Hard work. New and growing 'bad' jobs in Europe and ways to improve them: Findings from the walqing project

Ursula Holtgrewe, FORBA
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Why is quality of work important?

Limitations of „jobs, jobs, jobs“ policy

— inequality, „working poor“, expanding low-wage sectors
— Going beyond focus on access to and exit from labour market
— Demographics, changing & diverse workforces, health, sustainability

Changes in the world of work (flexibility, uncertainty, intensity)

— Global trends and challenges (restructuring, globalisation, financial markets, greening),
— crisis: austerity, disinvestment, welfare state retrenchment, cost-cutting
The aims of walqing: to investigate quality of work in

- Growing jobs in Europe with
  - Problematic working conditions,
  - Precarious employment,
  - Low wages,
  - and/or lack of social integration.

- and the possibilities and prerequisites for improvement!
The design

- analysis of European employment and quality of work and life data

- Sectors selected based on that evidence (data x theory x research strategy):
  - Cleaning, Catering, Construction, Elderly Care, Waste Management

- Stakeholder policies sector x country

- Company case studies (theory-led selection)

- Individuals’ careers and perspectives

- Policy gaps & small-scale interventions
Case selection: data x theory x research strategy

Analysis of European datasets (EWCS, ELFS, EU-SILC, EQLS)

Growing sectors
+ Problematic working conditions
+ Gender composition

Construction
Hotels & restaurants
Care
Cleaning
Waste

Societal challenges, Recognisability newness for research

Prev. knowledge
Company types
Small/large/International
Public/privat

Green construction
Contract catering
Mobile elderly care
Commercial cleaning
Waste collection

The Matrix
Results: Characteristics of „new and growing“ sectors

Cleaning, Catering, Construction, Elderly Care, Waste Management

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

— are **labour-intensive services** “on the ground” (except construction)

— 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

— vs 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 competition logics mostly exert downward pressure
## Results: Dimensions of quality of work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inclusion</strong></td>
<td>Labour market access for low-skilled and vulnerable groups. Inclusive employment regimes (Scandinavia) and „extra“ efforts, social entrepreneurship (Southern/Eastern Europe)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Flexibility</strong></td>
<td>Role of clients, work peaks: fragmentation of employment (part-time/marginal, women, subcontracting men - construction), extension of work (men, construction), compression of work (men, waste)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Security</strong></td>
<td>Vulnerability: turnover, discontinuous employment, health. Public sector and post-socialist: „endangered species“, Downsizing (crisis), outsourcing, more flexible contracts (zero-hours, agency) BUT some security in sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wages &amp; benefits</strong></td>
<td>Low wages + part-time = very low incomes and pensions, Losses for new employees, some in-kind benefits, gendered difference in patterns of compensation BUT „relative satisfaction“,</td>
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</table>
### Results: Dimensions of quality of work

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<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>autonomy</td>
<td>Quite varied North/South, teamwork vs regimentation, „too much“ responsibility possible (also middle management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills &amp; careers</td>
<td>Possibility of low-skilled careers BUT flat hierarchies, high turnover, often low-skill equilibrium, training mostly for management Aspirations „being able to stay“</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Uneven. Long lines of communication with management &amp; union, individual „standing“ and social relationships better jobs in unionised environment, BU: management interest in unionisation!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability, H&amp;S</td>
<td>Work intensification (client &amp; employer), fewer workers, shorter hours (or long hours), underinvestment in H&amp;S, „working while ill“</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Ways of addressing these issues: Observed good practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th>IT care: legalisation of migrants, info on employee rights, training</th>
<th>BE cleaning: service check to regularise informal sector</th>
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<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Work reorganisation to take off work peaks, and/or stabilise employment (working time banks?)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Waste &amp; care DK: making flexible or stand-in positions permanent</td>
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<td>Wages &amp; benefits</td>
<td>Waste DK: Addressing ambiguities of piece-rates</td>
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<td>Catering, construction, waste: in-kind benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Self-organised teamwork</td>
<td>Care UK and DK: training careworkers to train clients to be more self-reliant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills &amp; careers</td>
<td>Construction BE: training for green construction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>BU: supporting workers to finish school</td>
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<tr>
<td>Voice</td>
<td>Union participation in work organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>H&amp;S</td>
<td>Use of new technology to improve job design, innovative training for prevention</td>
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More: www.walqing.eu/webresource
The field of tension

- Quality efforts
  - Skill demands
  - "high road"

- Crisis

- Cost-cutting
  - Outsourcing
  - Work intensification

- Establishing standards

- Investing into sustainable arrangements

- Segmentation

- Downward spirals

- Ageing workforces
  - Second careers

- Labour market
  - "newcomers",
  - vulnerable groups
Policy challenges to

— Create safety nets against downward spirals, “level playing fields”

— Support and develop comprehensive institutions to do this and enforce standards

— Develop welfare and industrial relations to become more inclusive and extend beyond ‘core’ sectors/segments

— Involve new actors (clients, NGOs) and address new issues (environment), support worker voice along value chains

— Encourage and support investment in innovative job design
prize questions

— How to involve clients in quality of work measures (and make them love it)?

— How to address “work peaks” in sustainable ways?

— How to recognise and compensate “hard work” and efforts fairly and favourably in the feminised sectors?

— How to organise distributed, marginal, vulnerable workers?
## Appendix: walqing research and output

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<tr>
<th>Dataset analysis WPs 2-4</th>
<th>ELFS</th>
<th>Growth index, business function analysis, sector profiles</th>
<th>Vandekerckhove et al. 2010, Vandekerckhove &amp; Ramioul 2011a, b</th>
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<tr>
<td>EWCS</td>
<td>Weighted job quality measure, Cluster analysis, QofW typology</td>
<td>Holman &amp; McClelland 2011</td>
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<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>
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<tr>
<td>Sector investigation WPs 5, 8</td>
<td>Sector selection</td>
<td>Country x sector studies</td>
<td>walqing social partnership series, Kirov 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stakeholder interviews</td>
<td>Policy analysis</td>
<td>Policy gaps and potentials</td>
<td>Jaehrling &amp; Lehndorff 2012, Policy briefs</td>
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<tr>
<td>WP 6</td>
<td>Organisation cases</td>
<td>Company strategies, dimensions of QofW. Good practice examples</td>
<td>Report: Holtgrewe &amp; Sardadvar 2012 (from December)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WP 7</td>
<td>Occupational groups</td>
<td>Vulnerability, subjective QofW, careers, aspirations</td>
<td>Report: Hohnen 2012 (from December)</td>
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<td>WPs 5-8</td>
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<td><strong>Sector brochures, walqing web resource</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Action research WP9</td>
<td>Social partners, companies</td>
<td>Small-scale interventions &amp; reflexion</td>
<td>Report: Torvatn et al. 2012 (from December)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>Integrated findings by subject</td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Conference talks, Holtgrewe, Hohnen, Kirov, Ramioul (eds.) 2013</strong></td>
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Work and Life Quality in New & Growing Jobs

Thank you and watch this space:
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