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A proudly niche journal

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Table 1. List of *BMS* editorial titles (2018–2022).

2018	137–138	Conter nos méthodes	<i>Recounting our methods</i>
	139	Nouvelles du board	<i>News from the board</i>
	140	Format libre	<i>Open format</i>
2019	141	Un an déjà	<i>One year old already</i>
	142	<i>BMS</i> et RC33 : l'aventure continue	<i>Format BMS and RC33: the adventure continues</i>
	143	Bienvenue aux éditeurs et éditrices invitées	<i>A warm welcome to the guest editors</i>
	144	Variété quand tu nous tiens	<i>There's nothing like a little variety</i>
2020	145	Varia : à propos des méthodes de nos thèses, des évaluatrices et évaluateurs et du RGPD	<i>Varia: On thesis methodology, reviewers, and the GDPR</i>
	146	Mobilisons-nous !	<i>Rise up!</i>
	147–148	Un numéro « précaires » pour quoi faire ?	<i>Why a special issue on "precarity"?</i>
2021	149	Temps de Covid	<i>Covid times</i>
	150	Ceci n'est pas un anniversaire	<i>This is not an anniversary</i>
	151	La fabrique de leurs recherches	<i>The design of their work</i>
	152	A Guy Michelat, chercheur émérite	<i>To Guy Michelat, Emeritus researcher</i>
2022	153	L'écriture inclusive, une histoire en train de se faire	<i>Inclusive writing, a history in the making</i>
	154	C'est parti pour Sagetrack !	<i>Ready for Sagetrack!</i>
	155	Quand le <i>BMS</i> s'enrichit d'une nouvelle rubrique	<i>When the BMS adds a new section</i>
	156	A vos claviers, le prix Guy Michelat est lancé !	<i>Get to your keyboards: the Guy Michelat prize is launched</i>

project is fundamentally committed to the refusal of the standardisation of social sciences. It consists in putting reflexive narration at the heart of sharing methodological advances. As much as we are convinced that the social sciences anchor their scientificity in the rigour of empirical operations, and as such, that methods are crucial to guarantee the quality of the knowledge they produce, we believe that rigour must be wary of standardisation and 'good practices'. In a world in perpetual transformation, it seems to us that research must constantly question its practices rather than formalise them. The texts we publish in the *BMS* are not intended to tell colleagues what to do: they aim to give the most precise and possible reflective account of the means used to approach and define an object, to measure it or to collect and analyse traces of it. In doing so, the authors can fully understand what happened in the course of their research, the influence that their own ways of doing things, more or less planned as such – often rather less than more – had on what they found. Example and the sharing of experience seem to us to be effective vectors for innovation with confidence, while good practice always runs the risk of overlooking, if not masking, the driving force of serendipity – namely, in our opinion, empirical tinkering.

This editorial line – reflexive narrative versus good practice – is all the less obvious as 'methods' are not dominant objects in the social sciences. Those who engage in them often lack scientific authority and may tend to compensate by attempting to standardise

Table 2. Number of articles published in each section over the last five years (2018–2022)

Type of item	Number of articles published
Editorials (French and English)	18
Implementation	48
Tools and instruments	12
Models and protocols	6
The making of my research	8
The Method of my thesis	10
Social Sciences in question (from 2019)	6
Micro-macro (since 2022)	2
RC33 Newsletters	9
Other (prefaces to n° 137-138; introduction to the Social Sciences in question section, to the Micro-macro section and to the special issue on children)	5
Total number of articles published 2018–2022	124

practices, by wanting to say what is right and what is wrong. It is in this sense that ‘methodology’ can sometimes appear to be a Trojan horse for the standardisation of science, like it is the case in certain major international journals. On the contrary, we have taken it upon ourselves to make the *BMS* a niche journal, a journal in which one questions at length what one has done before coming to one’s results, a journal where one discusses in great detail the way one has approached one’s field, one’s interviewees, how one has coded and processed one’s data, a journal that publishes articles that are not of interest to everyone, but which Guy Michelat would have said are: “a treat for amateurs”.

Two of our editorials have been devoted to this outstanding researcher, the first shortly after his death and the other recently on the occasion of the launch of the prize created with the French Political Science Association (*AFSP*) and the *Centre Emile Durkheim* to honour his memory (<https://www.centreemiledurkheim.fr/actualites/vie-du-laboratoire/prix-guy-michelat-guy-michelat-award/>) Guy has largely inspired what we have done with the *BMS*. He was passionate about the question of measurement in the social sciences. He trained a generation of political scientists at Sciences Po Paris on the most qualitative interview there is, the non-directive interview, while introducing surveys into electoral studies. He could spend hours discussing the wording of an instruction or a question, and interpreting the responses obtained. He was both a pioneer of micro-computing for the social sciences and a defender of researcher autonomy in data collection and analysis techniques. This is why he embodies the journal in our eyes.

In order to carry out our publication project while diversifying the articles, we have devised several types of sections, in addition to the editorials published in French and English and the RC33 Newsletter, to which we will return. The “basic” section, in which colleagues reflect on the projects they have implemented, is indeed the most used (see Table 2): 30 articles published since 2018, plus the 18 articles published in the special issues. In this type of article, reflexivity makes it possible to avoid the two pitfalls of a simple account of the techniques used and the classic presentation of research based on an innovative methodology. The objective, which is rarely fully achieved, is to

understand how what one did constructed what one found. Two other sections accompany this one, which have in common that they do not necessarily reflect actual research: one focuses on the instruments used for methodological innovation; the other, which is rarer, offers a distanced reflection on a principle or a family of methods. It should be noted that articles published in these three sections are subject to two double-blind reviews, and comments sent by the reviewers feed the decisions taken by the four editors.

Since its foundation, the *BMS* has accompanied the development of information and the digitisation of the world. For more than three decades, it has served as a place for information on the actors, productions and places of dissemination of methodological work, in close collaboration with the Logic and Methodology Network of the International Sociological Association (ISA RC33). This connection still exists, but this information is now more broadly available, notably via the mailing list that Karl van Meter continues to run (*BMS-rc33@services.cnrs.fr*). It is also widely shared through the multitude of professional websites and networks. The *BMS* continues to publish the RC33 Newsletter twice a year, but it now focuses on the institutional information of the RC33.

Nevertheless, we are fully aware of the rapid changes that have occurred in a generation in terms of survey tools and techniques, and well beyond that, in terms of the materiality of the social and the conditions of practice of social science research. It therefore seemed important to us to make room for the expression of these differences in the journal by attracting both older and younger colleagues to our pages. We have therefore created two *ad hoc* sections. One invites well-known researchers to reflect on the place that questions of method have occupied, if not in their careers, at least in the work they have published (see Table 3). The other offers newly qualified doctors the possibility of valorising the methodological experiments carried out during their thesis, in a particularly ‘honest’ way that breaks with the formalism that characterises the publication of research work (Idem, see Table 3). The articles published in the first section, “The design of my work”, are published by invitation and are not subject to external review, but are read and commented on closely by the editorial committee. Those published in “The method of my thesis” are doubly reviewed, but in a slightly different way. We inform the persons solicited for these evaluations that we are committed to not refusing the articles submitted to us for this section, as long as the authors agree to rework them as much as necessary, and that we therefore ask them to indicate to us, at the same time as the weaknesses of the article, avenues for improvement. We then engage in a more or less lengthy process of accompaniment until the text seems ready for publication. The work required varies greatly and has sometimes proved so demanding that some of our young colleagues have preferred to give up. Thanks to all the others. We are particularly proud of the articles published in this section.

Two other sections were created along the way, in order to highlight methodological events organised by colleagues. First of all, the “Social Sciences in Question” section, in which we publish texts from the presentations made at the eponymous seminar coordinated at Sciences Po Paris for several years by Nonna Mayer and Samy Cohen. Six articles have been published since 2019. More recently, the ‘Micro Macro’ section, resulting from a panel organised by Claire Dupuy and Camille Hamidi at an *AFSP*

Table 3. Articles published in the sections “The making of my research” and “the method of my thesis” (2018–2022).

Year	Fabrique de ma recherche/ <i>Design of my work</i>	Méthode de ma thèse/ <i>Method of my thesis</i>
2018	<p>Philippe Cibois : Prendre les données au sérieux et rêver d'une sociologie autre (137-138)</p> <p>Nonna Mayer : Qualitatif ou quantitatif ? Plaidoyer pour l'éclectisme méthodologique (139)</p>	<p>Jessica Brandler-Weinreb : Enquêter sur la participation populaire en contexte de politisation extrême : saisir l'intime au cœur des dynamiques institutionnelles</p> <p>Katharine Throssell: <i>In the mouth of babes. A discussion of the use of semidirective projective interviews with children</i> (137-138)</p> <p>Alice Guilluy: <i>The lady knows the recipe: challenges of carrying out a feminist study of Hollywood romantic comedy</i> (140)</p>
2019	<p>Sidney Tarrow: <i>Comparison, triangulation and embedding research in history: a methodological self-analysis</i> (141)</p>	<p>Thierry Rossier: Prosopography, networks, life course sequences, and so on. Quantifying with or beyond Bourdieu? (144)</p>
2020		<p>Julien Audemard: <i>Objectifying contextual effects. The use of snowball sampling in political sociology.</i></p> <p>Pierre Blavier : La grande récession de 2008 au prisme des budgets des ménages espagnols (145)</p> <p>Paul Cormier : Quand les difficultés du terrain sont ailleurs. Soubresauts d'un protocole de recherche sur la gauche révolutionnaire turque des années 1970</p> <p>Emilien Paulis: <i>Using social network analysis (SNA) to study members and activists of political parties</i> (147-148)</p>
2021	<p>François Dubet : Une histoire personnelle de méthodes (2021)</p> <p>André Blais : Comment chercher ?</p> <p>Christine Musselin : Sociologue de l'Université : quand des opportunités font trajectoire</p> <p>Eric Neveu: <i>In the hope that scientific nomadism may turn out to be meaningful after all</i> (151)</p>	
2022	<p>Don A. Dillman: <i>Fifty years of survey innovation</i> (154)</p>	<p>Germain Bonnel : Etudier le travail au ras du sol. Une enquête sur le travail en agriculture biologique</p> <p>Francesca Quercia : Sur l'utilité du concept beckerien de « monde de l'art » afin d'appréhender un objet multiniveau. Le cas des projets de théâtre dans les quartiers populaires (156)</p>

congress (three articles published to date, a fourth to be published in this issue). In both cases, the texts are thoroughly reworked, first at the request of the people in charge of the section, then, after external review, at our request.

It is time to talk about those on whom the success of a journal like ours depends, namely the reviewers. As you will have gathered, our journal is not one of those that can boast an impressive citation index and that, given the constant flow of submissions, are essentially content to accept or reject articles. Not that we do not reject articles: for 92 texts published in the last five years,¹ we have rejected more than 80. But these rejections are largely rejections before evaluation: 49 “deskrejects” for 32 negative evaluations – and even then, for more than half of these rejections, we opened the possibility of a new submission and it was the authors who did not wish to follow up. Because we are a ‘niche’ journal, which paradoxically only interests a limited number of colleagues because of our subject matter – social science methods – and our particular way of approaching them, we are keen to work with the authors who submit texts to us to get them to share our perspective, in other words, to openly question their practices and the ways in which their scientific demonstration is constructed. To do this, we rely on the opinions and suggestions of the evaluators we solicit, from whom we expect not so much to say yes or no to the publication as to suggest ways of improving the texts we give them to read.

These reviewers are therefore particularly valuable and we would like to thank them once again for the difficult and free work they accept to do for us. Each year we take the opportunity of the first editorial to thank those of the past year. For reviewing the articles submitted in 2022, we would like to thank Alex Alber, Themistoklis Apostolidis, Anne-Marie Arborio, Jordan Becker, Tony Bennett, Jörg Blasius, Christophe Brochier, Marie Buscatto, Andréa Campbell, Marion Charbonneau, Philippe Cibois, Philippe Coulangeon, Mick P. Couper, Jessica Daikeler, and others. Couper, Jessica Daikeler, Lise Dassieu, Laurence Droy, Anja Durovic, Virginie Dutoya, Rosalind Edwards, Dave Elder-Vass, Mathieu Ferry, Aude-Claire Fourot, Mathieu Ichou, Tim Johnson, Dominique Joye, Christine Larrazet, Marie-Claire Lavabre, Françoise Liot, Rémy Madinier, Alexandre Mairot, Marième N’Diaye, Sophie Panel, Pierre Paillé, Sébastien Plutniak, Danielle Pollock, Nicolas Robette, Olivier Roueff, Olivier Rozenberg, Madlyne Samak, Marie Scot, Tom W. Smith, Dennis Suev, Amal Tawfik, Mark Taylor, Benoit Tudoux, Ioana Vasilescu and Jean-Marc Weller.

We also want to stress how time-consuming this reviewing work and the back and forth with the authors is. Our reviewers often find it difficult to keep to the two-month deadline that we propose; and we ourselves need time, when the two reviews are available, to synthesise them and decide what we want to propose to the authors in terms of follow-up. Let us say that it is our contribution, often involuntary, to the slowing down of science (Gosselain 2011; Noûs 2020) to take the time to reflect on the improvement of articles and to ask their authors to take them back. We know that these delays can be difficult to bear, especially for our precarious colleagues, but we want to assure them that we do our best.

The organisation of our journal is a hybrid between a French-style associative model centred on an editorial board that shares the evaluations and decides together on the future of the texts submitted to it, and the international peer-reviewed journal, in which each article is

submitted, in an anonymised version, to colleagues outside the journal, who also intervene anonymously and whose recommendations are binding. Unless these two recommendations are contradictory: the arbitration, in the peer-reviewed model, is then made by an editor, under contract with the publishing house, possibly helped by assistants. In the case of the *BMS*, the journal, which was created as an association in 1983, effectively became the property of SAGE in 2010 (for a history of the *BMS*, see van Meter, 2018). Between 2018 and 2021, we supervised the journal as a duo. But, added to our own activities, the double work of finding reviewers willing to make themselves available to comment substantially on the articles and of accompanying the authors in the quasi-systematic revision of their text proved exhausting (not to mention the verification and formatting of the articles before submission to the SAGE publication assistant and the double checking of the proofs); and this, even if we were able to rely regularly on the colleagues of the editorial board, also inspired by the peer-reviewed model: thanks once again to Philip Balsiger, Marc-André Bodet, Mathieu Brugidou, Damien Cartron, Margot Delon, Jérémy Dodeigne, Claire Dupuy, Olivier Fillieule, Florent Gougou, Camille Hamidi and of course, Karl van Meter. So we looked for help and now we are proposing to SAGE to continue the adventure with four people. We maintain the double-blind review of most articles,² especially since we are now required to use the ScholarOne platform for tracking submissions, but we share the tracking of articles and especially the (very) difficult search for reviewers. We can also discuss more broadly the decisions to be made, both on individual texts and on the general evolution of the journal.

Among the constraints of the journal, which are also its strength, is of course its particular form of internationalisation. The *BMS* is at the interface between French, or even French-speaking, sociology and political science, and English-speaking social sciences, mainly European and North American. This positioning, in the image of its founder, Karl van Meter, is reinforced by the location of the journal, between the *Centre Emile Durkheim* in Bordeaux, where its scientific editors work, and the team of its commercial publisher, SAGE, which administers it from London and California, or even India, where the journal is now manufactured, while its editorial assistant, Emilie Bickerton, commutes between Paris and London. This internationalisation is reflected in its organisational model, as we have just seen, and is reflected in the balanced bilingualism of its publications as well as in the scientific nationality of its authors and reviewers (see Table 4 and Table 5). Thanks to the partnership with the RC33, half of the readership and authors of the *BMS* are European and North American, and the journal also contributes to

Table 4. Academic nationality of colleagues who reviewed an article for the *BMS* between 2018 and 2022.

France	111
Europe (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom)	38
North America (Canada, Quebec, USA)	23
Rest of the world (Australia, Chile)	3
Total	175

Table 5. Distribution of articles according to the country of professional residence of the corresponding author, at the time the article was accepted (2018–2022).

Professional nationality of the correspondent	Articles in English	Articles in French	Total
France	16	36	52
Europe (Germany, Italy, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Norway, United Kingdom, Hungary, Switzerland, Austria, Netherlands)	27	4	31
North America (USA and Canada)	11	3	14
Asia	1	0	1
Africa (Burkina Faso)	0	1	1
Total	55	44	99

NB. This table was created by extracting the web data from the site. The number of texts considered differs slightly from those of Table 2, in which the articles have been counted manually.

making the methodological contributions of French colleagues known: younger people in particular, but not only, as shown by Éric Neveu’s choice to publish the ‘Design of [his] work’ in English, and Nonna Mayer and Christine Musselin’s choice to have theirs translated, which is available as ‘supplementary material’ on the journal’s website.

We have worked for five years to consolidate the position of the *BMS* as a niche and international journal addressing a fundamental issue in the social sciences, aiming to promote a pluralistic and somewhat iconoclastic approach to methodology. As it happens, these have been difficult years for many, due to the Covid-19 crisis, on the one hand, and the increasing precariousness that characterises the social science research profession in much of the world, for the younger generation in particular. The *BMS* mobilised with the collective of journals in struggle and its own contribution resulted in a double special issue – 147-148, 2020 – composed exclusively of texts written (or co-authored) by colleagues who were precarious at the time. The question of the difficult conditions of access to permanent positions in our disciplines remains important for us. The arrival in the editorial team of our young colleague Ahmed Fouad El Haddad is a way of attesting to this. Fouad also brings to us an increased interest and competence in the quantitative approach to data, particularly digital data, and thus balances our team, which now consists of two practitioners of qualitative methods, Sophie Duchesne and Xabier Itcaina, and two specialists in quantitative methods, Viviane Le Hay and Fouad El Haddad.

For the five-year term that begins with this issue, we therefore aim to pursue the editorial project presented here, but doing our utmost to broaden the journal’s international horizon, both to the east – whether it be Central and Eastern Europe or Asia – and to the south, towards Africa and Latin America in particular. In the shorter term, we have a number of interesting projects in the pipeline, starting with an issue on computational sciences, proposed by Felix Lennert and Etienne Ollion, and an issue that will be the subject of a call for papers directed by Clément Réversé, on the unspoken aspects of survey reports. We are also starting a collaboration with the leaders of the new summer school on mixed methods, Thomas Aguilera, Tom Chevalier and Benoit Giry, organised by the ARENES laboratory (<https://arenes.eu/ecole-dete-annuelle-sur-les-methodes->

mixtes-en-sciences-sociales/) which should lead to a new section. Finally, 2023 will see the first edition of the double Guy Michelat prize, which as you might have understood, is particularly important to us.

At the same time, the publication work continues. So here is the menu for this new double issue. It begins with a text by Olivier Roy, whom we have invited to speak about "the design of his work". The article offers a retrospective reflection on the methodological dimensions of a research project initially devoted to the relationship between Islam and politics, first in Afghanistan, then in various regional contexts, and finally extended to the relationship between religion, politics and culture in the contemporary world. The author returns to his concrete, empirical and intuitive relationship with fieldwork, nourished by a culture of human and social sciences impregnated with anthropology and philosophy. Halfway between a retrospective reading of a work – which can be deepened by reading *En quête de l'Orient perdu* (Roy and Schlegel, 2014) – and a scientific and methodological manifesto, the article will undoubtedly provoke reactions among *BMS* readers! It can be read as a symmetrical position to that of André Blais, published in issue 151 (Blais, 2021).

The following article enriches the questioning opened by Claire Dupuy and Camille Hamidi on the empirical articulation of micro and macro approaches. It discusses a research project aimed at explaining the recurrence of discrimination in access to social housing, in which the author implemented a multilevel approach to street level bureaucracy. In particular, Marine Bourgeois examines the ways in which the levels of analysis can be varied through ethnographic investigation, and shows us how she extracted macro elements from data collected mainly at the micro or meso level.

This issue then includes four implementation articles. The first is by Leslie Haddon, Davide Cino and Mary-Alice Doyle. With the continued digitisation of publication media, and the development of bibliographic databases, it has become possible to conduct systematic literature reviews. By means of an illustration on the factors that favour the development of digital abilities in children, the authors show how the carrying out of this type of literature review is subject to micro-decisions that can significantly orient the results. In this sense, their approach to the exercise is not so much a step among others in the research process as an end in itself, making it possible to gain transparency and to make explicit the subjective choices made that the systematic nature of the work cannot erase.

The second implementation is the work of Marion Maudet and Alexis Spire, who propose to return to the ways of quantitatively studying relations with institutions during the epidemic crisis of Covid-19. They use the first two rounds of the Epicov survey to compare the confidence expressed in the public authorities with the attitudes adopted in the face of the constraints of confinement and the obligation to wear a mask. The article argues in favour of paying close attention to the statistical categorisation of trust, and questions the causal relationship between trust in institutions and compliance with injunctions.

Afterwards, Alexis Kaboré and Ramané Kaboré defend the survey approach they have experimented with in order to make up for the impossibility of going to the field, due to the insecurity that now prevails in the region where they have been investigating for years: eastern Burkina Faso. They have therefore developed what they call an "ex-

situ survey”, which they think has great potential, and which proceeds by inviting respondents outside the field itself, in Ouagadougou, and by telephone interviews. In so doing, the article invites us to question the ethnographic methodological tradition borrowed by socio-anthropology with regard to the multiplication of ‘impossible fields’ and the opportunities offered by modern transport and communication technologies.

The last “implementation” article presents how Léo Joubert, Olivier Lê Van Truoc, Pierre Mercklé and Benoit Tudoux “hesitated in the right direction” when it came to exploiting the data from the *Life in Confinement* (VICO) questionnaire survey. This online survey was conducted during the period of strict confinement in France in spring 2020, when both the sociologists and the respondents were confined to their homes. The authors explain the sampling biases they faced, and the way they chose to adjust their sample. In doing so, they show that their trade-offs consist in finding the point of convergence between probabilistic theory and sociological reasoning; that is, in constantly worrying about what the adjustments applied do to the sample obtained so as not to degrade it.

Aashti Salman’s article, submitted under the heading “the method of my thesis”, was therefore the occasion for an in-depth and fascinating exchange with the author. Here, she develops the application of a mixed methods research design in a sequential manner to analyse the employment aspirations of young people from the Muslim minority community in Delhi. The article illustrates how the qualitative enriches the quantitative to investigate the formation of aspirations for social mobility, despite an unfavourable opportunity structure.

Finally, the issue ends with the Spring Newsletter of RC33, written as it should be by its Vice-President for Information and our dear colleague, Karl van Meter. Enjoy your reading!

Sophie Duchesne, Ahmed Fouad El Haddad, Viviane Le Hay and Xabier Itcaina
Bordeaux, January 2023

Notes

- 1 That is, the 124 texts listed in Table 2 minus the 18 editorials, the 9 RC33 newsletters and the 5 texts categorised as “other”, all of which are less than ten pages long.
- 2 To be clear, the articles published in the sections: Implementations; Tools and instruments; Models and protocols, as well as The methods of my thesis, are subject to double blind-review, but the latter, with slightly different instructions to the reviewers. The articles solicited for The design of my research are not evaluated, but only commented by the board and the editors. Finally, the articles proposed in the framework of special issues and guest columns are reviewed externally only once, knowing that the persons in charge of the column or issue have intervened before the submission of the article.

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