

New Patterns of Interests and representation of interests of White Collar Employees in German Industry?

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White and Blue Collar Workers in Germany

- past: distinction in social security and collective agreements

White Collar Workers („Angestellte“)

- fixed salary/month
- intellectual activity (office)
- psychological strain
- high work autonomy
- flexible working time

Blue Collar Workers („Arbeiter“)

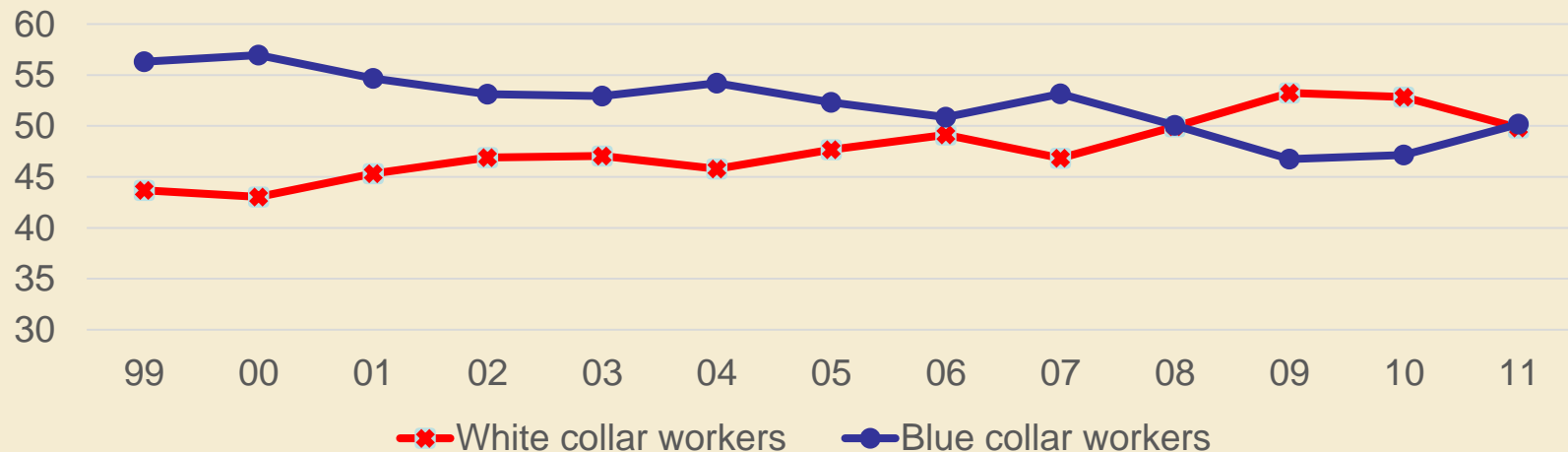
- wage depending on hours worked or pieces produced
- manual work (production)
- physical strain
- clear work instructions
- fixed working hours (shift work)

- present: distinction suspended in social security and important collective agreements
- but: employees know precisely if they are blue or white collar workers

Background

- internal tertiarization of the industrial sector
- high structural power
- individual representation of interests
- distance to works councils and unions
- works councils and unions have been concentrating on blue collars

Development of Blue and White Collar Employees in German Industry (Microcensus)



Research Questions

1. What are the labour-related interests of white collar employees?
2. What do works councils do to address this group (issues, initiatives, processes)?
3. (How) do works councils' initiatives affect interests and perceptions of white collar employees?

Methods

- Data analysis (Microcensus and Socio-economic Panel (GSOEP))
- Expert interviews with union representatives (10)
- 17 case studies (metal and electrical industries, chemical industry, various company sizes)
 - Interviews with works councils (18)
 - Interviews with white collar employees (52)
 - Online surveys of white collar employees in six companies (1.352)

Working Conditions of White Collar Workers (Online Survey)

Positive: most respondents

- are satisfied with their salary
- consider their job to be secure
- consider performance assessments by superiors as fair
- appreciate high autonomy (working time, work organisation), self-realization
- say that work and family life are reconciled
- identify with their company

General trends: most respondents observe that

- performance figures play an increasing role
- target agreements and performance assessments are increasingly important
- foreign languages and cultural knowledge become more and more important

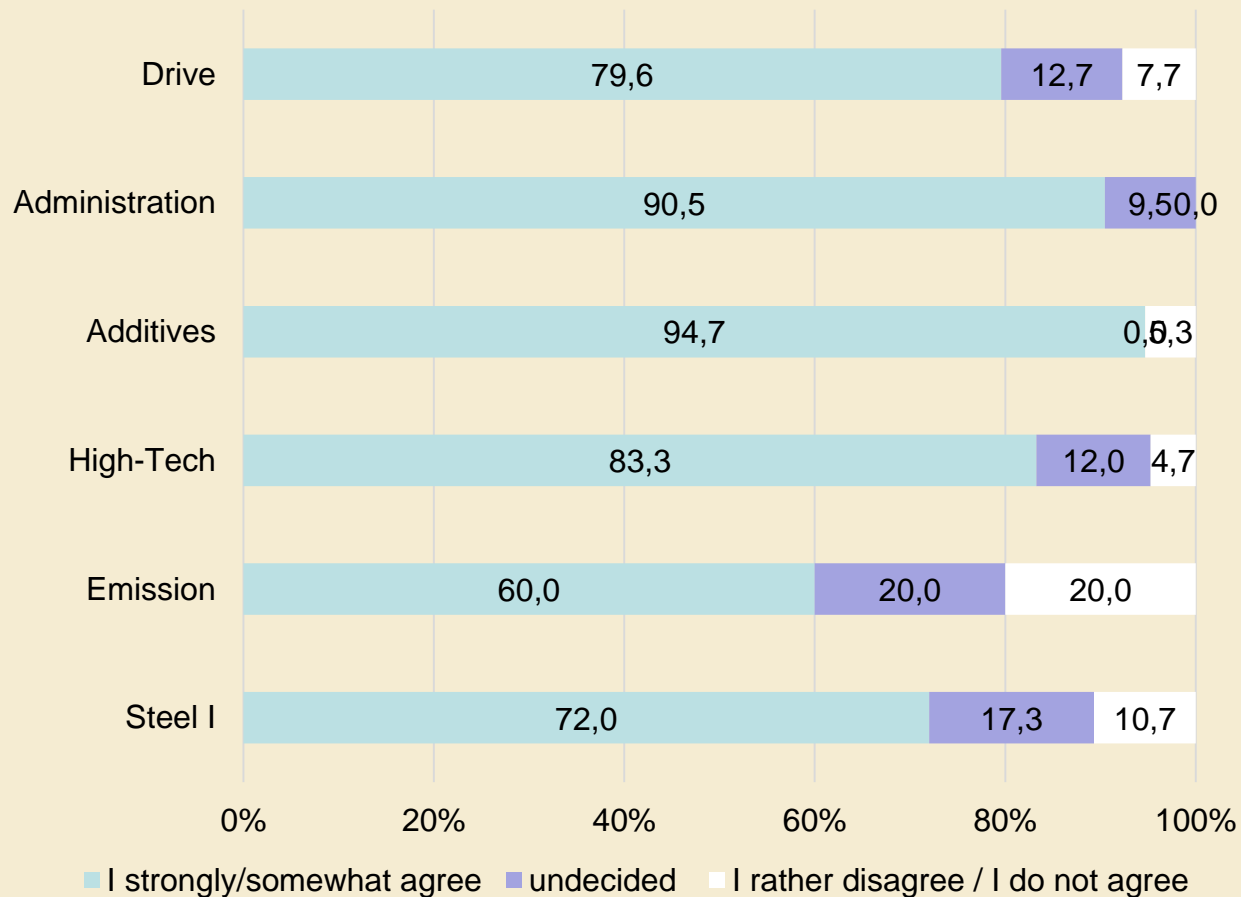
Working Conditions of White Collar Workers (Online Survey)

Critical: most respondents

- report high and increasing work intensity (quality of the work becomes poorer, mental stress, but they can work up to pensionable age)
 - report long working hours

 - availability outside normal working hours is partly expected
 - some wish for more appreciation
 - some wish for better career opportunities
 - women have the impression that they have to perform better than men to receive the same recognition and that female executives are less valued
- ➔ working conditions can be described as ambivalent

In the last years I noticed an intensification of work in my company (in %).



Case	Problem Perception of White Collar Workers
Emission	working time, salary inequality (sister company), intensity of work
Construction	work intensification and distribution, mental stress, job security
Automobile	increasing work load, working time and mobile work
Dynamo	work intensification, cost pressure, job security, different incentive wages blue/white collar workers, partly long working hours
Electronics	work intensification in project work, internationalization
Navigation	increasing workload and distribution of workload after staff cuts, reorganisation, job security
Additives	salaries, intensity of work
High-Tech	increasing work load
Administration	reorganisation and increasing work load, long working hours AT-Angestellte

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Initiatives of Works Councils

Framing

- **Issues of fairness**
 - salary
 - job security
 - working time
 - work performance
 - short-time work
 - health
- **Issues of Recognition**
 - working time autonomy

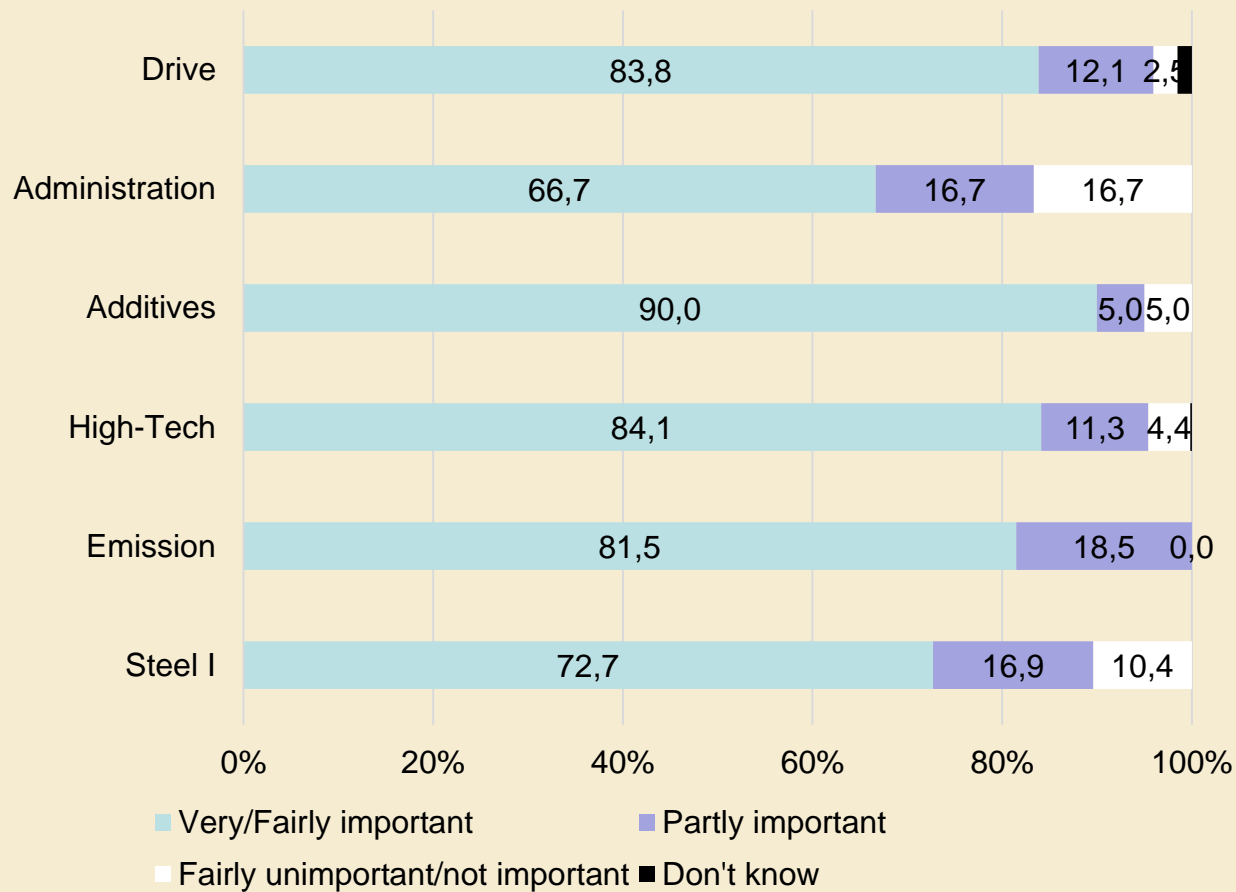
Processes

- **Works councils:** recruitment, qualification, working parties white collar workers or *AT-Angestellte (Construction, Drive, Dynamo, Navigation, Silicone, Steel I, Mineral, Steel II)*
 - Enforcement in works councils dominated by blue collar workers (*Automobile, Drive, Supplier*)
- **Union membership recruitment and union workplace representatives:** (*Emission, Construction, Automobile, Drive, Dynamo, Additives, Technologie, Administration, Steel II*)
- **Selective involvement of employees** surveys, departmental meetings, membership meetings, communication... (*almost all*)
- **Structured involvement of employees as experts** (*Emission, Construction, Dynamo, Additives, High-Tech, Silicone, Steel I, Supplier*)

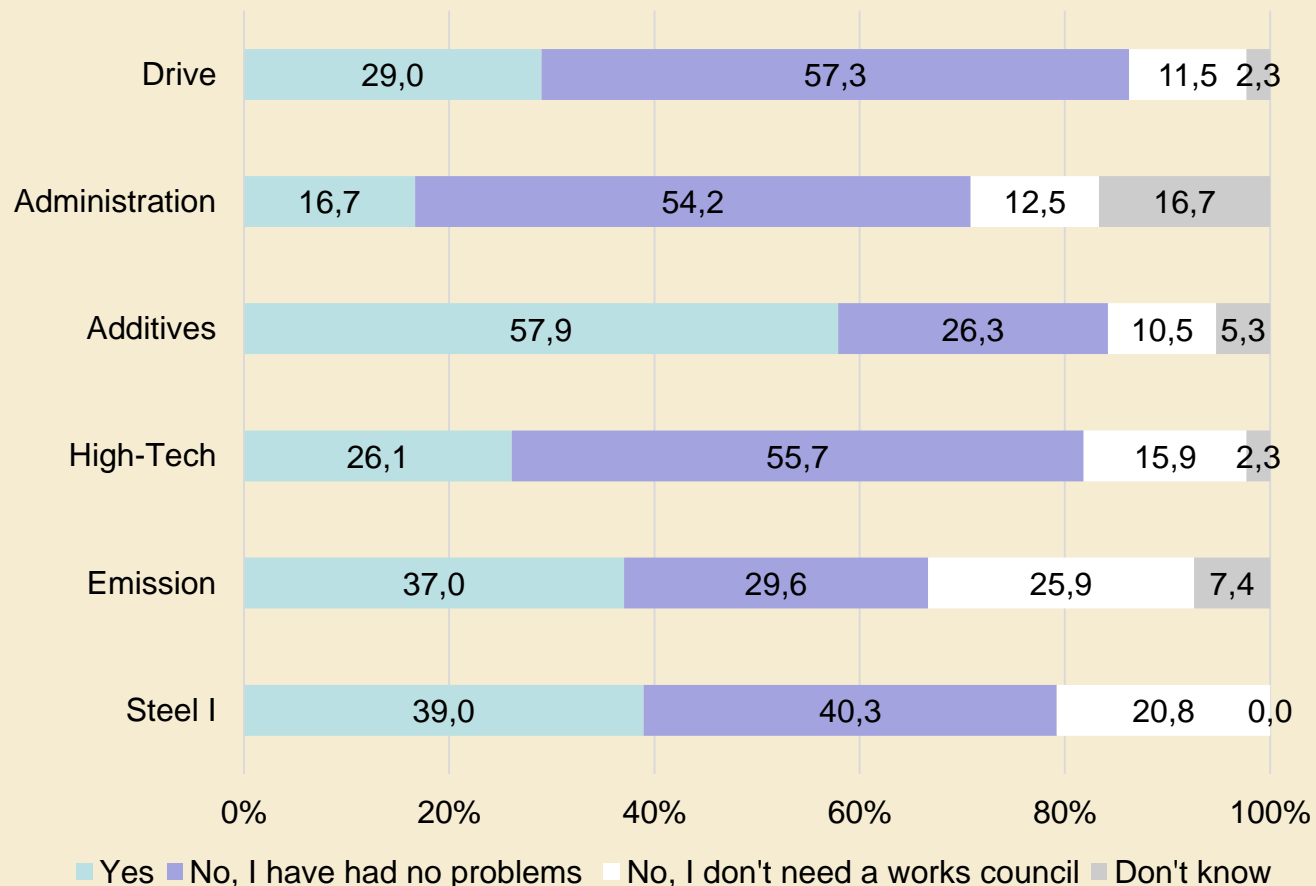
Topics & Agreements

- **Collective agreement / formation of works council** (*Emission, Communication*)
- **Job security / Restructuring** (*Dynamo, Electronics, Technologie*)
- **New topics** (working time, salary, health, qualification..)
- **Initiatives focusing on AT-Angestellte** (working time, salary) (*Additives, High-Tech, Silicone, Steel I*)

How important is the works council for you?



Have you ever consulted your works council?



Emission	individual representation of interests, close communication/consultation of works council, support from works council in conflict	Yes (1-50%)
Construction	individual representation of interests, participation in initiative, consultation of works council	No
Automobile	individual representation of interests, consultation of works council, participation in initiative	incremental (50%)
Drive	individual representation of interests, moderate participation	No
Dynamo	individual representation of interests, expert support, consultation of works council	incremental (30%)
Elektronics	individual representation of interests, moderate participation, consultation of works council	incremental (13%)
Additives	individual representation of interests, support in conflict, consultation of works council	Yes (2-80%)
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Silicone	individual representation of interests, consultation of works council	No
Technologie	individual representation of interests, participation in initiative, consultation of works council	Yes (to 30%)
Administration	individual representation of interests, visiting events, consultation of works council	No
Steel I	individual representation of interests, consultation of works council	No

Interest Behaviour of White Collar Employees

Organisational success

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Summary

- **Working conditions are ambivalent:**
 - high salaries, autonomy, job security, flexible working hours
 - increasing work load, (but: mental stress or long working hours are rarely criticized)
- **Initiatives**
 - topics: collective agreements / works council foundation, Securing jobs / Restructuring, New topics (working time, health), AT-initiatives
 - processes: committees, involvement as experts, selective involvement of employees (survey), membership recruitment & union workplace representatives
- **Representation of interests**
 - individual representation of interests dominates
 - involvement of employees

Thank you!

Literature

Haipeter, Thomas; Bromberg, Tabea; Slomka, Christine (2015): Angestelltenpolitik im Zeichen von Beteiligung und Organisierung. Neue Initiativen der Interessenvertretung von Industrieangestellten im Betrieb. (Im Erscheinen)

Haipeter, Thomas; Slomka, Christine (2014): Industriebeschäftigung im Wandel. Arbeiter, Angestellte und ihre Arbeitsbedingungen. IAQ-Report 06/2014.