Women at work in home help: tensions on the labour market in the French coastal zone

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Introduction

- *Seasonality of work in home help*: a concern among professionals
- *Seasonality*: fluctuations of a phenomenon according to an annual rhythm, linked to natural phenomena but mostly to social constructions
Methodology

- ANR Profam, Between profession and family, the "frameworks of work" of assistance to the elderly, [https://profam.hypotheses.org/](https://profam.hypotheses.org/)

- 20 interviews with various actors of the sector (home help workers, nurses, social workers, managers, officials, ...)

- Ethnographic survey with home help workers, meeting with beneficiaries and their families
The territory

- Located in the North-West of France
- Economy based on tourism and food industry
- Ageing index (number of people of 65 and older per 100 people under 20): AI = 1.4 vs 0.8 for Metropolitan France (2016). Up to 3 in the municipalities closed to the sea
- Cause: aging of the local population + arrival of retirees
- Attractive territory for elderly people
  → Gentrification of the coastal zone
The job market

- At a national level, home help sector considered as «jobs under stress» (Pôle Emploi).

- Locally, the situation is made worse by two factors:

  1° young families leave the coastal zone (price of the real estate, school closure). However, home help workers always work close to their home.

  2° Food industry and hôtel/restaurant sector need workforce with the same profile to that of home help workers.
A scissor effect

- *Increase of the demand for labour*

- *Workforce less available*

→ *scissor effect*

- *Tensions in the labour market throughout the year*

- *It sets the context in which the question of the seasonal fluctuations arises*
The seasonality

More needs:

- From the spring, arrival of residents of secondary residences (average age = 65; 39% of them > 70 years old)
- Family visits to local elderly people lead to reevaluation of their needs

Less workforce available:

- High demand in tourism sector
- Home help workers must take care of their children in holidays (especially single-parent families)

→ the scissor effect is reinforced
Consequences

1° Working conditions

- Car jam (market days, festivities) and parking difficulties (risk of fines)
- Increased number of beneficiaries: part-time contracts become full-time jobs
- Psychological risks (burn out, high turn over)
Consequences

2° Relations between profit and non-profit organisations

- Context of concurrence between profit and non-profit services since 2006.

- Public, associative and private actors manage the shortage by coordinating their actions to focus on the most problematic situations.

- Profit sector attached to the « social » part of the work, but the economic logic lead to increase social inequalities between local working class people and wealthy people in secondary residences.
Conclusion

- **Seasonality contributes to increase the tensions on the labour market**

- **Limit**: phenomenon very visible on this specific territory, but could expand to other places

- **Home help services could play a negative or a positive role in the tourism development**

- «Women at work» as professionals (productive), mothers (reproductive) and carers for relatives.
Thank you for your attention