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The Kaleidoscope of the Sociology of Aging Seen through the French-Speaking Field

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Abstract How does French-language sociology deal with aging? This is the question posed by this contribution, which explores articles published within the past fifteen years in various French-language scientific journals. Through a systematic review of the scientific literature, we analyze the evolution of topics in the sociology of aging through five well-known French-language journals of sociology. Three of them are generalist journals (*Revue française de sociologie*, *Revue suisse de sociologie*, *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*), from France, Switzerland, and Belgium respectively. The remaining two journals, both from France, are specifically devoted to the study of aging (*Gérontologie et société*, *Retraite et société*). The results invite further exploration of the influence of the national contexts in which French-speaking European sociologies are structured.

Keywords History of sociology · Aging · Scientific publishing · Meta-analysis

This article was written collectively. The order of the names is alphabetical and does not reflect a difference in authorship.

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Introduction

How does sociology in the French-speaking world deal with aging? This is the question posed by this contribution, which explores articles published within the past fifteen years in various French-language scientific journals. How the logical structuration of a field of study can be analyzed based on its scientific publications, however, is not self-evident, and clarification is in order regarding how we approach the journals and their production. In effect, they are seen as “content” and as “containers” having a particular structure (disciplinary, editorial, thematic) whose analysis can reveal the dynamics of a field of study at a given time in a given country (Gérard and Kleiche Dray 2009). This brings us to another question, complementary to the first: how do sociological articles on the subject of aging contribute to the field of sociology? *How does aging deal with sociology?* This question is particularly pertinent concerning age, whose disciplinary connection is regularly questioned. What are the boundaries and intersections between the sociology of old age and gerontology? Is gerontology a discipline, a field of study, an approach? These questions provoke considerable debate (to which Katz makes a very enlightening contribution in his evocatively entitled “Disciplining Old Age: The Formation of gerontological Knowledge,” 1996), and their formulation varies according to national contexts. If there is a basic consensus about gerontology being a multi- and/or interdisciplinary study of aging, the term may cover neither the same scientific practices nor the same theoretical underpinnings depending on whether one is in France or in Canada (as one emblematic example).

Should we include in our corpus articles signed by authors who call themselves “gerontologists,” or whose institutional affiliation mentions a center or department of “gerontology”? If so, why? If not, why not? Our hesitations on the matter derive from critique of a gerontology (dominant, in terms of financing and publications) that originated in the enthusiasm for large-scale quantitative research in the post-war period in the United States. This critique is particularly focused on gerontology’s derivation from “the discourses and practices of medicine, public health, social reform, and retirement policies that disciplined old age” (Katz 1996: 105) as well as on the production of atheoretical or naturalizing knowledge (Baars et al. 2006), notably by means of the introduction of new notions aspiring to the status of concepts such as “frailty” (Mallon et al. 2014). The confusion, alas, is worsened by the emergence in the Anglo-Saxon realm of critical gerontology, by analogy with critical sociology. The choice of name is troubling: what part of gerontology is preserved in its “critical” version? Far from resolving the question of disciplinary territories, critical gerontology initially challenges the sociology of old age and then colonizes it from within, for example by inciting Moulaert (2012)¹ to publish the article “Pourquoi les francophones préfèrent-ils la sociologie du vieillissement à la sociologie critique?” (“Why do francophones prefer the sociology of aging to critical sociology?”) in the journal... *Gerontologie et société*. If this article insists on a dialogue between the sociology of aging and critical gerontology, the basic problem is reminiscent of that

¹ Thibault Moulaert and one of the authors of this article have maintained for several years, through interposed publications, a friendly discussion on the sociology of old age and gerontology. This public and published discussion is (in part) included in our corpus.

already formulated by Marshall in 1987: “In the midst of its multi- and interdisciplinary productions, what constitutes gerontology's disciplinarity?” (1987: 3).

The choice of our corpus for investigation took place with this debate in the background; we settled the question by giving primacy to the disciplinarity of sociology. In particular, because at close examination, critical gerontology is a sociological criticism of gerontology, which furthermore is largely undertaken by authors whose disciplinary base is sociology. At a conference of the British Society of Gerontology entitled “Critical Gerontology: Origins, Current Status and Future Developments” (2014), Phillipson, one of the key authors of critical gerontology, proposed to remobilize categories of analysis emblematic of the sociological discipline in order to renew the theoretical basis of critical gerontology through “a new political economy of the sociology of ‘age’ and ‘generations.’”²

This consideration of the boundaries between (critical) gerontology and sociology is also echoed by other divisions, in this case internal to the field of the *sociology of aging*: national divisions (the “national” category actually covering distinctly structured scientific and academic areas that have not been subjected to the same influences) and academic divisions within “national” sociologies (between journals - and knowledge - seen as “generalist” or “specific”). Thus, the selection of the journals and articles - but also the criteria used for classification - always involve fundamental theoretical and epistemological considerations. For this reason, this stage of the reflection is not relegated to the status of a methodological appendix, but already constitutes a first step in the research, giving rise to new findings and new hypotheses.

The Constitution of the Corpus at the Intersection of National Dynamics and Complex Disciplines

In order to position the sociology of aging in the French-speaking context based on systematic examination of French-language journals over the past fifteen years,³ we chose two types of journals considered by the academic community as “generalist” or “specialized.”

From the first of these categories, we chose three journals, one from each of the three selected French-speaking countries (France, Switzerland, and Belgium): the *Revue française de sociologie*,⁴ the *Revue suisse de sociologie*, and *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*. However, the very small number of articles devoted to the question of aging ($N = 30$, including 16 from the *Revue suisse de sociologie*, 12 from *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, and 2 from the *Revue française de sociologie*) restricted us to only perfunctory quantitative analyses (breakdown by

² <http://www.britishgerontology.org/Private/2693/Live/Chris%20Phillipson%20Slides%20ERA%202014.pdf>

³ This temporal focus was chosen based on three kinds of considerations: technical (the availability of archives and the digital publishing policies of the studied journals), scientific (the beginning of the 2000s is marked by the emergence of several fields from which the sociology of aging has been considered - *gender studies*, *postcolonial studies*, *science and technology studies*), but also social (with notably the intensification and dramatization of questions related to aging).

⁴ For the *Revue suisse de sociologie*, we selected only the articles published in French and/or by authors based in French-speaking Switzerland (the journal being trilingual, certain French-speaking authors choose to publish in English).

country and journal) and a more qualitative approach. This first analysis nevertheless enabled us to demonstrate the limited visibility of the sociology of aging in French-language European sociology - at least in terms of publications.

The second analysis is based on the examination of two journals (both French, but with international exposure) considered to focus on the analysis of aging, namely *Gérontologie et société* and *Retraite et société*.⁵ The constitution of the database of articles drawn from the selected journals ($N = 235$) took place in several phases, based on distinct criteria, in order to identify articles resulting from the discipline of sociology in the broad sense of the term. Determining the sociological character of some articles proved to be difficult, because in the field of aging boundaries are porous not only between disciplines but also between activist and scientific perspectives. For example, disciplinary anchoring is not always indicated in the signatures or institutional presentations of authors publishing in the specialized journals. Some authors indicate only their institutional affiliation (INED, INSEE, CNAV)⁶ or their professional title (directors of gerontological structures, etc.). Similarly, although the journals take pains to distinguish the headings intended for the contributions of activists and citizens (“Édito” [“Op-Ed”], “Libre propos” [“Open commentary”] for *Gérontologie et société*; “Avant-propos” [“Foreword”], “Entretien avec” [“Interview with”], “Faits et chiffres” [“Facts and figures”], “Le point sur...” [“Taking stock of...”] for *Retraite et société*) from those reserved for scientific work, reading the summaries and outlines of the articles (often accessible online), as well as their introductions, conclusions, and bibliographies, shows that ambiguity can remain. For these reasons, we did not only consider the way in which the authors sign and present themselves. In the most complex cases (65 for *Gérontologie et société*, 40 for *Retraite et société*), we also examined the authors’ academic training, as well as the content of the articles. This second phase in the refinement of our corpus led us to exclude authors trained in sociology and presenting themselves as sociologists when their proposed contributions presented results of large-scale quantitative investigations by institutions such as the CNAV, INSEE, or INED in a descriptive and non-problematized manner. Because of these choices, an author published in one of the selected journals may have some of his/her articles included in the

⁵ The orientations of these two specialized journals result from the history of the financing of research on aging in France. Until 2015, research was mainly supported by agencies concerned with employment and retirement (in particular the Direction de la Recherche, des Études, de l’Évaluation et des Statistiques [Directorate of Research, Studies, Evaluation, and Statistics] - DREES) or with the loss of autonomy, sickness, and disability (in particular the Fondation de France [Foundation of France]). Created by the Caisse Nationale d’Assurance Vieillesse [National Old-Age Insurance Fund - CNAV] in 1992, *Retraite et société* is a multidisciplinary journal specialized in the study of retirement, aging, and the health of elderly workers from several different angles (sociological, economic, demographic, legislative, statistical and anthropological). The editorial board includes professionals from the CNAV, the observatoire des retraites [an organization responsible for oversight of old-age pensions], and DREES, with which the journal maintains strong bonds, and it gives considerable attention to economics and sociology. The older journal *Gérontologie et société* clearly originates from debates and concerns within the medical field. Initially financed by the Fondation nationale de Gérontologie [National Gerontology Foundation], the journal was also taken over by the CNAV in 2014, with a dual leadership (geriatrics/sociology) that maintains the journal’s previous position on two important dimensions (multidisciplinarity and researcher-practitioner dialogue) and demonstrates willingness to conform to international scientific publishing standards.

⁶ INED: Institut national d’études démographiques [National Institute of Demographic Studies]; INSEE: Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques [National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies].

sample and others not. Another consequence was the elimination of entire thematic issues from the corpus – thus revealing the sociological abandonment (or persistent concealment) of whole groups of questions related to aging (for example, those concerning technology and innovation, addiction, disability and ethics, communication networks, or the econometric and political analysis of pension reforms).

The coding of the selected articles also imposed some choices, particularly concerning the determination of the paradigms held by the authors. In the great majority of articles published in the specialized journals, the paradigm and the theoretical framework are not clear from the summaries (intended to be widely read and put online), and may not be identified in either the detailed outline or the introduction of the article. Thus, we had to opt for a broad coding that included in the “paradigm” variable the mention of an author of reference (Foucault, Castoriadis), a particular theoretical tendency within a field (i.e., gender relations), a notion (sometimes asserted as a concept – such as *empowerment*), or a broader approach to research (comprehensive, constructivist, etc.). In view of the number of articles not mentioning any such terms, we kept these “indeterminate” articles in our sample in order to be able to analyze this category, which became central (on what themes was this paradigmatic indeterminacy observed? From which research centers? And so on).

The second difficulty encountered concerns the institutional characterization of the authors, because the affiliations mentioned are very heterogeneous. They are particularly difficult to interpret in the case of French and Belgian authors unattached to any clearly identified research centers, Switzerland being an exception with a single pole of researchers coming from the same center. In France, the geographical and thematic dispersion of researchers in the field of aging is considerable, as indicated by the quantitative investigation recently carried out by the CNAV (Tuchman et al. 2015). Thus, we had to recode the institutional affiliations indicated by the authors into a broader category, considering research poles [Pôles de Recherche] and their areas of influence (Lille, Grenoble, Lyon, Toulouse, Grand Est, Centre-Ouest). As for the Parisian pole, it was split up so as to be able to identify the principal research centers involved with the question and, where appropriate, any differences in their approaches. The statistical institutions were also isolated (INED-CNAV-INSEE) in order to enable us to assess the degree of their presence in the field and any particularities of their approaches.

Although our research is centered on the French-language sociology of aging, the connections with the University of Sherbrooke and the University of Quebec in Montreal are historically strong (notably for their contributions to the study of social participation and territories).⁷ We therefore considered that these research poles were relevant to the French-language sociology of aging.

This work of institutional re-affiliation was performed based on consultation of the Internet sites of the research institutions where the authors were trained (for those without current academic affiliations) or to which they contributed. To ensure that authors were linked to the research centers to which we assigned them, we consulted their *curricula vitae* to identify practices of co-authorship and collective publication.

⁷ See here the status of professors associated with the University of Sherbrooke and several collective publications - notably on the question of the Villes amies des aînés [Age-Friendly Cities and Communities] initiative (Garon et al. 2015).

The themes discussed in the articles were also subject to recoding. First of all, we had to consider related themes, because the researchers working on aging are often also involved in other associated fields (family, health, employment, gender, etc.), which is confirmed by the CNAV's 2015 findings concerning France. Starting with the finest granularity possible, we then aggregated the themes indicated in the article summaries. The themes of “solitude” [“loneliness”], “expérience ordinaire de la retraite” [“ordinary experience of retirement”], and “santé” [“health”] were grouped into a broader category, “expérience du vieillissement” [“experience of aging”]. Similarly, the themes of “Alzheimer” [“Alzheimer's”], “dépendance alimentaire” [“food dependency”], “protection juridique” [“legal protection”], and “fragilité” [“frailty”] were aggregated into a single category of “dépendance” [“dependency”]. The dispersion remaining in spite of these successive recodings demonstrates the absence of a shared thematic structure within the field. This is also the case for subjects that have become characteristic of the field but are still approached from the angle of other disciplines. For example, work related to active aging covers two domains: that of employment, aging while employed, and old-age pensions and that of biomedical recommendations concerning aging well [*bien-vieillir*] and aging actively/in good health. We distinguished them because these subjects often involve distinct contexts (retired people in general vs. very elderly people) and approaches. The methodology of the article (qualitative/quantitative/mixed/non-empirical), the type of article (theoretical/empirical/indeterminate), the journal in question, and the year of publication were then determined without much difficulty.

The Low Visibility of the *Sociology of Aging* in “Generalist” Journals and the Influence of National Disciplinary Dynamics

The examination of the literature from the three generalist journals can enable us not only to situate the sociology of aging in the French-speaking European context but also to understand its evolutions.

Types and Rhythms of Publication: The Particularities of the Swiss Case

Of the 30 articles published between 2000 and 2015, 16 come from the *Revue suisse de sociologie*, 12 from the French-language Belgian journal *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques*, and only 2 from the *Revue française de sociologie*.

The first finding evidently concerns the small number of articles in these journals devoted to the sociology of aging. Might this result from choices made by the editorial committees? From an absence of manuscripts, implying a weak problematization of work carried out in the field? Or perhaps from the researchers' publication strategies? We sought to verify the number of manuscripts submitted to the generalist journals by relating them to the number of researchers working on the topic in each of the countries considered; however, the journals' archiving policies vary, and favor conservation of the contributions that are accepted rather than all submitted articles.

The very small number of publications in the *Revue française de sociologie*, however, compelled us to carry out a secondary analysis of the *curricula vitae* of the French researchers identified in the field of aging. In fact, this work revealed distinctive publication profiles. There were few articles and more contributions to books among the older

researchers (undoubtedly following the evolution of the norms of French academic publishing, according to which researchers are evaluated by national agencies). There was also a focus on journals specializing in aging and related topics (social affairs, family questions, health, gender, nutrition, and, more marginally, territories) with an openness to journals that are generalist but international (notably the online journal *SociologieS*, attached to the Association internationale des sociologues de langue française [International Association of French-Speaking Sociologists]) or outside the discipline (notably in ethnology and anthropology⁸). This particularity calls for more in-depth analysis of a medium that intends, moreover, to work for the production and accumulation of knowledge in general sociology: in particular, an analysis questioning the way in which “general” and “specific” knowledge are identified in a given discipline at a given moment in time. For the period that concerns us, the articles in the realm of general sociology published in the *Revue française de sociologie* are works that revisit and question authors considered to be fundamental (Weber in 2005), concepts that may span several fields of study (for example, rational choice in 2003, the State in 2011, capitalism in 2015), or singular theoretical fields and approaches (the sociology of morals in 2004, the sociology of medicine in 2005, cognitivism in 2010). Even so, these articles are not exclusively theoretical. Many of them are based on various domains and sources of data, ranging from archives to ethnographic material, gray literature, and institutional documentation. Moreover, the great number of *varia* issues (presenting a collection of articles on various topics) also permits the appearance of isolated contributions belonging to other sociological domains: in particular, the sociology of school and of youth, of the family, or of work and urban sociology. Undoubtedly, this is because these fields played a central part in the structuration and institutionalization of French sociology,⁹ answering questions considered as social (rather than natural or biological) and as central (by a majority of researchers in the social sciences as well as by the authorities).

This qualification of general knowledge can, by way of contrast, direct us to what might be considered as specific knowledge. As it happens, this is not necessarily a question of empirical knowledge but above all one of knowledge produced in reference to “non-structuring” authors or tendencies of the discipline and in marginalized fields of scientific production. This may be either because this knowledge emerged after the great periods of disciplinary theorization and did not contribute to the generation of specific paradigms, or because it pertains to questions that have been scientifically dismissed or undervalued (questions seen as matters of nature rather than sociology, or as secondary - i.e., arising from more general social processes). In France, the accumulated knowledge on gender is thus still seen as specific knowledge,¹⁰ although the

⁸ Since decolonization, French anthropology and ethnology have reinvested territories closer to home, bringing with them specific approaches to life stages (in particular, to old age). The journals of these disciplines now constitute possible means of valorization for the work carried out by sociologists of aging (and more generally of life stages) anxious to develop areas of reflection that do not necessarily find a place in specialized journals with narrower perimeters and subject to the norms of multidisciplinary publication.

⁹ The sociology of reproduction and inequality has largely developed from the study of school and family practices. The materialist and Marxian approaches relied heavily on the analysis of work and wage labor, while the study of urban spaces prompted the development of analyses in terms of segregation and socio-spatial polarization.

¹⁰ The journals dedicated to this topic (*Cahiers du genre*, *Nouvelles questions féministes*, *Genre, sexualité et société*, *Travail, genre et société*) are seen as specific, and the perspective is far from predominant in the publications of the generalist journals examined over the period studied.

subject spans multiple fields, has spurred the development of disciplinary approaches of general interest (such as materialist, relational, and intersectional perspectives), and its researchers have problematized the way in which gender has made it possible to revisit authors and fundamental questions of general sociology (Chabaud-Rychter et al. 2010). From this angle, the status reserved for knowledge stemming from a sociology of aging that on one hand takes up a question that has long been seen as biological and secondary (the consequences of earlier social or sanitary inequalities) and on the other scarcely clings to the discipline's approved theoretical tendencies is hardly surprising. It is likely that this vision of the accumulated scientific knowledge on aging and of that knowledge belonging to the realm of general sociology constitutes an obstacle that may provoke forms of self-censorship among French researchers (based on a feeling of illegitimacy or on the anticipation of a low probability of success). In contrast, the Swiss case also leads us to consider more institutional dimensions - notably linked to the absence of collective publication strategies in the French-speaking research centers working to shed light on this field's contributions to general sociology.

The examination of the *Revue suisse de sociologie* indeed reveals a larger number of articles (16 between 2000 and 2015), but this should not, however, suggest a continuing broad-spectrum presence. On the contrary, the contributions to the sociology of aging remain isolated and thematic, since they are collected in two special issues of the journal - one devoted to health in 2006 and the other to the evolution of retirement in 2015. In addition, this dynamic is also national (of the 16 articles, 13 are signed by Swiss authors), and is centered around a research center structuring the field: namely, the Centre Interfacultaire de G rontologie [Interfaculty Center of Gerontology] - CIG - at the University of Geneva. Almost half of the published articles come from the CIG or from research centers affiliated with the CIG, and many researchers currently active in the sociology of aging come from this center. This collective presence in the national journal of sociology testifies to the strategies of research and publication of a center whose production is intended to be interdisciplinary and international (via a strong presence in gerontological journals), while relying on individual authors with specific disciplinary anchorings (sociology, demography, social psychology, etc.). Furthermore, one of the two articles published in the *Revue fran aise de sociologie* is signed by a sociologist associated with the CIG, who also published in the *Revue suisse de sociologie*. We will see later that the nature of the themes treated, the approaches used, and the strength of disciplinary anchorings are also strongly influenced by the history of this center, which was inspired by the one created by Victor Marshall in the United States at the end of the 1990s. Not only did the CIG make a name for itself as a center of scientific expertise (for both public authorities and social actors) on a number of questions relating to the rehabilitation of veterans and to aging in good health, but it has also been responsible for a "global" approach to aging, proposing a strong connection between its social and biological dimensions and influenced by the history of American human and social sciences.¹¹ The leaders of the center have worked towards the

¹¹ Characterized by a lesser opposition between the social sciences and life sciences: less opposition between social and biological anthropology, or structuration of tendencies interlacing the two - sociobiology in the 1970s, "biocultural" perspectives at the end of the 1990s, etc. In contrast, French social sciences have been constructed in a strong opposition between the "social" and the "biological", in sociology (Memmi et al. 2009) as in anthropology (with the strong dissociation of biological anthropology, now a minority tendency in France, and social anthropology).

importation of this kind of approach and scientific policy, and this heritage continues to mark the particularity of the Swiss case in this matter. Because the Belgian situation is finally rather close to the French one: if the number of articles published in the generalist journals is larger there (12 articles), a finer analysis of the forms and temporalities of publication reveals intermittent contributions arising more from the initiatives or individual opportunities seized by the researchers than from a continued collective dynamic. Of the 12 articles, half come from a special issue of the journal dating from 2013 - with, outside this thematic opportunity, only 6 articles published in 15 years. In addition, the universities with which the published researchers are affiliated are not specialized in the subject of aging, but rather use this domain as a prism allowing them to question the transformations of contemporary societies.

The analysis of the types of supports in which the publications are concentrated (*varia* as opposed to thematic issues) and of the rhythms of publication (centered around certain thematic or continued opportunities) reveals the existence of two approaches to publication, which differ both quantitatively and qualitatively. There is a stronger and broader collective approach in Switzerland, centering around the CIG, concerning Swiss researchers, and marking out its territory in the national generalist journal (probably related to the history of the CIG and the American referent that inspired it). In contrast, there is a quantitatively weaker presence, more discontinuous and apparently structured around thematic opportunities, in Belgium (where a thematic issue supported by *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques* contained half of the relevant articles published in the journal in the last 15 years) and in France (where the editorial policy of the *Revue française de sociologie*, privileging *varia* over thematic issues, most likely restricted the available opportunities).

The analysis of the content of the contributions provides more precise information about the type of themes made visible.

Qualitative Articles Focused on Old Age and Active Aging

The small number of articles identified does not preclude the formulation of some hypotheses based on the characteristics of the selected articles (Table 1).

The articles in our “generalist” corpus are mostly empirical, demonstrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches. However, studies adopting qualitative methods are predominant, illustrating on one hand how generalist sociology journals do not seem to valorize large-scale quantitative investigations (such as those carried out, for example, in Switzerland by the CIG of the University of Geneva), and on the other hand how the use of quantitative methods and macro-level approaches is no longer perceived as a *sine qua non* condition for development of “general” knowledge or “grand” theories about society. This element probably goes hand in hand with a transformation of the academic vision of scientific production, in which confidence in the large-scale quantitative investigations from which sociology was relaunched after the Second World War (in France, in any case) (Martin and Vannier 2002) gave way to a qualitative (even situational) turn, giving more weight to interactions and to the underlying logic of action (Masson 2008). It also demonstrates how the methodological particularities of studies on aging (and their qualitative orientation) alone cannot explain the weak presence of this thematic branch of sociology in generalist media.

Table 1 Breakdown of the articles published in French, Swiss, and Belgian generalist sociological journals according to the countries of the authors and their methodologies

		<i>Revue française de sociologie</i>	<i>Revue suisse de sociologie</i>	<i>Recherche sociologique et anthropologique</i>	Total
Type	Empirical	2	12	9	23
	Theoretical	0	4	3	7
Country of Authors*	France	1	2	2	5
	Switzerland	1	13	0	14
	Belgium	0	1	7	8
	Europe (other)	0	0	2	2
	Non-Europe	0	0	3	3
Method**	Quantitative	1	3	2	6
	Qualitative	1	6	7	14
	Mixed	0	3	0	3
Total		2	16	12	30

*The number of authors may be higher than the number of listed articles because certain articles have more than one author

**Empirical articles only

The analysis of the themes addressed also reveals a second characteristic, which illustrates the impact of political and institutional agendas on scientific publication, including generalist publication - from one end of the process to the other, as the modes of financing for research on aging strongly determine which subjects of research can lead to publication,¹² and as thereafter the editorial committees may favor themes considered topical (political and social). In any case, it is clear that two distinct groups of themes related to aging emerge according to time period, with the question of old age and dependency being prominent between 2000 and 2009 (6 articles relating to residential modes, networks of sociability, familial support, leisure activities and personal commitments, and health and the risk of dependency) and more focus on the productive model between 2010 and 2015 (18 articles). Two specific themes are then examined more carefully: that of retirement (a special issue of the *Revue suisse de sociologie* in 2015) and that of active aging (a special issue of *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques* in 2013). The focus of this second theme is to examine the future of our social security systems through pension reforms or to highlight the diffusion of active aging campaigns, notably by supranational authorities such as the European Union. The question of active aging is very present in recent years, and is often treated from the viewpoint of critical gerontology or the analysis of public action. It is a matter of questioning the notion of active aging, starting from a critical reflection about activity (which type of activity? what do we mean by “active”?) or about activity campaigns (what is their frame of reference? How can we understand their emergence and diffusion in the European context?). The contributors do not specifically refer to the institutional frameworks in which this research is conducted

¹² We have seen the particularity of financing channels in France for publication about old age, while in Switzerland and Belgium publication remains supported by national research funds.

or to the kinds of funding they receive, but this thematic change occurs at a time when the European guidance on active aging became more extensive and was translated into funding opportunities either directly (access to European funds) or indirectly (references to the current European situation to obtain support from national funding channels).¹³ And it is certainly not coincidental that it is *Recherches sociologiques et anthropologiques* (the most internationalized journal) that published a special issue on active aging as a contemporary norm for aging: as noted, this issue alone accounts for half of the contributions to the sociology of aging published by this journal in the last 15 years.

This analysis of the publication dynamics of general sociological media (particularity of the Swiss case, thematic bipolarization - old age/dependency and active aging) must also be completed by the dynamics observable in the specialized journals (both French).

Conceptual Erasure and Geographical and Thematic Multi-Polarization: Publication in Specialized Journals

Three characteristics emerge from analysis of publications from the specialized journals. Firstly, the prevalence of qualitative works, with the conceptual erasure that characterizes them; secondly, the multi-polarization of the research centers and the themes studied; and lastly, the French influence over the publications in these journals.

Qualitative Research with Weak Conceptual Visibility

The examination of specialized journals, based on 235 articles, confirms the preceding results by highlighting the empirical character of the sociology of aging in French-speaking Europe, with nearly 3 articles out of 4 based on the analysis of survey data, with no attempt at generalization or modeling beyond the perimeter studied and without explicit and affirmed reference to a theoretical tendency (Table 2).

This lack of conceptual visibility tendentially characterizes the entirety of the contributions, whether they are based on quantitative or qualitative approaches: 54% of these articles rely on a qualitative dimension, but 40% employ a quantitative dimension and only 6% of them use a mixed methodology (Table 3).

Often considered to be a sociology of experience and subjectivity, French-language sociology seems more qualitative in this specific field of aging. Nevertheless, the analyzed contributions are not particularly explicit concerning the theoretical references mobilized, nor are they particularly committed to the discovery of structural effects that can be articulated to questions of general sociology.

In fact, for 80% of the articles examined, no strong theoretical framework can be identified from the articles themselves.¹⁴ However, the analysis of the *curricula vitae* of

¹³ For example, 2012 was the European year of active aging and solidarity between generations. Within this framework, guiding principles of active aging were written by the social protection committee and the employment committee.

¹⁴ The theoretical framework was determined on the basis of examination of the title, the summary, and the introduction of the articles. In these three units, we tried to identify the theoretical references (author, theory, concept) serving as a framework for an article.

Table 2 Nature of the articles in two specialized journals

Nature of articles	Number	%
1 = Theoretical	65	28%
2 = Empirical	170	72%
Overall total	235	100%

the authors published in these journals shows that they otherwise affirm specific and consistent approaches (sociology of experience, constructivism etc.). Rather than speaking of a theoretical weakness of the contributions, it therefore seems best to us to point out a theoretical erasure observable in these specialized journals, without being able to know whether this results from a triage by the journals' editors (as the articles are not necessarily evaluated by people from the same discipline, they must be readable and understandable by other disciplines, etc.), or from the expectations of authors with a certain idea of the prerequisites for publication in specialized and disciplinary journals. To this erasure is added a relative splitting of conceptual references. Because even when they are explicit, theoretical frameworks remain pluralistic (intersectional approaches, critical gerontology, capability theory, pragmatic and critical sociology, sociology of experience and of gender relations, etc.), and the registers from which the theoretical base can be read remain heterogeneous: sometimes in reference to canonical authors (Foucault, Castoriadis), sometimes to theoretical tendencies (pragmatism), sometimes to concepts or notions (disengagement, capability, narrative identity, *empowerment*), and sometimes to angles of analysis (medicalization). This theoretical disparity articulates with a thematic plurality that, beyond its evident abundance, reveals an interesting dynamic.

Thematic Dispersion and Renewal from the Margins

The analysis of the two specialized journals (*Gérontologie et société* and *Retraite et société*) shows very clearly the extent to which the plurality of conceptual frameworks is coupled with a great diversity of studied themes. The 235 articles examined are in effect divided into 32 thematic categories: each article was assigned to a maximum of two categories. The number of categories defined relates to an inductive logic, i.e., the categories were created not a priori but

Table 3 Nature of the methodology used in the empirical articles in two specialized journals

Methodology	Number	Percentage
Qualitative	91	54%
Quantitative	68	40%
Mixed	11	6%
Total	170	100%

starting from the examination itself. The result thus reveals all the richness of the themes covered in the fifteen years considered (Table 4).

Beyond this richness of themes, certain recurrences emerge. In line with the modes of political problematization of old age, but also with the history of French sociology,¹⁵ dependency, institutional placement of the elderly, and family relations occupy a central place. Some 20% of the articles contained in our database are thus devoted to questions of the dependency of the elderly, which represent 15% of the themes addressed. Around this constant thematic core we find a more heterogeneous fringe, focusing on particular or minority questions (such as, for example, aging in prison or the sexuality of the elderly). It is based on these categories that the sociology of aging, as portrayed in French specialized journals, is renewed through a process of periodic weakening of certain central structural themes and strengthening of previously marginal ones. The graph¹⁶ (Fig. 1) illustrates this pattern.

Two themes seem to decline in importance: that related to the family, whose general importance has already been noted, and the question of senior employment. These two themes are more present at the beginning of the 2000s, and gradually fall off thereafter. However, the data we have do not allow us to determine whether this decline reflects a disappearance of these themes from sociological research on aging or their displacement towards other journals, whether these might be “generalist” journals or other journals specializing in familial questions - national publications such as *Recherches et Prévisions* and *Politiques Sociales et Familiales* or international ones such as *Enfances, Familles, Générations*. On the other hand, three themes become more prominent over the periods considered: social participation, geographical context/territories, and the aging body. These increases merit some attention, to try to understand the possible effects of underlying context (are they related to changes in modes of research financing, or in the journals’ editorial policies? Or is it a matter of thematic and conceptual dynamics specific to the sociological discipline?) but also to identify which other displacements are taking place at the same time (in methodology, in implicit or explicit relationships to theory, or in the articulation with questions of general sociology).

A Superficial Renewal

In this respect, the secondary qualitative analysis carried out on the three emergent themes shows more a superficial renewal than a structural transformation of the contributions.

The first of these themes, that of social participation (with 21 occurrences, including 18 coming from the journal *Gérontologie et société*), emerges in two phases. Until the beginning of the 2010s, the theme is addressed from the angle of citizenship and of the political expression of older people. Moreover, a special issue of the journal

¹⁵ Indeed, old age has been considered in terms of family solidarity and intergenerational transfers in a country marked by the familial orientation of its public policies (Damon et al. 2003; Martin 2011). At the scientific level, it is also based on the sociology of the family (and on the question of solidarities and of transmissions) that several aspects of aging have been (and continue to be) treated.

¹⁶ The figure is based on the fifteen-year period of study divided into three five-year periods. Only the significant themes are presented (chi-squared test; $p < 0.05$).

Table 4 Distribution of themes and weighting in terms of % of themes and articles, specialized journals*

Themes	N articles	% of articles	% of themes
A. Frequent themes ($n > 15$ articles)			
Dependency (including Alzheimer's, food dependency, legal protection, frailty)	52	22%	15%
Family, caregivers, widowhood, couples	34	14%	10%
Retirement homes (maisons de retraite, établissements d'hébergement pour personnes âgées dépendantes [EHPAD], établissements médico-sociaux [EMS]), housing	30	13%	9%
Geographical context, territories (urban/rural, North/South)	28	12%	8%
Elderly care professionals	26	11%	8%
Social and public policies	25	11%	7%
Social participation (political, cultural, volunteering, citizenship, etc.)	21	9%	6%
Experience of aging (including loneliness, ordinary experience of retirement or of health)	19	8%	6%
Transnational migration, ethnicity	17	7%	5%
B. Average themes (15 articles $> n > 5$ articles)			
Active aging (in the sense of work)/Employment	11	5%	3%
Intergenerational relations (other than family, intergenerational transfers)	10	4%	3%
Active/successful aging and "aging well" [<i>bien-vieillir</i>]	9	4%	3%
Senior employment (before/other than active aging)	9	4%	3%
Aging of the body (other than dependency), appearance	8	3%	2%
C. Rare themes ($n < 6$ articles)			
Training (for the elderly)	5	2%	1%
Poverty, financial vulnerability [<i>précarité</i>]	5	2%	1%
End of life, death	4	2%	1%
Insecurity	3	1%	1%
Collective memory	3	1%	1%
Social exclusion	3	1%	1%
Sports	3	1%	1%
Technologies, information, and communications	2	1%	1%
Sexuality	2	1%	1%
Leisure	2	1%	1%
Prison	1	0%	0%
Daily mobility	1	0%	0%
Social relations, friendships	1	0%	0%
Indeterminate	5	2%	1%

*Because each article could be included in up to 2 categories, the total of the column "N articles" is greater than 235 and the total of the column "% of articles" is greater than 100%. The total of the column "% of themes" is equal to 100%.

Gérontologie et société is devoted to it in 2007. In a context of increasing life expectancy and the lengthening of the period of "old age," how can older people be guaranteed a form of representation of their social group? How can their voices be

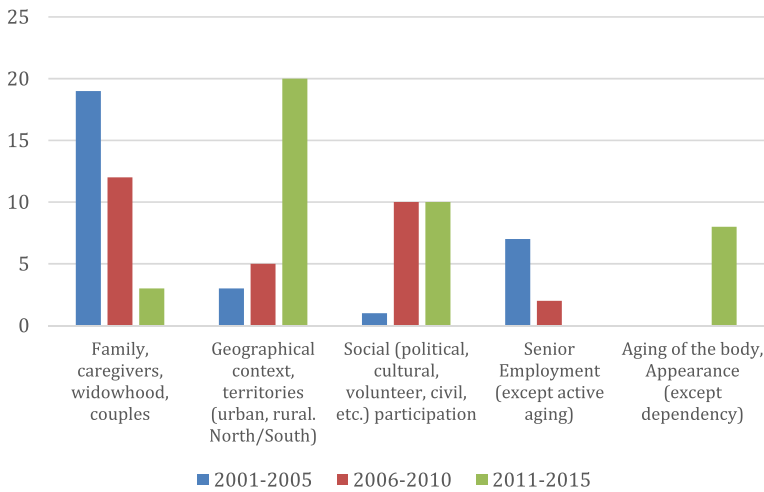


Fig. 1 Evolution of themes over three time periods

made audible? How can people remain involved in a militant struggle when the time comes for retirement? During a second period, beginning around 2010, the question of social participation is treated from an associative angle: collectives of seniors are studied in terms of their actions, their demands, and their structure. A 2012 issue of *Gérontologie et société* is specifically dedicated to “gray power.” This period sees more articles coming from Quebec, a pioneer on these questions. In parallel, rootedness in the local is highlighted in order to understand the approaches to action underlying these collectives. This thematic intensification arises from institutional processes that are more structural (notably the valorization of the theme of active aging and its articulation with spatial and territorial questions - with the launch of Vancouver’s *Villes amies des aînés* [Age-Friendly Cities and Communities] initiative, for example). It also encounters a renewed sociological interest in the spatial question, which is no longer limited to the fields of urban and rural sociology but now traverses all domains of sociological knowledge. Moreover, the territorial dimension is no longer limited to older people’s territories of participation and now extends to the spatial and geopolitical dimension of aging.

Indeed, the question of territories becomes very present beginning in 2010 (here too, particularly in *Gérontologie et société*¹⁷) and it is approached from four main directions:

- international comparisons (experiences of aging, retirement, and family solidarity in old age in different European countries)
- territories of public action - from a geographical and historical perspective, but also taking into account the discrepancies between institutional categorizations of the territory and lived experience

¹⁷ Twelve occurrences, including two special issues - the 2012 no. 132, devoted to gerontological territories, and the 2013 no. 146, dedicated to the elderly in rural areas and mainly investigated by sociologists. This theme is less present in *Retraite et société* (4 occurrences), where it is mainly viewed from the perspective of international comparison.

- housing and the territories of daily life, generally articulated with the differential study of urban and rural spaces (as territories of proximity)
- more marginally, the theme of the “Southern” countries, which is still investigated on the basis of Eurocentric categories (“dependency,” “gray power” in Africa, for example).

These contributions, which combine quantitative and qualitative approaches, demonstrate a concern for distinguishing between readings and experiences of aging according to territory, and, to a lesser extent, for grasping the processes from which the institutional categorizations of the territory are produced. But few of them study the interlacing of territorial, sexual, ethnocultural, or class assignments according to territory (Cairns 2013), and none of them makes use of the specific knowledge produced to repose more general questions (the social construction of space, North-South relations and post-colonialism, or the place of space in contemporary forms of government - for age groups and more generally). Thus, the reflections opened up by the geopolitical and socio-territorial dimension of aging processes do not make it possible to articulate this specific knowledge with questions of general sociology, which have nevertheless been opened up and prepared by certain theoretical tendencies, coming for example from post-colonial or gender studies. The obstacles are similar for the third emerging theme: that of the body.

The theme of the body (the aging of the body, including its subjective component) emerges primarily in *Gérontologie et société*, a journal relatively unconcerned with the questions of retirement and employment, which are not amenable to this type of approach. Indeed, a large number of articles appearing in this journal involve the body in an indirect manner: the body becoming frail, the body losing or maintaining its health, the body renewed by objects and relationships compensating for handicaps, the lived body in the experience of aging or supported through public and family solidarity, the body protected by law or invested with rights to social participation. But contributions invoking the theoretical frameworks of the sociology or anthropology of the body are rare. Since 2000, two issues grapple with this topic, but in very different ways, which indicates sporadic emergences of the question rather than a deliberate process of imposition of the theme and the paradigms that may be associated with it. In 2012, a first special issue appears (no. 140, “Corps, désirs, sexualités” [“Bodies, desires, sexualities”]), centered on the transformations of desire, of sexuality, and of aesthetic norms concerning aging bodies. Sociologists are not very present (3 articles out of 15), and they essentially highlight asymmetries or differentiations - linked to age in the case of the right to sexuality, or more strongly to gender. It is not until 2015 that another thematic issue appears (no. 148, “Regards croisés sur le corps vieillissant” [“Reflections on the aging body”]), at the instigation of younger colleagues (educated at the beginning of the 2000s) in research structures that are not specialized in aging (Paris: EHESS [École des hautes études en sciences sociales; School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences], IRIS [Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques; Institute of International and Strategic Relations]). Decidedly more sociological, this issue also has a more general ambition (Duprat-Kushtanina 2015). Its intention is no longer to study differential aging of the body, but to show how theories of the body can enrich aging and how, in turn, the analyses of the aging body can contribute to the questions of general sociology. As in the first issue, the approach remains largely qualitative and based primarily on empirical case studies. However, the references cited indicate a

more pronounced theoretical aspiration (Mauss, Durkheim, Berthelot, gender relations, intersectionality). A locus of imposition and assignation (biomedical, gender-related, cultural, age-related), the body is also a locus of resistance to the foundation of the social experience of aging and of the relation to disciplinary technologies (Dalibert 2015). This editorial change concerning the body converges with the structural dynamics of fields of research in France: rediscovery of the place of the body in social experiences of aging, for which much of the groundwork was done in French-language sociology - notably French sociology - since the mid-1990s (Caradec and Vannienwenhove 2015); reflections in the French field of *gender studies* (three contributions in this issue refer to these theories explicitly); and the demarginalization of *sexuality studies* (with the appearance of contributions on sexuality in the *Revue française de sociologie* (Clair 2016)). But it also remains distant from these dynamics in the sense that, if the domains investigated call for the reopening of important theoretical debates posed in the United States and the United Kingdom since the end of the 1990s (a revisiting of the articulations between the biological and the social as presented in the United States (Goodman and Leatherman 1998) and the new deployments of biopolitics in the United Kingdom at the beginning of the 2000s (Rose 2006)), the French contributions remain focused on the way in which the body informs the sociology of aging.

Thematic renewal thus takes place within a framework where the articulation between the knowledge produced on aging and knowledge produced on national and international social structures does not truly occur - the categories of analysis mobilized remain Eurocentric (the concepts of disengagement and “gray power” are put to the test of African settings) and, with the notable exception of a few thematic issues, still largely male-centered. Several authors have already pointed out the slowness with which the French sociology of aging took up the question of gender - not only to explore the gendered dimensions of aging, but to revisit the principal concepts on which this sociology was based and to flush out the biases that they concealed (visions of the autonomy of the elderly measured on the basis of external activities considered socially productive, and of free will - implying an *auto-nomos* that many women were deprived of for long periods of their lives, etc.) (Legrand and Voléry 2012; Membrado 2013). And the strong feminization of scientific publication in specialized French journals¹⁸ does not seem in itself to constitute a sufficient incentive for the development of these perspectives and of their theoretical ambitions.¹⁹

The Influence of National Dynamics

The last dimension emerging from this analysis of publications in the specialized journals relates to the influence of national dynamics. If the rates of publication in

¹⁸ Of the 235 articles, 110 were signed by one or more women, 72 by one or more men, and 53 by authors of both sexes.

¹⁹ Note that this feminization is less evident in generalist media. Obviously, it must also be put into the context of the feminization of the field of sociology of aging as a whole and of a double process of gendered division of scientific work: a vertical division (women occupying lower-ranked positions in academia, with less access to prominent “generalist” journals) but also a horizontal division (women being more involved with subjects related to care, to age groups, etc.).

French-language generalist journals are pulled upwards by the case of Switzerland, in the case of specialized publishing it is the French research dynamics that shape the framework. Because, despite the positioning of these two journals that present themselves as having international access, the analysis reveals a profound French influence.

International French-Language Journals, French Articles

Indeed, analysis of the researchers' countries of residence shows the clear predominance of France. Although the two specialized journals subjected to analysis are meant to be both French-language and internationally accessible, Table 5 shows that articles coming from other countries are marginal.

If this table shows the dialogue maintained with Québécois work on certain themes (in particular that of social participation, as noted above), the scarcity of articles written by authors residing on the African continent is astonishing – particularly given that during the period considered, the sociologists who coordinated thematic issues of one of these journals (*Gérontologie et société*) were often close to the research committee on old age of the Association internationale des sociologues de langue française [International Association of French-speaking Sociologists] (AISLF), which made considerable efforts to promote sociology produced in Southern countries and particularly French-speaking African countries. This geographical exclusion echoes the effects of the imposition of the Eurocentric categories sometimes tacked onto studies of the plural South as noted above.

This being the case, the influence of French national dynamics also spreads through the research poles historically developed in France and setting the tempo of the themes developed.

Thematic Impulses Originating from French Research Poles

At first glance, the analysis of the French authors' institutional affiliations reveals a strong duality, distinguishing researchers attached to research poles or to university laboratories prominent in the field (with regular production of research and publications over a long period) from other “isolated” researchers – “isolated” in the sense of young researchers unable to remain permanently in the center or laboratory where they produced their doctoral theses and who publish sporadically according to the research or post-doctoral contracts they obtain. Indeed, the frequent lack of durable prospects within a research institution and the general precariousness of young researchers' careers contribute to their dispersion and sometimes to their thematic reorientation as a function of employment opportunities.²⁰ However, the isolated character of the publications

²⁰ In 2001, Switzerland put in place a mechanism of long-term financing for centers of excellence (National Centers of Competence in Research, Swiss National Science Foundation, <http://www.snf.ch/en/researchinFocus/nccr/Pages/default.aspx>) with the aim of promoting the concentration of skills and the sustainable promotion of young scientists. If these centers indeed produce a large number of doctors, the possibility of obtaining post-doctorate employment within a center is always limited. The current trend is to strongly encourage young doctors to go abroad with a fellowship. In this sense, the injunction to construct individual international careers goes against the constitution of centers active in their scientific fields in a durable and stable manner, within a framework of generational renewal.

Table 5 Authors' countries of residence^a, specialized journals

Authors' country of residence	N	Percentage
France	169	72%
Switzerland	26	11%
Canada	18	8%
Europe (other than F, CH, BE)	12	5%
Belgium	6	2%
Africa	2	1%
Other	2	1%
Total	235	100%

^a When an article has several authors residing in different countries, only the country of the first author is considered

(and the researchers) is also due to a structural dynamics of the field of French sociology of aging, which is organized around research centers that are less strongly “centralized” than in other sociological fields (in France, the sociology of old age is a sociology created by “provincial laboratories”) but are also often multi-thematic. In fact, many researchers are considered “isolated” contributors because they participate in or belong to research centers dedicated to fields other than that of aging, or are themselves inscribed in several fields (on the boundaries of the sociology of the family, of work, of the body, and more recently of gender) and publish only sporadically in this type of specialized journal. Table 6 details the various identifiable “poles” within our corpus, as well as the contributions of the authors without a specific affiliation.

But when it is related to the themes of publications, this plurality of sectors nonetheless establishes a field structure that affects scientific publication. If certain themes span different research centers, others are clearly localized (Table 7).

This table shows first of all how the many authors without strong institutional attachments produce articles that are not guided by the idea of a particular theme (which can confirm the quality of the coding and the hypothesis of authors not specialized in the themes of aging, or concerned with a particular theme only at a particular moment). Moreover, two themes are studied fairly consistently across sectors (employment of seniors and active aging). Dependency is likewise studied across the various major sectors, except for the Grand Est, for reasons relating to the history of one center, which initially developed around the issues of retirement and of local social participation from a theoretical and empirical perspective (Legrand 2001). Social participation is studied particularly in the Québécois pole (included in “other” in the table).

Conversely, certain themes differentiate the various sectors. The theme of territories is addressed primarily by the Grenoble pole. The Lille pole shows the greatest interest in the experience of aging and in the aging body, from perspectives strongly articulating empiricism and theory, whereas the questions of dependency or social policies are more frequently addressed by the Breton

Table 6 Number and % of articles produced by pole

Poles	Number of articles	Percentage
INED-CNAV-INSEE ^a	35	15%
Breton pole	18	8%
CIG-CIGEV-PAVIE-LIVES French-speaking Swiss pole ^b	18	8%
Grand Est pole	15	6%
Lille pole	13	6%
Grenoble pole	10	4%
University of Quebec in Montreal (Canada)	9	4%
GEPECS-CEMS Parisian pole ^c	8	3%
Lyon pole	6	3%
Paris, isolated (IRIS, Paris-Est)	6	3%
Belgium, isolated	5	2%
Maurice Halbwachs Center Paris	4	2%
Sherbrooke (Canada)	3	1%
Toulouse pole	1	0%
Without specific affiliation	84	35%
Total	235	100%

^a The grouping of INED, the CNAV, and INSEE deserves to be clarified: these institutions bring together researchers from different disciplines (sociology or demography) with different approaches to production, but this grouping is based on the common characteristic of being public research institutes outside the university framework, working on large databases and whose mission is to provide analyses on questions of public policy and futurology in the field of old age. Demography is also strongly represented in this pole, the aging of the population being a central topic of this discipline.

^b Founded in 1992, the Centre Interfacultaire de Gérontologie [CIG] of the University of Geneva became, in 2012, the Centre Interfacultaire de Gérontologie et d'Études de Vulnérabilité [CIGEV - The Interfaculty Center of Gerontology and Studies in Vulnerability] on the occasion of the joint direction of NCCR LIVES (see note 20) by the Universities of Geneva and Lausanne. The laboratoire d'études du parcours de vie [research laboratory for the study of the course of life – PAVIE] at the University of Lausanne disappeared in favor of NCCR LIVES.

^c Université Paris-Descartes, then École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales [School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences]

pole. The Swiss sector is focused on themes related to social exclusion and vulnerability (*précarité*), and the INED-CNAV-INSEE group of public institutions is clearly distinguished by a consistent focus on mainly empirical articles (more than 90% based on survey data). Producing articles on many themes, it is also the only sector to study aging through the prism of migration. Perhaps the concentration of demographers in this consortium leads to a degree of rivalry with respect to the questions important to French demographers.

At the margins of the major structuring questions common to all of the poles (and often related to the important motivation of public funding and to modes of political and social problematization of which aspects of aging are open to question), these thematic tendencies demonstrate the existence of a structure that is multifocal and dependent on both the centers' degrees of specialization and the kinds of specialties invested.

Table 7 Distribution of themes of research by major pole

Themes/poles	Breton pole	Lille pole	Grenoble pole	Grand Est pole	French-speaking Swiss pole	INED-CNAV-INSEE	Other poles	Not affiliated with a pole	Total
Active aging	0%	10%	5%	10%	10%	0%	25%	40%	100%
Dependency	21%	6%	2%	2%	6%	15%	19%	29%	100%
Social, public policies	16%	4%	0%	4%	4%	0%	16%	56%	100%
Family, caregivers, widowhood, couples	6%	3%	0%	3%	6%	29%	18%	35%	100%
Geographical context, territories	0%	0%	21%	11%	0%	14%	11%	43%	100%
Retirement homes, EHPAD, EMS, housing	0%	0%	0%	7%	3%	17%	23%	50%	100%
Elderly care professionals	27%	0%	8%	0%	4%	4%	19%	38%	100%
Aging of the body, appearance	0%	25%	0%	13%	0%	0%	12%	50%	100%
Experience of aging	11%	21%	0%	16%	11%	11%	9%	21%	100%
Trans-national migration, ethnicity	0%	0%	10%	0%	0%	35%	5%	50%	100%
Intergenerational relations	0%	0%	0%	11%	11%	33%	23%	22%	100%
Social participation	0%	0%	10%	10%	10%	10%	8%	52%	100%
Poverty, financial vulnerability [précarité], exclusion	17%	0%	0%	0%	33%	33%	0%	17%	100%
Senior employment	11%	4%	5%	5%	3%	13%	16%	43%	100%

Conclusion

This work on generalist and specific scientific publications in three French-speaking countries reveals the influence of national disciplinary dynamics. In contrast to the discourses on internationalization and multidisciplinary, the history of the French-language sociology of old age - with its difficult relationship to gerontology but also with its own national dynamics of structuration - is particularly enlightening. It explains the low visibility of the sociology of aging in generalist journals - with the notable exception of Switzerland, which is at once the country that has pushed the importation and institutional translation of North American gerontology the furthest, with a thematic and interdisciplinary structuring of research (via the CIG in Geneva), and the country where the publication strategy has been the most aggressive. In Belgium and France, although this same schema is influential, it produces other effects. In their case, we observe less access to generalist journals - other than through thematic issues, which are less common in France where journals are more structured around *varia* editions.

But another national dynamic influences specialized publication, which on the question of aging remains largely French. The journals are financed by French institutions, and are subject to not only their agendas but also their orientations (notably concerning multidisciplinary). On questions related to aging, the field of scientific publication thus appears relatively dualistic: on one hand, there is generalist publishing that is not very open to or invested by sociologists of aging, some of whom prefer to publish in international generalist journals or journals of related disciplines, and on the other hand, there is multidisciplinary specialized publishing in which review procedures and editorial or diffusion policies may lead to the erasure of the theoretical basis of work in the discipline and to hyperempiricism. Beyond the realm of scientific publication, the structuration of the field of French sociological research on aging exerts a profound influence on the themes investigated and the research poles involved (teams with multiple focuses, thematic pluralism, and thematic nomadism).

Our analysis thus poses the question of the “regionalization of knowledge,” a notion that Loffeier (2015) borrows from Basil Bernstein in the framework of his research on the forms of knowledge at work among professionals in retirement homes. The phenomenon of regionalization consists of the production of knowledge that breaks away from disciplinary boundaries and focuses on subjects that span multiple disciplines - in this case, old age. The aim of this knowledge is highly operational, and it is more or less explicitly a matter of finding solutions - or at least to contribute elements with operational relevance - to “problems” associated with the subject. The predominance of articles devoted to dependency (and by extension to caregivers), housing (retirement homes, in-home care, etc.), and elderly care professionals, as well as the place given to the articles on senior employment, retirement, and “active aging” in our corpus illustrate this tendency to study that which “poses” problems, notably in terms of public policy. This same phenomenon of regionalization of knowledge would explain our hesitations about choosing articles concerning gerontology. In this respect, *Gerontologie et société* would be an example of a journal influencing the promotion of gerontology as a new “area of knowledge.”

These results therefore invite further exploration of the influence of the national frameworks in which the French-language European sociologies are structured (not only in terms of visions of old age and the manner in which the question of aging is

posed socially and politically, but also in relation to the ways in which scientific publishing, research practices, and their institutional structuring have developed), without neglecting the history of the poles of research and of their leadership. If the history of a field cannot be reduced to that of its figures and its personalities (Chaubet 2014), we must nevertheless note the (not always voluntary) traces left by certain researchers who have carried ideas from gerontological conceptions of old age and from research on aging to sociology, who have had a lasting impact on the field, and whose influence continues through academic filiations. To summarize the history of this field, which is in fact rather recent, is to be confronted with the interlacing of temporalities (that of distinct periods, that of institutions, and that of people) and obliged to grasp a complex interplay of conceptual, material, and symbolic transmissions and their evolutions, showing how much present-day scientific publishing inherits from the institutional and personal histories of the past.

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