

Work, sense of belonging and social ties

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Content

Sense of work

Social cohesion at work

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Sense of work

- On a long period, changes in the meaning of work (Méda)
 - Work > a production factor that provides an income (the definition of economists in the 18th).
 - Work > the essence of man (19th), a human activity that enables man to express himself and transform the world (Hegel and Marx).
 - Work > a system for distributing income, rights and protection (wage-earning society, work as employment, 20th).

- Changes in the relationship to work over the last forty years (Maslow and Inglehart)
 - In post-industrial societies, concern for individual expression and quality of life are becoming more important than concern for survival.
 - Work > an ethic of duty (an obligation vis-à-vis society) > then an instrumental value (work provides security and income) > today, an expressive value.
 - In developed countries characterised by “post-materialistic” values, work should enable individuals to fulfil themselves.

- The contemporary perspective: double or triple dimension of work
 - Extrinsic / Intrinsic
 - Materialist / post-materialist (Inglehart & Baker)
 - Instrumental / expressive (Habermas, Zoll)

- Instrumental / social / expressive

- + Differentiation of the expressive dimension

- Post-industrial societies
 - Development of education levels for both men and women
 - High participation of women in the labour market
 - Relative increase of economic security
 - A certain distance to work
 - Work is no longer a value in itself ≠ denying the importance of work
 - Work is an area where important values can be realised: self-development, autonomy, personal achievement, creativity.

- From an hegemonic value of work to a polycentric conception of existence.

Social cohesion at work

- **Generational standpoint**
 - Young workers are increasingly qualified compared to other generations
 - An advantage for women regarding levels of qualification
 - Age groups are unequally "used" to adjust to cyclical variations
 - A differentiated access to social protection benefits
 - Labour market models and welfare state models shape individual trajectories

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- **However**
 - No awareness of conflicting interests
 - Denial of the importance of age + no awareness of belonging to a generation >> status quo.
- **A conflict between the generations should assume that a cohort would be aware of a common social situation, and that the cleavage between the generations would be perceived as structuring inequities.**
 - A social movement can be initiated by the awareness of differentiated characteristics linked to structural conditions and affecting a particular group.
- **But....**

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- Tensions between generations
 - About employment (security), not work (sense)
- Paradoxical complicity between the generations
 - Competition at work / Solidarity outside work
 - Young people do not protest against the parents' generation (regarding secure jobs and retirement benefits) since they are conscious that those privileges guarantee them a safety net

- Views on solidarity and social ties at work
 - Communitarian enterprise > older generation
 - Solidarity as a mechanism of social regulation
 - Traditional militant bodies
 - Given belongings
 - Open enterprise > young generation
 - Solidarity limited to small, manageable social groups
 - New forms of militancy
 - Chosen belongings
 - Solidarity is not linked to predetermined belongings.
 - Solidarity is a built value.

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- Increase in education levels and in economic security >> increase in expressive expectations
- Polycentrality of existence
- Given / chosen belongings
- Coexistence of different forms of solidarity (slide 15).

- **Gender perspective**

- **Historically**
 - Men identity was built especially as breadwinner of the family
 - Thanks to their participation in the labour market, women started an emancipation process from the role of wife and mother under the patriarchal control
- **Today**
 - Reduction in the dichotomy between the male and female patterns of relations to work
 - Contamination of gender models in the young generation
 - "Feminisation" of the male orientation to work. Increased importance of other aspects of life, more expressive expectations.
 - "Masculinisation" of the female orientation to work. Work is not anymore an instrument of emancipation of traditional roles, which is given for granted although the gender discrimination and segregation persist. Work is important in social identity and for obtaining self-realisation.

- Economic development pushes societies in the same direction but they follow parallel trajectories, marked by history (including institutional and cultural aspects)
- Work is still a key element in the inclusion/exclusion process
- Social cohesion calls for an overall redefinition of the role of work in society and for a new idea of citizenship and (consequent) social security rights.

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Typology of the ties between individuals and collectives

Types of collectives	Reference unit	Forms of solidarity	Identity reference	Time horizon for personal achievement
Community model •Characteristic of primitive, segmented and pre-industrial societies	Communities •Small groups •Proximity •Emotional	Mechanical solidarity •Natural •Based on predetermined places •Resemblance •Interdependence	A single identity •Determined by membership in a community	The beyond
Society/member model •Characteristic of modern and industrial societies	Society •Large groups •Formal rule •Contract •Distance •Anonymity	Organic solidarity •Compromise •Stability of collectives •Strong involvement •Imposed collectives •Complementarity	A dominant identity •Despite an increased differentiation	The future
Reticulated model •Characteristic of the network society	The individual •Emancipation from given affiliations •Chosen and multiple memberships •Building of self-identity •The individual is subject of his identity •Attention to personal development •Logic of freedom	Network solidarity •Relationship between subjectivities •Distance and control to commitments •Cancellable ties •Built collectives •Ephemeral •Valorisation of experience •Personalisation of action	A plural identity	The present

Source: Vendramin P., 2004.

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References

- SPReW research (Social Patterns of Relation to Work)
 - FP6, 2006-2006, BE, DE, FR, HU, IT, PT.
 - Key questions of the research:
 - Are generations different regarding work?
 - Are there trends that can affect the quality of relationships between generations at work?
 - What are the challenges for social cohesion?
 - All reports are available on <http://www.ftu-namur.org/sprew>
- Vendramin P. (ed), *Generations at Work and Social Cohesion in Europe*, Peter Lang, to be published in Spring 2010.
- Vendramin P, *Le travail au singulier, Le lien social à l'épreuve de l'individualisation (Work in the singular, Social bond facing individualisation)* Académia Bruylant (Louvain-la-Neuve) - L'Harmattan (Paris), Collection "Sciences & enjeux", 2004.