Hard work in new jobs. The quality of work and life in European growth sectors

Ursula Holtgrewe, FORBA, Book presentation at ETUI, Brussels, November 17, 2015
“New” and growing jobs in Europe

The “knowledge society” is failing to get rid of “hard work”:

- > 50% of employment expansion in EU 2000-2007 with poor quality:
  - Problematic working conditions,
  - Precarious employment,
  - Low wages,
  - Lack of social integration
Why „Hard Work“?

— “bad jobs” go beyond measurable definitions – but the term doesn’t really work in the field!

— Accumulated disadvantages: Strains, hardships, risks and vulnerabilities

— Low-wage: Actual wage levels depend on equality, collective bargaining

— Low-skilled: Skills of jobs vs skills of workers
  — Social, gendered, ethnocentric … definition of “skills” and their value
The expansion of „hard work“

— Job creation over job quality and left to the market

— Job relocation and automation (manufacturing), “skill-biased technological change” (in EU, wage rather than skill polarisation)

— Outsourcing of service functions from companies, public sector, also households

— Declining union power and influence

— Policies of liberalisation and labour market dualisation
What is new?

— Since end of 1990s rediscovery of low-wage etc. work in studies of work – our findings in line with others

— range of sectors and occupations – “ancillary services” + construction

— range of countries beyond wealthy Liberal and Coordinated ones: Southern (IT, ES) and Eastern Europe (LT, HU, BU)

— Combination of insight into structure and meaning of hard work
Levels of analysis

Monique Ramioul

Vassil Kirov

EU survey data job quality and outcomes

Companies & workplaces

Social partnership & institutions

Workers’ views
Segmentation, inequality and vulnerability

Low pay
(Markova et al.; Poggi et al; Sardadvar et al.)
- Sensemaking
- Social and material wellbeing
- Gender Migration Minority status

Careers
(Hohnen et al.)
- Trajectories & “capacities to aspire”
- Younger and older workers

Employment
(Recio et al.)
- Part-time Fragmented employment
- Gender inequality
Autonomy and social ties

Autonomy
(Sørensen et al.)
- Too much or too little
- Occupation & function

Workplace social order
(Holtgrewe and Hohnen)
- Material and symbolic worker interests
- Social ties as resources for whom?
Methodology

Comparability & Contextuality
(Holtgrewe, Markova, Ravn)

Countries, sectors, companies, groups of workers

Survey data, stakeholders, case studies, participation

Research team
Results: Characteristics of „new and growing“ sectors

— “new and growing jobs” in Europe

— address fairly **basic needs**: clean shelter, food, care, waste disposal

— are **labour-intensive services** “on the ground” (except construction) – role of the client’s demands and needs!

— require **mobility** (work on clients’ sites)

— face **cost pressure** by clients and employers (part public or ex-public sector)

— are shaped by issues of **sustainability** and **quality of life** and shape them for society
General observations

— The range of job quality is enormous:
  — Bulgarian Roma street sweeper who can’t afford a train ticket to work
  — an “empowered”, team-working, unionised, well-trained Norwegian or Belgian builder or cleaner
  — “Institutional anchors”, national employment regimes and worker voice continue to shape “new and growing jobs”
  — (policy-induced) market and cost-based competition logics mostly exert downward pressure
  — Workers “cope” but are severely constrained and deserve better
Good practices:
www.walqing.eu/webresource
More reading matter: walqing research and output

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Results</th>
<th>Output</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dataset analysis WPs 2-4</td>
<td>ELFS Growth index, business function analysis, sector profiles</td>
<td>Vandekerckhove et al. 2010, Vandekerckhove &amp; Ramioul 2011a, b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EWCS Weighted job quality measure, Cluster analysis, QofW typology</td>
<td>Holman &amp; McClelland 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-SILC &amp; EQLS</td>
<td>Dimensions of QofL: material, subjective, objective wellbeing, social integration</td>
<td>Vesan &amp; Bizzotto 2011, Poggi et al. 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sector investigation WPs 5, 8</td>
<td>Sector selection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>Country x sector studies</td>
<td>walqing social partnership series, Kirov 2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
<td>Policy gaps and potentials</td>
<td>Jaehrling &amp; Lehndorff 2012, Policy briefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Results</td>
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<tr>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>WP 6</td>
<td>Organisation cases</td>
<td>Company strategies, dimensions of QofW. Good practice examples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP 7</td>
<td>Occupational groups</td>
<td>Vulnerability, subjective QofW, careers, aspirations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPs 5-8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research WP9</td>
<td>Social partners, companies</td>
<td>Small-scale interventions &amp; reflexion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Integrated findings by subject</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Work and Life Quality in New & Growing Jobs

Thank you and watch this space: www.walqing.eu
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