

16 & 17 November 2023

# Insights and Reflections on the Concepts of Bifurcation and Doing Transitions



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## Overview

The Gathering is designed to foster connections between French and German researchers of various disciplines and to create a dialogue between the related concepts of *bifurcation* and *doing transition*.

In this document you will find:

1. **Key information** about the event
2. A **timetable** for the two days.
3. **Summaries** of the presentations.

We look forward to greeting you and hope you enjoy the event. In the meantime, let us know if you have any questions:

[elisa.thevenot@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:elisa.thevenot@uni-tuebingen.de)

[catherine.negrone@gmail.com](mailto:catherine.negrone@gmail.com)

[axel.pohl@ost.ch](mailto:axel.pohl@ost.ch)

[claragutleben@gmail.com](mailto:claragutleben@gmail.com)

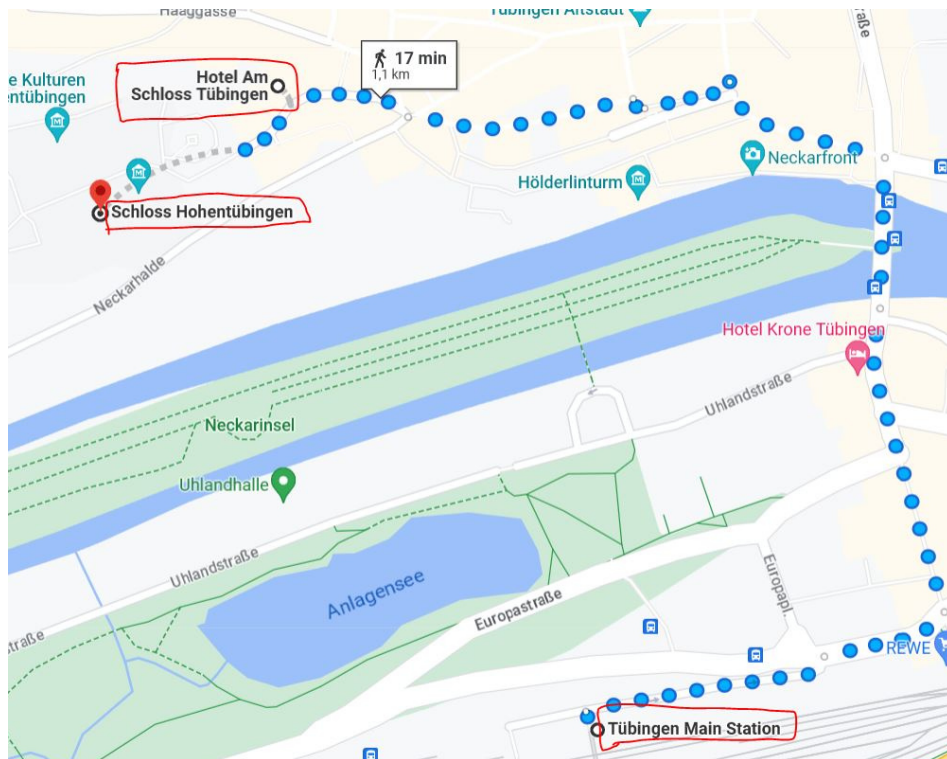
# Key information

## Addresses:

- **Conference location:** Schloss Hohentübingen, Burgsteige 11, 72070 Tübingen  
Conference room n° 124: Fürstenzimmer
- **Hotel Am Schloss location:** Burgsteige 18, 72070 Tübingen
- **Restaurant Dinner Thursday at Historische Weinstube Forelle:** Kronenstraße 8

## Directions:

- Train station → hotel: 15 minute walk up a steep hill. The old center of Tübingen is mostly pedestrian.
- Hotel → conference location Schloss Hohentübingen: The hotel is a 2-minute walk up the steep hill to the conference location. (Except agreed differently everybody is staying at this hotel)
- Hotel → restaurant dinner Thursday: 2 minutes walk down the steep hill.



## Meals and snacks

- Breakfast is included in the hotel reservation.
- Lunches: We will provide cold snack type of lunches on Thursday and Friday at the conference location, as well as coffee breaks.
- Thursday dinner 7PM (19h): Historische Weinstube Forelle  
Restaurant **Address: Kronenstraße 8, 72070 Tübingen.**

# FAQs

- Conference context:
  - The idea behind this conference is to bring different study traditions into a conversation. To compare research angles, concepts, framings and methods interested in life course transitions. The widespread approach of the concept of 'Bifurcation' in francophone research could offer many options for convergence with the "Doing transitions" approach developed over the past few years by the Doing transitions Graduiertenkolleg research Group.
  - International and interdisciplinary: When you prepare your presentation, please take into account the international and interdisciplinary audience and thus the need to explicate national and disciplinary specificities.
  - Language barriers: When you prepare and present your presentation and when you ask a question in the plenary, please remember that the audience is not native english. English will be challenging for some participants. Please be kind and tolerant about people's level in english. Suggestions for example: speak slowly, paraphrase, list synonyms, paste the central passages of your presentation as a text in powerpoint slides.  
We recommend the software DeepL for translation needs: <https://www.deepl.com/translator>
- Presenters:

The audience is international, therefore we expect the presentations to take place in english language. To facilitate the role of the discussants, please send your script and/or powerpoint to your discussant on Tuesday 14th of November at the latest.
- Discussant role:
  - The first two presentations (in childhood studies and late adulthood) are followed by Anna Wanka's joint commentary. Anna Wanka is a Doing Transitions fellow and the leader of the Research Group Linking Ages which analyzes how age is being un/done through scientific knowledge practices. Her commentary will serve as an introduction into 'Linking Ages' and probably incite a fruitful joint conversation on the backdrop of the two presentations.
  - The discussants for the next presentation have approx. 5 minutes (+/-2). The discussants were assigned for belonging to the 'opposite' research tradition. Their commentary will give an insight into their own research tradition. For example, how is the life course transition under investigation similarly or differently framed and interpreted? which dimensions could be fruitful additional inquiries?
- Finances
  - The hotel and restaurant on Thursday are paid for.
  - It would be helpful if your institution can pay for your train itinerary. If you don't have this option, we will reimburse your travels: Please inform us soon if you need reimbursement → keep your invoices and send them to [elisa.thevenot@uni-tuebingen.de](mailto:elisa.thevenot@uni-tuebingen.de)

# Programm

Thursday, November 16th

Time	Content	Presenters / Discussants
13:00 - 13:30	Reception (coffee and snacks on site)	
13:30 - 13:45	Introductory plenary session	Catherine Négroni, Axel Pohl, Elisa Thevenot
13:45 - 14:30	Introduction to the concept of <i>Bifurcation (Bf)</i> , followed by a Q&A	Catherine Négroni
14:30 - 14:40	Break	
14:40 - 15:05	Transition in early childhood: Kindergarten and nursery school	Astrid Broucke & Pascale Garnier
15:05 - 15:30	The life course of temporary workers at the end of their careers in Belgium	Nathalie Burnay
15:30 - 15:50	Joint discussion in the light of <i>Doing Transitions and Linking Ages</i>	Anna Wanka + plenary discussion
15:50 - 16:00	Break	
16:00 - 16:30	Staying a manager in a food business: the family roots of a horizontal career change	Juliette Guidon (approx. 15 min.) Discussion: Michael Bernhard (approx. 5 min. + 10 min. plenary)
16:30 - 17:00	Social mobility through the prism of eating habits	Clara Gutleben (approx. 15 min.) Discussion: Pierrine Robin (approx. 5 min. + 10 min. plenary)
17:00 - 17:30	Academic transitions in the post doctoral phase	Désirée Wägerle (approx. 15 min.) Discussion: Fransez Poisson (approx. 5 min. + 10 min. plenary)
17:30 - 17:45	plenary	Catherine Négroni, Axel Pohl, Elisa Thevenot
19:00	Dinner: Historische Weinstube Forelle	

## Friday, November 17th

Time	Content	Presenters / Discussants
8:30 - 9:00	<b>Welcome (Coffee and Brötchen)</b>	
9:00 - 9:45	<b>Introduction to the concept of <i>Doing Transitions</i> (DT), followed by a Q&amp;A</b>	Barbara Stauber
9:45 - 10:15	<b>Academic bifurcations through the development of self-organised scientific laboratories</b>	Franez Poisson (approx. 15 min.) Discussion: Axel Pohl (approx. 5 min. + 10 min. plenary)
10:15 - 10:45	<b>Early childhood transitions and protection</b>	Pierrine Robin (approx. 15 min.) Discussion: Andreas Walther (approx. 5 min. + 10 min. plenary)
10:45 - 11:15	<b>Break</b>	
11:15 - 11:45	<b>Skills enhancement pathways (upskilling) for low-skilled adults in France</b>	Jake Murdoch (approx. 15 min.) Discussion: Nathalie Burnay (approx. 5 min. + 10 min. plenary)
11:45 - 12:15	<b>Overall observations</b>	Patricia Loncle
12:15 - 12:30	<b>Closing words</b>	Catherine Négroni, Axel Pohl, Elisa Thevenot
12:30	<b>Lunch - snacks</b>	

# Summaries of the presentations

## **Transition in early childhood : Kindergarten and pre-school**

Astrid Broucke & Pascale Garnier

Experice Laboratory, Sorbonne Paris Nord University

Starting school, whether at 3 (in France) or 6 (in Germany) marks a crucial stage in young children's life. Whatever the degree of involvement of families (allowed or requested by the institution and performed by families), this institutional transition affects the children as well as their families. Sociologists have emphasized the importance of early childhood socialization and the possible conflicts between the different worlds they live in (neighbourhood, family, school...). We need to go further to understand children's transition experiences between these spheres, how children find themselves "affordances" in their environment connecting them or not. It is also important to study sociologically how children are "growing up" through these transitions. It demands specific methodologies, which make possible their "biography" at a very young age.

From an empirical point of view, we will focus on the transition from Kindergarten to School, in June and September 2023, in Ludwigshafen. At the two poles of this transition, these two institutions perform this passage by organizing highly symbolic festive events attended by families. We will compare the Kindergarten's "Schukifest", which marks the children's departure from the Kindergarten, with the "Einschulungsfeier", which marks their entry to school. This comparison will enable us to analyze the representations of adults working in these institutions on this significant passage. But how do children experience this transition? We'll try to capture children's subjective experiences of this transition by presenting their view of the other side of the bridge. Researchers accompany the children in writing the first lines of their biographies. Indeed, based on ethnographic observations, we'll describe how children project their future entrance into school and moments of nostalgic or not-so-nostalgic looking back.

## **Life course through temporary workers at career endings in Belgium**

Prof. Nathalie Burnay,

University of Louvain

University of Namur

For several years now, national and international bodies have been calling for an increase in the employment rate of older workers. This call to raise the employment rate of seniors could, for instance, manifest in raising the lawful age of retirement through national policies but fits more largely in the deployment of a more international framework focused on a type of productivity-driven active aging. In regard to employment, it is a question of developing national or regional public policies towards the maintenance of the elderly work force by introducing incentivizing measures (supplemental training, fighting against forms of discrimination directed towards seniors...) or repressive measures (the suppression of different forms of early retirement from the work force, penalties in the event of ceasing professional activity before the retirement age...). Like France, Belgium is characterized by a weak employment rate of seniors. However, if on one hand, seniors manage more and more to remain on the labour market, on the other, the more they are met with real difficulties: mass redundancies focused on seniors; indirect discrimination by companies; difficulties in regaining the labour market... Career endings are marked more and more by multiple health problems particularly because of the hardening of working conditions. Our contribution is situated in this challenging context where the elderly worker is somewhat wedged between a logic of inclusion and a logic of exclusion. In effect, it is interested in a phenomenon that, while quantitatively remaining marginal, is revealing real normative transformations of labour: that of the senior temporary worker.

The sector of temporary work has been in constant progression for more than 20 years. This significant increase twinned with the harshening of employment policies while nearing retirement renders the issue of the senior temporary worker essential to understanding the professional realities of elderly workers today.

The issue of senior temporary workers will be analysed starting from a reflexion on the settling of temporalities within an advanced modernity, and more largely starting from the paradigm of the life course. Based on the qualitative analysis of 36 semi-structured interviews of temporary workers 45 and older, a typology was created starting from two significant axes:

- chosen or forced life courses
- presence or absence of turning points

## **Staying a manager in a food business: the family roots of a horizontal career change**

Juliette Guidon, Doctoral student in sociology,

Université Paris Cité, Centre de recherche sur les liens sociaux (CERLIS), École Ferrandi Paris.

The professional reconversion of an individual who has worked as a manager in one of the following catering trades: chocolate, pastry, bakery, constitutes a so-called horizontal professional

reconversion. At first glance, and because of the professional experience of a manager prior to that of a craftsman, retraining appears to be a social downgrading (Peugny, 2010). However, an individual who has owned a catering business for several years loses neither his social status nor his standard of living by becoming his own boss. The professional continuity created by this type of conversion is explained in particular by the role played by the family of origin and the family formed by the individual. The aim of this paper is to analyse the family mechanisms that contribute to maintaining social status. On the one hand, the family of origin transmits a desire to remain in an affluent social environment by encouraging prolonged studies (Boudon, 1973) and by transmitting refined eating habits. On the other hand, the family of origin plays an active and constant role in the individual's career transition. The individual's spouse and children become essential support and play a driving role in making the career change a reality (Berger and Kellner, 2006). In this way, the family of origin makes it possible to maintain the social environment by transmitting values and aspirations, while the family created perpetuates this maintenance in the social environment by meeting marital and parental requirements. This paper will highlight the importance of family factors (Denave, 2017) in career transition and their influence on maintaining an individual's social status.

### **Climbing up the social ladder: how does it taste?**

Clara Gutleben, Doctoral candidate in sociology,  
University of Tübingen, Doing Transition Research Group.

Questioning the ideal represented by upward social mobility (Luckmann, Berger, 1964) - such as embodied by professional success, personal emancipation or liberation from economic bondage (Naudet, 2012 - this paper aims to question the reality of this transition in daily life observing the identity tensions generated by such success and potentially provoking "a split of the self" (Lahire, 2004; 1998; our translation) which may drag the individual into a more or less painful oscillation between two groups of reference or two sets of schematic actions and perceptions.

The so-called "class defectors" or "transclasses" (Jacquet) are mostly presented as having achieved an (upward) change of social belonging and therefore a completed shift in a social space that is mapped hierarchically by morally connoted metaphors such as climbing, falling, up(ward), down(ward), etc. Based on fieldwork with socially mobile people and drawing on a *Doing Transition* perspective, Bourdieusian theories and Muriel Darmon's sociological analysis of conversion processes, we will question this reifying representation and examine social mobility "as it is being experienced" (Pasquali, 2016), and as it is being narrated.

Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron (1970), but also more recently Muriel Darmon (2011) have shown how difficult the work of self-transformation represented by habitus conversion is, particularly because of the inertial force of hysteresis (defined by Bourdieu as the phenomenon whereby the dispositions acquired through the socialisation of an individual in a defined social space endure over time). This work can be observed both on a bodily and cultural level with a view to transforming lifestyles and avoiding social shame. Therefore, we will argue for the relevance of food-related practices as an angle to address social belonging in a context of upward social mobility. Indeed, they serve as a support or a basis for individual and collective identities and ease then a feeling of belonging to a group but also the possibility of defining the limits to this



group and stigmatise the excluded since "the Other is first and foremost the one who does not eat like me" (Héritier-Augé, 1981, p.61; our translation). It appears that these particular practices are both very related to the notion of identity and to the social image of distinction, thus allowing them to link the individual aspect and the structures of power at work in this transition, and allowing us to start a reflexion on the survival of class cultures.

## **Fair Chance? Inequalities in the postdoc phase using a Doing Transitions Approach: A discussion starter.**

Désirée Wägerle, Doctoral candidate  
Doing Transition Research Group

There is a long tradition of transition research in the social sciences (Wanke et al. 2020). The 'classical' approaches commonly construct their research object – transitions – as given social state-changes within the lifecourse (e.g. Sackmann/Wingens 2001). This mode of construction is problematic, as the genesis and persistence of mechanisms for reproducing social inequalities artificially escape analysis (Schröer 2015). Focusing the relational and processual perspective on the production of transitions (Walther et al. 2022), the around 2014 emerged Doing Transitions Approach takes up this criticism and thus marks a turn in transition research. Taking this as a start, the contribution first locates the specific perspective of Doing Transitions in the structure of 'classical' transition research. With the aim of initiating a discussion on researching transitions, the importance of the Doing Transitions perspective will then be exemplified by a current research project, investigating inequalities in the so-called postdoc phase in German higher education.

## **Academic bifurcation through the development of self-organised scientific laboratories**

Fransez Poisson,  
Coop'Eskemm et Laboratoire Arènes, École des Hautes Études en Santé Publique (EHESP).

Scientific knowledge is structured by academic laboratories. Other forms of not-for-profit organisation are organised on the fringes of the university. After situating these dynamics of self-organised laboratories in the production of scientific facts, based on the work of Latour and Woolgar (1979), I propose a comparison of two experiments: the Laboratoire Associatif de Sciences Sociales Appliquées (LASSA) and Coop'Eskemm. LASSA was set up in 2010 by a group of PhDs who wanted to continue doing research together after completing their theses at EHESP in Marseille. How can this be a turning point in their academic careers? My experience in Rennes with Coop'Eskemm, a cooperative that we founded with Rennes-based design engineers and associations in 2018, is also

part of this questioning. Interaction with academic laboratories remains strong. While some members work solely in the self-organisation, others are only volunteers while holding a post at the university, others are both salaried members of the collective and study or research engineers at the university. They are branching out towards horizons that aim to rethink the way the laboratories are organised: horizontal operations; self-management of research and experimentation facilities; strong links with the social practices of other collectives and associations, etc. These two initiatives thus stem from a variety of academic bifurcations that are reinterrogating relationships to knowledge and perhaps forming part of an epistemopolitics of the commons, as defined by Pascal Nicolas Le-Strat (2016).

## **Transitions in early childhood and child welfare**

Pierrine Robin

University Paris Est Créteil

After a brief theoretical review of the concepts of transition, pathway and bifurcation, this paper will look at how transitions in early childhood and child welfare are thought about and conceived. Drawing on fieldwork in early childhood and child welfare, or at the intersection of these two areas, the aim will be to grasp the similarities and differences in the way these transitions are thought of during the life cycle and according to spheres of life. What representations do they give of the children and parents concerned? What relationships between parents, children and professionals do they reveal? What effects might they have on the subjective construction of individuals?

## **Skills enhancement pathways (upskilling) for low-skilled adults adults in France**

Jake Murdoch

Centre universitaire de recherches sur l'action publique et le politique. Epistémologie et Sciences sociales (CURAPP-ESS) - UMR CNRS 7319, Université de Picardie Jules Verne.

This paper looks at career paths and qualifications, mainly for less-qualified adults. It is based on a study funded by Cedefop in collaboration with Céreq on the theme of upskilling for adult jobseekers and employees in France and Italy. The aim is to analyse the issue of individualised ('seamless') pathways for adults from the point of view of identifying target groups, providing them with support, as well as the support (financial and non-financial) and governance of institutional players. This project is being carried out in three regions of France (Bourgogne-Franche-Comté, Nouvelle-Aquitaine and PACA), using interviews with stakeholders and survey data (for example, Céreq's surveys on employee training and itineraries) to study how the regional training and integration schemes of the Pactes régionaux d'investissement dans les compétences (PRIC) and the Conseil de

l'Emploi et de la Solidarité (CEAS) work on the ground. (PRIC) and the Conseil en évolution professionnelle (CEP). The presentation will present some of the findings from the three phases of the study: micro level (experiences of and advisers), meso level (regional managers' perspective) and macro level (national perspective of national managers).

## List of active participants

Bernhard, Michael | Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany | Doctoral candidate  
Broucke, Astrid | University Sorbonne Paris Nord, France | Doctoral candidate  
Burnay, Nathalie | University of Namur and Louvain, Belgium | Professor of sociology  
Garnier Pascale | University Sorbonne Paris Nord, France | Professor of science education  
Guidon, Juliette | Université Paris Descartes, France | Doctoral candidate  
Gutleben, Clara | Tübingen University, Germany | Doctoral candidate  
Loncle, Patricia | University of Rennes, France | Professor of sociology  
Murdoch, Jake | University de Picardie Jules Verne | Professor of science education  
Négroni, Catherine | University of Lille | Senior lecturer Science of education and Sociology  
Pohl, Axel | Eastern Switzerland University of Applied Sciences St. Gallen, Switzerland | Professor for Social Work  
Poisson, Fransez | University of Rennes, France | Doctoral candidate  
Robin, Pierrine | University Paris Est Créteil | Professor of science education and sociology  
Stauber, Barbara | Tübingen University, Germany | Professor of science education  
Thevenot, Elisa | Tübingen University, Germany | Doctoral candidate  
Wägerle, Désirée | Tübingen University, Germany | Doctoral candidate  
Walther, Andreas | Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany | Professor of science education  
Wanka, Anna | Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany | Postdoctoral researcher sociology

## Additional participants

Johanna Christ | Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany | Research assistant  
Doing Transitions Colloquium on Thursday afternoon