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PROJECT

What Kind of Work for What Kind of Society after the Pandemic?

Over the last thirty years, changes in the sphere of work have been fostered by a continuous process of adapting companies and their employees to the quality, productivity, and profit demands of the economic and financial markets.

The pandemic has blatantly revealed, if that were needed, the limits of such a market- and profit-focused logic. At the same time, it has forcefully raised to a vital necessity another purpose of work: that of taking care. By consecrating as a new category of indispensable professions the socially undervalued jobs that, in different ways, care for the continuity of life and society – nurses, cashiers, garbage collectors, delivery drivers, etc. – the pandemic invites us to reconsider more broadly, beyond the jobs of the so-called care sector, what taking care means with respect to work. Caring about the environment and society where work is carried out and about those who perform it is key to such a broader understanding.

Taking France and Germany as two cases in point, the aim of the project is to ask about the meaning and practices of ecologically and socially sustainable work against the background of an empirical examination of experiments and initiatives that target such an extended meaning of work.

Recommended Reading

Zimmermann, Bénédicte. "From Critical Theory to Critical Pragmatism: Capability and the Assessment of Freedom." *Critical Sociology* 44, no. 6 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920517691107>.

Renard, Léa, and Bénédicte Zimmermann. "'Gute Arbeit' und 'qualité de vie au travail': Kategorisierungsprozesse im deutsch-französischen Vergleich." *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 30, no. 3–4 (2020): 421–451. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11609-021-00432-y>.

Zimmermann, Bénédicte. "Capability-Based Employability: A Total Organizational Fact." In *Employability and Industrial Mutations: Between Individual Trajectories and Organizational Strategic Planning*, edited by Florent Noël and Géraldine Schmidt, 33–46. London: ISTE; Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2022.

"Gute Arbeit", "qualité de vie au travail": Are there national standards for good jobs?

For two decades, international organizations like the ILO and the European Commission have been promoting a qualitative approach to work, as a complement to the quantitative one driven by the aim of full employment that prevailed until then. While the ILO promoted the concept of "decent work", the European Commission turned that into the claim for "better jobs", subdivided into "quality of employment" and "quality in work", a key piece of the European social agenda.

On the national level, France and Germany fed the debate, making better jobs a matter of public concern. But whereas "gute Arbeit" is the keyword for it in Germany, "qualité de vie au travail" is the one in France. Can we take for granted that these key words address the same kind of issue, beyond the fact that they both fall under the common umbrella of the English-language concept of "better" or "good" jobs?

The issue is not just a matter of linguistic translation, but of categorization and valuation. Words are part of a process of labeling and categorizing social reality. Therefore, lexical differences are more than just about words; they involve a series of presuppositions about work and workers that are rooted in institutional and socio-political configurations. In the present case, they also involve valuations of what "good" or "quality" should mean in relation to jobs and work.

The aim of the talk is to address the meaning of "gute Arbeit" and "qualité de vie au travail" by giving insight into the contrasted processes of categorization involved. For this purpose, I will rely on some very preliminary results of a French-German ANR/DFG research project on workers' capabilities for professional development in French and German sites of multinational groups.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

external publication list

(<http://centregeorgsimmel.ehess.fr/en/membres/membres-statutaires/benedicte-zimmermann/>)

Zimmermann, Bénédicte (Leiden,2021)

Close comparison in a global world : categorizing the quality of work in a multinational company

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Zimmermann, Bénédicte (Paris,2021)

Agie ou latente? : médiation tierce et production de la confiance en entreprise

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1770062173>

Zimmermann, Bénédicte (Brussels,2021)

Systems theory and algorithmic futures : interview with Elena Esposito

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1770060669>

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Les médiations institutionnelles de la confiance en entreprise : une comparaison franco-allemande

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Zimmermann, Bénédicte (Paris,2020)

Capabilités et développement de l'individualité

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Zimmermann, Bénédicte (Wiesbaden,2020)

“Gute Arbeit“ und “qualité de vie au travail“ : Kategorisierungsprozesse im deutsch-französischen Vergleich

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Gute Arbeit and qualité de vie au travail

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Promouvoir la socio-économie et "L'art de la théorie sociale" : entretien avec Richard Swedberg

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1725501732>

Zimmermann, Bénédicte (2018)

Sécuriser les parcours par le compte : formation continue, droits subjectifs et politiques de la singularité

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1046422154>

Zimmermann, Bénédicte (2017)

Capabilities and working lives

<https://kxp.k10plus.de/DB=9.663/PPNSET?PPN=1028895852>