

**Pierre Mercklé et Claire Zalc**

***Trajectories of persecuted during World War II: contributions to a microhistory of the holocaust***

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The application of prosopographical methods to the study of the Holocaust remains fairly uncommon, especially in France. In this presentation, we would like to draw on a survey that allowed us to reconstruct "trajectories of persecution" through World War II, in order to discuss the difficulties and possible benefits of sequence analysis in this particular case.

The first part of our communication will review the difficulties encountered in the early days of our investigation on a cohort of about a thousand people identified as Jews and as residing in Lens at the beginning of World War II. Our attempts to "model" persecution and its effects on their trajectories raised a certain number of methodological issues. Some of these difficulties raised from the construction of the survey population itself: our approach could have been suspected of scientifically supporting the identification logic of the persecutors by subsuming under a single name (the "Jewish population") a heterogeneous set of individuals. Other difficulties came from the causal scheme implied by our approach: is reducing choices made under tragic circumstances to their social determinants appropriate? How accurate and realistic is our account of persecution, if it reduces its causes age, income level or family size? The benefits of quantification must not conceal the problems raised by the the linear patterns of causality underpinned by the techniques we initially tested (correspondence analysis, logistic regression).

To conceptualize our data as "trajectories of persecution" seems to offer interesting prospects for overcoming some of these difficulties. In the second part of our presentation, we will therefore describe how we translated our database into a corpus of "sequences". Our aim was to formalize successions of time sequences into trajectories of individual confronted to persecution, in order to identify classes of trajectories, patterns and trends. By moving from a logic of properties to a logic of sequential states, and from a logic of causes to a logic of paths, we hope to describe, order and interpret the plurality of trajectories, yet without renouncing to quantification. While some previous difficulties may be solved, new ones may emerge, due to some properties of our sources (missing data, problems with formalizing events into states...), which we also intend to discuss.

Eventually, we will giving some indications of the benefits that may be drawn from approaches mobilizing "optimal matching analysis", in order to discuss the contribution of these modes of quantification to a better understanding of interactions, at a local level, between victims and persecutors, and in order to address possible contributions of approaches in terms of trajectories, to a microhistory of the Holocaust.