

CHANGING CAREERS

Changing careers and trajectories

How individuals cope with organisational change and restructuring

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Funded under the Sixth Research Framework Programme of the European Union



KATHOLIEKE UNIVERSITEIT
LEUVEN



Valenduc, Gérard

Changing careers and trajectories. How individuals cope with organisational change and restructuring / Gérard Valenduc, Patricia Vendramin, Marcello Pedaci & Mariangela Piersanti. – Leuven: Katholieke Universiteit Leuven. Higher institute of labour studies, 2009, 76 p.

ISBN 978-90-8836-012-1.
D/2009/4718/13.

Cover design by Koloriet.

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WORKS project - Project number: CIT3-CT-2005-006193
<http://www.worksproject.be>
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1 Introduction

The WORKS perspective

It is generally agreed that major upheavals are taking place in the organisation of work as corporate structures are transformed in the context of economic globalisation and rapid technological change. But how can these changes be understood? And what are the impacts on social institutions and on workers? The 'Work organisation and restructuring in the knowledge society (WORKS)' project was funded by the European Commission in 2005 under its 6th Framework Programme to investigate these questions. This ambitious research project has combined theoretical work and a detailed analysis of a wide range of statistics with in-depth case studies to analyse the forces that bring about these changes, including global value chain restructuring and the policy environment.

One of the underlying assumptions of the WORKS project is that the reorganisation of work can only be understood fully in the context of a global restructuring of value chains, entailing a simultaneous decomposition and recomposition of sectors, organisations, labour processes and skills. However, the considerable heterogeneity within Europe of skill supply, levels of employment, welfare systems and economic sectors makes it especially difficult to disentangle the causes and effects of such processes and to isolate the primary drivers of change. Yet it is particularly important for Europe both to understand the factors that will enable firms to sustain their competitive edge, to ensure a future supply of jobs that is satisfactory both quantitatively and qualitatively and to examine the impact of these changes on the quality of life. At the heart of this is a single issue: how are employment practices adapting to change and with what effect? If we can answer this more effectively on a Europe-wide basis we will be able to propose practical solutions to real problems.

Starting in June 2005, the WORKS consortium, involving partners from seventeen different institutes across fourteen EU member states, carried out an ambitious programme of theoretical and empirical work. These were carried out under five main pillars: 'theories and concepts', 'quantitative research', 'policy', 'qualitative research on organisations' and 'qualitative research on individuals'. The work of these pillars is summarised more fully below.

This is one of eleven thematic reports that bring together the results of all five pillars to deepen our insights into the topic of changing careers and trajectories. The other reports will focus on the topics of: value chain restructuring in Europe in a global economy; changes in work organisation and representation at the workplace; strategies to reach flexibility in the organisation; skills and qualification policies and HRM; new career trajectories and biographies; changing gender and ethnic relations in the workplace; working time, gender and work-life balance; change processes and future perspectives; changes in work in transitional economies; health, safety and the quality of working life; and employers' use of technology and the impact on organisational structure.

The material on which this report draws is summarised below.

1.1 Theories and concepts

In the first stage of its work the WORKS partners collectively carried out a review of the very large body of literature with relevance to the project's research questions, in order to map the field, formulate hypotheses to be tested in the empirical work and develop a clear conceptual framework for the research. This was no easy task. There are many lenses through which one can view the restructuring of work in a global knowledge economy. There are the lenses of different academic disciplines, for instance the sociology of work, economic geography, organisational theory, social psychology, ethnography, gender studies, industrial relations or political science. Then there are the lenses of different social perspectives, for instance those of international development agencies, of national governments in developed and developing countries, of technology providers, of statisticians, of employers, of trade unions, of educators, of civil society, of skilled professional workers who are may be beneficiaries of change, and of those groups that are potential losers. There are also differences deriving from different national research traditions, different ideological approaches and many other variables. In each of these many fields, a body of literature has grown up, trying to make sense of the changes taking place and supplying fragments of evidence. Piecing all this evidence together was a major challenge. The very disparity of the origins of this literature means that it is difficult to find a common frame of reference. Even when the same terms are used, they may be used with different meanings and the lack of commonly agreed definitions can make the refracted pieces of evidence difficult to compare, often giving them a contradictory and anecdotal character.

Nevertheless, in its first six months, the project managed to bring together in a single report (Huws, 2006) a remarkably comprehensive overview of the available evidence, thanks to the large collective efforts of the interdisciplinary WORKS team. This evidence was carefully sifted with the aim of distilling insights that could help to produce a clear conceptual framework in order to develop hypotheses and research questions to guide the empirical research to be undertaken by the WORKS project. This programme of work was, however, highly ambitious, encompassing the aims of: improving our understanding of the major changes in work in the knowledge-based society, taking account both of global forces and of the regional diversity within Europe; investigating the evolving division of labour within and between companies and the related changes at the workplace; exploring the implications for the use of skills and knowledge, for flexibility and for the quality of working life; and examining the impact on occupational identities; time use and learning; as well as the impact on the social dialogue and the varieties of institutional shaping. Balancing the need to take account of these many dimensions whilst still retaining a focus on clear research questions that could be addressed feasibly within a coherent research design in a relatively short space of time was a major challenge, and we begin by presenting the methodology that was adopted to achieve this.

The first task was to achieve a division of labour that on the one hand took full advantage of the specialist subject expertise of partners whilst also recognising the diversity of national research traditions across Europe and the need to take account of the literature in all major European languages. Once topics had been assigned to partners, in a second stage, these partners were asked to produce a list of 'key concepts' for inclusion in a glos-

sary.¹ The purpose of the glossary was to ensure that all partners could share a common understanding and make visible any differences of interpretation or definition of key terms so that they could be discussed and agreed, in a process whereby, in its contribution to the cohesion of the whole group, the dialogue involved in producing the entries was as valuable as the end result. The next stage involved the production of draft reports covering the main concepts and the associated literature. Despite the authors' broad knowledge of their chosen topics, and the fact that each report included inputs from institutes in more than one country, it was felt that the only way to ensure that each report covered the full range of relevant European scholarship was to add a further, vital stage in the work. This involved circulating each draft report as it was completed to all the other WORKS partners, including those who had not been involved in the actual process of report-writing. In this stage, partners were asked to draw on their knowledge of the literature in their own language or national setting, as well as their specific subject knowledge, to comment on the reports, point to issues that might be regarded as contentious and add references to relevant sources. This process of peer review enriched and refined the report which was then used by all partners as an input to the development of research questions, methodologies and research instruments for the empirical research.

1.2 Quantitative research

The 'quantitative research' pillar of the WORKS project studied the changes in work in Europe on the basis of comparative analyses of data from existing organisation and individual surveys. In a first step, major European organisation surveys and individual and household surveys relevant for changes in work were mapped and benchmarked in order to assess their relevance and their strengths and weaknesses for comparative analyses on changes in work. Next, and more important for the thematic reports, the research focused on the secondary analysis of the results of the organisation and individual/household surveys. For the organisation surveys, a thematic analysis of thirteen major national and international organisation surveys, focusing on the major results with respect to the key issues of the WORKS project, resulted in an overview report 'Comparative analysis of organisation surveys in Europe' (Ramioul & Huys, 2007). The key issues addressed in this report are:

- new forms of work organisation, organisational and technological innovation, changes in work. Here in particular some findings with respect to skill-biased organisational change and the role of employee involvement and participation are relevant;
- changes in skills and qualification and vocational training policies at establishment level;
- work-life balance and working time arrangements. Here conclusions from EU wide research on working time arrangements and flexibility policies are of particular interest;
- quality of the working life as measured in organisation surveys.

¹ Available online on http://www.worksproject.be/Glos_and_defint.htm.

For each of these issues, the most relevant conclusions from the organisation surveys were summarised, thus leading to a comprehensive overview of organisational changes in Europe based on this particular data source.

For individual surveys, three major sources of individual and household data made it possible to carry out longitudinal and EU comparative analysis on the issues relevant for the WORKS project: the Community Labour Force Survey (CLFS); the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) and the European Community Household Panel (ECHP). Based on these three key data sources, four different reports were published, each focusing on the EU comparative analysis and on the identification of trends with respect to key WORKS issues. The reports focused on the following issues:

- tracing employment in business functions: a sectoral and occupational approach: in this report an innovative method was used to measure changes in employment related to value chain restructuring;
- trends in work organisation and working conditions. For this report, three waves of the European Working Conditions Survey were analysed in a longitudinal and EU comparative perspective, shedding light on changes in task complexity, autonomy, working time independency, health and safety issues and working conditions;
- work flexibility in Europe: a sectoral and occupational description of trends in work hours, part-time work, temporary work and self-employment was carried out based on this important European data source;
- occupational change in Europe: based on longitudinal data, aspects of work satisfaction, occupational mobility and overqualification were investigated.

1.3 Qualitative research on organisations

The organisational case studies within the WORKS project covered a number of generic business functions that represent a wide variety of activities and labour processes in the 'knowledge society' ranging from highly skilled 'knowledge work' to semi-skilled manual tasks. The research also aimed to focus on those business functions that feature prominently in the external restructuring of companies and thus in the restructuring of global value chains. The selected business functions were: research and development, production, logistics, customer service and information technology.

To study the restructuring of value chains these business functions need to be located in specific sectors. The selection of sectors reflected the emergence of global value chains in different historical stages: sectors where vertical disintegration and internationalisation is already a rather old fact, and sectors where these have developed only very recently. The sectors under study were:

The *clothing industry* is an example of an 'old' industry where restructuring of global commodity chains was already an issue in the 1970s. Recently, the integration of Central and Eastern Europe in pan-European production networks and the phasing out of the MultiFibre Arrangement and the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing considerably changed the trade regimes and resulted in a new wave of restructuring mainly affecting production in Southern Europe and the CEE countries. This sector also provides interesting examples of 'head and tail' companies which concentrate high-skilled work within Europe but carry out the rest elsewhere.

The *food industry* is the largest manufacturing sector in terms of employment in the EU. It was subject to major restructuring after the completion of the single market in the European Union in the early 1990s which allowed companies to replace their country-by-country organisation with a pan-European structure. In contrast with parts of the clothing industry, food production is by and large highly automated. Both industries are interesting as examples of buyer-centred value chains in which the demands of the retail trade play a pivotal role.

The *IT industry* is a growing industry that saw a major wave of restructuring during and after the boom years in the late 1990s and around 2000, partly associated with off-shoring. Internationally, this has contributed to the emergence of a 'new breed of TNCs', global companies that supply services to other companies. To a large extent the IT service provider companies have grown through large outsourcing contracts that include the transfer of personnel from their public or private sector client organisations, a tendency highly relevant for the research questions of WORKS.

Public sector organisations and *services of general interest* are currently subject to far-reaching restructuring because of liberalisation and privatisation policies and budgetary constraints. In these sectors the lengthening of value chains through large scale outsourcing is a very recent phenomenon. The consequences for the quality of work are highly influenced by traditional differences in the regulation of work between the public and private sectors.

Each business function located in a particular sector was studied in a range of countries with diverse employment and welfare regimes (liberal, conservative, socio-democratic, etc.). This made it possible to analyse the influence of institutional frameworks on the consequences of restructuring. Overall, 58 case studies were conducted in fourteen countries. The following overview shows the distribution of case studies.

Table 1.1 Sample of case studies

| | R&D/design | Production | Logistics | Customer service | IT |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Textiles/clothing | BE; FR; DE; PT; IT | BE; IT; PT; HU; GR | FR; DE; NL; PT; HU | | |
| Food | | GR; BG; IT; NO; DK; UK | BE; NO; BG; GR; UK | | |
| IT | DE; AT; UK; BE; FR; NO | DE; AT; HU; BG; SE | | | |
| Public sector administration | | | | AT; BE; BG; HU; IT; UK; SE | BE; NL; UK; FR; DE; NO; SE; PT |
| Services of general interest: post and rail | | | | DE; AT; SE; NL; GR | |

For each case study, eight to ten interviews with management, key employees and shop stewards (in the selected business functions) were conducted. The interviews were complemented by company documents and other material that made it possible to produce a comprehensive picture. Researchers in the respective countries synthesised the individual case studies from the interview data. On the basis of the individual case study reports,

comprehensive comparative analyses were carried out to compose this report. The authors of the report are deeply indebted to the researchers who carried out the case studies in the various countries and to the respondents who devoted their time to our research and helped us to understand the developments in their companies and sectors. For the presentation in this report, all company names have been changed to assure anonymity.

1.4 Qualitative research on individuals

The organisational case studies were complemented by case studies designed to investigate the impacts of changes at work on individuals and their households. Thirty of these occupational case studies were achieved in fourteen countries, between June 2006 and May 2007; in total 246 in-depth individual interviews were carried out, according to common interview guidelines elaborated in May 2006.

These occupational case studies are closely related to the organisational case studies that were carried out in a selected number of business functions, during the same time span. In the WORKS project, the concept of the 'business function' lies at the core of the qualitative empirical research, since these business functions provide the most useful unit of analysis for studying value chain restructuring and changes in work. In order to study changes in work at the individual level, individual workers were selected within specific occupational groups linked to key business functions.

Table 1.2 Selection of occupational groups in WORKS business functions

| Business functions | Sectors for organisational case studies | Occupational groups for occupational case studies | Countries |
|---------------------|--|---|----------------------------|
| Research and design | Clothing industry | Designers in clothing | DE; FR; PT |
| | Information and communication technology (ICT) | Researchers in ICT | AT; DE; FR; NO |
| Production | Information and communication technology (ICT) - software production | IT professionals in software production | BG; DE; HU; SE |
| | Food industry or clothing industry | Skilled production workers in food or clothing | BE; DK; GR; IT; NO; PT |
| Logistics | Food industry or clothing industry | Skilled logistics workers in food or clothing | BE; BG; GR; NL |
| Customer services | Public services or services of general interest | Front-office employees in customer relationships in public services | AT; BE; DE; HU; IT; SE; UK |
| IT services | IT service provision for public organisations | IT consultants or professionals | BE; NL; UK |

Six occupational groups were selected: designers in the clothing industry; researchers in information and communication technology; IT professionals in software development; production workers in food or clothing; logistics workers in food or clothing; front-office

employees in customer relationships in public services; IT consultants in IT service provision for public administration. Both groups of IT professionals (software developers and IT consultants) were regrouped in one single occupational group at the stage of synthesis and comparative analysis. In each occupational group, three to seven case studies were conducted in different countries, covering a variety of socio-economic and institutional contexts. Each case study relied on seven to nine in-depth individual interviews, including a biographical dimension.

The analysis of the interviews was structured around five themes that grouped together the WORKS research questions. These were: career trajectory, occupational identity, quality of work, knowledge and learning and work-life balance.

Particular attention was paid to gender issues. Gender was treated as a transversal theme in the analysis of changes in work at the individual level. The principle of gender mainstreaming (*i.e.* taking systematically into account the differentiated experiences of men and women in all items of data collection and analysis), formed one of the basic guidelines for the individual interviews.

1.5 The policy pillar

A central task in WORKS is to examine what effect policy initiatives and regulation at various levels - international, European, national, regional, sectoral and company - actually have on work life and work experience. Especially relevant in this regard is the role of institutions in the determination, implementation and enforcement of policy. We began with the question: can we expect divergences in the ability to regulate changes in work due to restructuring according to different types of production or employment regimes, different types of industrial relations models, diverse institutional frameworks? Toward this end, all of the organisational case studies included a section on industrial relations and regulation of work. Within each company that was investigated, data was collected on the forms that worker representation took, which issues were negotiated, the role of workplace representation in restructuring (information, consultation, active intervention), the impact of European or national regulations and the pressures on regulations and institutions due to restructuring. Additional interviews with trade union representatives and works councillors were carried out where possible.

The research agenda motivating this line of inquiry was to examine what role the institutions and actors of industrial relations play in restructuring across value chain in diverse settings and across diverse institutional contexts. A further issue is what role workers' representatives have in tempering the effects at the workplace that result from this restructuring, including the terms and conditions of employment, fragmentation and segmentation, gender equality, training and skilling and quality of work life. Existing studies have shown that there are major challenges for existing institutions and forms of social dialogue to deal with current trends in restructuring and changes at work. Therefore, the case studies also investigated the impact of restructuring on the strategies or effectiveness of workers' representation and workers' voice.

1.6 This thematic report on changing careers and trajectories

This thematic report focuses on changes in individual careers and trajectories, in a context of organisational changes, value chain restructuring and the development of a knowledge-based economy. It intends to integrate the results of occupational case studies, organisational case studies, and quantitative data collection and analysis. The report is structured in four chapters:

- Chapter 2 draws the conceptual framework for analysing the changes in individual trajectories, careers and occupations. Selected theories and concepts are reviewed and their empirical relevance regarding WORKS empirical findings is evaluated;
- Chapter 3 focuses on the work sphere and considers three main categories of change factors in the area of careers and trajectories: the role of market pressure as an upcoming driving force; the evolution of internal and external labour markets; the changing balance of individualisation and collective dimension in workforce management;
- Chapter 4 considers wider factors of change at the societal level, concerning changing values in the meaning of work and new trends in life courses and individual trajectories.
- a concluding chapter summarises the key trends, the threats and opportunities for the workers and the comparative dimension of the findings.

2 Careers and occupational identities

Concepts confronted to facts

This chapter draws the conceptual framework for analysing the changes in individual trajectories, careers and occupations. As the overall purpose of the report is to develop a prospective approach to these changes, the conceptual framework will be designed to go beyond the 'impact' approach towards a more prospective and innovative approach, raising and discussing hypotheses about the future evolutions of careers and occupational identities. The purpose is also to focus on the meanings of changes (restructuring, occupational evolution, *etc.*) for individuals.

The first section highlights a series of concepts that are used in the report: careers; trajectories; identities at work; occupations and occupational groups. The second and third sections review a selection of theories about careers (Section 2) and identities (Section 3), which were developed and commented at an early stage of the WORKS project (Valenduc, Vendramin, Flecker & Papouschek, 2006). These selected theoretical approaches are confronted with empirical results coming from case studies and quantitative data analysis. Frequent references are made to the synthesis reports of occupational case studies (Valenduc, Vendramin, Krings & Nierling, 2008) and organisational case studies (Flecker, Holtgrewe, Schönauer, Dunkel & Meil, 2008), which are the masterpieces of the results of qualitative research.

2.1 Careers, trajectories, identities and occupations: some definitions

2.1.1 Careers and trajectories

Career and trajectories could be understood as synonymous terms. Indeed, both terms describe the individual entry path into the labour market and the continuing path and steps in the work life. Each term however reflects a different research stream (Guerrero, Cerdin & Roger, 2004):

- *career* is the key word in a research stream related to *human resource management*, psychology and organisation theories; such theories mainly consider careers as individual paths within or between organisations. The main drivers for understanding new career models are managerial changes, such as the network firm, flat hierarchies, new forms of work organisation, business process reengineering;
- *trajectory* is the key word in a research stream related to the *labour market* and focusing on insertion, mobility, transitions and professional paths. In this approach, other drivers are privileged: increasing flexibility of the labour market, evolution of skills and training, job creation or destruction, security or precariousness. Changes in individual attitudes towards work play an important part in both approaches.

The concepts of career and trajectory are partly overlapping, although they have different connotations: a career is intuitively supposed to be progressive, while trajectory is a more neutral term, describing progression as well as changing orientations or discontinuous steps, or no progression.

Careers and trajectories only concern work. However, individual choices related to work must be considered in a wider perspective, as a part of a life course. The concept of *life course* is linked to studies of narratives and biographies. 'A life course is an identified system of norms constructed by the society and proposed to the individuals like a way to organise their existence. It is a social fact, a social institution, and a whole of rules that organises a key dimension of the living. In particular, it defines age roles and transitions associated to typical ages' (Vendramin, 2008: 46; Guillaume, Lalive d' Epinay & Thomsin, 2005). This concept of life course will be used in Chapter 3 to interpret changes in careers and trajectories in a wider societal dimension.

2.1.2 Identities

In the WORKS conceptual framework, a distinction was made between *occupational identity* and *work identity*. Work identity is a broad concept that encompasses all work-related dimensions of the social identity of a worker. Many social scientists consider work as a consistent source of self-identity and as a crucial source of meaning in people's lives. Theories of social identities demonstrate that the formation of identity is the integration of two forms of identity, socially generated and individually constructed; in other words: a self-identity component and a social identity component (Dubar, 1996). Ellemers (2003) suggests that the work group provides the basis for shared social identity at work. Sainsaulieu (1977) defines work identity as the way different groups at work identify themselves as regards peers, superiors and others groups. Work identity is built upon specific collective representations.

Occupational identity is constructed by a community of workers in the light of the responses of others and workplace interaction (Abbott, 1988). It is closely related to the characteristics of an occupational group, or to a specific profession. Occupational identities are shaped by the socialisation process of training and qualification. They are also linked to interrelations between changing occupations and changing organisations; they are a part of social identities that are shaped by concrete work experiences. Several components of the occupational identity can be distinguished (Becker, 1971), and each occupational identity is a variable mix of these components:

- commitment to work or to specific tasks: attachment to a set of tasks and the feeling to be able of handling them and to engage in these activities;
- commitment to a workplace or a specific organisation, including various aspects such as positions in the organisation, link with a work location, feeling of belonging to an organisation;
- occupational title or ideology: names of occupations, titles of recognised professions or names of hierarchical positions carry a great deal of symbolic meaning. The symbolic meaning of an occupational title is also in many ways influenced by cultural and historical aspects of an occupation, and occupational cultures might therefore be a crucial element in how workers identify themselves with their work;

- position in society: workers evaluate their satisfaction both internally and externally; occupational identity also contains implicit references to the position and recognition in society.

In the WORKS empirical research, occupational identities were an important item in the occupational case studies. The method of semi-narrative and semi-structured individual interviews allowed for a detailed investigation of occupational identities, but also for broader insights and perspectives about work identities. In the identification of trends, this empirical material can feed meaningful thoughts and hypotheses concerning the evolution of work identities and the place of work in social identities.

2.1.3 Occupations and occupational groups

The WORKS synthesis report on occupational case studies stresses that important changes in the labour market and in the managerial discourses have blurred the traditional boundaries of occupations and the entry routes into occupational groups. Occupations are increasingly linked with competences, lifelong learning and careers, in addition to the classical link between occupations and status.

Within WORKS, different meanings of ‘occupations’ are used in quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research, occupations are considered as socio-professional categories. They are mapped according to the ISCO nomenclature. It is a constrained choice: there is no other way to get statistics on occupations. This approach to occupations is useful to provide basic comparative and chronological data, when available. Practical difficulties were however encountered in quantitative mapping of the occupational groups and business functions concerned by qualitative research (Geurts, Coppin & Ramioul, 2007), as well as in identifying quantitative trends in occupational changes across Europe (Brynin & Longhi, 2007):

- the WORKS occupational groups cannot be isolated as such from existing data sets. Geurts *et al.* developed a specific method, cross-tabulating occupational categories with NACE codes, in order to calculate a ‘proxy’ of business functions and occupational groups;
- changes in occupations can only be analysed on the basis of first-level ISCO categories in the ECHP survey, whereas the WORKS occupational groups are defined at a more disaggregated level.

Qualitative research requires going beyond the definition of occupations as socio-professional categories. As stated by Dubar (2004: 94), ‘an occupational group is neither a collection of individuals nor an administrative category (socio-professional categories). It is the result of a process that has to do with social organisation, the functioning of the labour market, and individual subjectivity (meanings of work). An occupational group is both a way of defining oneself and a social process.’

Among the various theories of occupations, the WORKS synthesis report on occupational case studies (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008: 13-17) has left aside the functionalist model, which relies on the distinction between regulated professions and other occupations. This model is not relevant regarding the occupations concerned in WORKS. Priority was given to the interactionist model, which can be defined by four basic principles (Dubar & Tripier, 2005: 90):

- occupational groups are interaction processes, leading the members of a same activity to organise themselves, to defend their autonomy and territory and to protect themselves from competition;
- professional life is a biographical process, building up identities along the life cycle, from entry into active life to retirement, passing through a series of turning points;
- biographical processes and interaction mechanisms have interdependent relations. The dynamic of an occupational group depends on biographical trajectories (careers) of its members, which are influenced by interactions among them and with their environment;
- occupational groups look for recognition from their partners, develop an occupational rhetoric, and seek for legal protection. Some occupational groups succeed better than others, through their position in the division of labour and their capacity to make coalitions. However all are trying to get a protecting status.

The WORKS occupational case studies addressed seven occupational groups, which are analysed in six occupational monographs in Valenduc *et al.* (2008) - groups three and four below were regrouped in a single occupational monograph:

1. dress designers in the clothing industry: fashion designers, working either for brands, or for integrated companies, or for SMEs, under various work status; technical designers;
2. researchers in ICT: computer scientists, engineers and other scientists in both academic research and development-oriented research, in various research areas (networks, software engineering, search engines, multi-media technology);
3. software developers in ICT industry, together with the next group;
4. IT professionals in IT services for the public sector: a range of IT professionals covering IT managers, IT consultants, software project leaders, analysts programmers, system engineers, user support and maintenance, quality insurance and commercial activities (with a majority of project leaders and analysts);
5. production workers in the food or clothing industry: prototype stitchers in lingerie; production workers in a dress factory, a slaughterhouse, three frozen food factories, a brewery and a fish-farming factory;
6. logistics workers in the food or clothing industry: export operation employees in a brewery; logistics managers in food and beverage companies and clothing companies; warehouse managers, clerical employees and warehouse workers in food and beverage companies;
7. front-office employees in public administration, post or railway, working in sales centres, customer support centres, local contact offices, centralised contact offices or call centres.

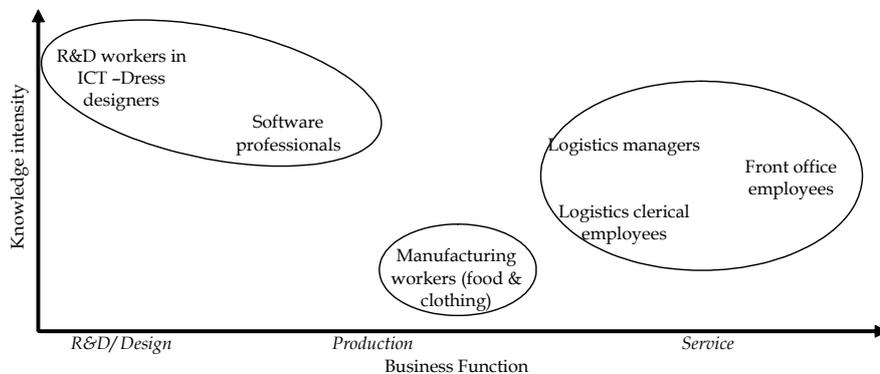
At the final stage of synthesis and comparative analysis of occupational case studies, occupational groups were gathered in three clusters, according to their respective position in the value chain and their knowledge intensity (Figure 2.1 and Valenduc *et al.*, 2008: 163-165):

- the first cluster includes *knowledge-based (creative) occupations*. It consists of R&D workers in ICT, designers (fashion designers and technical designers) and software professionals. There are several common aspects among those occupational groups, who can be characterised as creative knowledge-based workers, as far as creativity is understood

in a broad meaning: aesthetical creativity, technical creativity, generation of IT knowledge;

- the second cluster consists of *manufacturing occupations*. It only contains the occupational group of production workers in manufacturing industries (food and clothing), characterised - at least in our sample of case studies - by a low knowledge intensity and a high standardisation of work processes;
- the third cluster consists of *service occupations* (front-office, back-office and management activities). It collects clerical employees as well as managers in logistics and front-office employees in public services. These groups dedicate their main activities to service-based occupations. Logistics as well as customer relationships in public services got an increasing importance through global restructuring processes. Levels of knowledge intensity are different in this cluster. Among logistics workers, the knowledge issues for managers and clerical employees must be clearly distinguished; among front-office employees, knowledge intensity is very heterogeneous, depending on the contents of the service relationship.

Figure 2.1 Clusters of occupational groups



In order to avoid abusive generalisations, the names of the clusters - knowledge-based occupations, manufacturing occupations, service occupations - have to be understood in relation to the composition of sample of occupational case studies, as described above.

2.2 Careers and identities: selected theories and their empirical relevance

2.2.1 Career anchors²

The concept of *career anchor* (Schein, 1978/1990 & 1996) is defined as a combination of self-perceived abilities, motivations and needs, and attitudes resulting from interactions with organisations. Each individual builds up his or her career in reference to one or several career anchors, but career anchors only become structured after some initial work experience. Edgar Schein and his school of career studies at the MIT Sloan School of Management are often quoted as the starting point of career theories. In his successive publications, Schein proposes nine types of career anchors (seventh to ninth were added in the most recent publications):

1. technical or functional competence as a career driver;
2. managerial competence and increasing responsibilities or power;
3. security and stability, either within an organisation or within a local labour market;
4. autonomy and independence within organisations, or at the boarder of organisations;
5. creativity, innovativeness or entrepreneurship;
6. career as a pure individual challenge;
7. lifestyle as a career component;
8. service to others or dedication to a cause;
9. plurality of interests, voluntary variety of jobs.

Two assumptions are at the core of this theory:

- individual career anchors remain rather permanent, despite organisational restructuring or mobility on the labour market. Once established in the first steps of the professional life, career anchors may remain strong and stable along a worker's life, even if drastic changes occur in the objective or the subjective career. The relative weight of the anchors can however evolve along a career;
- although career anchors are individual attributes, some occupations can be characterised by particular sets of career anchors. Clusters of anchors can also be used to draw career typologies.

The WORKS empirical material, *i.e.* mainly the results of occupational case studies, can provide an assessment of these hypotheses. A preliminary step is to map which career anchors are relevant for the different occupational groups. Table 2.1 distinguishes, for each occupational group, the anchors that are relevant for the whole group, the anchors that are relevant for only a part of workers within groups, and the anchors that are still relevant but strongly threatened.

² This theory is detailed and commented in the contribution of Valenduc *et al.* to Huws (2006: 122-123).

Table 2.1 Career anchors in the different occupational groups

| | Technical competence | Managerial responsibility | Security and stability | Autonomy and independence | Creativity or entrepreneurship | Pure challenge | Lifestyle | Service to others | Voluntary variety |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Knowledge-based occupations | | | | | | | | | |
| Dress designers | + | | | + | + | | + | | (+) |
| ICT researchers | + | | (+) | + | + | | | | |
| Software professionals | + | | | + | | | (+) | | |
| Manufacturing occupations | | | | | | | | | |
| Food production workers | | | X | | | | | | |
| Clothing production workers | (+) | | X | | | | | | |
| Service occupations | | | | | | | | | |
| Logistic managers | (+) | + | | | | | | | |
| Logistic clerical workers | | | X | | | | | | |
| Front-office employees (core workers) | | | + | | | | | + | |
| Front-office employees (peripheral) | | | | | | | | (+) | (+) |

+ Relevant anchor; (+) only for a part of workers; X Relevant but strongly threatened anchor.

This table indicates that Schein's career anchors are mainly relevant for the cluster of knowledge-based occupations, and to a lesser extent to the cluster of service occupations. It is not surprising, as most of initial studies of career anchors were carried out among professionals, executives and high-skilled employees.

The first assumption - career anchors are 'career invariants' despite restructuring or mobility - is rather confirmed by the results of occupational case studies. For the three groups of knowledge-based occupations, the mix of career anchors provides strong individual and collective references that the workers try to maintain throughout organisational turbulence or changes in their individual trajectories. The career anchor 'security and stability' is the most threatened by restructuring; however, workers attach a great importance to it and continuously struggle to limit insecurity or instability. The 7th to 9th career anchors, added in Schein's recent papers (1996), seem relevant in knowledge-based occupations and service occupations, but not dominant.

This finding could be interpreted in another way: the occupations who are able to better cope with restructuring are those who have a strong set of career anchors; and the occupations who are mostly threatened by restructuring are those who have a limited set of career anchors.

The second assumption - particular sets of anchors can characterise occupations or career profiles - is not confirmed by the WORKS empirical results. Anchors are particularly insufficient to characterise manufacturing occupations and service occupations. Only for knowledge-based occupations, the combination of career anchors provides a good description of values and self-perceived motivations in each occupational group. This finding highlights a limit of the theory of career anchors: the theory is too close to the functionalist definition of professions *versus* occupations, and therefore less relevant for occupations that are not professions (in the functionalist meaning of quasi-regulated professions).

2.2.2 Organisational, protean and boundaryless careers³

Several career theories are based on the opposition between organisational careers and new career models. The key point is that organisational careers are defined by company rules and models, formalised procedures of human resource management (HRM), or specific professional rules, while in new career models, a wide margin of initiative is left to individuals to build up their own career.

Two main models are proposed as alternatives to organisational careers: the *protean* career and the *boundaryless* (or nomadic) career.

³ This theoretical debate is detailed and commented in the contribution of Valenduc *et al.* to Huws (2006: 123-128).

The concept of protean⁴ career (Hall & Moss, 1998) does not delineate a single career model, but rather a variety of models in which the career is not managed by the organisation, but by the individual himself. While an organisational career is a path, a protean career is a script (Alvarez, 2000). Other features of protean careers are:

- career is defined as a series of experiences (in work, education and training), transitions, and changes of identities all along the professional life;
- personal development relies on continued learning, and on the capacity to develop relational networks and to improve the job contents;
- the components of professional success are the learning capacity (instead of technical or functional competences in organisational careers), the employability (instead of job security in organisational careers) and professional fulfilment;
- in return, the enterprise is committed to propose jobs with responsibilities, access to information sources and opportunities for personal development.

The concept of protean career emphasises the role of psychological contracts. Two kinds of psychological contracts are mentioned in the literature (Galunic & Anderson, 2000; Guerrero *et al.*, 2004).

The *relational contract* is a long-term compromise, exchanging loyalty, performance and involvement against career progression, training opportunities, material and non-material advantages; it can be re-evaluated along time. The *transactional contract* is a short-term 'calculated commitment', including specific and negotiable obligations, merit remuneration or performance-related wages, encouragement to professional mobility and development of personal competencies.

The shift from relational contracts to transactional contracts is considered to be in line with employability, project work, networking and other current organisational changes.

The concept of *boundaryless career* or *nomadic career*, which is nowadays considered as a new paradigm in career theories (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Cadin, Bender & De Saint-Giniez, 2003), makes a step further in the individualisation of the career concept. Boundaryless careers are characterised by a strong emphasis on autonomy, empowerment and learning. The conceptual framework of boundaryless careers is more precisely formalised than the concept of protean career, and relies on three subconcepts:

- *weak environments*: in opposition to strong environments (unambiguous, intelligible, predicable), weak environments are characterised by instability, unpredictability and 'self-designing' organisations. Boundaryless careers are both a consequence of organisational changes and a condition of success of relevant 'self-designing organisational forms' in weak environments;
- *typology of 'knowing' competences*: three types of competences are at the core of the concept of boundaryless careers: knowing how (knowledge and know-how accumulated through professional experience or other experiences); knowing whom (business relationships, personal relationships, social networks, contacts); knowing why (individual identity and motivations, work culture, sense making, career anchors). Experiences in

⁴ Proteus was an ancient Greek divinity who did not want to give his prediction and who entered in several metamorphoses to escape from his predictive duties. The etymology of 'protean' refers to both unpredictability and metamorphosis.

the professional or personal areas are systematically interpreted as a process of accumulation and learning, building up the three 'knowing';

- *enactment*: although careers are an individual process of sense building (knowing why), the development of boundaryless careers also transforms organisations and specific labour markets, through its action in institutional arenas. The concept of enactment is borrowed from theories of symbolic interactionism.

Confusion must be avoided between, on the one hand, voluntary commitments in boundaryless careers, and on the other hand, 'nomadic' trajectories consisting of frequent changes of jobs and employers, resulting from the increasing flexibility of the labour market. The differentiation relies on the degree of liberty or constraint the worker has in his choices, and on the degree of control the worker has on the nomadic trajectory. Examples such as the interim worker, or the precarious worker, or the unemployed experimenting a series of transitional jobs, do not fit anyway the model of the boundaryless career, although they are nomads on the labour market.

The literature on boundaryless careers usually neglects this kind of constrained nomadic trajectories. Among the career theories considered in the WORKS conceptual framework, only the theory of career fields pays some attention to constrained nomadic trajectories (Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer & Meyer, 2003; Guerrero *et al.*, 2004: 115-131). This theory distinguishes four career types: company world (similar to organisational career), free floating professionalism and self-employment (related to protean or boundaryless careers), and *chronic flexibility*: career including frequent changes of jobs, either within an organisation or between organisations, or from employee to self-employed and *vice versa*, or between different work status. There is no specialised professional expertise, but rather polyvalent skills; the key resource is to adapt to changing occupational environments.

To what extent do the WORKS empirical results feed the debate on organisational *versus* boundaryless careers? The WORKS occupational case studies provide very relevant findings, concerning varieties of organisational, protean and boundaryless careers; they are complemented by the results of organisational case studies, which help to frame certain findings of the occupational approach. The quantitative findings on occupational mobility also bring something new in the debate on career models and trends.

Several varieties of organisational careers are found in the occupational case studies: a *hierarchical* version, a *technical* version and a *multi-organisational* version.

Hierarchical organisational careers are the most classical - but nevertheless still the most frequent in the studied sample, even among knowledge-based occupations.

In ICT research, the linear career from university to research, and eventually further to R&D departments of private companies, getting increasing R&D management responsibilities, is the dominant model in all studied countries. There are however few levels in this standard career path.

In software development and IT consultancy, organisational careers are also very frequent, following a step-by-step progression: programmer, analyst, project leader, team manager, area manager, and further into managerial tasks; when reaching upper levels, international mobility may be required. After mergers, the bigger size of merged companies can allow for a more developed organisational chart, offering more career opportunities, but often at the detriment of the 'small is beautiful' work atmosphere; this kind of career is however less likely to be developed in small companies, where flat hierarchies are very frequent. As the career proceeds, more 'soft' skills (communication, team man-

agement, financial management, foreign languages, *etc.*) must be added to IT skills, which have nevertheless to be continuously updated. Increasing responsibilities are the leading thread of this career model.

Among service occupations, hierarchical careers were found in the cases of logistic managers, as well as among front-office employees belonging to the 'core' workers and experiencing 'light' forms of restructuring,⁵ *i.e.* intra-organisational restructuring without major threaten to their job security. In this latter case, restructuring leads to both more polyvalence and more opportunities for oblique career progression, *i.e.* jointly upwards and sideways.

Few opportunities for hierarchical organisational career were mentioned for the observed manufacturing occupations. Restructuring often leads to 'hollowing out the internal career paths', by eliminating intermediate hierarchical levels in the organisation of production plants (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 72). In low-skilled work, progression is only possible either through recognition of acquired experience, or through occupational changes driven by reorganisation or restructuring, for example the shift from production tasks to logistics (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 74).

A generic and recurrent gender issue has to be mentioned about organisational careers: the glass ceiling, *i.e.* the limitation of women access to upper hierarchical positions. Organisational and occupational case studies confirm the existence of the glass ceiling in organisational careers, mainly in the ICT sector.

Technical organisational careers were found in several occupational groups: technical designers in the clothing industry; ICT researchers evolving as high level experts instead of getting R&D management responsibilities; software professionals evolving towards more complex and specialised technical tasks. Increasing expertise is the leading thread of this career model. The commitment to the company is linked to the expectation of a continuing challenging job, from the technological point of view. Besides knowledge-based occupations, only one case of quasi-technical career was found among the cluster of manufacturing workers: clothing production workers converted, after restructuring, into prototype stitchers associated to the dress design process (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 16-17, 24 & 26-27).

Multi-organisational careers represent a very significant trend in several occupational groups. They concern employees developing their career in successive steps by moving from a company to another, in order to achieve better positions within organisations, but through a limited number of changes and with the clear purpose to progress within organisations - not to become boundaryless. Such careers are found among dress designers, for whom changing company is the better way to get a carrier progression, from assistant designer to designer, chief designer, head of design department; as such positions are rather rare and recruitment is based on accumulated experience, designers have to move where better organisational positions are available, also according to the reputation of brands and companies. Despite changes of employers, such careers can provide rather secure employment conditions. Similar scenarios exist among software profession-

⁵ The synthesis of occupational case studies of front-office employees distinguishes 'light' restructuring, mainly concerning job contents, distribution of tasks, and customer-oriented skills and flexibility, without significant statutory change for employees, and 'strong' restructuring, including statutory changes and internal or external transfer of personnel to subsidiaries or to service providers. The same organisations can develop both kinds of restructuring, respectively for 'core' and 'peripheral' workforce.

als and ICT researchers. Changing company is a way to get a more stimulating job or a better salary, while pursuing an organisational career progression, either hierarchical or technical, in a favourable labour market context. For software professionals, some institutional settings may foster multi-organisational careers in case of restructuring, when negotiated provisions allow moving to subsidiaries or to service providers in order to avoid redundancies. In the case of front-office employees facing 'strong' restructuring, negotiated institutional settings can also support continued careers after outsourcing or privatisation. New entrants in core jobs (not in peripheral jobs) in customer services, for example in restructured administrations or utilities, do not believe anymore that they would have a pure organisational career, but they however hope that the new organisational structures will still open career opportunities - if not upwards, at least sideways. However, in these cases, the feeling of insecurity increases significantly: 'this is not anymore a job for life', said several interviewees, even if they could continue another career path in another parent company or public-private partnership.

This model of multi-organisational career is in-between the classical organisational career and the protean career. Rules are given by organisations, but individuals have a margin of initiative, depending on their position on the labour market. Their purpose is to achieve an organisational career, but their values are those of the protean career: continuous learning, valorisation of experience, and promotion of individual employability.

Is this visible in quantitative data? In their WORKS study of quantitative data on occupational changes, Brynin and Longhi (2007: 39-43) consider a range of factors explaining occupational mobility in European countries. Through analysis of the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) survey,⁶ they develop an analysis of overqualification, *i.e.* the feeling of workers to have a higher qualification than required for the job they are doing. They come to the conclusion that overqualification is a driver for occupational mobility towards other organisations where the job better matches the education level. Multi-organisational careers, as named here, are a way to cope with overqualification.

Boundaryless careers were only found among dress designers and software professionals. Dress designers present two profiles of boundaryless careers: artistic and entrepreneurial; they do not exclude each other. In the artistic profile, the designer has a passionate vocation for creative design, wants to work only with 'interesting' people and is not motivated by following any professional or organisational guidelines. The occupational identity is summarised in the 'portfolio' (the book gathering one's best personal creations), which is also the skills passport and the CV. Nomadic careers are accepted as a necessity to achieve artistic goals. In the entrepreneurial profile, the purpose of the designers is to create their own atelier or their own brand, after gaining experience from working as an employee or a freelancer for several companies. At a moment, they consider that they meet the conditions to start their own business: knowledge, available money, network of relationships, and clients; in other words: knowing how, knowing

⁶ The purpose of this analysis is to look at individual-level change over time, to measure the extent of flux but also to assess both its antecedents and its effects. The data are mostly from the ECHP, which contains information on individuals and households in fifteen European countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and UK. Collection of the ECHP started in 1994 with twelve countries; Austria, Finland and Sweden joined in waves 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The dataset contains only eight waves of data since its collection stopped in 2001.

whom, knowing why. The concepts of weak environments and enactment are also relevant in these career profile.

Among software professionals, boundaryless careers were not so frequent as expected according to the literature, and they cannot be considered as representative of ICT careers. Boundaryless careers in software include reorientations, return to training, career breaks, migrations, alternating periods of unemployment, freelancer or employee, attempts to create one's own company, mobility between companies. Although knowledge building and social networks are essential, such careers do not completely fulfil the conceptual model of boundaryless career, particularly the conditions of weak organisational environments and the enactment process.

Do specific features of work organisation in IT occupations foster boundaryless careers? Several authors think so; they establish an explicit link between the development of boundaryless careers and organisational changes, particularly project-based work organisation. Project work is identified as a powerful incentive for boundaryless careers (Guerrero, 2001; Tremblay, 2003; Valgaeren, 2005). According to these authors, project work concentrates several favourable features to boundaryless careers: commitments are linked to projects, not to organisations; knowledge is a key resource; work experience is based on accumulation and learning; networks and communities of practices play an important role.

The findings of WORKS occupational case studies are not so clear-cut. Project work does not necessarily need boundaryless careers; project work is also found in organisational careers, for instance in large companies: this confirmed by the occupational monographs of software professionals and ICT researchers (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008). There is indeed a renewal of the model of organisational careers, which is also incorporating new values and new forms of career capital based on knowledge and networks. This renewed model is increasingly attractive for the same target public as boundaryless careers. Moreover, weak environments are unstable equilibriums; they evolve towards stabilisation by defining new rules, more flexible and customised than in the past. New organisational rules are not only perceived as constraints, but also as resources for individuals (Valcourt & Tolbert, 2003).

In their attempt to quantify occupational changes, Brynin and Longhi (2007: 46-51) propose a particular focus on occupational mobility in IT professions, testing the hypothesis that IT careers might be more boundaryless than others; data are only available for Germany and UK, but in both cases, the authors' answer is negative. The respective percentages of stayers, leavers and joiners in IT occupations are quite similar to other occupations with comparable skills (engineering, accountancy, HR management). Interestingly, about one third of inflows at the level of IT manager or software analyst do not come from vertical mobility within IT professions, but from other occupations outside IT. According to the authors, this is an indicator that IT is attractive for organisational careers. Moreover, IT is attractive for workers who felt overqualified in the job they had before entering into IT.

Among the WORKS occupational case studies, boundaryless careers were mainly observed in countries (Bulgaria and the Netherlands) where the interviews took place in several companies of various sizes and various restructuring experiences.

Finally, the model of *chronic flexibility*, neglected by most of career theories, appears very widespread in occupational case studies.

Among dress designers, several fragmented careers are a mix of voluntary and constrained choices, and of successful and unsuccessful job experiences. The succession of status and/or employers is not only the result of personal choices. Fragmented careers often include renunciations: to more interesting jobs, to preferred work locations, to family formation.

Among software professionals, some interviewees, in several countries (Belgium, Bulgaria and the Netherlands), report individual experiences of constrained mobility, due to plant closure, company bankruptcy, collective dismissal after restructuring, *etc.* They were pushed into professional mobility. Their knowledge and skills portfolio was the critical factor to help them to find a new job, sometimes after some unsuccessful attempts. At the moment of the interview, most of them had found an anchor in an organisational career. So, flexibility did not become chronic for them.

Among manufacturing occupations, the work biography of the food workers can often be characterised as fragmentary. They often had several different jobs before the current one, in the food sector or elsewhere. Conversely, biographies of clothing workers do not correspond to the model of chronic flexibility: they have often a long experience in the sector and were partly trained in specific vocational training schemes, partly on the job. However, they do not expect significant advances regarding their career development; mostly they stay in the position in which they were hired.

In service occupations, insecure trajectories are very frequent in outsourced services, particularly in call centres. Most of interviewees do not perceive their current job as a career, but as an opportunity to find a job; their trajectory is often made of a succession of fixed-term jobs, in different sectors. Their job security is low. They however hope to be hired in more stable contracts. This career pattern illustrates contrasted trajectories of 'core' and 'peripheral' front-office employees. Core employees have rather standard organisational careers, even if progression opportunities become more restricted through restructuring. Peripheral employees have discontinuous work biographies, and expect stabilisation.

2.2.3 Trajectories⁷

The focus on trajectories highlights a series of transitional aspects that are not taken into account in career theories. The most critical - and the most studied - transitions concern entry routes into the labour market. Transitions may occur before starting a well identifiable career path, or during career reorientations. They are shaped by employment policies, by legislation, and by labour market institutions. There are several motivations behind the focus on transitions: to understand youth unemployment, which is a huge social and political problem;⁸ to support employment policies; to understand to what extent initial trajectories in the labour market are a predictor of future career paths, or not.

⁷ Theoretical aspects are detailed and commented in the contribution of Valenduc *et al.* to Huws U (2006: 128-130).

⁸ In almost all European countries, the youth unemployment rate (under 25 years) is twice higher than the adult unemployment rate (over 25 years), even in countries with low unemployment.

According to literature (Gautié, 2003; Fournier & Bujold, 2005), trajectories in the labour market can be characterised by several features:

- *multiplications of transitions*, there is a significant increase in the number of transitions, either from employment to employment (eventually between different types of work contracts), or from employment to unemployment or *vice versa*. Unemployment is at the core of this trend in multiplication of transitions and makes them more risky. Transitions are not only frequent at the beginning of the professional trajectories;
- *emergence of transition phases*, chaining several transitions and leading to semi-structured transitional periods, frequently supported by public employment policies, for example: the insertion process from education to work; the insertion process of unemployed; the re-insertion process after job loss due to industrial restructuring;
- *diversification of trajectories*, due to several factors: multiplication of transitions, intertwined constraints of professional and family life, influence of lifelong training, differentiated wage progression, geographical mobility;
- *persistence of linear trajectories* from education (or vocational training, or apprenticeship) to work, not only in skilled industrial or service occupations, but also in craft occupations.

The WORKS quantitative findings on occupational mobility confirm the importance of transitions, though specific measurement of occupational mobility, based on secondary analysis of the European Community Household Panel (Brynin & Longhi, 2007: 33-45). The authors compute changes in occupations from year to year over seven years in a set of countries, for eight occupational categories (first level of the ISCO standard classification), through the measurement of the percentage of workers remaining in the same occupation over the seven years; 'remaining in the same occupation' means in the same company *and* in the same job. Occupational categories are broadly aggregated, so the measurement concerns transitions rather than careers - indeed, career measurement should require more disaggregated occupational levels. The highest levels of stability over seven years are observed among professionals (average percentage 75.4), skilled manufacturing workers (average 67.0) and technical occupations (average 56.2), although with important national variations (Table 2.2). Clerical and service occupations present contrasted pictures. Variations are generally larger between countries than between occupations in the same country (Huws & Dahlmann, 2007). Variations across countries are more difficult to interpret, because they may depend on variations between national systems of occupational definitions.

The authors also computed the percentages of occupational stability over three years instead of seven years; over this shorter period, stability is much higher: over 90 *per cent* in all countries, except UK, and in all occupations, except the elementary level.

When interpreted in terms of mobility rather than stability, these data reveal a rather high level of occupational mobility, concerning 25 *per cent* to 40 *per cent* of workers over seven years. Mobility covers however several meanings: moving upwards in a career progression; moving to another occupation because job dissatisfaction, overqualification or better opportunities; moving because difficulties on the labour market (fixed-term or casual contracts, job insecurity, job losses, transitions from unemployment, *etc.*). In order to

get a better insight on mobility, Brynin and Longhi calculated the ratios of upwards, sideways and downwards mobility, using the same ECHP data (Table 2.3).⁹

Table 2.2 Percentage of workers remaining in the same occupation over seven years (ECHP data)

| | DE | DK | NL | BE | FR | UK | IE | IT | GR | ES | PT |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Senior officials and managers | 44.6 | 77.0 | 52.9 | 50.3 | 82.1 | 63.8 | 71.2 | 43.0 | 49.2 | 52.4 | 38.3 |
| Professionals (engineering, health, teaching, business) | 79.2 | 80.4 | 68.0 | 53.9 | 80.7 | 63.0 | 81.1 | 78.8 | 81.8 | 81.4 | 81.6 |
| Technicians and other associate professionals | 73.7 | 76.1 | 56.5 | 39.5 | 78.4 | 52.2 | 52.9 | 43.4 | 44.2 | 59.2 | 41.7 |
| Office and customer service clerks | 67.5 | 77.6 | 54.8 | 62.9 | 82.4 | 61.9 | 64.1 | 75.4 | 69.6 | 43.9 | 66.3 |
| Service workers and sales workers | 63.2 | 70.8 | 45.0 | 48.6 | 78.7 | 60.6 | 54.8 | 54.9 | 62.8 | 62.2 | 52.8 |
| Skilled manufacturing and agricultural workers | 74.8 | 74.8 | 67.1 | 37.5 | 82.7 | 63.8 | 59.7 | 61.7 | 74.8 | 65.5 | 74.2 |
| Plant and machine operators and assemblers | 67.3 | 70.2 | 67.5 | 40.3 | 77.5 | 57.4 | 60.7 | 47.1 | 68.3 | 58.8 | 57.2 |
| Elementary occupations | 54.7 | 58.2 | 38.2 | 20.0 | 73.6 | 37.0 | 43.5 | 35.2 | 51.4 | 48.5 | 44.4 |

Source: Brynin & Longhi, 2007: 35

Table 2.3 Percentage of workers moving occupation across pairs of survey waves over seven years (ECHP data)

| | DE | DK | NL | BE | FR | UK | IE | IT | GR | ES | PT |
|------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Moving upwards | 26.9 | 36.3 | 29.1 | 39.4 | 26.5 | 26.6 | 31.4 | 24.8 | 26.2 | 33.2 | 24.5 |
| Staying in the same category | 71.4 | 61.8 | 68.6 | 59.1 | 72.9 | 69.9 | 66.7 | 74.2 | 73.2 | 64.9 | 73.7 |
| Moving down | 1.7 | 1.9 | 2.3 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 3.6 | 1.9 | 1.1 | 0.6 | 1.8 | 1.7 |

Source: Brynin & Longhi, 2007: 38

These data in Table 2.3 bring complementary explanations to Table 2.2. For instance, Belgium has the lowest rate of occupational stability, but the highest rate of upward occupational mobility; France has a high occupational stability, but less upward mobility and almost no downward mobility. In order to understand how far occupational mobility is driven by factors such as job insecurity, job dissatisfaction, or overqualification, Brynin and Longhi computed a probability model and came to the following conclusions:

- ‘occupational change is primarily associated with people in relatively advantages positions, who are still upwardly mobile. People with higher wages, or higher occupational status (professionals), have a lower probability changing occupation; (...)

⁹ Technical details of the computing method are given in Brynin and Longhi (2007: 38-39).

- those who are relatively satisfied with their job seem to be less likely to change occupation, while those who feel overqualified and those with fixed-term or casual contracts are more likely to change; (...)
- overqualification is strongly associated with upward mobility in most countries, so that many people in fact move into better, more demanding jobs where they are no longer overqualified. However, in several countries, overqualified people move downwards; overqualification describes, for some people, a process of continuing job failure; (...)
- while most occupational changes consist of upward mobility, this is often from a low start: many people are in insecure jobs where they are overqualified and have low job satisfaction; most tend to work their way out of this situation during their careers. Some do not, and for these people things can get even worse over time.' (Brynin & Longhi, 2007: 40-43).

The WORKS occupational case studies also provide some interesting findings on trajectories and transitions.

Some occupational groups are characterised by rather linear transitions from the education system (including apprenticeship or specialised training after graduation) to work: dress designers, ICT researchers, software professionals, clothing production workers, and logistic managers. For some of them (fashion designers and software developers), transitions are frequent in the first stages of their career, as already described in their career profiles. Transitions phases are however not so long: for instance, in the sample of software professionals, half of interviewees have not known more than two successive employers.

Other forms of trajectories and transitions are found in other occupational groups. Food production workers have fragmented trajectories, including a succession of jobs in other sectors; their mobility is driven by reducing insecurity and getting better wages. Clerical employees in logistics have a similar profile, although at a generally higher education level. Their transitions have the same motivations. Sideways mobility is frequent: for example, from other business functions in the company towards logistics, after restructuring. Service employees have quite heterogeneous educational background, and experienced various jobs in various sectors. Call centre workers are often overqualified regarding the job they really do, and consider their job as a transition phase.

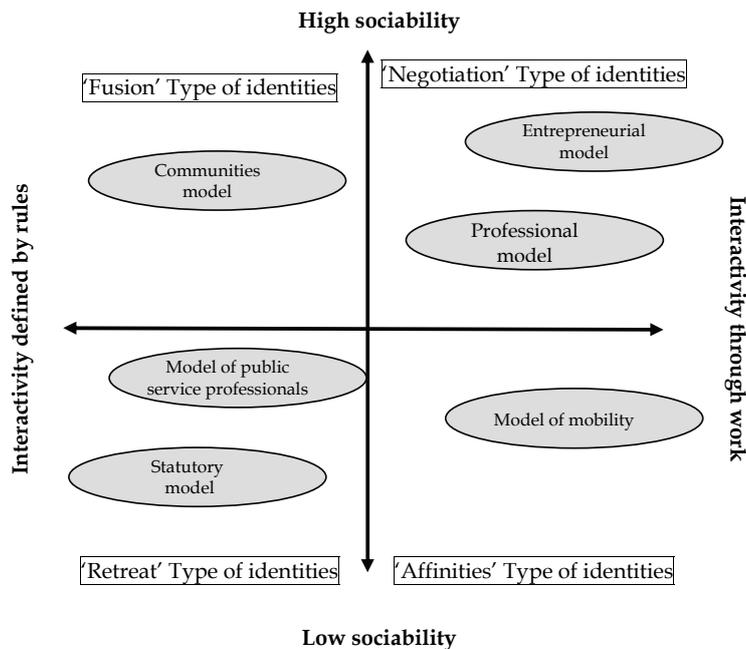
Nevertheless, a limitation is inherent to the empirical material collected through individual interviews: all interviewees were still employed after restructuring, even if not in the original company; precarious trajectories are not significantly represented in the sample.

2.3 Identities at work: selected theories and their empirical relevance

2.3.1 Cultural models of identities at work¹⁰

A key reference among theories of identities at work is the typology of Sainsaulieu (1977), revised twenty years later by the same author and others in *Les mondes sociaux de l'entreprise* (Francfort, Osty, Sainsaulieu & Uhalde, 1995).

Figure 2.2 Sainsaulieu's forms of occupational identities and their various models



Source: Francfort *et al.*, 1995: 223; Dif, 2001: 153

Sainsaulieu defines four basic types of identity: the *fusion* type, mainly concerning mass production workers, whose relationships are based on solidarity, and whose power relations are defined by hierarchy; the *negotiation* type, specific to professionals and executives, whose relationships are characterised by cognitive richness and debate, and who prefer leaders than hierarchy; the *affinities* model, concerning groups searching for social rise and building selective affinities, and for whose authority is accepted as project leaders; the *retreat* type, concerning those for whom work has only an instrumental purpose or

¹⁰ Theoretical aspects are detailed and commented in the contribution of Valenduc *et al.* to Huws (2006: 133-137).

who are at risk of marginalisation (because of low skills, age, status, ethnicity, etc.); relationships are atomised and hierarchical authority is needed for co-ordination.

The evolution of this typology over twenty years is particularly interesting, as it takes into account a long wave of organisational and occupational changes. This evolution is also commented by Dif (2001: 152-153) and Dubar (2000: 124-128).

- The decline of the *fusion type*, linked to industrial restructuring, has led to the development of a *community model*. Workers are highly attached to colleagues, to their formal occupational status and working conditions within the organisation. Beyond traditional production workers, this model also concerns wider categories of employees having accumulated a long working experience within public and private organisations, and having survived important organisational and structural changes. These groups, who were traditionally based on a high level of solidarity and relational interactivity, are breaking down into smaller communities. In other words, the community model results from the fragmentation of the fusion type.
- The evolution of the *negotiation type* of occupational identities entailed a splitting up into two models, however both characterised by high sociability and high level of interactions at work. The *professional model* concerns high-skilled employees and professionals, in areas closely related to high-tech and innovation. They are attached to relational values based on a well-done job, autonomy, self-learning, trust and solidarity between members of the occupational group. The second trend concerns the emergence of a new dynamic category of individuals (managers, executives, sales engineers, commercial employees) whose competencies allow them to invest in change management and to participate in change, while being well integrated within the organisation as a whole. Sainsaulieu named this new form of occupational identity *entrepreneurial model* or *corporate identity model*.
- The *retreat type* has been also split in two models. The first trend is an extension of the retreat identities characterised as administrative or regulatory (interactions defined by rules and low sociability), towards wider categories of individuals destabilised by technological change or organisational change, and at risk of marginalisation or exclusion. They use the routine of the established administrative regulations as means of protection against change and potential exclusion. Sainsaulieu names this trend the *statutory model*. The second trend consists of the emergence of a new category of customer service employees, directly confronted with clients or citizens, and involved in counselling activities. Interaction with users is at the core of their occupational identity. It is named *model of public service professionals*. In Figure 2.2, it is positioned higher on the scale of sociability, and is less in retreat than the statutory model.
- Finally, the *affinities type* of occupational identities has evolved towards a *model of mobility*. Convergent trends, such as rarefaction of career promotions, flat organisational structures and flexible work organisation (notably teamwork or project work), have fostered the emergence of a new generation of mobile workers, particularly among specialised technicians, executives, young graduates. They tend to secure their socio-professional promotion through individual strategies founded on occupational mobility, labour market flexibility and project-based career. Their relational network is primarily focused on the achievement of their individual career projects, rather than on the group or the organisation.

Dubar adds several comments on this typology and modifies the names of the models, but without deeply altering their contents (Dubar, 2000: 124-128). He characterises the declining communities model as ‘categorical’ identities: instrumental relation to work, passive adaptation to changes, occupations threatened by restructuring; this model can result in blocked identities. He characterises the emerging professional and entrepreneurial models as corporate or promotional identities. He renames the mobility model into network identity or identity of independence, emphasising that it is the only case where precariousness has a positive connotation: a kind of ‘identifying precariousness’, as a continuous exploration of an occupation through short-term but meaningful work experiences. Finally, he considers that exclusion or marginalisation processes are increasingly important among retreat identities; he suggest to extend the concept of retreat to situations of precariousness, combining an instrumental relation to work (work as a necessity to survive) and an exteriority relation to employment (trapped in peripheral labour markets).

Can the WORKS empirical material be interpreted using this theoretical model? Indeed, all models mapped in Figure 2.2 are found in the occupational case studies, and the transformations of the initial model are also well confirmed.

The transformation of the fusion type into the communities model is confirmed in the cluster of manufacturing occupations. Successive waves of restructuring have weakened the traditional forms of solidarity. Fragmentation of work leads to splitting up workers’ identities (the categories of Dubar). Adaptation to changes is mainly passive, as workers and workers’ organisations are not involved, and rarely consulted, in the restructuring processes. The consequences of fragmentation of work are also described in the WORKS thematic report on flexibility: ‘Most workers in production experience a fragmentation of tasks, while higher workloads leave little time for the informal contacts that traditionally compensate for the strains’. Hence, collective identities and senses of belonging erode together with the experience-based knowledge of the respective production processes in a similar way as Sennett (2008) describes it ‘what once [was] a trade has now been transformed into a number of loosely coupled tasks to be performed by trained hands and bodies undermining the historical occupational identity’, as Gorm Hansen reports for Danish slaughterhouse workers (Gorm Hansen, 2007: 9; Flecker *et al.*, 2008).

It is worthwhile to point out here the convergence between changes in identities, from fusion to communities and categories, and the fragmentation of social relations. The decline of traditional solidarity and the fragmentation of work can also push some workers in manufacturing occupations into retreat identities, particularly the statutory model: once destabilised by changes and threatened by marginalisation, the last refuge is to retreat behind regulatory protections and to accept routine as a compromise for survival.

The professional and entrepreneurial models are mainly found among knowledge-based occupations, as well as among logistic managers in service occupations; but the mobility model is also very present in knowledge-based occupations, particularly among dress designers and software developers.

The formation of identities of several dress designers, ICT researchers, software professionals and logistic managers is well described by common features of the professional model, such as the focus on professional competences, the motivation for achieving objectives, the emphasis on self-learning, the importance of agreeable work relationships, the innovative inclination, *etc.* However, the corporate dimension of this identity model is

weakening. Restructuring usually weakens the feeling of belonging to an organisation, and in counterpart reinforces the professional or entrepreneurial dimension. Entrepreneurial identities were mainly found among dress designers; nevertheless, in their case, there are blurring boundaries between the models of entrepreneurship and the model of mobility (network identities), which are much more overlapping than in Sainsaulieu's typology. The key point is their positioning on the 'sociability' axis.

The cluster of service occupations illustrates the evolution of the retreat type of identities. On the one hand, the model of public service professionals is emerging, as a result of two trends. The first trend is a substitution to either the statutory or the communities model, as a retreat strategy to cope with restructuring. In the cases of postal or railway services, restructuring (*i.e.* privatisation and or transfer to subsidiaries) entailed a loss of the fusion identities, which historically characterised post and railways. Workers replace this lost identity by a substituted identity as commercial worker or customer service worker. The same phenomenon occurred with restructuring of municipal services (in Austria and UK). The second trend is found among new entrants in restructured public services, and among civil servants experiencing a 'light restructuring' from back-office to front-office (Belgian and Hungarian cases); these workers develop a positive relation to work, emphasising individual fulfilment in the customer service relationship.

On the other hand, service occupations are also characterised by a core-periphery model, where peripheral workers are not put in work situations where they could positively develop an identity of public service professionals. This is the case of most of outsourced call centre workers, at least in the Austrian and Italian cases. They are rather concerned by Dubar's extension of the retreat identity towards marginalisation identity.

The case of clerical employees in logistics is rather different, as they are back-office workers. Restructuring of logistics leads to a decreasing identification with their companies and a decline of the former communities model. These employees are often pushed to find a refuge in the statutory model.

As a conclusion, it is important to highlight that no occupational group corresponds to a single model of identity formation. Several identities are present in each occupational group. Only two occupational groups could be characterised by a dominant identity: the former fusion identities among manufacturing workers (but declining and undergoing fragmentation); the professional model among ICT researchers (dominant but in competition with the entrepreneurial model and the network identity of the mobility model).

2.3.2 Identities and adaptation or resistance to restructuring¹¹

In a worldwide context of value chain restructuring, the question whether occupational identities foster adaptation or resistance is particularly relevant.

According to Uhalde (2005), restructuring is a threat to occupational identities, but it can also reveal their resistance capacities. Professionals and high-skilled workers do very rarely adopt the retreat model of Sainsaulieu or the blocked identity of Dubar. They make a distinction between work itself and the organisation, between themselves and the system; the organisation is perceived as rather independent from work. Thinking so, they

¹¹ The theoretical aspects of this debate are detailed in the contribution of Valenduc *et al.* to Huws (2006: 137-140).

preserve continuity in their occupational identity, throughout restructuring processes. Even if they disagree with the new forms of organisation, they stick to their occupational identity and to other external references, for instance recognition by the clients.

This hypothesis could explain why huge forms of restructuring, such as in the clothing industry or the software industry, are not affecting so much the occupational identities of dress designers or software professionals. They express their disagreement with increasing market pressure, acceleration of rhythms, standardisation of methods, but they keep identifying themselves with the professional model, looking for other forms of professional recognition: peers, clients, communities of practice, *etc.* Conversely, the fusion type of identities is much more sensitive to restructuring, as shown in the cluster of manufacturing occupations.

Ellemers develops another approach to adaptation or resistance and suggests a triple hypothesis (Ellemers, 2003: 198): 'Those members of an organisation who identify more strongly with the present culture are more likely to feel threatened by impending organisational change; such identity threat is an important source of resistance to change, or at least as important as other more instrumental considerations; to the extent that the change process addresses identity concerns, this may alleviate feelings of threat and hence reduce (or even eliminate) resistance tendencies'.

In order to check this hypothesis, the issue of resistance to change should be compared between change process that address identity problems, and those that neglect or forget them. Occupational and organisational case studies do not provide such a clear evidence, because identity problems are rarely anticipated in restructuring strategies: they are managed a posteriori. Some arguments favourable to Ellemers' hypothesis can be found in the case of those railway or postal workers who moved from the communities model towards the statutory model of identities, as a manifestation of their reluctance to restructuring. Nevertheless, other workers, in similar situations and even in the same companies, moved to the less retreated model of public service professional, in order to adapt themselves to the new organisation.

Other authors highlight a substantial difference between those who have a job that meets their expectations (target trajectories) and those who have an unsatisfactory job and are currently seeking a better job (trajectories with transition expectations) (Fullin, 2004). The first are more sensitive to identity threats and might be resistant to change, because their fear losing job satisfaction. The latter try to construct their own occupational identity despite employment instability; instability can represent a resource in the process of identity definition as it allows them not to identify with the job and to look ahead. In this sense, instability is used instrumentally. This attitude was only clearly found in the occupational group of fashion designers, and among software professionals engaged in boundaryless careers. However, when future prospects are too vague or when the waiting period is too long, individuals cannot manage instability in such a way and they keep their distance from the job; this leads to frustration, as for instance in the case of peripheral customer service workers.

To end up with this overview of hypotheses related to identities and resistance to change, some authors (Gouldner, 1957; Hannerz, 1990) distinguishes the 'cosmopolitan' and 'local' occupational culture. In the cosmopolitan occupational culture, workers are familiar with transnational labour markets; they often travel or stay abroad; at work, they interact with people of different national and cultural backgrounds, about specialised

issues; they are confronted to the need to reach common understanding. They are more able to deal with worldwide restructuring processes than the workers who have a local occupational culture. But again, as regards the WORKS case studies, this hypothesis still leads to the same distinction: knowledge-based occupations and, to a lesser extent, logistic managers on the one hand; manufacturing occupations and front-office employees on the other hand, and logistic clerical workers in-between.

3 Careers, occupational identities and changes in the work sphere

This chapter draws an overview of changes in the work sphere, related to organisational restructuring, that have impacts on careers and occupational identities. The first section addresses the role of the increasing market pressure, which is perceived by a lot of workers as a strong driver for occupational changes. The second section considers the changes in workers' trajectories due to the evolving roles of internal and external labour markets. The third section concerns changes in workforce management, leading to growing individualisation and to a weakening of the traditional collective dimension.

While the preceding chapter was following the thread 'concepts confronted to facts', this chapter has a more inductive structure. It is mainly based on a comparative overview and discussion of WORKS empirical results.

3.1 Changes in economic driving forces: the role of market pressure

Market-driven strategies and market dependency exert an increasing influence on careers and occupational identities. Among the various aspects of value chain restructuring, the rapidity, frequency and volume of information exchanges has increased all across the value chains, from design to market and customer services. This is not only due to the worldwide diffusion of internet-based communication systems, but also to more reactive management methods and generalised labour flexibility.

In general terms, the WORKS empirical material confirms that market pressure is present in all business functions across the value chain, although with different levels of intensity. Market pressure is perceived as new in some occupational groups, such as researchers and dress designers; in the past, market constraints were obviously not absent from these occupations, but not so systematically. In manufacturing occupations, the main manifestation of market pressure is a speeding-up of just-in-time processes. In software production and consultancy, 'customisation' becomes a key word and illustrates how software production becomes a demand-pull rather than technology-push activity. In front-office occupations, business processes are reorganised according to client-centred strategies and methods. Logistics is at the crossroads of these trends.

The purpose of this section is to consider to what extent these trends have impacts on careers and trajectories, and what kind of impacts.

3.1.1 General trends: closer to markets, closer to customers, and faster

Organisational and occupational case studies highlight an increasing weight of the market constraints on work organisation.

This statement may appear contradictory to one of the findings of the quantitative approach, based on secondary analysis of the European Working Conditions Surveys (EWCS) of the Dublin Foundation (Greenan, Kalugina & Walkowiak, 2007: 43-56). In this analysis, the intensity of market constraints is studied as one of the determinants of the evolution of working conditions. Multi-level analysis of the survey waves of 1995, 2000 and 2005 do not reveal an increasing role of the market constraints during this ten-years period, at the European level. However, variations among countries are important and they are due to intra-country specific variables. These country specific variables are mainly related to the structure of employment: higher weight of market constraints is correlated to higher rate of service employment, higher proportion of part-time employment, and lower proportion of younger workers. 'The typical employee in a work station with intense market constraints is a middle-aged women (between 25-54) working in the private sector. She is self-employed or on unlimited work contract and her job involves working with computers and hierarchical responsibilities (...) Professionals, service workers and sales workers are professions where the market constraints are the higher.' (Greenan *et al.*, 2007: 52)

This survey analysis does not concern directly careers and trajectories, but more generally working conditions and the quality of working life. An important feature is that the weight of market constraints has to be carefully differentiated according to sectors and occupations.

Besides this background information from WORKS quantitative analysis, the integration of the findings of WORKS organisational and occupational case studies gives an overall pictures of the changes related to the various forms of market pressure that are encountered in the studied sectors.

In the *clothing industry*, 'the most conspicuous feature is the overall acceleration of business activities and workflows. Across the industry, the traditional pattern of seasonal collections has dissolved, and collections are continuously modified and updated. Thus fashion markets change faster, and retailers and distributors demand increasingly rapid responses. (...) Fashion becomes more short-cycled and the availability of ICT based merchandise information systems allows for feeding sales information immediately back into the production and design functions. Indeed, value chains contain loops of information feedback and knowledge circulation between customers and suppliers.' (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 24 & 29). Acceleration cannot simply be passed on to subcontractors or outsourcing; it also affects the design and logistics functions. Acceleration is perceived as a challenge for occupational identities and careers of dress designers. Although market factors are not new in the designers' work - their products must anyway be sold - their work becomes increasingly sensitive to cost-oriented constraints and to continuous feedback from consumers preferences. The success or performance of designers is measured by sales figures of their products. Interviewees diversely appreciate this growing market pressure. Some of them consider the necessity to adapt their creativity to the cost-based demands and market feedback as a concession to make in order to continue their career and secure their position. Other opinions are much more critical, considering that something is going wrong in the evolution of fashion design, from artistic dream to market dependency; such critical attitudes often lead to the wish to change employer or to move to a freelance position. Other interviewees are more combative, they fight with the marketing or sales departments to impose their own ideas, and they are happy when they succeed. Anyway,

increasing market pressure develops tensions in the occupational identities and career prospects (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008: 37-38).

Moreover, the increasing concern for integrated value chain management leads the designers to work more closely with the marketing, technical and sales departments in their company: The relative importance of these communication and co-ordination tasks however depends on the extent to which designers are integrated in the workflow, or working as freelancers. This trend in widening tasks and skills is also likely to concern other occupations in the next steps of the workflow, such as model makers, pattern cutters or prototype stitchers (De Bruyn & Ramioul, 2007).

In *ICT research and development*, the insisting market orientation also changes work orientations. 'If we assume a continuum of IT and software research between basic research and development of marketable products, all investigated R&D units have moved or been pushed towards the product development side. Although they represent a range of positions in a chain (or network) of innovation, they all are instances of complex articulations of technology push, market pull and iterative loops and incremental search processes between both sides' (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 36). The move closer to markets and customers has two implications for careers. Functions such as marketing, communication and project acquisition have been added to the career profiles of researchers; and in some cases specific career paths have been created for specialists in these areas. So, in this case, the increasing market orientation leads to a diversification of career profiles. Nevertheless, market pressure is experienced as a challenge for the culture of researchers, not merely because of market proximity, but mainly because of a speeding-up process: market requirements lead to fragmentation of research tasks into short-term projects, with shorter deadlines and multiple intermediate deliverables. As regards the work culture of researchers, this short-term orientation is more problematic than the market orientation (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008: 54-55).

In *software development*, the increasing market orientation is reflected in a shift from purely technical tasks (programming, testing) to broader project management and implementation tasks. Career orientations are influenced by the strong occupational identity of software developers, based on their 'promethean' relationship to technology. This identity is now tempered by the market-driven orientation of the job contents. The new skills mix, combining IT skills and 'soft' skills with an increasing weight of communication or management skills, changes both the image and the identity of the developer. The 'complex problem-solving' orientation becomes more important than the fascination for technological pioneering. The occupational identity increasingly relies on the capacity to design and implement efficient solutions. Learning is another component of the occupational identity, which is empowered by market orientation. Private certifications, often resulting from an individual decision to acquire them by e-learning or self-training, give a recognition to individually generated occupational identities.

Although the growing weight of non-IT skills is a key element in the evolution of careers profiles and occupational identity, IT skills themselves are also concerned by global restructuring trends, such as standardisation. Standardisation transforms pieces of tacit knowledge into codified knowledge. Standardisation also concerns the relationships with customers and the quality criteria of the service relation (service level agreement standards). Many interviewees perceive standardisation as a threat for their own expertise. Expertise becomes easily transferred or shared, and specialists become more inter-

changeable. As a result, standardisation can weaken the technological dimension of the occupational identity (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008: 85-87).

Blurring boundaries between software development and *IT consultancy* are a consequence of increasing market orientation. Although the business functions of software development and IT service provision for the public sector were clearly different in delineating the WORKS organisational case studies, the findings revealed that they concerned quite similar occupations. These occupations were merged in a single occupational group when drawing the synthesis and comparative analysis of occupational case studies. Common features of career profiles and occupational identities, in response to market pressure, are one of the reasons of this.

Customer services in public administrations, post and railway are obviously concerned by the expanding market orientation. 'The concept of customer care has evolved over the past years in a way it now involves both private companies and public-sector administrations. Work in the public sector was once well regarded relative to private-sector equivalents. (...) The quality of customer service is by definition critical for the legitimacy of public-sector privatisation and liberalisation, since losses in quality affect customers who are tenants, citizens and voters as well.' (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 106) Moreover, customers may be regarded as a part of the value chain, because they are able to add value to the service. This process leads to increasingly marketable public services: 'the characteristics of service goods, like intangibility, perishability and simultaneous production and consumption, preclude specific options of restructuring (such as separating time and space of production and consumption) as well as opening options (such as communicating intangible information services via the Internet)' (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 132).

The formalisation of the customer service function is a key trend in the current evolution of customer service occupations. Before restructuring, customer-related services were usually subordinated aspects of administrative tasks; now service tasks are at the core of full time jobs, with a range of additional tasks. Quality-oriented service models are implemented, instead of administration-oriented models.

Market orientation and structural institutional changes (privatisation, public-private partnerships, splitting into subsidiaries) are intertwined. Careers move from a single employer to a multi-employer configuration. The identification with one single organisation becomes less evident and the former collective work is increasingly replaced by independent ways of working, in which the customer relation (keeping the customer satisfied) is at the core of the job, as a source of motivation, pride, recognition and satisfaction at work. Helping people, providing good services and giving relevant information become a crucial part of the occupational identity, even for the peripheral employees in outsourced call centres. This behaviour could be seen as 'a sign for high job identification, which does not necessarily correspond with identification with an enterprise' (Schönauer, 2007b). Nevertheless, this common behaviour does not prevent strong career segmentation between core and peripheral workers in customer services. While core workers have job tenure, secured contracts or secured conversion after restructuring, peripheral workers often see their job as a transitory situation. They tend to limit identification and to establish a boundary between job and personal ambitions in helping people, which becomes a central motivation at work.

Here too, a speeding-up process is observable. It consists of continuous delivery of services (extended time affordability), accelerated deadlines for handling customers' files,

quality benchmarks for service delivery, real time access to information via the internet, *etc.* This speeding-up process has important consequences on flexible working time, but little impact on occupational identities and career development. At the contrary, being speedy is often considered as a part of the new image of ‘helping the customer’.

3.1.2 Differentiated aspects among occupational groups

The increasing market pressure affects trajectories and identities in all occupational groups, but in different ways and at different levels of intensity, concerning three aspects: their sensitiveness to market constraints; the new demands for skills; the feeling of insecurity.

The next table tries to map the sensitiveness of the different occupational groups towards various aspects of the market pressure: speeding-up processes; priority to market orientation (from supply-push from demand-driven); growing flexibility of production according to market demand; customer orientation aligned on market services.

Table 3.1 Sensitiveness of occupational groups to various forms of market pressure

| | Speeding-up processes | Priority to market orientation (demand-driven) | Growing flexibility of production according to market | Priority to customers as in market services |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--|---|---|
| Dress designers | ++ | | | |
| ICT researchers | | ++ | | + |
| IT professionals | | ++ | + | |
| Logistics managers | ++ | | | |
| Logistics clerks | | | ++ | |
| Clothing production workers | ++ | | ++ | |
| Food production workers | | | ++ | |
| Front-office employees | + | | | ++ |

In most occupational groups, the market pressure has created a *new demand for skills and qualification*. In addition to its own professional features, each occupational group has to extend individual competences towards new skills. This extension of skills beyond the traditional occupational boundaries is very often transferred to the individual responsibility of the worker, through self-training or on-the-job training. Designers or ICT researchers have to develop skills in marketing or management; software professionals have to develop skills in public relations; logistic managers develop a new professional work profile; front-office employees are expected to acquire communication skills, or to deal with conflict resolution.

Through these new demands, the identity of the workers, as well as the profiles of occupational groups, were partly affected:

- in some occupational groups, *i.e.* the dress designers in the first cluster and the whole cluster of manufacturing occupations, the occupational identity does not change so much, but new skills are integrated in the self-conception of the identity;
- in the third cluster of service occupations, front-office employees are particularly affected by the new skills requirements, which are perceived as more generic and less linked to their traditional identity (civil servant, postman, railwayman - the latter being

moreover strongly gender-biased). Becoming a 'generic' customer service worker is perceived as a threat to the occupational identity, except for new entrants and for the peripheral workforce in call centres, who did not know this former identity;

- in other occupational groups, such as ICT researchers and logistics managers, the requirement for new skills or broadened skills caused a shift in occupational identities, weakening the traditional anchor of individuals in their core activity, but not threatening it.

The *feeling of insecurity* is another differentiated impact among occupational groups. The perceived insecurity must be distinguished from real precariousness - this latter issue is extensively studied in another WORKS thematic report on flexibility (Flecker *et al.*, 2008). In a context of restructuring, the feeling of insecurity can refer to a wide variety of risks or vulnerabilities for the workers: losing their job; becoming de-skilled; falling in precariousness; not being able to keep up or to update their competences; being able to adapt to organisational or technological changes; coping with uncertainties in their working environment, worrying about the future, *etc.*

As a general trend, the common feeling of insecurity is important among production workers in the clothing or food sectors. Production workers are mainly worried about losing their job or not being able to maintain the same working conditions (working in the same firm, maintaining the same pay, contract, working time, shifts, *etc.*).

Within service occupations, various perceptions of insecurity were encountered. Peripheral workers (mainly call centre workers) are more vulnerable to work precariousness which is often combined with fixed-term contracts and working conditions with a low level of autonomy. Most of front-office employees in railway and post feel that they have lost the formal job security they had before, even if they are still in open-ended work contracts; they often consider that their future is uncertain: if not about employment, at least concerning tasks and skills. Among front-office employees in reorganised administrations and clerical employees in logistics, the future of their work is the main source of feeling of insecurity - and in these cases, the wording 'feeling of uncertainty' is more appropriate than insecurity.

Within knowledge-based occupations, employees often acknowledge that the job security is declining ('this is not anymore a job for life', as witnessed by several interviewees in several countries), but they seem less worried about constrained mobility from one firm to another and consequent changes. Generally, in case of restructuring, their higher skills, and the particular state of the labour market in their profession, give them more opportunities to find a new job, not only in other firms of the value chain, but also in other segments of the labour market. Feeling of insecurity however exist in cases of strong restructuring, including outsourcing and transfer of personnel, such as in the UK case of IT service provision for the public sector. This occupational case study reveal that workers are abandoning the occupation altogether because conditions have deteriorated too much, and also because restructuring is perceived as an individual threat. The question is whether this case is an exception or a sign of possible developments that may come in the future in other countries. Again, and obviously not only in the UK case, the feeling of uncertainty towards the future is quite common among knowledge-based occupations.

Summing up: the feeling of insecurity is a multi-facet feeling. In some cases, it relies on insecurity regarding the past and present situation, mainly the past experience of restructuring and the current situation on the labour market. In other cases, it is related to

uncertain future perspectives in a context of continuous restructuring, either at the individual level (competences, careers) or at the organisational level.

3.2 Changes in labour markets and workers' trajectories

3.2.1 Core workers and peripheral workers: divergent trajectories

Many scholars observe that outsourcing as well as atypical contracts have allowed enterprises to parcel out the workforce utilised in the productive cycle and to create two macro categories of workers, the *core workers* and the *peripheral workers*. Sometimes the former make up the strategic part of the workforce thanks to the functions they carry out and the skills they possess and make available. As a rule, these workers constitute a stable, permanent, nucleus. The latter macro category is made up, on the other hand, of less qualified workers, who often carry out highly rationalised tasks. As a rule, these workers are often temporary and in the payroll of subcontractors (Atkinson, 1987). But this rough model cannot be generalised. In some cases the internal nucleus is not the professional 'heart' of the organisation; rapidly spreading are those organisational models where higher profile staff - to whom core activities are entrusted - is external (Benner, 2002; Reyneri, 2002); and moreover in some organisations core and periphery are not so neatly segmented; often the one buffers the other, the one competes with the other (Rubery, 2006). The possibility for an enterprise to change the proportion between the fixed number of workers and the differing peripheral segments (from fixed-term contract workers to payroll staff at subsuppliers) outlines a further type of flexibility, known as the 'dualistic' kind (Salvati, 1988). While initially considered as a response to crises or to an acceleration of the changes underway, this segmentation of the work market has now been accepted as being structural.

The WORKS empirical findings - especially the organisational case studies - have confirmed the mentioned trends. The case studies in the food production industry show, for instance, a clear trend to outsource lower level work or at least keeping the most knowledge intensive work at the headquarters or original site. The same thing comes out from the case studies in clothing industry. All companies in the sample have gone through considerable downsizing (in most of cases companies have offered early retirement packages) and have gone through outsourcing of a sizeable part of the production. These parts are usually the easier ones. The subcontractors usually organise production in assembly lines with highly repetitive work.

However, these same case studies reveal a far *greater complexity in the restructuring underway and in the process leading to the segmentation of the workforce*, thereby recommending more caution in the implementation of approaches or models that are too schematic. Many workers who hold 'core' functions are not permanent workers; while, on the contrary, many permanent workers do not carry out 'core' functions. Thus, the model implies a broader articulation. An interesting case is represented by software development sector; here the peripheral nodes (subcontractors enterprises or single workers hired as collaborators or external consultants) are often highly qualified professionals (Holtgrewe & Meil, 2008).

3.2.2 Internal labour market and career opportunities

Restructuring modifies careers and trajectories by partly redefining the structures, characteristics and functions of both the internal and external labour markets. Leaner outfits imply shorter hierarchies and, consequently, lesser internal career opportunities.

The organisational case studies of the WORKS project highlight this phenomenon. A particularly interesting case is represented by public services and front-office employees. For instance, in the case study of the German railways, the ongoing division of the railway into several separate enterprises also leads to an increasing limitation of the internal labour market, and thus of career opportunities, as well as of a limitation of chances to change from one activity to another (services and sales for example) (Dunkel, 2007). Also in other cases, for core workers, changes are more frequently perceived as limitations, than as opportunities. Career opportunities become limited because there are fewer positions in upper and middle management, and they only become available when older workers go to retirement. Most often, their perspective is limited to 'horizontal mobility' as illustrated by the Belgian and Hungarian cases (Vandenbussche, 2007; Makó, Csizmadia & Illésy, 2007). Moreover, in public administration, opportunities are also hampered by the rigidity of career advancement schemes and by the practice of recruiting externally certain positions, especially the higher ranking ones. The Hungarian case mentions that top public managers, at the hierarchical level where the strategic decisions are made, are mainly recruited from outside the organisation; this practice is restricting the internal career opportunities.

3.2.3 Stability and instability in internal labour markets

Some functions of the internal labour market are changing. Several scholars argue that enterprises are not as keen to 'hoard up' specific skills (many of which are acquired in training courses or gained from the switchover from one company to the other) as to obtain from workers a proactive involvement, an almost total commitment, that would allow the organisation to cope with volatile demand and markets. In such a context, a key resource is the security of the job (Reyneri, 2002). Many companies continue to be confronted with the issue of 'retaining' workers they consider as being more useful to their production cycle (non only qualified workers but also those who show more willingness and commitment in sharing corporate targets and are more compliant with corporate demand and requirements) and of preventing from going elsewhere. To this end, worker loyalty and retention strategies have been outlined. Loyalty boosting techniques are many: besides stability clauses (or clauses establishing minimum duration of contracts), enterprises envisage training programmes, forms of involvement, *etc.* The security of the job becomes not only a key instrument for the construction of a 'team spirit' but also crucial in the identification with the enterprise and its targets. A secure job thus becomes the instrument that allows the enterprise to obtain maximum availability and a very high degree of flexibility in terms of functions, working hours, *etc.*

Such retention strategies were found in a limited number of case studies, mainly in the ICT sector (Flecker *et al.*, 2008: 47-63; Valenduc *et al.*, 2008: 73-98). They cannot be considered as representative of the occupational group of software professionals.

The academic literature has, however, underlined above all the process of diversification of careers and trajectories; and in particular has underlined the differences emerging with the spreading of unstable occupations.

Workers having a stable relationship, *i.e.* those hired with an open-ended contract, maintain work trajectories and biographies that continue to be rather linear.¹² This is confirmed by the occupational case studies of the WORKS project. While the initial phase often involves brief and unrelated stints, the working career of an individual successively develops along a coherent and standardised path within the same organisation (many respondents taking part in the occupational case studies declared they were long time employees at the firm). The situation was very different for those who were not employed on a stable or standard basis. Their trajectories featured discontinuity and were significantly fragmented. Though differentiated, these have lost the linearity of the traditional trajectories, and can be defined as the sum of bits of work, having different duration, sometimes coherent and sometimes incoherent, where intensive periods may be followed by unemployment. In addition, these job apportionments generally present a great variety of differences in terms of conditions, career prospects, job stability, professional opportunities, protection and rights. The outcome of such trajectories, however, cannot be taken for granted. The outcome may not necessarily be an open-ended contract. While a more stable relationship may be achieved, it may also be that this frenetic alternation of jobs continues over the years, contributing to define the trajectory itself. This situation has emerged clearly in the stories told not only by several front-office employees (Muchnik & Valenduc, 2008), who are often hired with atypical contracts, but also by production workers of the clothing or of the food industry (Nierling & Krings, 2008).

The careers of these workers are, in addition, fraught with difficulties. Some aspire to gain the stability that would allow them, once they are given an open-ended contract, to seek an internal career. While for some this is a prospect that cannot be barred before hand, for others the chances of a permanent job are inexistent or at best very poor (Reyneri, 1998). The latter are workers who will most likely be 'compelled' - for long periods depending on the combination of specific socio-personal and territorial factors - to a continuing 'nomadism' between one firm and another, from one job to another. In other words, not always are workers employed on a non-standard basis given 'point of entry', that is the opportunity to access the company they are operating for; not always is a specific trajectory organised for them. Of course, this also depends on the corporate strategy and on the reasons why the enterprise is relying on atypical contracts.

3.2.4 Fragmentation of internal labour markets

It was observed in the occupational case studies that some workers with unstable occupations actually prefer to gain stability in the market rather than within the company; in other words, they do not want to be hired as employees and prefer to work with atypical contracts or as freelancers (Semenza, 1999). Unlike what occurred within the Fordian model (that formalised all phases of the entry and permanence in the job market and

¹² The persistence of linear trajectories is more frequent among: skilled production workers (technician - foreman - lower management); administrative clerical workers; specialised craft workers (from wage-earner to independent craftsman and sometimes entrepreneur).

standardised all risk protection mechanisms), in the post-Fordian scenario a growing number of individuals seek to construct their own occupational trajectory and professional career and seek their own protection schemes. For these workers there are two types of problems. On the one hand, even when they do succeed in reaching a strong professional position in the market, these workers are exposed to the market - an exposure that affects their trajectories, security, wealth. On the other hand, the possibility of 'being successful', of making a 'career' (external), depends on whether skills and experience are acknowledged by clients thereby enhancing the worker's contractual leverage. And this is something that does not occur for all professional profiles (Fullin, 2002 & 2004).

With regard to careers and trajectories, case studies of the WORKS project show that inequality in terms of opportunities sometimes depends on the position one occupies within the complex networks of enterprises: it depends on whether your employer is the parent company or one of its subcontractors. Should the latter occur, opportunities are poorer. Customer service offers an interesting example. In the case of Greek post and of its subsidiary, the parent company offers clearly delineated career paths, in which promotions are based on a specific set of criteria (years of service, performance, training). At the subsidiary, promotions are based mostly on supervisors' discretion (Gavroglou, 2007). In small and medium-sized enterprises, top positions as well as opportunities for internal mobility are fewer, but also regulations governing such issues are looser and depend on the management's discretion.

Likewise interesting is the example provided by call centres servicing the public administration. In the Italian and Austrian cases (Flecker *et al.*, 2008), there is a clear separation of staff: some work in the back-office and in the face to face support, some in the call centre. In these cases - internal as well as external - labour markets are completely separate and mobility between organisations is non-existent. Because of this, human-resource management acts totally independently. Core organisations offer long career trajectories, which involve significant rises of wages, while call centres offer hardly any possibilities for internal promotion. They have no multi-level hierarchies nor are they really interested in engaging staff over a longer period of time. In most cases, call centre work is seen as a transitional work, by employers as well as by employees - even though often it is not (Piersanti, 2007; Schönauer, 2007a).

The fragmentation of workforce generates inequalities in the access to information and training, in turn producing disparities in terms of possibilities to learn and grow, which has an impact on trajectories and careers. Among the WORKS empirical findings, leaner productive functions and their transfer elsewhere often lead to the reduction of investment in training for production workers (Pedaci, 2007). This policy can lead to the demise of important vocational training tradition as well as knowledge sharing (De Bruyn & Ramioul, 2007). Findings also highlight the 'liminal position' (Garsten, 1999) of workers with non-standard contracts; about their being within the productive cycle but with marginal positions within the organisations, about their marginal enjoyment of resources and services that are available in the structures they work in or for, such as training, for example.

3.3 Changes in workforce management: individualisation and collective dimension

3.3.1 Individualisation of human resource management and careers

First of all, it is useful to explain briefly the different meanings of the concepts often used one for another: 'individualism' and 'individualisation' (Vendramin, 2004).

The notion of *individualism* is subject of several interpretations, notably in philosophy and sociology, and such interpretations are often fraught with value judgements. Individualism is often wrongly perceived as a form of egoism or indifference, or a deny of any collective reference. Individualism is not something new. It is a deep trend, a socio-cultural change in action for many centuries, but knowing an acceleration since some decades. Individualism is a feature of modernity, a part of a civilisation process. It is a victory of the individual, its recognition as an individual person and not only as a member of a group, a class, a lineage or whatever social space. It is an emancipating evolution, but the risks of increasing fragility must not be ignored (Corcuff, Ion & de Singly, 2005).

Individualisation refers to a social process of differentiation of individuals according to individual characters. This is both a voluntary and constrained process. Individualisation is a form of collective destiny (Beck, 2001). This differentiation process is observable in all life spheres, also at work:

- in human resource management, where individualising settings (appraisal, remuneration) are spreading, and in focusing the wage relation on the individual, until subjective mobilisation;
- in work situations, including various forms of flexibility, amplifying the diversity of status, professional trajectories, relations to employment;
- in the approach to skills, including the shift from the notion of qualification towards the notion of competence, and the growing weight of social competences;
- in the relation to work, including growing qualitative expectations and the search for a balance between engagements in various spheres (work, family, *etc.*); work is not an exclusive value anymore.

Individualisation also concerns social risks that lead to exclusion (Beck, 2001). In this section, it is the individualisation process that is analysed, and its links with restructuring in the shaping of career and trajectories.

The *individualisation of human resource management* is a common trend in companies. It is concretised in a series of settings that, all together, are shaping an increasingly fragmented work environment. Among these settings, the most relevant are (Boltanski & Chiapello, 1999; Vendramin, 2004):

- individual appraisals, which tend to become more qualitative, and hence increasingly linked to individual characteristics of workers and increasingly depending of the subjectivity of evaluators;
- pay systems relying on qualitative individual appraisals, while wages are at the core of collective bargaining;
- transformations of the subordination link and multiplication of work status;
- working by objectives, giving each individual targets to reach, independently from hazards in his direct work sphere;

- isolation and intensification of work, reducing the spheres of social relationships at work;
- individual approach instead of collective approach to qualifications, including an increasing weight of social and behavioural skills regarding know-how and technical skills;
- the limitation of the concept of job security to employability, drawing back on individuals the responsibility for their professional successes or failures;
- career instability and occupational mobility, which do not allow anymore individuals to involve themselves in a work collective and to strike up stable bonds;
- benchmarking of performances and competition among workers to reach the benchmarks;
- increasing use of freelance work and self-employment;
- valuation of individual over-investment in work;
- rise of values such as entrepreneurial spirit, independence, autonomy.

These transformations of human resource management are embedded in three contextual trends: critique of hierarchies and control; valuation of autonomy; mobilisation of full individual competences. At the beginning, these trends aimed at liberating the employee from organisational constraints and at allowing increasing individual fulfilment at work: nevertheless, these new management patterns also increased the pressure on work and put employees into competition.

As regards *career management*, the WORKS case studies reveal two ways of approaching individualisation: on the one hand, how individuals consider their progression in organisations or on the labour market; on the other hand, how organisations manage the differentiation of individuals.

The empirical material shows different degrees in individualisation. A first group gathers some dress designers and software experts, who consider that their career belongs to them, whatever would be the organisational frameworks. They are more numerous than other groups in the model of boundaryless or protean careers. The careers of most of dress designers and ICT researchers are shaped by individual evaluation. Both their organisational value and market value rely on their individual career assets: the portfolio (design book) of the designer, the publications list of the researcher. Their career assets are individual properties, although they were often acquired through teamwork; however, the recognition and valuation of these assets is an organisational matter, or at least a trade-off matter on specific professional labour markets. Organisations are forced to formalise a certain level of institutional recognition of career assets.

At a slightly lower grade of individualisation, the case of IT experts (developers or consultants) is significant. Their expertise is managed by companies as an individual human resource, for instance by the means of individualised wages, performance bonus, extra-wage advantages, *etc.* However, recognition and valuation of this expertise is quite dependent on the supply, demand and shortage on the labour market, increasingly including the offshore labour market. At a lower degree, individual benchmarking, eventually correlated with performance-related pay, concerns several occupational groups, for example logistics managers, front-office employees.

In higher skilled professions (knowledge-based creative occupations and logistics managers), which have always been characterised by a significant individualisation of work relations, people often organise their work individually, following in most cases personal

rules and schedules. An increased autonomy in these professional segments led to a complete individualisation process, similar to work models of freelancers, advisers, *etc.* This confirms that the higher the quality of work, the broader the scope for individual choice.

Some *individualisation of training* is observable in the development of self-learning. Several occupations are concerned by self-learning: not only IT occupations, in which e-learning is the leading edge of self-learning, but also some service occupations. The privatisation or fragmentation of public institutions also entails the collapse of former collective structures of internal vocational training; the responsibility of keeping up and updating skills is transferred to individuals or to small working teams. Even on-the-job training is concerned by individualisation: findings of case studies on manufacturing occupations underline that on-the-job training is losing its collective component and socialisation role.

There are more opportunities to take professional and career decisions individually in professions where the quality of work is higher (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008). In fact, knowledge workers, as most of the highly qualified workers, are more free in the labour market, they have more opportunities to learn autonomously and seize control of their career trajectories.

In essence, many of these workers widen their knowledge and skills completely autonomously, through self-training or on-the-job training. Furthermore, the restructuring and the dispersal of work along the value chain allowed many workers, especially those highly specialised, to broaden and improve their knowledge but also to have professional trajectories that allow them to acquire new competences, also those of other professional profiles. This happened to designers or researchers, who acquired marketing skills, to software professionals who applied their knowledge to public relations activities, logistics workers who became expert and qualified also in process management, *etc.* Software professionals in particular benefited from an ongoing exchange of training thanks to professional relations with other actors in the value chain (partners, customers, buyers, *etc.*). In fact, when mergers of different parts of the value chain took place (not just an outsourcing process), there was a new division of labour that led to the relocation of higher skilled tasks, an increased autonomy and responsibility on the job and more career opportunities. Skills development and training are characterised by a strong individualisation process. According to the case study results in the Netherlands, software professionals are considered as 'quasi self-employed', for autonomy in organisation and planning of tasks, autonomy in working time management, autonomy in learning (Bannink, Trommel & Hoogenboom, 2007).

In the cluster of manufacturing occupations, the introduction of new techniques and machinery did not increase skills (except in one case of upgrading of production workers to prototyping workers), nor enhanced career prospects; on the contrary, it only worsened the typical routine of industrial work, based mainly on rationalised activities and standardised tasks (Krings & Nierling, 2008). Also in the service occupation cluster, the growing use of ICT-tools led to a higher standardisation of tasks and knowledge: 'The net training is very much oriented on facts and routines; to be honest it's all about making it simple and cheap' (Swedish interview quoted by Tengblad & Sternälv, 2007a).

The *issue of autonomy* is perceived as critical in several occupations, but in different meanings. In some occupations that were characterised by a high degree of autonomy (dress designers and researchers, for example), current restructuring trends are perceived

as limiting the autonomy, by adding new constraints, notably market constraints. In other occupations, which had a low level of autonomy (public service employees, for example), the new customer orientation is perceived as increasing the autonomy, by fostering the personalisation of services and reducing the weight of bureaucratic rules.

While manufacturing workers of the industry and production and logistics workers follow a hetero-directed working model, subject to more vertical surveillance and that does not allow any individual choice during the different stages of the production process, among knowledge workers 'autonomy' is a distinctive variable.

In still other occupations, such as software development and logistics, the trend in global standardisation of working methods reduces the margin of autonomy, but employers often consider a basic level of autonomy as necessary for the quality of delivered services.

3.3.2 Changes in collective framework and collective involvement

Understanding changes in collective framework and involvement in work is a complex issue. On the one hand, figures regarding trade union affiliation are analysed as the concretisation of a decline in the social bond at work, largely attributed to the fragmentation of the labour market, the individualisation of human resource management and globalisation. However, what happens in the work sphere is not disconnected from other major changes that concern society as a whole, mainly changes in social critique as well as in the forms of social involvement.

Decline of collective frameworks in companies

Numerous studies and empirical surveys confirm the 'decline' of collective framework in companies. Trade unions are the first to be affected.¹³ Anyway, this does not forecast the coming of a de-unionised society or an inevitable marginal role of workers associations. At any rate, there is no doubt that the workers capacity of association and action as well as their capacity of representing their interests is weakening (Visser, 1994; Western, 1997; Cella, 1999; Carrieri, 2003). Also social protection systems are becoming weaker, especially the general regulations on employment conditions. There are many factors that contribute to this decline: qualitative and quantitative changes in the labour force, changes in production models and company policies concerning labour force, market internationalisation processes that imply a greater interdependence of economic systems at the international level (Accornero, 1997; Waddington, Hoffman & Lind, 1999). Other changes occur (but they are in part a consequence of mentioned changes); those concerning cultures, symbolic references, motivation, attitudes, positions; about this, literature reveals an 'atomistic disintegration' process, a 'haphazard identification' (Paci, 1992), an increased individualism. Therefore, the (objective and subjective) premises at the basis of

¹³ See the comparative report of the WORKS project pillar 'Policy, institutions and social dialogue' (Meil *et al.*, 2006). The decline of union membership and density involves all EU countries, even if the picture is far more varied across the member states. Some exceptions can be found in those countries where trade unions have an important role in the management of social protection programmes for unemployed workers (European Foundation, 2006 & 2007a).

collective identities, culture of solidarity and trade unions are crumbling. There is a decline in the importance of permanent workers in industries (especially big ones), who were at the core of trade unions policies and industrial relations during the Fordist-Keynesian era. Furthermore, the 'rejection of individualism' (Tannebaum, 1951), a central value of trade unions and, more in general, of collective action, is also declining. On the contrary, we are witnessing a coming back of individualism, self-entrepreneurship, 'soloist' worker, self-managing forms of social protection, that often attempt to conceal the return of a subordinate mindset and often leave scope to a more intense exploitation.

Company flexibility policies have an impact on the presence of strong 'collective protection' (Castel, 2003) and general regulation on working conditions; this is true in particular for policies adopted to streamline the company that usually imply the outsourcing of many business functions and lead to set up networks of firms, long chains of subcontractors. This means a downsizing of personnel and employees relocation. These restructuring processes spread the labour force working in the same value chain in many different territories and in many different working conditions. It has been noticed that work is 'de-concentrated' (Accornero, 1995). As a consequence, it is harder to organise and attract interests, to establish general regulations.¹⁴

WORKS organisational case studies - above all those concerning production and logistics in the clothing and food industry - confirm that the continuous restructuring of the value chain, with downsizing and relocation of business functions, limits the union's power of representation and bargaining, differentiates forms of regulations and levels of protection and lowers them for an important part of the work-force. For instance, some studies show how, in companies 'destination' of outsourcing, union density and generally unions' power, are much lower than in the 'source' firm, and regulations are weaker. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that many restructuring processes more or less explicitly aim at abandoning too strictly regulated firms, where there is a strong unions and industrial relations tradition, to find less constrained environments. This is evident in the organisational case studies in the food industry, in Bulgaria, Italy, Greece and Portugal.

In the case of the Italian company producing of frozen food, according to trade unions, behind the selection of subcontractors located in the South of Italy there is the will to 'exit' a territory that is more thoroughly regulated. This is an area, in fact, where agri-business collective bargaining at a provincial level produced an agreement that set a series of restrictions on the utilisation of manpower. Over the past few years, as a trade unionist explained, there has been 'an all-out assault on the industry-wide provincial agreement'. Many enterprises - principally multi-nationals - have threatened to close down their local establishments if trade unions did not loosen restrictions (or to be more precise: if they did not consent to the implementation of worse terms and conditions) (Pedaci, 2007).

In the case of the Greek company producing frozen vegetables, it can be noticed that the level of interests representation is much lower in its subsidiary in Bulgaria. There is no workers representation, while in the company based in Greece all production workers are represented (Gavroglou, 2007).

¹⁴ About this issue, the 'capacity' of outsourcing process to limit union power, there is an extensive literature (see Doellgast & Greer, 2007; Marginson, Sisson & Arrowsmith, 2003; Murray, 1988; Amin, 1991; Regalia, 1977).

A particular case is that of the textile Portuguese company. Here the downsizing and relocation of production led to disproportionate redundancies of union members who were concentrated among older workers and production workers. Hence, the company became non-union. This has brought HR management to an individualised small-business approach 'nowadays, because of the reduced number of workers and because they don't have manufacturing, they don't need representation. They can talk directly to the human resources manager or the head manager.' (Vasconcelos da Silva, Woll & Moniz, 2007: 17). Here, instead of official interest representation an informal commission has been established to deal with workplace issues.

However, other authors add to this approach through company strategies, the changes among the workforce itself (Thuderoz, 1995; Vendramin, 2004; Beck, 1998 & 2001). Their key hypothesis is that the social bond, solidarity and collective consciousness in the work field are not disappearing but that the forms and temporalities of the social bond within work are changing. They are closer to a logic of network, organised around projects, with subjective involvement of individuals. This is quite different from the communitarian logic that is at the core of the trade union institution and the traditional approaches of the social bond in the work field (Vendramin, 2004). Such approach to social bond at work fits well to the new industrial model (Veltz, 2003) characterised by the network enterprises, in which individuals work on projects, with a relation increasingly personal and subjective to work.

Trade unionism adapts itself to a new economic, organisational and technological framework. This is witnessed by the multiplication of negotiation levels (company, regional, national, European) and by wider negotiation areas (flexibility, training, quality of working life, environment). Trade unions must also adapt themselves to a new figure of employee, whose collective feelings and social engagements are different from feelings and engagement that were at the core of trade union action during a lot of years. The employee of the years 2000s is not that of the years 1970s. The employee of the years 2000s is also a woman. It is also important to rethink the nature of links, solidarity and collective engagement, together with the nature of linked employees.

The SPReW research, conducted at the European level, analyses the changes in the social patterns of relation to work. The research demonstrates a fragmentation and 'privatisation' of the relational motivation regarding work, this means that the relations of proximity are to some extent replacing the relations to a reference group (Vendramin, 2007).

Effects of de-standardisation of employment

Identities, culture, collective involvement and working conditions regulations are strongly affected by the increased use of non-standard employment. With so many differences between countries, workers under these contracts can often be at the margins of the social protection systems; they are also apart from general regulations on work and working conditions (Accornero, 2006; Gallino, 2007).¹⁵ In many countries there is still a low institutionalisation of such forms of employment, in particular of the different collaboration contracts and external advice employment. In other words, there is a lack of formal rules

¹⁵ See also European Foundation (2007b & 2008).

(law or collective agreements) (Fullin, 2004). In such situations, the regulation of working conditions is mainly negotiated between employers and single worker.

This situation contributes to move away workers under non-standard contracts from collective involvement. The low social protection increases their weakness and makes it easier to blackmail them; a situation that hinders any kind of collective initiative (Bologna & Fumagalli, 1997; Leonardi, 2000). It is also important to take into account that, depending on their working position, workers behave differently on the job and with their employers. As various empirical surveys have detected,¹⁶ those with higher transition expectations¹⁷ tend not to care about improving their working conditions. Knowing/hoping that they will remain in that position for a short time, workers do not engage in initiatives aimed at improving pay, working time, *etc.* Finally, we should take into account that where there is a high turnover and work relations are short it is very hard to establish relations with colleagues; considering and organising collective actions is almost impossible even for those that feel this need.

WORKS empirical findings confirm these phenomena. Overall, the organisational and the occupational case studies shows that the majority of atypical workers are far from trade unions, collective identity and culture of solidarity. Most of them (in particular those with a high education level and those who perform creative and knowledge-based jobs) consider themselves as individual workers and perceive collective action as something that concerns other categories of workers and other situations. This can be noticed almost in all sectors and business functions. For example, this is clear in customer service, among front-office employees who work in a call centre. Both the Italian and Austrian reports (Piersanti, 2007; Schönauer, 2007a) on call centres work insist on weak co-operation, weak integration and identification with the group, low participation in collective actions. And this is linked to the different forms of contract: temporary contracts, short-term contracts (Italy) or freelancers (Austria). In Italy, a low affiliation to trade unions is observed in call centres. In Austria, call centre employees were not allowed to elect a workers council because of their freelance contracts.

Polarisation between occupational groups

A very clear element revealed by WORKS empirical findings is the polarisation between sectors and occupational groups, which are extremely different as for presence/persistence of collective identity, cultures of solidarity, presence of workers representation, collective actions.

On the one side, there are *manufacturing workers* in industrial sectors (clothing and food industry); those who work in production or logistics, who still perform manual work, even though there are significant innovations and differences depending on other variables concerning organisation (size, position in the value chain, owner of the brand/sub-contractor, *etc.*).

¹⁶ See, for instance, Addabbo and Borghi (2001); Catania, Vaccaio and Zucca (2004).

¹⁷ According to literature on workers with non-standard jobs, people who have a (non-standard) job that does not meet their aspirations and interests have paths with transition expectations and aim at changing their work in the future. On the contrary, people who perform jobs that match their interests and aspirations and who do not want to change job are in stable work/market-oriented paths (Magatti & Fullin, 2002).

On the other side, there are first of all employees who perform *knowledge-based (creative) occupations*; they are R&D workers in ICT, designers (fashion designers and technical designers), software professionals; these jobs can all be described as creative knowledge-based employment, as far as creativity is used in a broader meaning: aesthetical creativity, technical creativity, generation of IT knowledge. But there are also workers in *service occupations* (front-office, back-office and management activities). They are office employees as well as managers in logistics and front-office employees in public services; public service employment also includes workers who carry out rationalised activities, constrained by technical and organisational factors, such as call centre operators.

In the first group (manufacturing workers) a strong collective identity, culture of solidarity and strong workers representation can still be found. Even though in some cases these elements are declining, they are still significant for both work organisation and evoking a feeling of belonging, shaping identity, raising workers awareness (Valenduc *et al.*, 2008). In these occupational groups, social relations between colleagues are generally very important; they are characterised by co-operation and solidarity and they build up a strong collective feeling. Co-operation among workers includes different aspects. Colleagues are the main interlocutors for discussing and sharing possible problems related to the job. Knowledge and information are shared with colleagues; colleagues are the main source of knowledge to learn how to carry out a task or 'the tricks of the trade', or to find a solution to a specific problem concerning the carrying out of tasks, the functioning of a machine, *etc.* Co-operation (and solidarity) lead to join a trade union and participate in its activities. In fact, here union density is generally high. Nevertheless, some recent trends revealed by case studies must be highlighted: a lower participation of non-standard employees and immigrant workers in the young people trade union.

On the contrary, in the second group (*knowledge-based 'creative' occupations*) there is a low or nonexistent trade union affiliation and usually there is no workers representation or, if it is present, it is an informal structure. A special case concerning workers in service occupations is that of public administration employees; they have a medium-high union density almost in all European countries (Meil *et al.*, 2006).¹⁸

Knowledge-workers in particular organise their work as if they were freelancers, they consider themselves as 'individual workers', as 'soloists'. An interesting example is that of the designers of the clothing industry. Fashion designers have an individualised conception of work meaning; they consider themselves as 'soloists'. So they reveal a low interest in unions and in workers councils even if their employment conditions and working conditions are sometimes rather bad. The labour contracts and collective agreements negotiated for the clothing sector are not considered as attractive.

The opportunity to negotiate working conditions individually is considered a guarantee of freedom, a sign of independence. They think that trade unions response and protection is unconvincing. Moreover, they raise other problems: skills assessment, decision-making autonomy, meritocracy instead of seniority privileges. Hence, in this situation

¹⁸ In this context, very interesting is the English case study on IT service provider in the public administration (Dahlmann, 2007), a case of outsourcing of the IT business function. Here trade unions were very strong and they were able to reshape the form of the restructuring process, minimising its impact on working condition. In particular, trade unions succeeded in keeping staff on the same terms and conditions and in obtaining a mobility clause for all staff, which basically means that they cannot be relocated to another office against their will.

there is a lack of collective action, at least a trade union or similar organisations action. Furthermore, in some cases also 'weak' collective action is scarce (share/discuss with colleagues work problems, *etc.*). Concerning this, also company policies must be taken into account, especially those promoting the involvement (or integration) of workers through direct participation, which means participation through trade union representation.

The organisational and the occupational case studies show the presence of alternative forms of association, which are often informal and limited to some groups of workers. And here we can also find a confirmation of the presence, in some occupational groups, of new particularistic and corporative approach. For example, in the Swedish/American company active in the development, production, implementation and maintenance of IT based business systems, 'about 50 *per cent* of the employees are organised in either SIF (a work place organisation that includes everybody regardless of education or profession) or two professional organisations; JUSEK (for system developers and economists) and the Swedish Association of Graduate Engineers' (Tengblad & Sternälv, 2007b: 15). In the software development sector for example, there is 'committee of representatives', that is a committee for dialogue and co-operation with the management. In the German business software case study, employees were initially represented by a committee of representatives that co-operated with management, and the establishment of a works council, in line with the German Work Constitution Act, was somewhat controversial in the company (Krings, Bechmann & Nierling, 2007). And a similar situation can be found at *the software company* in Hungary (Mako, Illéssy & Csizmadia, 2007) and in the software company in Bulgaria (Galev, 2007).

From some occupational case studies also emerged the presence of 'communities of practices'; communities for co-operation, the exchange of knowledge and methodological tools. Especially in the case of software developers, there is a 'brotherhood feeling' among workers; and this contributes to build up the occupational identity.¹⁹

¹⁹ See in particular the Hungarian and the Swedish occupational case studies (Makó, Illéssy & Csizmadia, 2007; Tengblad & Sternälv, 2007a).

4 Careers, identities and meanings of work in life

This chapter deals with changes and trends that extend beyond the work sphere, in a wider societal scope. The first section addresses the changing meanings of work in society, and their influence on individual trajectories. The second section considers the place of work in a whole life course, taking into account the time dimension in careers and life courses.

4.1 Changing values in the meaning of work

Work, as individual and societal feature and experience, has deeply changed, so the relation or orientation to work has also significantly changed. The debates about the central value of work or the distance to work, and the statements about differentiated attitudes of age groups or gender groups at work as well, are all elements that reveal the social concern about these societal mutations.

According to a literature overview carried out in the ongoing European SPReW project²⁰ (Vendramin, 2007: 10-13), three dimensions can be distinguished in the relation to work (Nicole-Drancourt & Roulleau-Berger, 2001; Riffault & Tchernia, 2002; Zoll, 1992). The *instrumental* dimension refers to the material expectations, the idea of income, the importance of payment and the possibilities of being promoted. The *social* dimension refers to the importance of the human relations at work. The *symbolic* dimension has to do with the opportunities to express oneself in an activity, the interest of the work, the feeling of success, the level of autonomy and the social usefulness. Symbolic and social dimensions are sometimes considered together as the *expressive* dimension of work, in a dual model of instrumental *versus* expressive relation to work.

There are different currents of thoughts regarding these three dimensions of the relation to work (Zoll, 1992; Smola & Sutton, 2002; Galland & Roudet, 2005). Some authors state that nowadays, there is no place anymore for the expressive dimension of work and that workers mainly develop an instrumental relation to paid work. Work tends to become simply a job. As workers cannot find enough satisfaction in their job, work becomes a 'transitional' value, because it makes it possible to achieve other goals: access to autonomy, access to a higher social position, quality of life, consumption, *etc.* Other authors, at the contrary, stress the increasing importance of post-materialists values and self-development at work. As regards both social and symbolic dimensions of work, the post-materialist thesis states that after stressing on economic and physical security, the modern societies pay more attention to the sense of belonging, individual experiment and

²⁰ Generational approach to the social patterns of relation to work (SPReW) - FP6, Citizens and governance, CIT5-028408.

quality of life. Young workers are particularly sensitive to these post-materialist values. Many young people also consider as crucial the access, throughout work, to social and professional recognition, to training opportunities and to self-development. All these aspects are playing a key role in their job appraisal.

At the European level, value surveys (European Value Survey, EVS) measure the relation to work of Europeans for twenty years. Researchers who analyse the EVS surveys often refer to a framework for analysis developed by Inglehart and Baker (2000), themselves referring to earlier works of Maslow. This framework for analysis distinguishes extrinsic or materialist orientations (wages, job security, prestige) from intrinsic or post-materialist orientations, related to personal fulfilment. Surveys highlight an growing affirmation of post-materialist values overall in Europe, which give more relativity to what concerns material survival - providing for the needs - and give more room to what concerns personal development - expression of personal capabilities (Tchernia, 2005).

Both trends in increasing instrumental relation to work and expression of post-materialist values are not necessarily incompatible (Tchernia, 2005). Beyond the basic instrumental function of work, there is a room for subjective needs, self-expression and self-fulfilment. However, meeting both material and subjective needs does not seem possible in all jobs. Identification through work requires a significant autonomy, larger room for initiative and possible self-determination in the execution of work. This is possible in limited number of jobs, for example knowledge-based occupations. For many others, standard work does not provide opportunities anymore for identification in the current context of accelerated changes. So the current work situations can be interpreted as *a new balance between instrumental and expressive dimensions*. What has changed is not the reference to work but rather the relative weight of these dimensions.

The WORKS case studies feed the debate concerning instrumental *versus* expressive dimensions of work. However, occupational groups are not homogeneous from this point of view, and prudence is required in generalising dominant individual attitudes as an objective feature of an occupational group.

The instrumental relation to work is present in all occupational groups, but dominant in the cluster of manufacturing occupations. Nevertheless, even among manufacturing workers for whom the instrumental dimension is at the foreground, the social dimension is often at the background: good human relationships at work, good work atmosphere, *etc.*; the social dimension is perceived as important by workers who think they have no career prospects anymore.

The social dimension of work is expressed in several occupational groups, under various forms. The importance of good human relationships at work is stressed by many software professionals and service employees. Particularly the 'core' service employees appreciate sociability at work; as this group is not cemented by a strong occupational identity, the quality of the work atmosphere is a component to the identification to 'small groups' within restructured organisations. The 'small is beautiful' group atmosphere is also very present among software professionals; the quality of human relationships is often mentioned as a factor of retention in companies (when the atmosphere is positively appraised) or a factor of mobility (if the atmosphere is worsening).

The expressive dimension of work is more visible among creative occupations, and the particularly among dress designers; for most of them, work is a passion, and has a central place in their life. ICT researchers and software developers are less talkative about this

expressive dimension, which is however frequently a leading thread in their career development. The expressive dimension is not restricted to creative occupations. Among service workers, the rising occupational identification as 'providing good service to customers' enhances the expressive contents of a series of tasks that were formerly perceived as purely administrative.

So, the WORKS empirical material does not confirm that current changes in work, particularly restructuring, standardisation, fragmentation, should limit the relation to work to its purely instrumental dimension. It rather confirms the compatibility of an instrumental relation to work and the expression of post-materialist values.

4.2 Changes in life courses and individual trajectories

As a result of the analyse of narrative interviews about the relation to work and its generational aspects, the European project SPReW has developed a typology of patterns of relation to work organised around two axis (Vendramin, 2008: 45-52). The *first axis* (Figure 4.1) makes a distinction as regard the nature of involvement in work, either more *pragmatic* either more subjective or *expressive*. These terms refer to well-known concepts in researches analysing work orientations: the three dimensions of work (instrumental, social and symbolic) or, according to other authors two dimensions, instrumental and expressive (including both symbolic and social). In such a distinction between pragmatic or reflexive involvement, we find also the differentiation between materialist orientations and post-materialist orientations. So, the first attitude is *pragmatic* and a strong *relation to employment* dominates it. It corresponds to the idea that work is necessary to encounter material and social obligations. However, work is not life; it is just a means. As it is a constraint, and because it takes a significant place in life, work must also be pleasant, this means working in a good atmosphere, feeling useful, having an interesting occupation, etc. In the *reflexive* involvement, *work plays a key role* in personal identities. It corresponds to the idea that work plays an essential role in the identity. Personal development is important, as well as creativity, initiative, knowledge development. At the opposite, bureaucracy is seen as alienating. Individuals are engaged in a search for meaning and the workplace is seen as a key place for this goal. The concept of involvement or attitude, as it is used here must be understood in a broad sense. It concerns not only representations to which individuals refer when they describe work but also to the place that individuals want to have in work and to their driving values.

In pragmatic involvement as well as in reflexive involvement, two different attitudes are possible; they are shaped by trajectories or individual life courses. This *second axis* of the typology referring to *life course* is important; the research shows that people are distributed into two groups: those who follow, more or less, a normative calendar (Guillaume *et al.*, 2005) that connects phases (education, work, independent living, starting a family, ...) according to an institutionalised calendar and those who follow an individualised life course, either as a choice or a constraint, in a trajectory that is not always in line with dominant social norms and institutions. Crossing the two axis (pragmatic/reflexive involvement and standardised/individualised life course) leads to the characterisation of four types of patterns of relation to work (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1 Typology of patterns of relation to work

| | Pragmatic involvement in work | | Reflexive involvement in work | |
|----------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| Standardised life course | Relation to employment dominates relation to work | I. Work is a constraint to experiment positively | III. Work supports self-development. | Relation to work dominates relation to employment |
| Individualised life course | | II. Work is a means to earn money | IV. Work is a cornerstone of the identity | |

Source: Vendramin, 2008: 52

These types are described as followed, they all suggest different attitudes regarding careers (Vendramin, 2008: 51):

- Type I: work is a constraint to experiment positively. The attitude is mainly pragmatic, however it is also necessary to have a pleasant job. Work is not life; it is a means to support other projects. Work and private life are clearly separated. Financial aspects in work are important but not determining. Stability is more important than salary or professional ambition. The social dimension of the work is extremely important (working in a good atmosphere, in a supporting team, ...). These profiles are quite passive. Changes are possible to find a more stable and pleasant job. This type is transversal to age and many people in this type are already engaged in a private life (couple, children). Most of the low qualified are also in this group. Search for pleasure and security at work are the main characteristics. The life course is standardised. *Career attitude is rather passive, but open to change* in order to get more security on better work atmosphere;
- Type II: work is a means to earn money. The attitude is exclusively pragmatic. Work is necessary to encounter material needs. Work is necessary but peripheral in life and well separated from private life. There is a strong emphasis on the instrumental dimension of work. Working is a means, not an end in itself. There is no ambition regarding salary or status: just having enough for material needs. The social dimension of work is not a major concern. Those profiles are passive. The most important in job is to provide money for material needs. There is no homogeneity in this type. It appears as a 'residual' type. Distance to work and low subjective involvement in the activity are key characteristics. The life course is individualised. *The career attitude is passive;*
- Type III: work supports self-development. Work is a way to discover personal capabilities and aptitudes. Professional and private trajectories are built together. Salary has a secondary importance but social and symbolic dimensions of work are important. Stability is quite important to support family projects but is not essential (changes are possible). Colleagues and managers provide recognition. Self-development is important. Those profiles are proactive. This type is transversal to age, sectors and levels of qualifications. A key characteristic is the involvement in both professional and private life (family project). The life course is standardised. *Career attitude is proactive;*
- Type IV: work is a cornerstone of the identity. Involvement in work is highly subjective. Success in life is subordinated to success in work. The instrumental and symbolic dimensions of work are important. Stability and security are less important. Social

dimension is not important. Critical distance to authority or colleagues. Search for excellence. Very proactive profiles. The part of young is important in this type. It also gathers mainly qualified workers. A key characteristic is the identification between life and work. The life course is individualised. *Protean or boundaryless careers are preferred.*

According to the SPReW research, Type I is nowadays the dominant one. Type III is the second one and Types II and IV are more peripheral. The following trends seem to be emerging: there is no sectoral distribution between the types, all activity branches investigated are widespread within all types; age and levels of qualification seem more discriminating than gender; Type I gathers more profiles below thirty years old and above fifty years while the middle age group is more represented in Type III; the level of qualification seems higher in Type IV while low levels of qualification are concentrated in Type I.

The question is whether the biographical interviews of the WORKS occupational case studies can be interpreted by using the SPReW typology. A methodological precaution is necessary: the WORKS biographical interviews were not purely narrative, they were rather semi-directive, but including a biographical dimension, notably concerning insertion in the labour market, career development, occupational changes, learning paths, work-life balance and work-family balance. Information about individual life courses, collected in individual interviews, was aggregated in the reporting process: in a first step in the occupational case study reports, in a second step in the synthesis and comparative report. That is an important methodological difference with the direct exploitation of narrative material.

The four patterns of relation to work are relevant to describe the variety of combinations of life courses and relations to work, which were found in the biographical interviews. However, several patterns are present in each occupational group, and each pattern can be illustrated by several occupational groups. Expectations regarding careers and working conditions will be slightly different in each subgroups as well as the way of coping with restructuring.

Type IV (work as a cornerstone of the identity) was mainly found among fashion designers, and to a lesser extent among a minority of software developers. This pattern of relation to work is less affected by restructuring: people tend to compensate the drawbacks of restructuring by an individual overinvestment in work.

Type III (work supports self-development) is very frequent among all knowledge-based occupations (dress designers, ICT researchers, software professionals, and also logistics managers), although in competition with Type IV. The key differentiating point is the life course. Some interviewees evolved from Type IV, at the beginning or at a turning point of their career, to Type III, when they decide to reduce their level of risks. However, the interviews reveal that many individuals, and mostly women, have some difficulties to manage their work-life balance, particularly the work family balance, although they have a high job satisfaction and positively appraised working conditions.

Type I (work as a constraint to experiment positively) is very widespread in all occupational groups, even among some knowledge-based occupations (researchers or IT professionals in big organisations), and particularly important in service occupations. Interestingly, restructuring of service occupations can lead some individuals from Type II to Type I, thanks to a move from a bureaucratic environment to a customer service environment, even if they have lost their former level of job security.

Type II (work is a means to earn money) is mainly found in manufacturing occupations. Restructuring can draw individuals back from Type I into in Type II, such as mentioned in the occupational monograph on food and clothing production workers. The case of prototype stitchers is atypical, as the restructuring strategy offered them the opportunity to gain positive work experience through vocational conversion. Individuals responding to Type II pattern are characterised by a low and often decreasing job satisfaction, but also by a strict separation between work sphere and private sphere. Type II is also frequent among 'peripheral' service workers, at least those who are trapped in peripheral or atypical employment.

5 Conclusions: trends, threats and opportunities

5.1 Key trends in careers and trajectories

In a context of accelerated organisational change, driven by a large variety of restructuring strategies, the evolution of careers, identities and trajectories is marked by diversification rather than upheaval.

The WORKS findings do not highlight an increasing dichotomy between *organisational careers and boundaryless careers*, as suggested by some authors. They rather confirm the hypothesis of a widening spectrum of career models. Various models of organisational careers are observed: hierarchical, technical, and multi-organisational, *i.e.* combining a certain level of mobility with organisational career purposes. Even when restructuring, organisations remain attractive, mainly for skilled professionals. Boundaryless careers are also diversified, encompassing boundaryless transitions, progressive paths towards entrepreneurship, and a small sample of quite nomadic careers, corresponding to the model described in the literature. Project work, which is a key organisational feature in knowledge-based occupations, does not necessarily foster boundaryless careers; it can be also organised within renewed models of organisational careers. Not all career choices are voluntary: case studies confirm the increasing importance of the career model of chronic flexibility, coupled with constrained mobility, which is mainly encountered among peripheral workers in service occupations, but also among other manufacturing or knowledge workers who experienced job losses as a consequence of restructuring. Anyway, there is nowadays an increasing level of individual risk in most of the careers, except in some public organisations. In order to cope with this increasing level of risks, workers try to stick to career anchors, which remain rather stable despite mobility, organisational change or restructuring. However, the relevance of the concept of career anchor seems limited to skilled occupations.

As regards *trajectories and transitions*, the findings confirm both the persistence of linear trajectories and fragmented trajectories. Fragmented trajectories, including 'sideways' mobility not only between companies, but also between occupations, characterise several occupational groups, including skilled employees. Linear trajectories, based on smooth transition from education to work and career progression, are however less linear than before and can include several bifurcations. Again, a dual model of stability against fragmentation does not fit the observations of organisational and occupational case studies.

The relevance of the proposed theoretical models of *identities at work* is confirmed by empirical evidence. Although several identities are present in each occupational group, some general trends can be sketched. The transformation of the fusion Type of identities, based on traditional solidarity, into a community model, relying on smaller groups sharing similar occupational status and working conditions, is mainly observable among production workers. Huge restructuring can also push production workers into retreat iden-

tities, when their last refuge is to retreat behind regulatory protections and to accept routine as a compromise for survival. The professional and entrepreneurial models are mainly found among dress designers, ICT researchers, software professionals and logistics managers, but the mobility model is also present in these occupations. Restructuring usually weakens the feeling of belonging to an organisation, and in counterpart reinforces the professional or entrepreneurial dimension of workers' identities. The cluster of service occupations illustrates very well the emergence of the model of public service professionals, relying on the service relationship, as a substitution to either former fusion identities (post and railway, for example) or traditional retreat identities (civil servant). This model is however not generalised among service workers, as outsourcing and fragmentation generate precariousness among specific segments of peripheral service workers: those who are characterised by Dubar as combining an instrumental relation to work and an exteriority relation to employment.

Economic driving forces behind restructuring, particularly the *new forms of market pressure*, are also shaping career profiles and occupational trajectories. They create a new demand for skills and qualifications, beyond the core skills of each occupation, in areas such as marketing, communication, public relations, teamwork, project management, customer relationships, e-skills. The acquisition of such extended skills is often transferred to the individual responsibility of the worker, though self-training or on-the-job training. Career progression is often linked to the acquisition and updating of such skills. The new forms of market pressure also create a feeling of insecurity regarding the future. As the future evolution of economic context and company structures appears as uncertain for many workers, their individual perspectives are perceived as increasingly uncertain, concerning competences and careers as well as job security in the long-term. Even workers in organisational careers consider that their job is not anymore a job for life.

Changes in the *organisation of the internal and external labour markets* have diversified impacts on careers and trajectories. The segmentation of the labour market, according to a core/periphery model, is still observable, but the features of the core and peripheral segments are changing. In some occupations, for example software production or dress design, the peripheral segment may include high-skilled workers, looking for career development through mobility and taking risks; in other occupations, such as customer service, the peripheral segment develops precariousness. On the other hand, core functions are increasingly transferred to service providers, entailing a depletion of career opportunities in the core segment of the labour market. The organisation of the internal labour market is often affected by restructuring. Company downsizing, fragmentation of companies into clusters of subsidiaries, as well as flat organisational models, tend to restrict the hierarchical career paths, as fewer positions are available in middle management; in some cases it was however observed that opportunities for 'sideways' mobility were widening. Career opportunities depend on the position in the value chain structure, whether the employer is a parent company or a subcontractor. In some cases of outsourcing, either in call centres or in IT services, internal labour markets become totally disconnected and human resource managers act totally independently. Workforce fragmentation generates inequalities in access to information resources and training, in turn entailing disparities in learning opportunities, which have unequal impacts on careers and trajectories.

Regarding the challenges of changing careers and trajectories, the *education level* is an important individual resource. In occupational groups where the education level is heterogeneous (front-office employees, clerical workers in logistics), education and training are decisive resources for adaptation to changes. In other occupational groups that are characterised by a homogeneous educational background (dress designers, ICT researchers, IT professionals), workers can stick to their professional skills to cope with the consequences of restructuring and reshape their future prospects. Conversely, in low-skilled groups, the margins of choice of workers are restricted.

There is a common and widespread trend in *individualisation of human resource management*. The individualisation process concerns career management, training and autonomy. In knowledge-based occupations, career management is often considered as a personal matter, based on individual career assets. However, the recognition and valuation of these assets depends either on company organisation, or on specific occupational labour markets. In all occupations, organisational changes entail a widespread use of electronic monitoring and benchmarking of individual performances, eventually correlated with individualised performance-related pay or bonus. Individualisation of training mainly relies on the development of self-training and e-learning.

Changes in *collective involvement* are a complex phenomenon. On the one hand, organisational changes and restructuring lead to a weakening of traditional forms of collective organisation, notably trade union affiliation and trade union power in collective bargaining. This trend was already highlighted about identities at work, with the decline of the 'fusion' identity and the rise of the 'communities' identity. Fragmentation of companies and subsidiaries increase disparities in the levels of collective representation and bargaining. On the other hand, the social bond, solidarity and collective consciousness are not disappearing; they are moving to changing and flexible patterns, adapted to network companies and project-based work organisation, which are currently observable in knowledge-based occupations. The research findings indicate a polarisation between sectors and occupational groups, concerning formation of workers' identities, culture of solidarity and collective organisation: at one end of the spectrum, production workers, who are still attached to declining forms of collective participation; at the other end of the spectrum, knowledge-based creative occupations and logistics managers, who are squeezed between individualisation and new forms of social bond at work; in-between, the others.

These trends are related to deeper changes at the societal level, concerning the *values attached to work* and the *place of work in life courses*.

The balance between the instrumental, social and symbolic dimensions of work is evolving. Beyond the basic instrumental function of work, and despite a threatening economic environment, there is nowadays more room for subjective needs, self-expression and self-fulfilment at work. The balance differs however among occupational groups.

Considering the place of work in life courses, two types of life courses can be distinguished: standardised life courses, following a normative calendar, and individualised life courses, either voluntary or constrained, following trajectories in discordance with dominant norms and institutions. If these two types of life courses are combined with two types of relation to work - pragmatic involvement or reflexive involvement in work - four patterns of relation to work can be distinguished. The combination of standardised life course and pragmatic involvement in work leads to the attitude 'work is a constraint to

experiment positively'. This attitude is quite widespread in all studied occupational groups, and particularly important in service occupations. The combination of individualised life course and pragmatic involvement in work leads the attitude 'work is a means to earn money', which was mainly observed among production workers and peripheral service workers; restructuring can push workers into this attitude, also characterised by decreasing job satisfaction and increasing feeling of insecurity. The combination of reflexive involvement in work and standardised life course leads to the attitude 'works supports self-development', which is widespread among knowledge-based occupations, but in competition with the fourth attitude 'work is a cornerstone of the identity' (combination of reflexive involvement in work and individualised life course). Nevertheless, several patterns of relation to work are observed in each occupational group. Obviously, expectations regarding careers are correlated with the various combinations of life courses and involvement in work.

5.2 Beyond occupations: gender as a transversal issue for careers

Gender is a transversal issue in careers and trajectories. The most important gender issues to be highlighted at this concluding stage are: the glass ceiling and other differences between men's and women's careers, the gendered occupational culture, the new skills requirements, and the work-life balance.

The *glass ceiling* is a typical feature of all types of organisational careers (hierarchical, technical, and multi-organisational). In IT research, development and consultancy, women's careers are often ceiled at the level of project manager or team manager. Case studies, particularly in the IT sector, often report tensions among employers and human resource managers regarding women's careers: discriminating discourses and behaviours coexist with open-minded attitudes, which consider gender balance as a part of diversity policies. In service occupations, women's careers are generally ceiled at the level of middle management, except in the UK case study. Among front-office employees, women and men often account for different career expectations and motivations: more women than men express a motivation for 'service' (caring for the client, looking for qualitative performance), while more men than women express the motivation for 'sales figures' (looking for quantitative performance). In boundaryless careers, only encountered among knowledge workers, women are more attracted by the entrepreneurial career path than by pure nomadic careers.

The various *occupational cultures* are strongly marked by gender. In knowledge-based creative occupations, work has a central place in individual identities and strongly influences the organisation of daily life. Trends towards a stronger orientation of women on professional biographies, such as men, can be observed in all countries. Depending on the national institutional patterns, the variety of working and living models differs strongly. When cultural and institutional settings foster more equality between men and women, renunciations to family life are less frequent on the female side. The increasing importance and visibility of women's work in skilled occupations, and their high identification with their profession, lead to an attenuation of the traditional differentiation of gender roles. At the contrary, among manufacturing occupations, traditional gender segregation and role models are steadily reproduced, in all observed cases and countries. Among service occupations, a wide variety of occupational cultures were observed. In public

services, the work culture is mainly that of the organisation the workers belong to: post, railway, regional administration, and municipal administration have distinct work cultures. The work culture of postmen and railwaymen was obviously gendered, but things are evolving with the feminisation of the service workforce and the increasing focus on commercial relationships. The 'service' culture is often associated to tacit skills of women - although this is influenced by gender stereotypes. Recently recruited employees (men and women) do not share the culture of the former organisation and they identify themselves as service workers, pointing out the service relationship rather than the belonging to an organisation. In this case:

The *new skills requirements* are frequently favourable to women. In knowledge-based occupations, the widening of the skills portfolio, including more communication, language or management skills, offers favourable career opportunities for women, at least until a certain level (glass ceiling). In these occupations, women may have a broader skills portfolio than men, as they often have a twofold educational background. However, successful careers are also based on self-training, and women have generally less time than men for such personal investments. In former public services and public administrations, the long-standing tradition of open access to training is not disappearing, but weakening. In outsourced services (call centres), there is a strong gender segregation in employment status, and the most precarious status are disadvantaged in access to training. In production occupations, the traditional division of labour between men and women remains prevalent, as well as gender discriminations in access to company training. Generally, women in high-skilled occupations are much more independent in choosing their individual trajectory. Women in lower-skilled occupations are more dependent on company constraints and on the traditional gender roles.

The issue of *work-life balance* is shaped by the use of time, which is strongly differentiated among occupations. Project work, teamwork, and result-oriented work increase the blurring of boundaries between work and life. The classical female role is eroding among knowledge-based occupations, as shown by the diversity of working and living models in women's trajectories. This is a sharp contrast with manufacturing occupations and service occupations, where the boundaries between work and life are formally separated. However, flexible or atypical schedules (shift work, twilight work, and irregular working hours) lead to time management problems in households, which especially affect the work-life balance of women. Institutional settings determine to what extent the lack of social infrastructure has to be compensated individually.

5.3 Restructuring and international comparisons

For comparative purposes, which are important in European research, changes in careers and trajectories can be analysed either from a sectoral or from a national point of view. These changes are shaped by institutional settings, which may be either sector-specific or country-specific.

Concerning careers and trajectories, *institutional settings* at the sectoral level appear as more influential than national settings. The practical organisation of vocational training and the learning processes in companies are mainly sectoral features, and few differences were observed between countries in the same occupational group. Wage scales, as well as company practices of wage differentiation and individual appraisal, are another sectoral fea-

ture. The organisation of the internal labour market within companies or organisations is closely linked to the nature of the economic activity, rather than to country-specific features, except in the case of privatisation processes of public services. Collective bargaining about workers' trajectories is influenced by both sectoral and national factors. In occupations and sectors with a strong collective representation, the national institutional settings are determinant, while in sectors with weaker collective representation (for example IT), less differentiation is observed between countries. Conversely, national institutional settings are much more influent than sectoral ones in the area of entry routes into the labour market. Transitions from education to work, the degree of precariousness of youth employment, the degree of mobility at the beginning of the career, and the regulatory framework of flexible working, are strongly influenced by national policies.

Nevertheless, the empirical findings concerning careers and trajectories do not allow for drawing clear-cut conclusions about inter-country comparisons, for practical reasons linked to the country distribution of case studies: different occupational groups cover different sets of countries. The methodological option was to care for country diversity in each occupational group.

Finally, is it possible to establish a causal relation between value chain restructuring and changes in individual careers and trajectories? The answer must be differentiated according to the various types of restructuring that were observed in our empirical material concerning careers and trajectories.

A first case of restructuring consists of reallocation of business functions in the international division of labour across the value chain. The clothing industry is a typical example. In this case, restructuring is hollowing out the careers opportunities of production workers, but reinforcing the relative weight of other business functions: design, prototyping and logistics. Careers of low or medium skilled production workers, who survived job losses, can be re-oriented towards prototyping or logistics. Careers and identities of dress designers are not threatened, but pushed into changes in scope and prospects.

A second case of restructuring consists of a new international division of labour within the same business function, in a context of huge business growth. This is the case of all observed occupations in the IT sector: researchers, software developers and consultants. Value chain restructuring entails several redistributive effects of international specialisation: some tasks are offshored, different roles are given to different subsidiaries in different countries, power relationships are changing within multi-national groups, service activities become more profitable than technical activities and in Europe the whole sector becomes demand-pull rather than technology-push. The influence of such a restructuring model on careers and trajectories was clearly described in this report. However, changes in careers and trajectories are at the crossroad of two streams of influence: on the one hand, the external driving forces of value chain restructuring; on the other hand, the intrinsic dynamics of the evolution of IT occupations. Interestingly, the careers of logistics managers are rather similar to several IT career paths, at the confluence of similar driving forces - as far as the small size of the sample authorises generalisations.

A third case of restructuring consists of privatisation of public organisations, which was observed in post and railway. The privatisation process entails a fragmentation into subsidiaries, a transfer of tasks to private partners and a stronger focus on customer satisfaction and commercial activities. This process presents both threats and opportunities for career development, and these threats and opportunities are perceived differently by for-

mer public servants and new entrants. The privatisation process breaks the former organisational homogeneity and the established system of organisational careers, although transitional provisions are negotiated for the employees. The specialisation of subsidiaries changes the reference framework of identities at work. The new commercial orientation opens opportunities for service-oriented career paths. However, the balance between threats and opportunities is still subject to incertitude, as the future of the new organisational and institutional configurations is not clear.

A fourth case of restructuring concerns a range of externalisation or outsourcing processes: dual configurations of face to face and call centre services, secondment of services to citizens, outsourcing of IT functions, *etc.* In this type of restructuring, the key word for careers and trajectories is dualisation: between security or precariousness, long-term or short-term prospects, opportunities or restrictions to skills development, *etc.* Even if the classical core/periphery model is not anymore relevant in all cases, career opportunities clearly depend on the position of the employee in the dual segmentation of restructured organisations.

Finally, several case studies highlight smoother restructuring processes, closer to the notion of organisational change than to value chain restructuring: typically the cases of customer-oriented reorganisation of local or regional public services. In these cases, organisational changes are much more significant than occupational changes. The job contents and the identity at work of front-office employees are changing, but not so much their career opportunities. These cases were however interesting, as they provide a kind of reference group to assess the changes linked to huger forms of restructuring.

In very few words, we could conclude that restructuring is shaping the context of the evolution of careers and trajectories, but not determining the directions of change.

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- This thematic report focuses on changes in individual careers, trajectories on the labour market and occupational identities. It analyses the driving forces behind these changes and considers wider societal trends concerning the changing meaning of work.

First, it presents the conceptual framework for analysing these changes and reviews a range of theories concerning careers and identities at work.

Then it analyses the main driving forces underlying occupational changes including the increasing market pressure, the fragmentation of the labour market, and new developments in workforce management. Finally it addresses the changing meaning of work in society and its influence on individual trajectories, as well as the place of careers in a whole life course.

The conclusions highlight key trends in careers and trajectories: the widening of the spectrum of career models; the multiplication of fragmented trajectories; the plurality of models of identity formation at work; the new balance between internal and external labour markets; the individualisation of human resource management; the decline of traditional forms of collective involvement and the emergence of new forms of social bonding at work; and finally the increasing importance of the expressive dimension in the relation to work. Gender is discussed generally as a transversal issue in careers, as well as in relation to 'glass ceilings', skills requirements and occupational culture.

