

## Relations industrielles Industrial Relations



Peter GROOTINGS, Bjorn GUSTAVSEN, Lajos HÉTHY : *New Forms of Work Organization and thier Social and Economic Development*. Budapest, Statistical Publishing House, 1986, 297 pp., ISBN 963-01-6862-6

Alexander J. Matejko

Volume 42, numéro 3, 1987

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/050354ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/050354ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

### Éditeur(s)

Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval

### ISSN

0034-379X (imprimé)

1703-8138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

### Citer ce compte rendu

Matejko, A. J. (1987). Compte rendu de [Peter GROOTINGS, Bjorn GUSTAVSEN, Lajos HÉTHY : *New Forms of Work Organization and thier Social and Economic Development*. Budapest, Statistical Publishing House, 1986, 297 pp., ISBN 963-01-6862-6]. *Relations industrielles / Industrial Relations*, 42(3), 665–667. <https://doi.org/10.7202/050354ar>

Tous droits réservés © Département des relations industrielles de l'Université Laval, 1987

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

**é**rudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

nelle), adhocratique. Ce qui leur attribue un caractère particulier par rapport aux autres cols blancs et qui fait des cols d'or une catégorie particulière réside dans la position sociale déterminante qu'ils occupent au sein des organisations dans le processus de production-distribution des connaissances pour et/ou entre ces organisations. Ils sont la force maîtresse du développement de la production des biens symboliques et des biens matériels. C'est par leur production de connaissances qu'ils alimentent et permettent ce développement. Le Japon, par son programme d'implantation de technopoles, a bien saisi l'enjeu et l'importance du «capital de connaissance» pour le développement de la production de l'an 2000. Ce pays a reconnu les producteurs de connaissance comme force première du développement socio-économique.

L'auteur, Robert E. Kelley est bien placé pour traiter du travail des cols d'or. Il est consultant en management à la SRI International et il a acquis une reconnaissance importante par la large diffusion qu'a connu son livre **Consulting: The Complete Guide to a Profitable Career**. L'expression «cols d'or» pour désigner les travailleurs de la connaissance est de lui. Kelley cherche, par ce livre, à sensibiliser les dirigeants qui sont à la tête des organisations dont une quantité importante de la force de travail est constituée de cols d'or. Il veut leur démontrer la nécessité de mettre en oeuvre une gestion adaptée à cette catégorie particulière de ressources humaines.

L'ouvrage est constitué de neuf chapitres. Le premier chapitre effectue un survol rapide des caractéristiques et des contingences liées au travail des cols d'or. Par la suite, les chapitres deux à cinq présentent une analyse du contexte organisationnel au sein duquel évoluent habituellement les travailleurs de la connaissance. Il s'agit d'une partie importante de l'ouvrage qui est bien documentée sur le plan des thèmes abordés mais qui aurait eu besoin d'intégrer les travaux d'Henry Mintzberg, sur les structures et la dynamique du pouvoir dans les organisations. Les concepts de bureaucratie professionnelle et d'adhocratie y seraient particulièrement utiles pour mieux saisir le fonctionnement des organisations orientées vers la production des biens symboliques. Les quatre derniers chapitres sont, quant à eux, très normatifs et visent à décrire des règles de gestion adéquates pour le management des travailleurs de la connaissance.

Peter Drucker, dans **The Age of Discontinuity: Guidelines to Our Changing Society** (1969), avait vu juste lorsqu'il mettait en relief l'importance croissante du rôle central joué par le système de la production des connaissances dans les organisations: «The productivity of knowledge has already become the key to productivity, competitive strength, and economic achievement. Knowledge has already become the primary industry, the industry that supplies the economy with the essential and central resources of production.»

Paul BEAULIEU

Université de Québec à Rimouski

**New Forms of Work Organization and Their Social and Economic Development**, by Peter Grootings, Bjorn Gustavsen and Lajos Héthy, eds., Budapest, Statistical Publishing House, 1986, VIII+297 pp., ISBN 963 01 6862 6

This is a collection of papers presented at the conference arranged jointly by the Vienna Centre and the Institute of Labour Research in Hungary in 1984. It covers the following contributions: An European Overview (B. Gustavsen & L. Héthy), the Hungarian experience (A. Simonyi, M. Ladó, and F. Tóth), the Polish experience (two papers one, by Z. Janowska & J. Kulpinska, and another by H. Strzeminska), the GDR experience (F. Macher & F. Mielke), the

Bulgarian experience (Ch. Kiuranov), the Swedish and Norwegian experience (K. Rehnstrom & B. Gustavsen), the British experience (E. Batstone), the French experience (P. Dubois), the Dutch experience (J.J. van Hoof & R.J. Huiskamp), a comparison of the West German, French and Italian cases (K. Düll), the Spanish experience (R.H. Gonzalez), summary of the conference discussions (P. Grootings, J. Bogdan, and M. Ladó).

It is quite clear that the innovations in the social organization of work come from the variety of sources: management trying to motivate workers and better coordinate their efforts, spontaneous organizational initiatives of the rank-and-file, the union-management-government co-operation, experimentation by social scientists and management professional consultants, even the political initiatives. The forms may be similar but the intentions may be much different. For example, the socialist work brigades in the Soviet bloc are somewhat similar to the autonomous work groups in the West but their actual nature is much different.

The need of work humanization is brought to the attention of the public both in the West and in the East. However, in the West this is understood as a valid correction of the status quo done by different bodies: the **profit-oriented** management or the **plan-oriented** management, the governmental bureaucracy or the political body (the one party systems), the technicians and economists (vulnerable to the «trained incapacity» to see people behind systems) or the «soulless» administrators, the capitalists or the apparatchiks, the bosses or the workers.

Innovations in the social organization of work are promoted on the basis of the variety of manifest and latent intentions. In this respect it would be necessary to look deeper into the **power configurations** of various European countries as well as into the **civilization message**. Unfortunately these factors are not exposed in the papers. The work life enrichment projects in Western Europe have much to do with the democratic welfare state concepts that include, among others, the public concern about job surroundings, promotion of the co-operative union-state-management relations, etc. In Eastern Europe, both the organizational consulting of a technical-economic nature (there is not any good reason to identify it with Taylorism!) and the quality of working life improvement are productivity oriented. The party/government bosses hope the people will be ready to work more and better without necessarily paying them much higher wages. The employees hope to earn more without additional efforts and problems. The direct promoters of the innovations hope to be rewarded for their pet projects that are more or less successful in softening the negative impact of bureaucratic rigidity. Only in few cases the opposite interests are clearly articulated, as happened in Poland in 1956, 1970, 1976 and 1980/81. Europe remains deeply divided as regards the actual chance to articulate the collective demands and to promote the open bargaining. This important factor is not reflected in the book.

However, in both parts of Europe there is growing awareness that much promise does exist in the recognition of vital human needs and informal social capacities. The consultative style of management may lead to a harmonious relationship between the supervisors and the supervised. People organizing themselves spontaneously into the autonomous work groups based on self-management may become much more committed and trustful **contributors**. Management conscious of human resources may avoid many unnecessary troubles. Trade union bodies and the local workers' representatives may be more constructive when invited to solve problems jointly with management. Out of practical western and eastern experiences gradually emerges knowledge of how short-sighted it is to remain doctrinaire and authoritarian as well as recognition of neglect the vital importance of relationship of trust at workplaces. The forum permitting exchange of experiences originating from very different surroundings may play a very positive role. The book under review here is a good example.

It appears quite clear from the contributions included in the book, that both in Western as well in Eastern Europe so far lacking the socio-economic forces able and willing to promote initiatives in the field of the social organization of work consistently and strongly enough. Norway and Sweden are exceptions. But even there, some difficulties are apparent. For example, in Sweden most of the innovative projects come from the management side and this diminished their public appeal. Trade unions remain lukewarm all around Europe. The governmental bureaucracies, being influenced mostly by lawyers and politicians, show very limited understanding. The fear of unemployment contributes to the passivity of the labour force regarding internal labour market innovations.

Only in Yugoslavia is the whole work system supposed to be socially innovative, but in the reality it does not necessarily function this way due to a variety of reasons: one party rule, economic difficulties, organizational weakness, rivalries between various powerful groups. The new ideas promoted in the Soviet bloc by M. Gorbachev should in the long run make much more room for the democratization of the workplace. But, obviously, they are not easy to implement as long as in each socialist country there are enough powerful people to tenaciously defend their privileges.

It is difficult to imagine real progress in European quality of working life without the establishment in each country of a public lobby committed to promote the cause. Mass media in general are positively oriented to innovative projects but they do not usually follow up the events. Academics are more and more in favour and they follow in this respect the progressive trends in the university communities. Modern management training strongly emphasizes the capacity of the manager as a democratic leader.

It is an interesting question if and to what extent the quality of working life movement may become an **autonomous** factor free from any particular political determination, able to unite the ideologically diversified groups of people who manifest a desire to enrich the socio-moral values of collective work. The principle of **teamwork** becomes a vital part of the modern civilization, and the economic recovery of Europe depends much, among other things, on the revalorization of this principle. It is quite obvious that the economic success of Japan originates to a considerable degree exactly from this very sort of **work culture**, based on the cultivation of a co-operative approach. The traditions of European civilization need to be revived in order to make evident progress in cultural unification. Now there is more reason than ever before to see a better chance for Europe. The socio-moral upgrading of collective work in complex organizations is a joint task of a particular attractiveness for several European countries.

It was a very useful to bring together several European experts to promote jointly a discourse on the new forms of work organization. This has already led to more collective projects that are being implemented across borders.

**Alexander J. MATEJKO**

University of Alberta

**Industrial Relations — A Textbook**, by Michael P. Jackson, third edition, London, Croom Helm, 1985, 294 pp., ISBN 0-7099-1474-1

This British textbook is designed to introduce students to the field of industrial relations. Because the empirical contents of the book are presented in conjunction with a number of broad conceptual and theoretical issues and debates, and because the analysis draws on the ex-