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IfS Working Paper 06/2017

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Abstract

Today's pervasive transformations in work and employment relate to changing forms of employment and work organisation, to blurring boundaries between paid and unpaid and formal and informal work, and to the shifting of work between different spheres of society. Over the past years, a number of economic and social processes, such as economic liberalisation, financialisation, or digitalisation, accelerated these trends. This results in an increasing openness of how work and employment are being constituted with regard to the societal division of labour and the institutional forms and organisational principles of work. In this paper we call to rethink the conventional spatial and institutional 'containers' and we argue for a widened perspective on the current dynamics of labour thus contributing to further developing the theoretical tools for the analysis of working life.

Zusammenfassung

Weitreichende Veränderungen können derzeit bei Arbeit und Beschäftigung beobachtet werden: Es entstehen neue Beschäftigungsformen, Grenzen zwischen bezahlter und unbezahlter und zwischen formeller und informeller Arbeit verschwimmen, die Arbeitsorganisation verändert sich und es kommt zu Verschiebungen von Arbeit zwischen kapitalistischen Unternehmen, dem Staat, dem Privathaushalt und der Zivilgesellschaft. Im Laufe der vergangenen Jahre haben sich diese Entwicklungen beschleunigt und sie können zu einem wesentlichen Teil auf den Ausbau von Liberalisierung, Transnationalisierung von Kapital und Arbeit, auf die Finanzialisierung, auf voranschreitende Digitalisierung und die Durchsetzung einer Dienstleistungsgesellschaft zurückgeführt werden. Eine Folge davon ist, dass die Gestaltung von Arbeit zunehmend offener wird, d.h. die gesellschaftliche Arbeitsteilung, die organisatorischen Prinzipien von Arbeit, aber auch die herkömmlichen räumlichen und institutionellen ‚Container‘ – wie etwa das Unternehmen, der Privathaushalt, der Staat, das nationale Beschäftigungssystem oder das Arbeitsverhältnis – werden in Frage gestellt. In diesem Artikel stellen wir eine erweiterte Sichtweise auf aktuelle Dynamiken der Arbeit dar.

1. Introduction

Currently, profound changes can be observed in work and employment. These shifts relate to changing forms of employment, to the blurring of boundaries between paid and unpaid, as well as formal and informal work, to changes in work organisation and to the shifting of work between the capitalist economy, the state, households and civil society. Having accelerated over the past years, these developments can, to a substantial degree, be traced back to processes of economic liberalisation, the transnationalisation of capital and labour, financialisation, digitalisation and the move towards a service economy. The financial and economic crisis of 2008ff. and the European and international crisis policies have accelerated tendencies of de-regulation of labour markets, particularly in Southern and Eastern European countries.

As a result, the constitution of work is increasingly open, with regard to the societal division of labour and the institutional forms and organizational principles of work. Work research can no longer take conventional spatial and institutional 'containers', such as the company, the household, the nation state, the national employment system or the employment relationship for granted (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002). New theoretical and analytical frames are needed to describe and explain current changes in work and to envisage possible futures of work and employment.

Although research has analysed the consequences of the above mentioned shifts and dynamics, and although new theoretical approaches have been provided in specialised fields, the majority of research on work and employment, theoretically and analytically, still takes the conventional spatial and institutional 'containers' for granted: labour is (implicitly) assumed to be expended in a workplace which is separated from home and part of a company or a public-sector organisation located within a nation state which, in turn, determines the institutions that regulate the employment relationship within which people work. This limited perspective increasingly tends to 'misframe' (Fraser, 2010) work and employment. Companies no longer take the standard employment relationship for granted but take forms of employment as variables. Work and employment on the ground are shaped not only by national institutions but also by the rules prevailing in transnational companies or by the position of the workplace in transnational value chains. The current openness and dynamics of the constitution of work call for analyses

of the ways in which work and employment are currently shaped and defined, making it necessary to adopt a new conceptualization of work and to use analytical tools that help to understand new spatial and institutional dynamics.

We are arguing for a widened perspective on the current dynamics of labour. The approach we are suggesting thus has two dimensions:

Firstly, we perceive the *constitution of work* in contemporary societies as contested not only within the realm of wage labour, i.e. the regulation of employment and of the labour process, but also with regard to the assignment to different societal spheres such as the market, the state, civil society or households as well as the shift between different modes of work such as paid and unpaid, professional or voluntary.

Secondly, we question the *spatial frames* in which work and employment are usually perceived which more often than not remain within what is called a 'methodological nationalism'.

In this paper, the widening of the perspective on the constitution of work and on the dynamic spatial frames help us to highlight gaps in research on work and employment.

2. The levels of analysis of work and employment

In line with these two perspectives on work and employment, i.e. the re-conceptualization of work and the socio-spatial sensitivity of work research, this contribution first suggests a wider concept of work which in particular does not only refer to gainful employment but to all activities having an economic impact or output or are done under economic restraint (Glucksmann, 1995). This allows to take into account, for example, the interrelationships between gainful employment and unpaid care work, but also makes it possible to analyse shifts and interdependencies between the different societal spheres and the dynamics of the wider social organisation of work that includes the household, the private and public sectors, market and non-market relationships and civil society institutions.

Analyses of the ways in which work and employment are socially and institutionally embedded and contested then need to consider multiple spatial scales such as the local,

regional, national, supranational and global. These spatial scales – to use the more common notion derived from human geography (Brenner, 2001; Hess, 2004) – are seen not as ontologically given but as outcomes of social conflicts. They are related and inter-linked in various ways rather forming distinct and hierarchical levels of action. Indeed, the contested constitution of work occurs through the links between these levels, and exploring these links lets us take account of processes in which social relations are scaled up or down.

Three analytical levels are relevant when investigating the contested constitution of work and employment: (1) the social organisation of work and employment, (2) the governance and regulation of work and (3) the labour process. The reconceptualization of work and the spatial perspective raise the following questions on each level:

Ad (1) What are the changes and continuities in the *social organisation of work* and what are their spatial implications? This question deals with the interrelationships between different societal spheres as well as changes in their respective institutional logics. Institutional logics relate to the rules, cognitive maps, belief systems and normative expectations carried and shaped by participants in societal spheres that guide and give their activities meaning.

Ad (2) How do local, national, supra-national and global *governance structures and regulations* impact upon the constitution of work and employment? How do such governance structures interrelate with societal spheres and their institutional logics on different spatial scales? Governance structures refer to all agreements by which power and authority are exercised, involving formal and informal systems, public and private regimes as well as regulative and normative regulations and their enforcement.

Ad (3) What local, national, supra-national and global conditions and dynamics shape the constitution of the immediate *labour process* in and across different societal spheres in a historical constellation in which an accelerated transnationalisation and digitalisation of work coincide? How do shifts in the social organization of work and in the regulation of work and employment impact on the immediate labour process and its wider social embeddedness and how does restructuring of the labour process influence regulation and the social organisation of work?

3. Dynamics of the social organisation of work

The social organization of work describes the *modes* (paid, unpaid, formal, informal etc.) and the *societal spheres* (market, state, household, voluntary sector etc.) within which work is being carried out. For decades, feminist researchers in particular have problematised the lacking consideration of unpaid work in research and emphasised the interrelated and mutually constitutive character of ‘productive’ and ‘reproductive’ work (Walby, 1986). However, the majority of studies within the sociology of work still focuses on formal paid work within the sphere of markets and within nation states although many scholars have pointed to the need for a broader perspective (e.g. Biesecker, 2000). Recent research findings have pointed to blurring boundaries between social spheres and modes of working and their contested character: This relates to shifts from state provision to the non-profit or volunteer sector (e.g. Hossler, 2012), to unpaid work carried out in market contexts (e.g. Siebert & Wilson, 2013), to households involved in production processes by consumption and prosumption work or service ‘co-production’ (Cova et al., 2015) to reproductive work that is transferred to the market (Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012). Perspectives on shifts between societal spheres (Dörre, 2009; Friedland & Alford, 1991) have suggested that processes of commodification and capital valorisation increasingly enter non-market spheres such as the public sector or private lives (Crouch, 2015; Hochschild, 2003). This may also mean that informal work is being formalised while we simultaneously observe a tendency towards informalisation and casualisation of work (Standing, 2011).

One prominent perspective on shifts between societal spheres is rooted in Marxist theory: The theses of ‘land seizures’ (Luxemburg, 1913, Dörre, 2009) or ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Harvey, 2003) suggest that capitalism depends on ever-expanding or deepening processes of commodification (Polanyi, 1944) and capital valorisation that enter non-market societal spheres. Others point out that outcomes of ongoing capitalist restructuring and marketisation may also allow for emancipation (Fraser, 2012), for example through the shift from the male bread winner (Pfau-Effinger, 2000) towards the adult-worker model (Lewis, 2001). Glucksmann (1995), in her framework of the ‘total social organization of labour’ takes into account various modes of work activities undertaken in different societal spheres focusing on shifts and interdependencies. Research

following an institutional logics approach points to changes in the spheres' inherent institutional logics or the pervasion of spheres by external logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). For example, market logics are introduced into the public sector (i.e. in the form of indicators and rankings in schools, hospitals, universities) and private lives (Crouch, 2015; Hochschild, 2003) contradicting established institutional logics, such as professional logics or everyday life practices (Flecker et al. 2014; Pernicka et al., 2016).

Research in work and employment has also pointed out spatial implications of the shifts in the social organisation of work:

- The concept of "spatial fix" (Harvey, 2006) points to the geographic expansion of capitalism and to continuous spatial restructuring of companies.
- The concept of transnational social spaces makes it possible to conceptualise cross-border relations within organisations, households or families (Pries, 2008).
- Glucksmann (2009) points to spatial rescaling when she argues that the shift of work from home cooking to eating prepared meals from supermarkets is also a shift to extended and often transnational supply chains.
- Shifts in the social organisation of care work through a marketisation of the work, result in the emergence of transnational 'care-chains' (Lutz & Palenga-Mollenbeck, 2012).
- The digitalisation of work not only accelerates the blurring of boundaries between paid-work and non-work spheres (Wajcman, 2015) but also alters spatial divisions of labour at various scales (Flecker & Schönauer, 2016; Huws, 2014).

Research in work and employment has to overcome the analytical focus on gainful employment stemming from the historical separation of the visible (male connoted) wage labour in the public and hidden (female connoted) reproductive work in the private. By systematically recognising various forms of labour as constitutive elements of work as a whole, widely neglected forms of work and their importance for the contested constitution of work come into view, such as for reproductive work, usually carried out by women in private households. This is definitely not the only example where gender relations are integral parts of the constitution of work within and between societal spheres that are gendered themselves in unequal but not necessarily coherent ways. Therefore, gen-

der should be recognised as a complex variable which interacts with other social differentiators, including ethnicity and class (intersectionality). This also helps to trace other complex entangled work constellations (i.e. informal paid care work of female migrants etc.) and a gender- and intersectional-sensitive lens systematically reveals gender specific inequalities.

Overall, the valuable concepts and insightful debates briefly discussed here in general tend to overlook shifts and interdependencies between societal spheres and the dynamics of various modes of work. A systematic space-sensitive analysis needs to be developed in order to fully understand the impact of transnationalisation and mobilities on dynamics of formalisation and informalisation of work and the consequences of privatisation and commodification on the spatial division of labour.

4. Governance and regulation

The governance structures and regulations of work and employment are particularly addressed by Industrial Relations (IR) scholars (P. Edwards, 2005), Varieties of Capitalism and Employment Systems approaches (Bosch, 2010; Hall & Soskice, 2001) as well as welfare-state research (Esping-Andersen, 1990). These strands of literature deal with the regulation of the subordination of workers to the authority and the right of direction of their employers for an agreed time span, a social phenomenon referred to as the 'internalised employment relationship' (Rubery, 2010). They emphasise the contested constitution of these regulations in various historical contexts and nation states.

There is wide agreement in the literature that the period of 'Fordism' (Aglietta, 1979) or the 'trente glorieuses' (Fourastié, 1979) have brought about a new 'standard employment relationship' (Mückenberger, 1985) providing previously unattained levels of employment, social security and participation opportunities (Castel, 2000). This standard employment relationship was mostly limited to men, as the regulation in terms of wages and working hours was (and still is) part of a particular gender regime and gendered division of domestic labour (see Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010). Therefore, changes in gender relations also have consequences for regulation. Since the 1980s, scholars have pointed to the erosion of the standard employment relationship in the Western

world (Castel, 2000) and, more recently, to the spread of precarious employment (Standing, 2011) and an increasing dualisation or polarisation of labour markets (Palier & Thelen, 2012) into a well-protected core labour force and a growing number of outsiders. From a global perspective however, precarious work arrangements have always been the rule, and the level of security provided by the European standard employment relationship is the exception. Yet, neoliberal policies have accelerated the erosion of the standard employment relationship with some degree of 'varieties of neoliberalism' (e.g. Mijs et al., 2016).

A major concern of IR research in the last decades has been the territorial expansion of markets beyond national borders, while the regulation of work and employment has primarily remained within the scope and competencies of nation states. In spite of the salience of the ensuing social and economic incongruences (Bach, 2008), research has mainly adopted a nation state-centred or country-comparative perspective (e.g. Frege & Kelly, 2013). Only since the 2000s, IR research takes on board concepts of space that allow to analyse transnational processes and structures as endogenous societal developments rather than externalities triggering change at national level (Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012; Pernicka & Glassner, 2014). Some scholars have assumed a multi-level governance perspective to analyse the interrelations between supranational European governance and national regulations and industrial relations, emphasising a vertical perspective on policy-making processes (Keune & Marginson, 2013). Against the background of the most recent economic and sovereign debt crises in the European Union, these studies in particular contributed to a better understanding of the new supranational economic governance regime and the international crisis politics by the Troika institutions (European Commission, European Central Bank, International Monetary Fund) (Keune & Marginson, 2013). In addition, scholars point to the importance of European integration to better understand processes of transnational migration and the challenges they pose to national and supranational regulations of work and employment (Lillie, 2012). This may result in a 'deterritorialisation of sovereignty' that allows capital to escape from national class compromises (Lillie, 2010). The construction sector provides a case in point as transnational subcontractors have extensively made use of the huge wage-differentials between Eastern and Western European countries, 'posting' workers from low-wage ar-

areas to higher wage areas and thus, challenging national industrial relations and employment regimes in high-wage areas (Wagner & Lillie, 2014).

The assumption of distinct levels of policy and social action has only been overcome very recently, giving way to the analysis of individual and collective actors' perceptions and actions as 'multi-scalar practices' (Hürtgen, 2015). Still underdeveloped within the existing literature, a spatial and conflict-sensitive perspective on governance structures and the regulation of work takes account of wider societal processes and power relations within and beyond the political sphere on the national, supra- and international levels. Sociological field theory offers a suitable analytical tool, but only a few studies have so far taken up such a relational field perspective (Helfen & Sydow, 2013; Pernicka et al., 2015).

Such a new approach is needed because territorial economic expansion as well as eroding standard employment forms have opened up new room for the constitution of work relating to the governance and regulation of labour.

5. Dynamics of the labour process

Research on work and employment often takes as a starting point the contestation between capital and labour relating to the internalised employment relationship and its governance and regulation (Frege & Kelly, 2013; Rubery, 2010), the segmentation of the labour market (Rubery, 2005) and the dynamics of the immediate labour process (Smith, 2016; Thompson and Vincent, 2010). Currently, labour process analysis is not only being applied to the study of management control and workplace restructuring in a wide range of sectors and occupations but also to the dynamics of global value chains and global production networks, taking into account labour agency and its spatial determinants (Newsome et al., 2015). IR research, also focussing on capital-labour relations, has opened up to include transnational, supranational and global conflicts over the regulations, norms and belief systems underlying the employment relationship (Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012).

On the analytical level of the labour process, research addresses the social relations in production and the shaping of work by investigating different forms of work organisation, use of technology, skill needs, forms of cooperation and management control. This strand of research predominantly focuses on paid work within the workplace. The labour process is often seen as a 'contested terrain' (R. Edwards, 1979) where employers face the challenge to transform the potentials of labour power into value adding work and workers pursue their interests in the form of 'labour agency' (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Smith, 2010). Generally, there exists an inherent focus on management control and work organisation within gainful employment showing on the one hand up-skilling and a 'subjectivisation of work' (Kleemann & Voß, 2010) and, on the other, a standardisation and degradation of paid work especially in the service sector, including public services (Holtgrewe & Schörpf, 2017; Howcroft & Richardson, 2012).

In this strands of research, spatial aspects have only been addressed in internationally *comparative* approaches, such as those investigating work organization from the perspective of 'societal-effects' (Maurice & Sorge, 2000) or 'varieties of capitalism' (Hall & Soskice, 2001). These approaches find that work organisation is contingent upon *national* societal institutions like education systems, industrial relations and innovation systems. Others also include influences stemming from other spatial scales, e.g. from dominant capitalist economies in a particular historical period (Smith & Meiksins, 1995) or the home countries of multinational companies.

In contrast to analyses of work organization *within* workplaces and national territories, scholars such as Thompson and Vincent (2010), Robinson and Rainbird (2013) and Newsome et al. (2015) recently suggested to situate the analysis of the labour process within Global Value Chains (GVC) and Global Production Networks (GPN) taking up the focus on inter-firm relations in spatially extended cross-border production processes. These perspectives shed light on cross-border relocation and restructuring of labour processes and their consequences for work, e.g. in terms of standardisation (Flecker & Meil, 2010; Flecker & Schönauer, 2016; Howcroft & Richardson, 2012), up- and down-grading (Barrientos et al., 2011), the transmission of cost pressures and flexibility demands down the value chains in question (Frade & Darmon, 2005), or the loss of organisational identity among dispersed and disconnected crowd-workers (Lehdonvirta, 2016). Further debates

point to the implications of labour mobility (Smith, 2006) and to new forms of labour agency and possibilities for workers' participation on different spatial scales (Coe & Jordhus-Lier, 2011; Greer & Hauptmeier, 2012).

In such a perspective, the constitution of work can be understood with reference to the position of the workplace within a network of firms, and, ultimately, the capitalist world system (Bair, 2015; Wallerstein, 1974). Especially the GPN approach emphasises the spatial dimension and the dialectics between the global and the local as well as the embeddedness of actors in particular territories (Coe et al., 2008; Hess, 2004).

As far as different societal spheres are concerned, the public sector and processes of privatisation remain under-researched. Scholars have started to connect labour processes in the spheres of the market or the state to work *outside* the workplace in the private sphere pointing to informal work and household-based production (Newsome et al. 2015), reproduction work in households (Clelland, 2014; Dunaway, 2014; Hewison, 2016), consumption work, e.g. self-service in supermarkets (Humphery, 1998), household recycling (e.g. Wheeler & Glucksmann, 2015), user-generated content on the internet (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010) or the ways in which social media conduct at work is re-shaping the boundaries between public and private spheres. Research on digital work, in particular, increasingly addresses the shifts and interdependencies between societal spheres, discussing the blurring of boundaries between 'work' and 'life' (Bittman et al., 2009; Schörpf et al., 2017; Wajcman, 2015) and highlighting the work of 'prosumers' (Bauer & Gegenhuber, 2015; Frayssé & O'Neil, 2015).

However, most of this research still insufficiently considers the contested and ongoing reconfigurations in the relationships of spheres of work, the dynamics of rescaling labour processes and the dialectic of global-local relations. In particular, research is needed to determine the ways in which work is connected in multiple locations, in which the variable spatial divisions of labour transform workplaces (Newsome et al., 2015) and in which spatial relations and mobility of both capital and labour contribute to informalisation or other transformations in the modes of work.

6. Conclusions: Open research questions

To better understand contemporary work-related changes in capitalist societies, future research in work and employment should perceive labour and work as contested within a plurality of often dynamic social relations at different spatial scales. The contestation of work and employment occurs at the levels of the social organisation of work, governance and regulation and the labour process. This implies that the constitution of work is shaped by historically developed configurations of individual and collective actors that occupy distinct structural and power positions within society and struggle, negotiate, and compete over their respective perceptions, aspirations and normative claims over all forms of work. Structures of social inequality at different scales (global, regional, national, local) are seen as important causes and consequences of particular ways in which work is constituted.

Therefore future research in the sociology of work and employment should firstly adopt a space-sensitive perspective to be able to do justice to transnationalisation and, more generally, 'new space formats' (Löw, 2008, p. 196) of the constitution of work and to avoid both methodological nationalism (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002) and de-territorialism (Pries, 2008). With regard to societal spheres and modes of work, future research secondly should adequately address current shifts and upheavals, taking into account different forms of work (paid/unpaid, formal/informal etc.) and the complex interconnections between various activities on different scales (cf. Glucksmann, 1995). This makes it possible to address 'all the work performed in a society between institutional spheres' (Bourne & Calás, 2013, p. 436) pointing to the articulation of interconnected work activities in the form of patterns, networks or other connections in societies (Glucksmann, 2005). Building on such a broad definition of work does not deny the centrality of paid work and wage-labour in contemporary society, but rather provides a context for understanding what constitutes work and generates hierarchies between different types of work (Parry et al., 2005).

Thirdly, emphasis should lie on the contested character of work and employment. This provides room for a historicised and actor-related approach, and for the analysis of the constitution of work going beyond the influences of structural forces such as technological change and socio-economic shifts. The constitution of work thus is – among other

factors – an outcome of struggles over the social organisation of work, its governance and regulation, and the labour process. More generally, we see these three analytical levels of the constitution of work as interrelated in the sense of a ‘totality’ of the social institutions and relationships that govern work and social reproduction.

In focusing on the contested constitution of work consolidated institutions that govern work and employment are not neglected. While predominant institutional logics of action (such as the logic of capitalist markets, collective bargaining, gender regimes, voluntary work, professional logics, etc.) are characterised by a certain degree of inertia, i.e. the tendency for practices of work and employment to resist over time, they also have to be seen as historical and contemporary outcomes of conflicts and cooperation between individual and collective actors. As a consequence, the contested constitution of work is influenced by, but also includes struggles over, institutions and forms of governance and regulation of work and employment which, however, cannot be analysed within national ‘containers’ any more.

The concept of social fields allows to include a wider range of power relations and institutionalised logics of action that have a potential impact on the constitution of work (Bourdieu, 1989; Friedland & Alford, 1991). The conception allows to analyse historical and contemporary as well as manifest and latent conflicts over the societal division of labour, the valuation of occupations and tasks, the rules of access to occupational positions, processes of professionalisation and de-professionalisation, regulations of work and employment, etc. Here, social fields are understood as relatively autonomous social spaces constituted around a particular activity and which have been constructed historically through struggles over positions, power resources and legitimations. Shifts between societal spheres, e.g. through processes of privatisation or marketisation, do not only involve changes in the prevalent institutional logics of action but also the blurring of boundaries between particular fields of work and employment (e.g., boundaries between different occupational groups). Such a perspective enables the analysis of the constitution of work at different social and territorial scales, by empirically mapping institutionalised spheres of action with particular authority and power relations which do not necessarily coincide with the borders of the nation states (Scott, 2000).

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