and agriculture that this configuration can be found. More precisely, it is in occupations such as train and lorry driver, travel attendants, protective services or special-education occupations that we find these constellations.

In a further step, we have analysed what psychological, social and political repercussions are related to these configurations of atypical work. This question is important, as it allows us to understand which configurations are systematically related to social problems and individual sufferings and which configurations are not related to these, for example, because of the particular nature of configuration or because of specific compensation mechanisms that mitigate the effects of atypical employment. We find very clear results, as it is only in the lower left quadrant (and to a much lesser extend also in the lower right quadrant) that dissatisfied, depressed or politically uninterested people

are concentrated. The lack of employment satisfaction is virulent among those who have poorly paying jobs that are limited in time and characterised by forced flexibility. Jobs that are also flexible but better paid, which are more stable in time and small employment is not connected to discontent—however, these jobs seem to have a negative implication for the life satisfaction in general. People in the configuration of small and regular employment—in the upper-left quadrant—seem even to be the most satisfied group when it comes to job satisfaction and, in particular, to satisfaction with the amount of work. The configuration characterised by overtime, occasional work at home and autonomous flexibility is neither particularly satisfied nor particularly dissatisfied. The only factor where it stands out is interest in politics, where it is more interested than the rest (hardly surprising, when we look at its educational level). Important seems to us above all the confirmation of two results: firstly, employment satisfaction is not distributed on a gradual scale from the worst to the best job. Even people in otherwise prestigious and well-paid jobs are not particularly satisfied. Secondly, it is the combination of biographical insecurity and forced flexibility that is particularly sensitive, as the psychological repercussions are clearly the most pronounced in this configuration.

This insight will allow us to think conclusively about the distinction between atypical and precarious employment conditions and to start a reflection about compensation mechanisms that prevent certain configurations of atypical work to become configurations of precarious work. It seems clear that the lower-left quadrant of the space of atypical employment, defined by a combination of biographical insecurity and forced flexibility, cumulates most clearly several forms of atypical work and has the most severe psychological consequences. Whereas the other configurations might correspond to atypical employment, this configuration is probably what we can term a configuration of *precarious employment—in the sense that it corrodes the character and leads to real social suffering*. It is composed of jobs in the gastronomic sector and the wholesale and retail sectors. A closer examination reveals that besides jobs such as housekeeping and restaurant services, messengers and porters, cashiers and tellers, client information clerks or personal care occupations, it includes certain industrial occupations such as mechanics, plant machine operators, craft printing or elementary occupations. In other words, this configuration is a blend of the new service proletariat and the traditional industrial proletariat. Our analyses show that the employment conditions of these two groups are both very similar to each other and very different to all the other employment configurations. In addition, these positions are occupied by very specific social groups: young, poorly educated and from southern European countries. Certain family constellations, for example single parenthood, seem also to be strongly associated with this configuration. These people are not satisfied with their jobs (in particular, work

conditions, interest of task, bad atmosphere and bad income), are politically disinterested and think they have no political influence.

It seems as if the group that is forced to accept these positions are devoid of all possible resources and capital. They possess neither educational resources, nor labour market experience, nor cultural capital (understood as national Swiss cultural capital), nor social capital (in form of household members who would complete their income). Finding themselves in these positions is, in a way, simply the result of a negative allocation process. The composition of their capital is such that they are not able to compensate for the lack of one sort of capital with another. People in other atypical, but not precarious configurations have at least one compensation mechanism at their disposal and use a part of their resources strategically: women working in part-time positions, especially when it concerns a low percentage of work, are also at risk of poverty. However, they can rely on the social capital that links them to other members of the household and completes their salary in a way that the household equivalence income is above 42,000 Swiss Francs. The (majority of) men who work in occupations with unusual hours and shift work in the lower-right quadrant seem to trade working hours that are hardly compatible with the social rhythms of others against a slightly better salary and biographically higher security. The hard and irregularly working group of managers and professionals are endowed with all relevant capital (experience, educational capital, cultural capital, and social capital) and can decide autonomously about their flexibility and do earn very well. In other words, according to its context, the social meaning of atypical work can change quite radically.

ⁱOf course, especially Paugam also translated his ideas in empirical studies.

ⁱⁱFor a comparable strategy to study poverty in Switzerland, see Ferro-Luzzi et al., 2006.

ⁱⁱⁱ Certain researchers doubt that quantitative surveys can give answers to questions of work precariousness (Pelizzari, 2009). And indeed these doubts about the ability of these surveys to capture those who are the most unprotected and whose lives as a whole are so volatile that they are hardly reachable by telephone surveys must be taken very seriously.

^{iv} Using the occupational typology as a passive variable, we are not compelled to limit the number of categories. However, in the graph, we only display the categories with a number of members > 10.

^v In other words, whereas in countries such as France this distinction between employment configurations seems to be crucial, it is not in Switzerland. A deductive

typology such as Paugam's is therefore only of limited use to analyse the Swiss case and should be handled with care when comparing countries.

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