

Gerhard Bosch

Pro-active Response of the German trade unions to Industry 4.0 - large Scale Trade - Union Experiment

CRIMT « Institutionnal Experimentation Better Work »

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The German context (I): Declining membership - high institutional power (IP)

Declining organisational power (OP) of German Trade Unions:

- Trade Union Density: 36 % in 1991 - 17 % in 2016
- Coverage by CA's: 90 % in 1990 - 57 % in 2017

Outcome:

- High **OP** remaining only in some core sectors (*manufacturing and public service*)
- In other industries: Shrinking union budgets, loss of power to bring employers on the bargaining table

The German context (II): Declining organizational but high institutional power (IP)

High IP through codetermination at plant and company level

1. Supervisory boards with employee representatives in 635 companies
2. Works councils:
 - Strong rights of codetermination
 - Resources to carry out their duties (*release from work, additional staff, access to professional advice, further training in trade union training centers at the employers costs etc.*)
 - 174,000 German works councillors (WC) were elected on a voter turnout of 80% – most of them trade union member
 - Around 8,400 WC's released from all work
 - 80% of works councillors union members

The German context (III): Declining membership - high institutional power

- IP = temporary protection of multi-employer bargaining
- **With declining OP only a question of time until historical compromises on IP are challenged**

Strategic use of IP **in core industries** question of survival for unions

Goal: activation of WC's and increased participation of union members and employees

- Traditional model of representative WC's with passive members not regarded as future proofed

Project „Work 4.0 - North-Rhine-Westphalia 2020“ (I)

Basic idea:

- **Focus on delocation and redundancies to late („end of the pipe“)**
- **Focus on overall restructuring of companies and chain of value added needed to react early enough**
- **National hype on industry 4.0 - management also concerned how to manage digitalisation – open to cooperation**
- **Improving of trade union cooperation: joint project of IG Metall with the Chemical, Mining and Energy (IGBCE) and the Food Workers Union (NGG)**

- **New narrative „YES WE CAN SHAPE THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRY 4.0“**

Project „Work 4.0 - North-Rhine-Westphalia 2020“ (II)

- Resources: (1) Own „Work 4.0“ team (only IG Metall 5 FT officials), (2) State money for consultants, (3) Hans-Böckler-Foundation financed evaluation
- „Work 4.0“ team identified companies with pro-active works councils and interested management – both signed a letter of commitment
- In 2017/8: 6 - 8 all day workshops in 28 companies with the help of consultants:
 - Stock-taking of digitalisation of 4.0 in all departments
 - Involvement of employees as „experts of their workplaces“
 - Mapping of problems and chances
 - Development of pro-active strategies - if promising additional workshops are financed
 - Network workshops for „mutual learning“

Company map of industry 4.0

Betriebslandkarte Arbeit und Industrie 4.0



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Stand: August 2017

Erklärung zu den verwendeten Symbolen

Einschätzungen zur Technik – Status Quo

Grad der Vernetzung

Stand alone	In Abteilung	Abteilungsübergreifend	Mit externen Unternehmen
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Grad der Steuerung durch Technik

Entscheidungsunterstützung	Entscheidungsvorgaben	Teilweise technikgesteuert	Voll technikgesteuert
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(Maschine = reines Arbeitsmittel / Werkzeug)

Wirkungen auf Arbeit – Status Quo

👤 Beschäftigung
 🧠 Anforderungen an Arbeit
 ⚙️ Arbeitsbedingungen

🟢 positive Entwicklung
 🔴 negative Entwicklung
 ⚪ keine Veränderung
 🟡 keine eindeutige Entwicklung

Einschätzungen zur Technik – Ausblick

👤 Verstärkter Einsatz von Industrie 4.0-Lösungen
 ⚪ Keine Veränderung

👇 Verlassen des technik-zentrierten Pfades
 ❓ Unklar

Wirkungen auf Arbeit – Ausblick

🟢
 🔴
 ⚪
 🟡

MA = Mitarbeiter/-innen

Illustration: Alexander Zentgraf/Elcom

One consultant

„In these work-shops we have mainly been working on the attitudes of the works councillors“

Intermediate results – project continues (I)

- Higher involvement of employees than originally planned – from all departments including the non-unionized
- Change of traditional representative WC model – not „one-man-show“
- Management impressed by professional approach
- Until 9/2018 in 9 „Mittelstand“-companies „Future Agreements“ signed:
 - joint working groups / joint monitoring of changes: especially skill development, working time
- Clear intensification of social partnership and co-management in these companies

Intermediate results – project continues (II)

Part of experiments: Also failed cases

- Some WC's did not want too much trade union intervention, project made their work transparent, made some deals with management more difficult ...
- management lost interest – did not want more codetermination
- no success in big companies – strategic decisions centralized

3.5 Topics

Topics	During Mapping (cases of plants)	Taken up (in negotiations)
Safeguarding of jobs	9	8
Organisation, Processes, Leadership	11	6
Business strategies, Products	5	2
VET	10	7
Working time	8	2
Wages	5	0
Data protection	3	2

Conclusions

- Ressource intensive experiment with unknown results
- Stock-taking helpful – precondition of early intervention
- Earlier participation of employees in future
- „Future agreements“ signed by employers because they had to negotiate with them anyhow
- Mutual learning accross companies and support of unions crucial – isolated WC's overloaded
- Stronger unions have to help weaker unions
- Need to mobilize additional public ressorces - „Decent Work 4.0“ is also a public responsibility

Conclusions

Open questions:

- Are „Future agreements“ a step forward?
- Will the state support „Decent Work 4.0“ projects?
- Dissemination across industries?
- Can unions in other countries with other resources learn from this experiment?