Work in the digital age: Germany in a Comparative Perspective

Professor Jacqueline O’Reilly,
University of Sussex Business School
Inclusiveness in the digital age

• Visible and invisible identities
• Cross-national comparisons
• Policy paradigms
• Visible and invisible identities
Working in the gig economy

https://www.imdb.com/title/tt8359816/
ALGORITHMIC JUSTICE LEAGUE

https://www.ajlunited.org/ • Joy Buolamwini
#MeToo
BLACK LIVES MATTER
How will the digital transformation of work affect identities?

• Who becomes visible?

• Who becomes lost from sight?

• Who are the connected and the disconnected?
• Cross-national comparisons
Individual lives and identities in a broader political economy
BOOK ESSENTIALS

Comprehensive picture of the impact of new technologies on employment and the economic model

Part I: Debating the fourth industrial revolution
  ◦ The destructive creation of employment in the digital age
  ◦ The changing face of work in the digital age
  ◦ Labour relations and the welfare state in the digital age

Part II: Comparing digital discourse in Europe
  ◦ 21 case studies (17 European + US, Canada & India)
CONVERGENCE AND DIVERSITY IN EUROPE

Starting point: EU-Digital Economy and Society Index

1. Connectivity
2. Human capital
3. Citizens’ use of the Internet
4. Business integration of digital technology
5. Digital public services - eGovernment
EU SKILLS INDEX: 2018

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2018, Human Capital

DESJ Report 2018 – Human Capital

European Commission
2019 Human capital

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019, Human Capital

Source: DESI 2019, European Commission

DESI Report 2019 – Human Capital

2a Internet user skills
2b Advanced skills and development
EU BUSINESS INDEX

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2018, Integration of technology

Source: European Commission services based on Eurostat data

DESI Report 2018 – Integration of Digital Technology
2019 Integration of Technology

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019, Integration of Technology

4a Business digitisation  4b E-commerce

Source: European Commission services based on Eurostat data
DESI Report 2019 – Integration of Digital Technology
E-GOV- ARE WE THERE YET?

Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2018, Digital Public Services

DESI Report 2018 – Digital Public Services

European Commission
• Policy paradigms
Lesson from EU front runners: Denmark & Finland

- **Denmark** – TU-employer negotiations – voluntary agreements not legislation
- **Finland** – need to improve upskilling, context tripartite co-operation but in a context of mistrust and uproar unions accepted wage freeze, increased working time, reduced holiday pay an transfer of social security costs to employees; government leadership around AI.
Lesson from EU front runners: Sweden & Netherlands

• **Sweden** – codetermination & ALMP as workers transfer between sectors; integrate platforms into existing collective bargaining & social protection.

• **Netherlands** – flexible jobs and job quality; emphasis sectoral analysis & tripartite negotiations; issues: workers rights, welfare, training & inequalities;

• Intelligent Augmentation – improve human learning requires co-creation; education; ownership & social wealth funds from a ‘robot dividend’
Canadian context: Canada ‘gets it’
Juan Gomez & Rafael Gomez

• resourcefulness, leadership and ‘major enhancements to post-secondary education, physical infrastructure, pensions, unemployment insurance, income support and public housing, and the rollout of universal healthcare….. Ontario, opened nine public universities in under 10 years. ‘

• Innovation Superclusters Initiative, which will invest substantial sums in areas, such as machine learning and AI.

• The fund also seeks to invest in projects that cross-pollinate high tech in more traditional sectors like agriculture, retail and energy.
Education & Wages

• blend apprenticeship, work-based learning and improved labour market information.
• world-class primary, secondary and post-secondary educational system
• labour and income support policies: respond to low-wage and precarious employment.
• increased minimum wages
• support for collective representation
• giving workers a greater say in scheduling
• equal pay for contract and casual employees, stronger enforcement of labour legislation (eg hiring more inspectors) are becoming the norm.
Supporting new tech

• first mover advantage in fourth industrial revolution areas like machine learning and AI, with the city of Toronto
• neural net research programme
• powering most of the voice recognition software in mobile phones
• fundamentals like education and economic supports for displaced workers will help reduce inequality and mitigate what could be difficult transitions for some industries
Dark clouds?

• concern that the existing welfare state will be replaced with a **threadbare basic income**
• too much tech centred focus on the labour market side, which ignores opportunities for **meaningful employment in other sectors** eg: personal services and care based work
• advance innovation and productivity improvements across all sectors and occupations, not only tech.
Mixed blessings: mixed economy of tech firms

• large tax breaks and subsidies – to attract ‘big’ tech firms worrying.
• focus on supporting smaller, successful Canadian start ups
• Toronto waterfront district Quayside – dominated by Google
• Corktown Common – local start ups
• open data advocates need national discussion about information, related public infrastructure, and the degree to which we want private actors based in Silicon Valley influencing our governance and public services
Stall out countries
Challenge of loosing momentum, ‘digital plateaus’
Need to sustain growth
Chakravorti et al. (2017)
To avoid stall out

- Rebuild momentum by adopting **public-private partnerships** on digital innovation;
- **Investment in reskilling workers** and digital skills in schools and universities;
- improve **access to capital and digital infrastructure** to reduce inequities;
- Keep pace with **transforming rules of competition**;
- Direct **investment** to more complex less fad driven ideas that take on deeper problems, rather than a stampede to unicorn investments.
You can follow our new centre on twitter @digitcentre
Mail us on: digit@sussex.ac.uk
To be launched in January 2020
Keep in touch – we want to know what you are thinking and doing