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Work organisation and restructuring in the Knowledge Society

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WORKS qualitative pillar - Workshop summaries

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Deliverable 6.2 - WORKS Qualitative Pillar Workshop summaries

London, 22-23 March 2006

Vienna, 11-12 May 2006

Jörg Flecker, Ulrike Papouschek, FORBA

works
CHANGES IN WORK

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1 Workshop summary - London

On March 22th and 23th 2006 the WORKS qualitative research pillar launched a workshop to discuss and agree to a research design for the WORKS project. The second goal of the workshop was to prepare and discuss the second workshop within this workpackage, a methods workshop for all researchers of Workpackage 10 and 11 on May 11th and 12th in Vienna.

Agenda of the Workshop

Conclusions from WP3 and focus of qualitative research (Jörg Flecker - FORBA, Gérard Valenduc - FTU, Ursula Huws - WLRI)

Jörg Flecker, Gérard Valenduc and Ursula Huws presented some conclusions and hypothesis from the WP3 synthesis report.

Relation between qualitative and quantitative research in WORKS (Monique Ramioul - HIVA-K.U.Leuven)

There will not be any primary research in the quantitative pillar. The literature study on findings from organisation surveys will be accomplished in October/November 2006. Background papers on results from analyses of employee surveys will be available at the end of year 2. The quantitative pillar may thus provide comparative background information for the case study analysis (sectoral and occupational shifts, differentials between sectors *etc.*). The case study results could help to interpret survey analyses. The main link between the pillars however is the combination of their results in year 3.

Value chains as object of study (Vassil Kirov - IS)

Vassil Kirov gave a short input on value chains as an object of study. His conclusions and recommendations:

There is a necessity to concentrate efforts for background studies including:

- trying to make 'economies of scales', while preparing the background studies for these cases - *e.g.* to divide work on particular value chains between different partners;
- developing guidelines how to conduct background studies (as part of the guidelines for the structure of the reports) in order to ensure coherence;
- balancing approaches in collecting information (sectors and value chains, regions and value chains, nation states and value chains).

There is also a necessity to reconstruct value chains (or parts of value chains) once case studies have been finished.

Comparative case study research: how to investigate institutions 'at work'? (Pamela Meil - ISF)

In the literature little can be found about how policies and regulations actually affect work. This will be a main focus of the research in WORKS (impact of institutions on the outcome of restructuring, enforcement of regulation *etc.*).

Gender issues (Ewa Gunnarsson and Dag Balkmar - NIWL)

Ewa Gunnarsson and Dag Balkmar presented the conceptual frame of gender issues in the WORKS project.

Organisational case studies (Jörg Flecker and Ulrike Papouschek - FORBA)

Jörg Flecker and Ulrike Papouschek presented the research design and research procedure of the organisational case studies. This included research questions and hypotheses, the selection of cases and data collection, the draft guidelines, suggestions concerning the (software-supported) interview analysis, comparative analysis and case study reporting. One important issue was the selection of sectors/business functions. In a very fruitful discussion it was managed to improve this selection of sectors/business functions.

Research questions and hypotheses

The impact of the restructuring of value chains on work organisation and quality of life is at the core of the research questions. To give the research more focus it is necessary to keep only topics that are directly related to changes of value chains. Therefore the focus should be strictly on the interrelations between restructuring of value chains and quality of work. One such topic is the standardisation of work processes; another relates to the outsourcing or supply contracts between companies, issues of performance monitoring and quality assurance *etc.* that may have a direct impact on work organisation and skill demands.

Two perspectives are relevant: first, the current state of affairs (structures) and second the changes, the restructuring (processes). As far as restructuring is concerned the driving forces and the motives of the main actors also play a role.

The presented research questions were structured according to analytical dimensions:

- legal/organisational dimension (company boundaries, organisation of networks and value chains, labour regulation *etc.*);
- spatial dimension (location of units and workplaces, distributed work, relocation of work);
- functional dimension (products/services, workflow, tasks, communication, skills, knowledge *etc.*);

- social dimension (power relations, employment relations, gender relations, social relations between occupational groups *etc.*);
- temporal dimension (time-line of restructuring, working hours, temporal flexibility *etc.*).

Software-supported interview analysis

An open question was if software should be used in interview analysis and if so, which one.

Procedures differ considerably with regard to their objectives and methods:

- QDA (qualitative data analysis) programmes such as MAXqda (formerly WINMAX), NUD.IST and NUD.IST Nvivo, The Ethnograph, ATLAS ti: computer-supported procedures in a 'traditional qualitative' interpretation - semantics-based;
- programmes for quantitative analysis (Textpack, Intext General Inquirer): pursue the aim of coding texts in dictionary-based categories;
- procedures for comparative analysis such as QCA (qualitative comparative analysis): model-oriented comparative procedure, requires a deductive approach.

Possible benefits of QDA programmes:

- helpful in systemising the analysing process;
- gives a frame which makes it comfortable to handle large amounts of interview material, supports the assigning and managing of analytical categories and supports with special tools the interpretation process by arranging the material by self-defined criteria.

Possible disadvantages of QDA programmes:

- exploding of complexity (thousands of assessment categories);
- partners (researchers) without experience with QDA programmes.

Key questions that were discussed at the workshop:

- should the exchange of results be limited simply to the case study reports?
- should we plan to exchange the primary data (the interview texts)?

It was agreed to limit the exchange of results to the case study reports. In order to be able to exchange the coding as well as the texts it would be necessary for all participants to use the same software. There is in addition the issue of language. We assumed that it would not be possible to conduct the interviews in English. It would require a considerable effort to have all the transcribed interview translated. As a consequence of this decision the use of software is optional.

Occupational case studies (Patricia Vendramin and Gérard Valenduc - FTU)

Patricia Vendramin and Gérard Valenduc presented the research design and research procedure of the occupational case studies. This included research questions and hypotheses, data collection, interview analysis, comparative analysis and case study reporting. One important issue was the selection of the occupational case studies. It was

agreed that the occupational case studies are chosen within the business functions. The proposal made and discussed in London was to choose the eight following occupational groups:

- in R&D and creative jobs: designers in the clothing industry, researchers in the IT sector;
- in production: software developers and programmers in IT, skilled and semi-skilled production workers in clothing or food industries;
- in logistics: product line managers and skilled or semi-skilled workers (logistics in the clothing or food industries);
- in customer services: front office employees in public services or services of general interest;
- in IT service provision: IT professionals as service providers for public services or services of general interest.

The distribution of occupational groups between research teams will follow the final decision on organisational case studies. A matrix will be circulated after agreement on the organisational case studies.

Each team will conduct case studies in two occupational groups. An occupational case study represents around nine interviews. The interviews will be carried out in the same organisations as the organisational case studies. If this is not fully possible a minimum of four workers should be interviewed in the case study - organisations, the rest in similar organisations (with respect to sector and business function but also restructuring).

Research questions and hypotheses

The key question that the occupational case studies intend to answer is: 'How do company strategies and labour market regulation impact on careers trajectories, time use and occupational identities?'

This means that the qualitative approach of occupational groups will tackle the individual dimension of changes in work, through the analysis of:

- work biographies, career construction and choices;
- changes in occupational identities;
- quality of work (working conditions, health and safety, stress, time use, ...);
- learning and skills development;
- work/life balance, including household dynamics (questions related to conciliation, family formation, children, ...);
- gender dimensions of changes.

Gender and ethnic characteristics are transversal matters that will come across all topics.

There are two perspectives in the qualitative approach: the first one is to draw out a picture of the current reality of work within these occupational groups and the second one is to identify and understand effects due to changes in work organisation and restructuring of value chains.

Forthcoming deliverable 'Report on comparative methodology' (D6.3)

The structure and content of the forthcoming deliverable 'Report on comparative methodology' was presented and discussed.

Methods workshop (10-12 May 2006, Vienna)

The draft agenda of the methodological workshop in Vienna was presented and discussed.

2 Workshop summary - Vienna

The aims of this workshop were:

- to reach a common understanding on research questions;
- to discuss and agree on research methods;
- to discuss research guidelines;
- to discuss selection and assignment of cases;
- to agree on case study reporting.

The papers or presentations of the second workshop are available on the WORKS website. To get a general idea see the agenda below. 39 researcher (of the WORKS project) participated in the workshop.

WP6 - Agenda methodological Workshop, Vienna, 11-12 May 2006

Thursday, 11 May 2006

- 09:00 Introduction to the workshop (Jörg Flecker and Ulrike Papouschek - FORBA)
09:30 The role of the institutional framework in the case studies - input and discussion (Pamela Meil - ISF)

Organisational case studies (Jörg Flecker and Ulrike Papouschek - FORBA)

- 10:15 General research design
11:15 Research questions and guidelines - input and discussion
14:00 Data collection/ data analysis/ reporting - input and discussion
15:00 Cases selection - input
Presentations:
- K.U.Leuven/HIVA (Catholic University of Leuven/Higher Institute for Labour Studies)
 - FORBA (Working Life Research Centre)
 - FTU (Fondation Travail-Université, Work & Technology Research Centre)
 - LONDONMET (London Metropolitan University, Working Lives Research Institute)
 - UPSPS (Panteion University of Political and Social Sciences, Department of Social Policy & Social Anthropology)
 - UT (University of Twente, School of Business, Public Administration & Technology)
 - ISB (Institute of Sociology of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences)
 - ISF (Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung e.V.)

- FZK/ITAS (Forschungszentrum Karlsruhe, Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis)
 - FFCT-UNL (Fundação da Faculdade de Ciências e Tecnologia-UNL)
 - NIWL (National Institute for Working Life, Department for Research on Development Processes)
 - ATK (Arbetslagarkonsultation AB, Arbetsliv)
 - IRES (Istituto di Ricerche Economiche e Sociali)
 - SINTEF (Stiftelsen for industriell og teknisk forskning ved Norges tekniske høyskole)
 - IS (Institute of Sociology, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences)
- 18:00 Organisational case studies: next steps, open questions

Friday, 12 May 2006

- 08:30 Gender issues: levels of quantitative and qualitative measurement in the case studies and the occupational groups (Ewa Gunnarsson and Dag Balkmar - NIWL)

Occupational case studies (Gérard Valenduc and Patricia Vendramin - FTU)

- 10:00 General research design
 11:00 Research questions and guidelines - input and discussion
 12:00 Cases selection/ data collection/ method - input and discussion
 14:00 Interview analysis/reporting - input and discussion
 15:00 Comparative analysis - input and discussion

Conclusions/next steps

- Case selection: contact with companies, negotiation of access should be continued during the following weeks.
- First case study should (partly?) be finished until the meeting in September - suggestions for first case early in June.
- One pilot interview for the occupational case studies should be finished by mid-September.
- One expert interview on gender issues should be included in each organisational case study - a special guideline will be provided by Ewa Gunnarsson and Dag Balkmar (NIWL).
- Background information on policies and institutions: report for policy pillar can be used as background information.
- Background information on value chains: this information should show what kind of description of value chains is needed in the case study report.
- Background information on regional/national/sectoral gender contracts: it needs to be clarified whether such information can be compiled centrally and provided for the research teams.

- Connection between organisational case studies and occupational case studies: the link should not be too close. Organisational and occupational case studies are two different steps in the research with separate reporting, comparative analysis and synthesising.
- Occupational case studies: interviews with some workers (min. 2-4, depending on size) in the companies/networks investigated in the case studies (information can also be used for organisational case study reports).
- Other respondents in the same business function in similar organisational situation (*e.g.* IT service provider working for the same public organisation).
- Definition of occupational groups needs to be clarified.