

Quality, diversity, and impact: (The first) 10 years of the *Journal of Professions and Organization*

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This essay marks, reviews, and celebrates the first decade of the *Journal of Professions and Organization*. It begins with a brief review of the journal's founding, initial scope, and objectives. This is followed by an analysis of all the articles published in the first decade (2014–23) of the journal's existence. Finally, turning to the future, we consider at topics and initiatives that are becoming relevant as we approach *JPO*'s second decade.

KEYWORDS: *professionals; professions; organization; journal.*

In this essay, we celebrate the first decade of *JPO*, the *Journal of Professions and Organization*. It begins with a brief review *JPO*'s founding, initial scope, and objectives. This is followed by an analysis of the 171 articles published¹ in the first decade (2014–23) of the journal's existence. Finally, turning to the future, we look at topics and initiatives that will be relevant for *JPO*'s second decade.

IN THE BEGINNING ...

The *Journal of Professions and Organization* was founded a decade ago by Huseyin Leblebici, Daniel Muzio, and myself. The idea for such a journal occasionally circulated among attendees of the 'Professional Service Firm' conferences and workshops sponsored (and usually also hosted) by the Saïd Business School at The University of Oxford (see <https://www.sbs.ox.ac.uk/research/research-areas/professional-service-firms/oxford-saïd-conference-professional-service>). The topic was first discussed explicitly after a workshop entitled 'What are PSFs, and what is PSF research' that I presented at Oxford in March 2012. Within weeks I had contacted *Oxford University Press* to begin discussing a proposal for a journal. The proposal was soon submitted, the process was completed and approved in November 2012. The first submissions were

received in March 2013, and the first issue was published in March 2014.

In our opening essay (Brock, Leblebici and Muzio 2014), we explained not only why this area of study is crucial in contemporary, knowledge-intensive society; but also why extant journals often minimized or even cut details on the professional context, and thus were not optimal channels for this work. In consultation with colleagues in the field—many of whom have subsequently served as member of *JPO*'s editorial team and board—we were able to crystalize the journal's mission in the following four interlinking principles:

- *Scope*—*JPO* will be an interdisciplinary journal, dealing with professions (and other knowledge-intensive occupations), their work, and organization.
- *Quality*—*JPO* will encourage and facilitate the publication of highest quality research (reflected in the journal rankings).
- *Diversity*—*JPO* will be willing to embrace any academic discipline, theoretical frame, and any methodological approach on the road to advancing our understanding of professions, their work, and organization (as reflected in the diversity of its editorial board).
- *Community*—*JPO* will be focused on building a global and interdisciplinary community of scholars,

working together to promote research on professionals and their organizations.

These principles were carried forward into explicit formal statements—such as calls for papers—as well as implicit internal operations—such as author-friendly editorial policies. Given the overall strategy of focusing on a fairly narrow niche, quality, as well as the unranked status of the new journal, submission numbers were modest in the early years—averaging about 40 per year for the first 4 years, building up to 71 in 2017, and averaging in the 80–105 range since 2020. The numbers of published papers per year can be seen in [Table 3](#).

JPO's high level of scholarly quality was recognized by external journal ranking agencies relatively early, by entering the ABDC journal quality list at level A (2016), and being ranked 2 by the CABS/Academic Journal Guide (2018). *JPO*'s first major impact factors were also quite respectable: the first CiteScore of 3.6 (2019) and first Clarivate impact factor of 2.2 (2022). To give an impression of the papers—authors, topics, and years—that attracted most interest, [Table 1](#) contains the most highly cited *JPO* papers (including two different approaches), and [Table 2](#) lists the papers that received the annual 'Best Paper Award' at the Oxford PSF conference.

ANALYSIS OF PUBLISHED PAPERS

This section contains a review and analysis of *JPO*'s accomplishments over this first decade. To this end, I analyzed all of the 171 papers published (see footnote 1) by *JPO* in the first 10 years. The first 100 of these publications had been analyzed for an earlier project ([Brock 2021](#)), and I simply continued the process for this essay. Each article was assessed for its characteristics according to five classifications: phenomenon studied, occupation studied, research methods used, academic field of first author, and country location of first author. In the following subsections, I explain how the publications were analyzed and coded, and present analyses of the various phenomena, occupations, methods, academic fields, and locations of this research over the decade.

Phenomena

Each paper was initially classified by the main scholarly phenomenon that it addressed and to which it contributed. To arrive at a parsimonious list of phenomena—listed in [Table 3](#)—I grouped related topics. For example, the 'Human Resources' phenomenon includes papers dealing with careers, training, and staff turnover; politics was merged with lobbying and boundary spanning; and globalization included in internationalization.

Table 1 Most highly cited *JPO* papers.

Total	Reference to paper
(A) Total 'Web of Science' citations over life or article (from https://academic.oup.com/jpo , recorded 11/11/2023)	
175	Noordegraaf, M. (2015) Hybrid Professionalism and Beyond. (New) Forms of Professionalism in Changing Organizational and Societal Contexts. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 2(2): 187–206. http://jpo.oxfordjournals.org/content/2/2/187.abstract
87	Bevort, F, and Suddaby, R. (2016) Scripting Professional Identities: How Individuals Make Sense of Contradictory Logics. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 3(1): 17–38. http://jpo.oxfordjournals.org/content/3/1/17.abstract
74	Blomgren, M., and Waks, C. (2015) Coping with Contradictions: Hybrid Professionals Managing Institutional Complexity. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 2(1): 78–102. http://jpo.oxfordjournals.org/content/2/1/78.abstract
55	Andersson, T, and Liff, R. (2018) Co-optation as a Response to Competing Institutional Logics: Professionals and Managers in Healthcare. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 5(2), 71–87. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joy001
45	Boussebaa, M., and Faulconbridge, J. (2019) Professional Service Firms as Agents of Economic Globalization: A Political Perspective. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 6(1): 72–90. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joy014
(B) Citations via the 2022 Clarivate Journal Impact Factor (from https://jcr.clarivate.com/jcr-jp/...)	
15	Armour, J, and Sako, M. (2020) AI-enabled Business Models in Legal Services: From Traditional Law Firms to Next-Generation Law Companies? <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 7(1): 27–46. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joaa001
14	Noordegraaf, M. (2020) Protective or Connective Professionalism? How Connected Professionals Can (Still) Act as Autonomous and Authoritative Experts. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 7(2): 205–223. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joaa011
6	Adams, T. L. (2020) Professional Employees and Professional Managers: Conflicting Logics, Hybridity, and Re-stratification. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 7(1): 101–115. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joaa005
5	Goto, M. (2021) Collective Professional Role Identity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 8(1). https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joab003

Table 2 *JPO* papers that received the annual ‘Best Paper Award’ at the Oxford PSF conference.

Year (location of ceremony)	Details of the winning paper
2013/14 (Philadelphia)	Seabrooke, L. (2014). Epistemic Arbitrage: Transnational Professional Knowledge in Action. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 1: 49–64. http://jpo.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/1/49.abstract
2014/15 (Oxford)	Dinovitzer, R., Gunz, H., and Gunz, S. (2014). Unpacking Client Capture: Evidence from Corporate Law Firms. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 1(2): 99–117. http://jpo.oxfordjournals.org/content/1/2/99.short
2015/6 (Oxford)	Wallenburg, I., Hopmans, N., Buljac-Samardzic, M., Hoed, T., and IJzermans, J. (2016). Repairing Reforms and Transforming Professional Practices: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Surgical Training Reform. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 3(1): 86–102. http://jpo.oxfordjournals.org/content/3/1/86.short
2016/17 (Stockholm)	Ahuja, S., Nikolova, N., and Clegg, S. (2017) Paradoxical Identity: The Changing Nature of Architectural Work and Its Relation to Architects’ Identity. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 4(1): 2–19. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/jow013
2017/18 (Oxford)	Ballakrishnen, S. (2017). ‘She Gets the Job Done’: Entrenched Gender Meanings and New Returns to Essentialism in India’s Elite Professional Firms. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 4(3): 324–342. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/jox009
2018/19 (Boston)	Mors, M. L., Rogan, M., and Lynch, S. (2018). Boundary Spanning and Knowledge Exploration in a Professional Services Firm. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 5(3): 184–205. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joy012
2019/20 (Zoom)	Armour, J., and Sako, M. (2020). AI-Enabled Business Models in Legal Services: From Traditional Law Firms to Next-Generation Law Companies? <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 7(1): 27–46. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joaa001
2020/21 (Zoom)	ten Dam, E., and Waardenburg, M. (2020). Logic Fluidity: How Frontline Professionals Use Institutional Logics in Their Day-to-Day Work. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 7(2): 188–204. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joaa012
2021/22 (Zoom)	Goto, M. (2022). Accepting the Future as Ever-Changing: Professionals’ Sensemaking About Artificial Intelligence. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 9(1), 77–99. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joab022
2022/23 (Oxford)	Sako, M., Qian, M., and Attolini, J. (2022). Future of Professional Work: Evidence from Legal Jobs in Britain and the United States. <i>Journal of Professions and Organization</i> , 9(2), 143–169. https://doi.org/10.1093/jpo/joac011

Phenomena with fewer than three appearances were inserted into the ‘Others’ category.

The numbers are too small for reliable statistical analysis, but there are apparent increases in three related phenomena—namely, institutional work (including professional projects), connective professionalism, and technology/digital disruptions. These topics reflect the context of competition and deregulation in general and specifically surrounding professional work (Maestriperi 2019; Siebert 2020). On the other hand, there are some declines in topics like hybridity, logics, and professional identity, which were considered central to professional organization theorizing (Muzio, Brock and Suddaby 2013). The likely explanation is the relative increase in concern with more contemporary topics such as those mentioned earlier. On the other hand, it is interesting that six of the ten ‘Best Paper’ winners (Table 2) studied these ‘traditional’ professions topics, like client capture,

professional identity, logics, boundary spanning, and jurisdiction.

Occupation

Using a similar approach as before, I coded the primary occupations studied in each paper. As can be seen in Table 4, the common occupations were (unsurprisingly) healthcare, law, and accounting—totaling 72 of the 171 (42%) *JPO* papers published in this decade. The ‘blue collar’ category, which includes police, nurses, and paramedics—seems to be becoming more popular. Also engineering/science/hi-tech, which included only two publications from 2014 to 2020, has shown increasing numbers since 2021.

JPO’s growth in popularity outside the traditional professions is also reflected in the increasing numbers in the ‘others’ category, which included occupations such

Table 3 *JPO* papers by phenomena and year of publication.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 ¹	
Institutional work, professional project		1		2	1	7	4	4	4	4	27
Hybridity, logics	2	3	1	2	2		2	2	1	2	17
Roles/status			1			1	5	1	1	1	10
Diversity/inequality		1		1	1		1		4	2	10
Digital/virtual/AI/online							1	3	5	1	10
HR/careers, training, turnover	1		1	1		1	1	1	1	2	9
Globalization, international	1	3	1			3					8
Connective							3	3	1	1	8
Research, theory	1		1	2	2	1					7
Professional identity	1	1	1	1	1			2			7
Regulation	1		2	1	1			1	1		7
Boundary work					2	1	2	1		1	7
Professional practice	1			1	1			2		1	6
Wrongdoing, corruption	1					2				1	4
Jurisdiction					2	1			1		4
Lobbying/politics/boundary spanning				2	1						3
Governance	2			1							3
Others/general		1	3	2	5	4	2	1	2	4	24
Total	11	10	11	16	19	21	21	21	21	20	171

Table 4 *JPO* papers by occupation and year of publication.

Occupation	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Health	1	3	3		7	5	4	4	1	1	29
Law	3	1	1	2	2	2	6	2	6	3	28
Accounting	1	1	4	1	1	2	1	2	2		15
Blue collar, nurse, EMT, paramedic	1	1		2		1	1	3	5	1	15
Engineer, science, hi-tech		1		1				2	4	2	10
Consulting				1	2	2	1				6
Public, politics				1			1		2	2	6
Mixed							1			2	3
Others	1	1	1	4	1	5	2	5	1	6	27
Unspecified (essays)	4	2	2	4	6	4	4	3		3	32
Total	11	10	11	16	19	21	21	21	21	20	171

as social workers, architects, wealth managers, coaches, project managers, and clergy. This is an encouraging trend, in line with *JPO*'s four principles (mentioned earlier). A further 32 essays and conceptual papers were coded 'unspecified' occupation—in other words, these were essays or conceptual papers, addressing

scholarly aspects of our field and not dealing with a specific occupation.

Methodological approach

Each paper's methodological approach was classified, revealing the majority (93 of 171, over 54%) in the

‘Qualitative’ category (see Table 5). Qualitative empirical research is clearly the most popular mode, reflecting not only the need for more interpretative and emancipatory forms of theorizing at these early stages of our field’s development² (Cornelissen, Höllerer and Seidl 2021), but also the fact that the subtle indicators of institutional work and hybrid management are best captured using qualitative methods. The ‘Quantitative’ category comprised only 17%, but did show some increase over the last 5 years. A small number of ‘Mixed’ method papers were published—mainly since 2020—which is a positive signal of methodological sophistication. A further 16 ‘Conceptual’ and 22 review/essay publications were published, many of these encouraged by *JPO*’s positioning as a new home for establishment and legitimizing this research area.

It is also interesting to note that only one of the nine most cited papers (listed in Table 1) employed any quantitative analysis—namely Goto (2021), which used a mixed methodology including analysis of archival data. Four of the ten ‘Best Paper’ winners (Table 2) had either a quantitative or mixed methodology. In *JPO*’s opening editorial we bemoaned that while ‘several interesting qualitative (even ethnographic) studies are being published, quantitative empirical studies using large data bases and/or data from more than one occupation

are few and far between’ (Brock, Leblebici and Muzio 2014: 3). Clearly more needs to be done to encourage a broader variety of methodological approaches in this area; and this should be achievable, given the evolving maturity of the field.

Academic field

The study of professions and professionals originated in the Sociology field (Gorman and Sandefur 2011), with the management and organizational aspects gravitating to business schools in the late 1900s (Suddaby and Muzio 2015; Brock 2021). We might thus ask if our data reveal some tendencies concerning the academic home of the main authors in our survey. Table 6 reveals that 85 of the 171 papers originated in business schools, with the proportions being relatively stable over the decade. However, combining the Sociology and Social science categories hints at an increasing trend over the decade.

The ‘Others’ category includes a wide range of areas, with only three papers originating in law schools, and one each from Engineering and Architecture. The complex realities of journal status and rankings, and their impact on promotion and tenure decisions across different academic disciplines, make it difficult to persuade

Table 5 *JPO* papers by methodological approach and year of publication.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Qualitative	5	6	6	10	9	13	10	11	11	12	93
Quantitative	2	2	1	3	1	4	4	1	6	5	29
Mixed			1				1	5	4		11
Review/essay	1			2	3	4	6	3		3	22
Conceptual	3	2	3	1	6			1			16
	11	10	11	16	19	21	21	21	21	20	171

Table 6 *JPO* papers by academic field of the lead author.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Business	6	6	5	10	9	13	8	12	9	7	85
Sociology	2	1	2	2	4	2	4		4	3	24
Social Sciences				4	2	1	3	6	4	7	27
Public		1	3		1	1	1	2		1	10
Healthcare		1	1		3	2	3		2		12
Others	3	1			1	2	2	1	2	2	14
	11	10	11	16	19	21	21	21	21	20	171

researchers to send their work to any specific journal—especially when the journal is fairly new. *JPO*'s 'community' principle was instrumental in attracting papers in the early years, and I hope we can continue in this spirit to be an integral part of a diverse academic community with growing and dynamic shared interests.

Country of origin

While the majority of the foundational articles from the early decades of this field were written by scholars based in the USA, the contemporary Professional Organization field is now well established around the world, but predominantly the Western world. The analysis of *JPO*'s first decade reveals about one quarter of the articles from North America and a further 65% from Europe. These numbers—accounting for 90% of *JPO* publications—were very stable over the decade. The leading single country is the Netherlands, with 24 of *JPO*'s 171 publications (14%). Other hotbeds of activity include the Scandinavian countries with 40 papers (23%), and the UK and Ireland, with combined 33 (19%). Further details are shown in [Table 7](#). Publications from the 'Rest of Europe' category include five from lead authors based in Germany, four from France, and two each from Italy and Switzerland.

JPO clearly has some work to do in terms of attracting authors from South America, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. However, surveys of other leading journals in the management and organization area reveal that *JPO* is not alone in facing this challenge. Recent desk reject letters to authors from these under-represented countries have included—among other words of encouragement—the following text:

We would like to add that *JPO* has not yet published a paper by researchers based in XXXXX, and sincerely would like to encourage authors from your country. Perhaps we can arrange some kind of paper development workshop, or other initiative to promote submissions and publications? Please let us know if you have suggestions.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This essay began with a review of *JPO*'s first decade of publishing research on professionalized workers and their workplaces. As such it provides food for thought for those of us who read and write about these contexts. However, in each area for which the review reveals a solid presence or progress—for example, research on institutional work and professional projects—we also see several areas to which sparse attention seems to have been directed. This essay thus concludes with some thoughts on future directions for researchers that take some important yet understudied issues forward. This discussion begins with the six broad topic areas, mirroring the 'interconnected subject areas' developed in the [Brock, Leblebici and Muzio \(2014\)](#) essay, and concludes with additional topics whose importance to our field has become more obvious recently.

Organizational models and structures

A decade ago we were certainly well aware of the decline of the traditional professional partnership, and the need for 'more corporate and managerial modes of operation' as well as the fact that new technologies 'have allowed the development of alternative organizational modes

Table 7 *JPO* papers by country of origin of the lead author.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
Canada	2			2	3	5	3		4		19
USA	2	2	2		1	3	2	1	2	6	21
UK and Ireland	2	1	4	2	5	3	9	3	1	3	33
Scandinavia	2	4	2	3	5	4	1	7	4	8	40
Netherlands		3	1	2	4	3	4	3	3	1	24
Rest of Europe	2		2	3	1	2	1	1	4	2	18
Asia				1				2	1		4
Australia and NZ				2			1		1		4
Israel	1			1		1		2	1		6
Turkey								2			2
Total	11	10	11	16	19	21	21	21	21	20	171

centered on network forms and virtual structures' (Brock, Lelebici and Muzio 2014: 5). This 'macro' topic was thus the first to be mentioned in the Brock, Lelebici and Muzio (2014) essay, in the expectation that *JPO* would be an important forum for new ideas and findings concerning organizational issues in these contexts.

It thus came as a surprise when the above review of *JPO*'s first decade plus further searches revealed that these expectations were not fulfilled: Only one empirical paper dealt with partnerships (von Nordenflycht 2014); one multi-case exploration and typology-building paper dealt with professional service network structures (Salvoldi and Brock 2019); and one review editors' essay (Greenwood, Hinings and Prakash 2017) discussed issues of structure and ownership before focusing on the social purpose of professional firms. A few other papers dealt with organization-level strategic issues, such as Klimkeit and Reihlen (2016) on how partners of local subsidiaries responded to a global integration initiative; Pickering (2017) on strategic decision-making in publicly traded PSFs; and Fu, Flood and Morris (2016) on organizational ambidexterity and professional firm performance.

One can speculate why this core subject area was ignored to such an extent by this first generation of *JPO* authors. As argued by authors from Ackroyd and Muzio (2007) to Smets et al. (2017), the era of relatively standard and predictable organizational forms has passed, and the contemporary field is characterized by complexity, disruption, lack of standardization, and so-called 'Alternative Business Structures' allowed by 2007 Legal Services Act in the UK. However—whether considering the Big Four or other large professional firms like Dunne, Brennan and Kirwan (2023), or alliances of medium firms like Salvoldi and Brock (2023)—*JPO* remains the primary home for research on organizational innovations relevant to professionals, and is committed to publish research in which existing organizational structures are reassessed and alternative organizational structures are introduced.

Micro-organizational issues

Traditional professional values like collegiality, independence, seniority, and external affiliation have clearly become less central in contemporary professional settings (Smets et al. 2017), and thus there is a lot to learn about micro organizational behavior in contemporary professional fields. Fortunately, a good selection of *JPO* papers over this decade helped paint the picture of how things work at the individual and group level. For example, Gorman (2015) sheds light on how and why some professionals do better than other in terms of organizational attainment; ten Dam and Waardenburg (2020) show how frontline professionals use institutional logics in

their day-to-day work; Lelasseux, Lander and Barbulescu (2021) study emotions as causal mechanisms and strategic resources; and Vogelgsang (2022) studies creativity and innovation in hybrid organizations.

However, there is a lot to be learned by studying workplace realities of these dynamic contexts. *JPO* will thus continue to emphasize research on micro-organizational issues affecting the management of professional workforces including: leadership practices and styles, changing career structures and employment patterns, the development of new control and accountability regimes as well as the processes, mechanisms, and outcomes of identity work. Thus, for example, we would like to see follow-up to the study of the impact of client-overlap hiring on PSF client embeddedness by Kim and Skaggs (2023); more understanding is needed on lateral moves of partners (Liu et al. 2022); and extending the field analysis of Bühlmann (2023) on how elite global PSFs act as a career stepping-stone in the selection and promotion of top executives.

Diversity, inclusion, and the professions

From the start we recognized that 'closure is an inherently gendered, classed and racialized process', encouraged papers in *JPO* on 'how certain professional practices and cultures affect different demographic groups', and stressed the 'the agency of professionals, their colleagues and their clients vis-a-vis their employers in these processes' (Brock, Lelebici and Muzio 2014: 7–8). Table 3 shows 10 papers with primary publications in the 'diversity/inequality' category. Additional papers from other categorizations also have significant relevance to this area: such as Briscoe and von Nordenflycht (2014)—in the HR category—who study how gender and ethnicity are related to networking strategies and billings; and the Zhu, Zhao and Liu (2020) paper—which is also in the HR category—contains important theory and finding on the gender gap in these elite firms.

JPO recently published a virtual special issue that focuses on inequality in professional work, which featured nine articles. An essay by the guest editors (Taheri and Ballakrishnen 2023) explains that social structure and inequality are not fixed concepts, and that finding solutions for their challenges requires dynamic and interconnected approaches (see <https://academic.oup.com/jpo/pages/special-issue-inequality-in-professional-work> for links to all the papers). This initiative benefited from a professional development workshop on 'diversity/inequality/inclusion' sponsored and organized by *JPO* editors and presented at the 2022 *Academy of Management Meetings*.

A parallel initiative involved a sub-pleinary on ‘Professions and Inequality: Challenges, Controversies, and Opportunities’ organized by Stefanie Gustafsson, Daniel Muzio, and Stefan Heusinkveld at the 2021 EGOS meetings (see https://www.egos.org/2021_amsterdam/SUB-PLENARIES). A recent essay by Ashley et al. (2023) summarizes key points of the sub-pleinary, focusing not only on how professions may exacerbate existing inequalities, but also on how professions can help tackle inequality as a grand challenge. *JPO*’s editors are committed to maintain this focus on diversity, inclusion, and the professions; and look forward to maintaining and improving our publication of important research on emerging thinking and findings in this essential area.

New/emerging professions and organization: towards new models of professionalization

This is clearly a central topic in *JPO*’s domain, as signaled in the original editors’ essay, and reflected in the above analysis. The ‘Institutional Work and Professional Projects’ category is the largest of all the Phenomena (see Table 3); and the discussion around ‘Occupation’ above (Table 4) mentioned the plethora of occupations featured in recent *JPO* papers. Recent *JPO* publications represent traditional occupations like banking (Siebert, Martin and Simpson 2020), the clergy (Sirris and Andersson 2023), and child-care workers (Avnoon and Sela-Sheffy 2021); as well as newer occupations like executive remuneration consultancy (Adamson, Manson and Zakaria 2015), high-tech workers (Zaidman 2021) or graphic designers (Moldenæs and Pettersen 2021).

Table 4 also includes the ‘Blue collar’ category for highly trained occupations with limited decision-making autonomy like police, nurses, and emergency workers. ‘Blue-Collar Professionalism’ was introduced into *JPO*’s evolving vocabulary by McCann and Granter (2019). Soon afterwards this was followed by *JPO* articles by Dudau, Kominis and Brunetto (2020) and by Jacobsson, Wallinder and Seing (2020), which used the ‘Street-level Bureaucrat’ term. The latter category generally refers to liaisons between government policy-makers and citizens, working in the civil service to implement policy decisions made by senior officials or by elected officials. A decade ago we wrote ‘*JPO* is committed to foster debate around new forms professionalism and patterns of professionalization, including occupational projects that are emerging’ (Brock, Lelebici and Muzio 2014: 9). *JPO* has, to a large extent, delivered on those commitments, and we intend to keep encouraging publication of new approaches, emerging occupations, and innovations in organization within this domain. These studies also evoke a continuing conversation and engagement around the theory and

definition of professions and professionalism; and also evokes the evolving understanding of the nature of professionalism, the theoretical apparatus surrounding the definitions of professions, which of course is essential to *JPO*’s mission.

Societal issues: professions and professional organization in the broader political economy

Professionals are supposed to work in the public interest. Unfortunately, this is often not always the case. In an early *JPO* article, Mike Saks (2014) presents arguments to expose professional self-interest. More recently Brooke Harrington (2021) writes about ‘The Professionals Who Are Really Not Helping’ and she notes the ‘profound betrayals of the social contract between professionals and the general public’. These sentiments are broadened in a *JPO* article by Bierman et al. (2019: 384), who show how professionals have failed in their societal functions: ‘Failures of gatekeeping ...most notably horrendous misvaluations by financial analysts of various securities coupled with widespread omissions of third-party auditors detailing toxic risk positions by their financial services clients’.

On the other hand, *JPO* papers illustrate where many professionals are still helping. For example, Liu and Halliday (2019) use the example of activist ‘Die-hard lawyers’ and their boundary work, fighting against the abuse of state power. Another encouraging example is illustrated by Brès et al. (2019), wherein CSR professionals approach their challenges by infusing activism with ‘a kind of soft political reformist ideology’ (249). Likewise, work by Meilvang (2021) contributes to the sociology of professions by in her study of professionals’ ‘moral work’ dealing in the ecological realm. As *JPO* enters its second decade, in a world where environmental, social, and governance (ESG) compliance is a reality of organizational existence, there is no doubt that our journal should be a forum for exploring social responsibility—not just by corporations—but by the professionals themselves. *JPO* will continue to be a core forum to accommodate and further these debates.

Transnational issues³

A key theme explored in many *JPO* articles has been to explore how professionals operate globally and transnationally, working across rather than within borders. The theoretical gambit here is to suggest that some professionals do not limit their operations to where they are licensed but actively seek to shape how issues are treated. This includes using tactics like ‘epistemic arbitrage’, where professionals strategically play-off pools of knowledge

to increase their control over issues (Seabrooke 2014), tracing those actors who become ‘arbiters’ and dominate the professional treatment of issues. Similar work has developed interest in the ‘habitus’ of elite professionals (Harrington 2017), and how they use and develop economic and cultural capital across borders (Kipping, Bühlmann and David 2019). The extent to which these professionals are unmoored from their national settings, or instead agents of them, has been questioned (Dezalay and Garth 2016).

Much of this thinking in *JPO* has explicitly developed concepts from Andrew Abbott’s (2005) classic piece on ‘linked ecologies’, which proposed the concepts of ‘hinges’ as issues that connect professional groups, and ‘avatars’ as the infiltration of one professional group’s logics into another. This action-oriented ‘linked ecologies’ approach has been used to study the emergence of professional groups at a transnational level (Seabrooke and Tsingou 2015), as well as how professional projects are spatially located, connecting the local to the transnational (Blok et al. 2018). This ecological thinking has been applied to a range of cases to explain professional interaction, including on regulatory and legal issues (Hasselbalch 2016; Francis 2020). The stress in this work has been on diagnostic struggle; as in how professional groups fight over jurisdictional boundaries.

Accordingly, this scholarship has also been associated with specifying how and when ‘boundary work’ takes place as professionals and professional groups make alliances and enemies over how issues are treated and who works on them. Valérie Boussard (2018) provides an example in her work on how in the financial merger and acquisition sector in London, New York, and Paris relies on normative rather than legal boundaries to populate the ecology of clients with former professionals who legitimize professional practices. All of this work has contributed to a more processual view of professional action, which follows on from Chicago School thinking on ecology. In this vein, Sida Liu’s (2018) theoretical explication of how professional life centers on forms of action linked to ‘boundary work’, ‘diagnosis’, and ‘exchange’ is particularly important.

Technology

In *JPO*’s initial editors’ essay (Brock, Leblebici and Muzio 2014) we scarcely mentioned technology, and certainly did not foresee the imminent importance of digital/virtual/online professional work. As mentioned in the earlier analysis of phenomena (around Table 3), *JPO* articles featuring the digital/virtual/AI/online topics were absent from *JPO*’s first six volumes. The first *JPO* paper to be squarely in this space was the study by Armour and

Sako (2020) on artificial intelligence and business models in legal services. This was followed by Goto (2021) who also studies AI, and how it impacted on sensemaking by professionals. In 2021 and 2022 we published a Special Forum on the topic of ‘Professionals and their Work in the Digital Era’ comprising six articles (split between *JPO* 8:3 and 9:1). The floodgates were now open, and further *JPO* papers recognized the reality of the digital era for professional work, seemingly covering three levels of analysis: the macro level, looking at broad-industry level changes like AI (Armour and Sako 2020) and the gig economy (Yao 2022); meso issues, such as how digital technologies effect and enact professional identity (Goto 2021; Kronblad and Jensen 2023); and organizational-level issues such as the study by Klimkeit and Reihlen (2022) on how organizational identity responds to digitalization in accounting, and the work of Callegari and Rai (2022) that investigates digitalization and innovation in law firms.

And beyond...

A decade ago we did mention the need ‘to recognize the decreasing monopoly of Western concepts, samples and theories of professional organization’ and expressed the importance of studies by authors and in locations that represent ‘the world as a whole’ (Brock, Leblebici and Muzio 2014: 11). The above analysis of authors’ country of origin (around Table 7) admits to our limited success in broadening *JPO*’s author base in terms of nationality. However, when looking at the location of empirical studies, we do see several recent studies in Asia. For example, Ballakrishnen (2017) studies entrenched gender meanings among Indian lawyers; and Tripathi et al., study frontline healthcare professionals working with marginal tribal communities in Western India. Kokterer and Tuncalp (2021) study auditors in Turkey; and Gürses and Danisman (2021) research institutional logics among Turkish healthcare workers. And the studies by Zhu, Zhao and Liu (2020) and by Li (2019) both focus on Chinese lawyers. So there is some limited progress, and the *JPO* editorial team continues to work to include research from beyond our initial home markets.

The future is devilishly tricky to predict (Boneabau 2002). Whether or not there are one or more elephants in the room can be evaluated by my successor/s a decade from now. Whatever predictions we may make, the body of work published by *JPO* certainly evidences a thriving field of scholars engaged with significant questions related to the professions. These achievements are due to the essential contributions of our community: the authors and reviewers, attendees of workshops and conferences, as well as all the great scholars who have served

as editors. And when looking to the future I am certain that the community will maintain its quality and engagement, opening up new avenues of research, new empirical settings, and theoretical questions, while growing in diversity and impact.

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When remembering what made *JPO* successful from the very start, I have to give copious credit to my fellow founding editors: Daniel Muzio for his constant input, ideas, and judgment calls over the years; and (unfortunately, with sadness) the wisdom and fundamental contributions of the late Huseyin Leblebici to *JPO*'s original positioning and early years.

Finally, for those editors who convinced me to drop 'herding cats' from the title of this essay, I sincerely hope that time will heal... ♥

NOTES

- 1 The analysis of papers was done in mid-October 2023, and includes all the papers published and accepted for publication at that time.
- 2 Thanks to Stefan Heusinkveld for suggesting this point.
- 3 Credit to Len Seabrook for this section.

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