

EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

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Infowork

Social cohesion, the organisation of work and Information and Communication Technologies: Drawing out the lessons of the TSER research programme and the Key Action on socio-economic research

‘Synergies and Innovations in EU Research’ Position Paper

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Introduction

Until very recently social science played little role in EU research. There was a social science element in the Third Framework Programme, but it was buried in the 'Foresight' programme. The Fourth Programme contained for the first time a distinctive social science programme, the Targeted Socio-Economic Research programme (TSER). The Fifth Programme contained the Improving Human Potential and Key Action, and there was also the possibility of a distinctive social science contribution to the other programmes (e.g. Information Society).

In comparison to some (but not all) national social science funding, these were relatively small funds. Furthermore, they are a very small proportion of the EU's research expenditure: the entire TSER programme amounted to 1% (one per cent) of the total Framework budget! (Brine, 2000). However, at least since the TSER European social scientists have had access to funding which is not just an addition to what was already available.¹ This funding is also qualitatively new. All EU-funded research projects have to be European rather than simply national projects, so that European social scientists are pushed to a new level of international (or at least European) collaboration. In addition, both social science programmes have called for projects that are interdisciplinary and relevant to policy. What impact have these novel demands had on European researchers? Have these apparently laudable objectives been achieved? What contribution has EU funded social research made to European social research? This paper uses the cluster projects² as 'case studies' to sketch out some answers to these questions. It also makes some use of material gathered on a parallel project investigating the understanding of the 'European Dimension' held by the co-ordinators of EU funded social science programmes.³ It is very much a first attempt – a *position paper*. It is intended to stimulate some debate about our own experiences within the cluster – so it uses at times a rather personalised tone!

European integration through European research?

One obvious 'sociological' question to ask about European social research is whether it has contributed to the creation or development of European networks. At first the

¹ In this area there does appear to have been clear additionality. Not even the British government has used new EU funding for social science as an excuse to reduce its own expenditure.

² The Accompanying Measure 'Infowork' focuses on a 'cluster' of six projects: Flexcot, NESY, NUEWO, Servemploi, SOWING, WHOLE (thematic network). Of these, all but NUEWO are completed. The Measure also involves a wider group of about ten further projects.

³ Accompanying Measure 'European Dimension' (co-ordinator Michael Kuhn, Universität Bremen), project webpage:

www.eu-dimension.uni-bremen.de

The core of this project is a series of 'Group Discussions' with a sample of co-ordinators of TSER and IHP projects. Where I quote from the transcripts of these discussions, I use a two element code: the first element identifies the specific Group Discussion, the second element the utterance in the transcript.

answer is obviously positive. All those journeys to meet each other in different cities must have some effect! The professional life of a researcher on a European project involves frequent and routine contact by phone and above all e-mail with colleagues in other countries. It also involves an increased amount of physical travel: most members of a research project will meet each other face-to-face at least once a year. Team leaders probably travel to meet each other more often, and at least in some projects separate cross-national subgroups also meet⁴. In these newly routine activities, 'Europe' becomes the arena of activity. As Soysal (2002) has pointed out, there is much academic discussion of 'European identity' and much concern over the lack of a European 'demos' (see for example Siedentop, 2000), but this ignores the way in which 'Europe' has become a space for many routine professional activities. The growth of European research teams hardly indicates the replacement of national communities by a single European collective identity. It does however involve a more low key form of European integration: the creation of a new public space *alongside* existing spaces. This is the *social reality* of the new European Research Arena (European Commission, 2001).

To what extent however does common project work lead to common research activity, for example in the form of joint publication? Peterson and Sharp (1998: 192) cite research showing a clear impact of EU funded research on the publication patterns of British researchers in engineering and materials. As EU funding became available through the 1980s, the number of British researchers' joint publications with US researchers was overtaken by those with European colleagues. More generally, Peterson & Sharpe suggest that whatever the impact of EU technology policy may have been on EU technological capability (let alone on economic growth), it has clearly contributed to European integration. Furthermore, although one might expect that research funding would have a strong negative impact on regional cohesion – since the international standard research institutes would be located in the richer countries, this turns out not to be quite true. The same study shows that, in proportion to the number of researchers already within an area (the so-called absorption capacity of a region), technology funds have gone disproportionately to poorer regions.

EU funding has made it possible for European researchers to meet each other more often. Particularly important, I suspect, is that this has been a new opportunity for younger researchers. Whereas previously international collaboration came at the middle or even the end of the career, now it is a routine experience at the start of a career. Indeed, for many researchers, a post on an EU project has been the starting point of their careers. Of course, this networking is uneven. In rich countries, most researchers still pursue their careers within the nationally funded programmes. It is more in the poorer countries, or those where national funding has been underdeveloped, that EU funding has a disproportionate effect.

This networking is European rather than global. Here the comparison with another area of higher education is useful. The Erasmus and Socrates programmes were set up in order to make study at another European university part of the normal experience of European students, with the ambitious target of 10% of all students

⁴ Notice however that compared to international project work in many other areas of professional or above all business life, this is probably a rather *low* level of contact.

studying abroad during their studies. Although the explicit purpose was to create a common European identity, a study by Teichler suggests that these exchanges are simply part of a wider process of the internationalisation of higher education through student exchanges, and that therefore the 'European Commission, while talking about Europe, is a powerful actor of internationalisation' (1998: 95).

At least in terms of networking, such an argument probably could not be applied to our EU funded research. It does seem that even though all international contacts have been growing, the intra-European contacts have been growing faster. This is probably particularly important for colleagues in small departments in small countries. Participation in a European research team gives hitherto isolated academics the chance of at last funding someone who shares their interests, and increases enormously the range of people with whom one might be able to collaborate. In the words of a Finnish colleague, European projects allow isolated researchers 'virtual collegiality'.⁵

In project Servemploi, we tried to enhance this intra-European co-operation and to broaden it to include users as well as researchers. In the original plan the project included two 'European round tables' at which the researchers would meet with relevant social partners (essentially industry organisations and unions) at European level. During the course of the project these planned meetings began to sound rather formalistic, so we replaced them with two annual national round tables held in each participating Member State. Here we presented the results of the research to date, but with the European dimension that each national round table was also addressed by one or more researchers from a different country. This meant that participants were 'lower down' the hierarchy of interest organisations (national or regional, rather than European, representatives) and so the European experience was brought closer to home. Although there was of course much variation between the meetings, industry and (particularly) trade union representatives clearly found it very useful to hear about the situation in other European countries. These meetings also gave individual members of the research team a chance to meet and discuss common interests. Furthermore, at the end of Servemploi the participating trade unions helped us to hold a two day meeting and social event in Sweden for the women workers in retail who been members of the Qualitative Panel Study and whom we had interviewed repeatedly during the project. In these ways, a little bit of European experience was exchanged.

However, there are several caveats to this European **social** research as European social integration thesis.

Firstly, it is **not** clear to what extent this has been accompanied by joint work between members of different national teams. Within the cluster nearly all of the formal publications by research team members have been written within national teams, even though they use data from a European wide project. These issues are highlighted by a check of the publications of some of the cluster projects.⁶ Using the

⁵ European Dimension Group Discussion, 2,153.

⁶ The check was of the final reports of Flexcot, NESY, Servemploi and WHOLE, which all list publications based on the project. No such list of dissemination activities is contained in the final report of SOWING. There is no final report of

final reports of four projects, I noted all the publications that appeared to be journal articles; I then checked these journals in the Social Science Citation Index to see if they were listed there. Of these articles, not a single one was written jointly by authors from different national teams. Realistically, given the diversity of the participants (see below), joint writing requires authors to meet quite frequently, but research projects usually only have funds to bring the entire research team together once or twice a year.⁷ Furthermore, it is unclear if collaboration within a project leads to further joint research and writing once the project is finished and the funding for such joint activities has also ended. Given that networking involves physical travel, it is therefore unlikely that co-operation can be sustained independent of direct funding.

Secondly, the 'Europeanisation' occurs through English. In the research community, even more so than in EU politics and policy-making generally, English has rapidly become a lingua franca. Almost entirely we carry out our formal discussions in English, and then usually use English for informal socialising. Of all the 15 projects included in our cluster, all bar one (REFEPAR) have written their scientific reports in English. 'Language problems' are initially perceived as the fact that some older colleagues (from countries such as France) have weak English and are therefore cut off from contemporary developments. But partly of course *we* are cut off: just like mediaeval clerics with their use of Latin: access to a (slightly) privileged position depends upon using a language *that most people do not have*. The extent to which this language shift is a problem depends of course on where you come from. For many Scandinavian colleagues, English has long been their international language, and they are used to using it in order to reach an international audience (the Scandinavian sociological journal *Acta Sociologica* has long been in English). By contrast, older colleagues from Mediterranean countries have to make a shift from French to English as their 'international' language.

All of this means that Anglophones have some obvious advantages within EU research, since for them the lingua franca is also their first language. This contributes (though only that) to their disproportionate representation amongst project co-ordinators.⁸ Conversely, the fact that English is the working material of a project means that much research material (e.g. interview transcripts) is 'hidden' from the rest of the team if it is not in English (and of course the costs of translating such material are prohibitive). There is here a clear limit on the extent to which teams can genuinely carry out research which crosses national boundaries.

There is an important general issue here. Within the academic environment, if non-Anglophone colleagues wish to reach an academic audience, they have to write in English. Conversely Anglophones are under no such pressure, and appear to never

PRECEPT to hand. The detailed list of the journals is presented in the Appendix to this report.

⁷ However, researchers do sometimes manage to use other funds – or other meetings – to meet more frequently than this.

⁸ Anglophones often however do carry a 'white man's burden': as native speakers they also do a disproportionate amount of editing and even re-writing of research reports. However, this in turn earns them the authorship (or at least the status of first author) of what they have edited!

write in a non-English language to reach specific national audiences. A further problem is that the ‘international’ (i.e. American) databases of scientific literature disproportionately contain US journals, once again putting pressure on people to write in those journals.

These arguments are supported by the analysis of the journals used for the cluster’s publications. Table 1 shows that although the project results were disseminated almost equally in non-English and English language journals, the latter are more likely to be included in the Social Science Citation Index. Furthermore, of all the articles listed, eight were published by non-Anglophones in English language journals; one was written by a non-Anglophone in another non-English language, and precisely none were written by Anglophones and published in non-English journals.

Table 1 Journal articles from cluster projects: language and SSCI listing

	Social Science Citation Index		Total
	Listed	Not listed	
Language			
English	7	5	12
Non-English	3	12	15
Total	10	17	27

Source: journal articles listed in final reports (full list of journals in Appendix)

Of course, some influential writers publish in their native language and can expect to be translated very quickly into English (e.g. Ulrich Beck), but the problem is that this is increasingly the prerogative of ‘stars’. The ordinary scholar, pursuing ‘normal’ science, must choose which language to write in. And increasingly, such people write in English.

It could be argued that this is all simply an inconvenient side effect of progress (or even ‘globalisation’). Whereas it would be more equitable if the lingua franca was – like Esperanto – not a vernacular for anyone, any inequity is far outweighed by the benefits of having a common language for all researchers. From this perspective, part of the creation of a European Research space is the creation of a community of English-speaking researchers. Furthermore, one could point out that English itself is neither static nor homogenous. There are within social research a few ‘European’ phrases and terms (most obviously, ‘social inclusion’ and ‘social exclusion’) which have entered the language via the terminology of Continental European debates. Yet this is rather simplistic. It ignores the extent to which many populations, and not just elites, have been and are *routinely* multi-lingual. Over the centuries European elites have understood each other perfectly well through a facility in several European languages, and indeed, the history of the workers’ movement shows that this was hardly simply the concern of elites. Within Europe the equation of mutual comprehensibility with the complete domination of one vernacular language is novel, and perhaps not so inevitable as we usually assume.

The issue of language is not however just about how we talk, it also impacts on *what we talk about*. Languages with a long established ‘international’ social science literature (above all German and French) become marginalized, with German and French publications no longer assumed to be accessible to an audience beyond the national frontiers. Journals that are not in English are thereby defined as not

international and hence ipso facto of lower status. Whole traditions run the risk of being marginalized or becoming dead-ends. For example, for the second half of the 20th century there was a (West) German tradition of ‘industrial sociology’. Yet as an Anglophone reading a recent review of the discussion (Deutschmann, 2002), I became aware how most of the key texts (e.g. Kern & Schumann, 1970) were never translated into English and most of the discussion was unnoticed within the Anglophone world.⁹ To date such distinct intellectual traditions have been merely isolated within one language community, but there is now the danger that the dominance of English may replace isolation with submergence. In the wider world biodiversity and linguistic diversity are seen as valuable – and currently under threat. The diversity of research traditions within Europe is surely also valuable. We could consider whether European research, far from enhancing this European diversity, is actually undermining it.

Beyond comparative research?

To use an English colloquialism: ‘The grass is always greener on the other side of the hill’. For any vaguely policy relevant issue, one motivation for comparative research is always the belief that ‘they’ do it better, whoever they are and whatever it is.¹⁰ For example, British social researchers tend to assume that German vocational education and Swedish childcare systems are infinitely superior to their home variety; German researchers may (I don’t know) assume that British ethnic relations are better, etc. Testing such comparisons is a powerful incentive in European social research.

Comparing different European countries has now become almost second nature to many European social researchers, although there are probably some interesting differences in the extent to which such comparisons are routine in the field as a whole. For example, my sense is that within British sociology employment studies are quite strongly Europeanised, while media and cultural studies draw their empirical referents far more from the UK and indeed the USA and are generalising rather than comparative. Our instinctive reach for national comparisons comes partly from what is being studied: national labour markets remain national institutions, bounded by national legislation and national fiscal systems.

Social policy research has long been conducted with a comparative framework. There is a whole sub-industry comparing different (national) welfare states and different policy areas, and one clear reference point in Esping-Andersen’s *Three Worlds of Welfare*. In employment studies there is a similar reference point: the societal effect thesis of Maurice et al (1986). This stimulated some comparative research, usually addressing the question of why the British are (were) so bad at manufacturing. Much of this is summarised in Lane’s standard text comparing manufacturing in France, Germany and the UK (Lane, 1989), covering work organisation, education and vocational education, management careers, financial systems and employment legislation. This in turn leads into the ‘Rhineland’ versus ‘Atlantic’ models of capitalism, a debate that appeared buried by the late 1990s but which refuses to die and which in a way we are busy reviving.

⁹ A collected volume did try to bridge the language gap (Altmann et al, 1992) but sunk without trace.

¹⁰ European Dimension Group Discussion GD2,8; GD2,156.

However, that existing literature (and of course I am referring almost entirely to the ‘international’, i.e. Anglophone literature) is very limited. Most of the work seems to involve comparing the conventional big three (France, Germany and the UK), so there is little comparison with other European countries. One of the very simple achievements of EU-funded research, including our own cluster, is the extent to which the comparison has been broadened, so that our cluster has contributed to a growing comparative literature on work and employment in contemporary Europe. The cluster projects cover a wide range of countries, so that the rest of **Western** Europe is at last included in ‘Europe’. This leads in turn to the attempt to develop typologies or at least clusters of countries. The most developed within the cluster is the ‘service landscapes’ of NESY, defining different national routes to the service society. Thus NESY shows how employment in different service sectors does vary according to the national context. Homecare work for example in the UK involves short part time work with little formal training, whereas in the Scandinavian countries it involves longer part-time jobs, more regular hours and more formal training. This despite the fact that we can observe similar trends and pressures in all the countries. Again, by comparing IT employment across Europe, NESY highlights that the industry’s infamous ‘long hours culture’ is completely different in The Netherlands to anywhere else. It shows therefore that ‘long hours’ have different meanings in different national contexts. Servemploi continually uses national comparisons, and rather hesitatingly develops some arguments about forms of national variety in service employment, constructing typologies of financial services delivery and applying a ‘social system of production’ approach to the national organisation of retail. In the analysis of in-firm training, Servemploi also contrasts ‘training rich’ and ‘training poor’ *national* environments. In similar vein, preliminary papers from NUEWO define ‘clusters’ of different European countries in terms of how they use temporary agency work.

EU-funded research has at minimum contributed to a better understanding of intra-European diversity in the employment area. However, one could ask: understanding by whom? While the English language journals (e.g. above all *Work Employment & Society*) now include more analysis of Europe, is such a Europeanisation also occurring in French or German journals? Or do we simply have a situation where European comparisons are the prerogative of Anglophone journals?

More importantly, these comparisons remain state centred. They start from the national legislative framework and examine its effects on enterprises and the labour market. Within our cluster, the cause of national differences is seen as ultimately the institutions of the national state. While this may appear obvious, it’s worth noting that there are some arguments in the ‘varieties of capitalism’ tradition which focus on the inter-relationships between firms rather than on the impact of the state (see above all Hall & Soskice, 2001). Such an approach does not, as the cluster projects implicitly do, reduce national differences to the consequences of an institution whose relative power does appear to be in decline.

This focus on national comparisons is partly the result of the structure of project teams. The standard research project is after all a group of national partners, and frequently the initial stage of a project has been that each (national) team produces a

‘national report’. Thus only SOWING moves away from this to focus on regions rather than nation-states.

A further problem here is the extent to which the choice of area studied is purely opportunistic. Finding and choosing partners usually is dictated by existing contacts and, given the Commission’s publicly available evaluation criteria, the need to have a geographical spread. Proposers know, for example, that a project that includes a Mediterranean partner will have a better chance of success. The choice of national teams – and hence of national comparisons – often has to be justified after the event. However, the ability to extract value from a given comparison does demand theoretical ingenuity and imagination, and often the results are more important than any text book type design where the comparisons are neatly deduced from an *a priori* theoretical argument.

Once within a Member State, most of our projects then study sectors. For example, Servemploi studies financial services and retail, NESY studies banking, IT services, homecare for the elderly, retail, and hospitals. The choice of sectors is usually intrinsic to the project’s overall argument. Thus in Servemploi we wanted to find areas which are large scale employers of women¹¹ and which are exposed to technological change. The choice of service sectors in NESY seems to have involved simply the desire to get as wide a variety as possible, given the initial argument that the service sector is highly differentiated.

The cluster projects usually also involve case studies of particular enterprises or workplaces. Here the choice of research sites was often quite opportunistic, presumably depending partly on ease of access. Yet projects clearly also chose case studies as *strategic* cases (Yin, 1984). Thus in project Servemploi we chose the case studies so that the research covered as varied a selection of firms as possible. Selection criteria included the size of the organisation and its position in the market, the nature of ownership and the nature of activities; we also ensured that the study included several enterprises in different countries which were owned by the same multi-national company. The final selection involved both mutual agreement between the teams to ensure that the list of companies was completed, and what was practical for each team in terms of access. Within each enterprise we focused on a specific workplace (e.g. a call centre in a financial services company) and here we wanted to find workplaces where large numbers of women worked and which were technologically advanced. Our case studies were therefore hardly ad hoc, but it is not clear to what extent we were able to fully utilise this variety in the analysis of the results. Case study research must be able to use the particular case study – either as an example of a general trend, as a strategic sample, etc. It is not clear in Servemploi, or for that matter in other projects, what theoretical role the case studies play. Notice that this justification can perfectly well be post facto – **after** choosing a case study for opportunistic reasons (access, location etc.) it can later be argued that this particular case is relevant for particular reasons. This post facto justification is also usually lacking in the projects.

As Brine (1997) comments, the structure of EU-funded projects therefore pushes teams towards national comparisons, often perhaps at the cost of other more fruitful

¹¹ We were well aware that this applies to a differing extent in different countries.

comparisons. However, this criticism ignores that researchers on EU projects have developed strategies to overcome this problem. While the standard project design starts by national teams collecting national data, it often continues with ‘transversal’ or ‘cross-cutting’ themes. Here each (national) partner team is allocated a theme, and each theme then draws on the reports of every national team. Thus in Servemploi each national team produced an initial overview of the two sectors (retail and financial services) in its country, and then carried out case studies in its own country. Relevant sections of the reports on this research were then used by each national team in order to write their ‘theme’. In some projects such ‘thematic reports’ then become the basis of further collective discussion before a final ‘synthesis report’ is written. At its best this approach leads researchers from one Member State to question colleagues from another Member State about their findings, and stimulates much cross national mutual questioning.

There is also a learning process involved. Realistically, in some projects these national reports have at times been quite shoddy, partly because researchers can assume that the rest of the team is completely ignorant about their own country. As some comparative knowledge develops within the European research community, the quality of the mutual questioning improves. As European researchers stop being embarrassed about being ‘Eurocentric’, and develop a detailed knowledge of the Europe in which they live, so they learn to ask questions of both their own and other societies. Within purely national projects there is little scope for such a development.

The cluster projects are therefore examples of how European researchers are developing new ways of carrying out cross-national social research. However, the innovation is in the mode of working, rather than in the research methodology per se. At this point, and I very much hope to be corrected, the only methodological innovation in the strict sense I can find is the ‘Qualitative Panel Study’ method developed in Servemploi (the use of repeated semi-structured interviews over the duration of the project with a small panel of interviewees).¹² And even here, what is remarkable about Servemploi is the extent to which this data is *not* used systematically in the final report. There has however been a process of methodological dissemination: more researchers are now familiar with qualitative case study methodologies and above all with qualitative semi-structured interviews. It is no longer the case that ‘empirical’ social research is equated with the social survey.

Policy relevant research

EU funded social research is defined by research programmes and more narrowly, by ‘calls for proposals’. These pose research questions that can broadly be defined as ‘policy’ or perhaps ‘issue’ relevant. In other words, the problems are largely not generated internally to disciplines, but stem from public debate and from what are perceived by the Commission to be emerging issues. Of course, there is a two way flow here: Commission staff consult informally and formally with the research community; issues that enter ‘public debate’ do sometimes come from, or are reformulated by, particular disciplines. The notion of ‘flexibility’ in employment research would be an example of a concept that crosses public and research debates.

¹² In the ‘wider’ cluster, project INNOFLEX has developed novel methods of data capture for its case studies.

Notice that this process of consultation is typical of the way EU institutions have been described as working: a process of consensus building which often involves the creation of networks and which itself contributes to the formation of the very 'community' which is consulted.

Calls usually request that projects are 'interdisciplinary'. In fact this is generated by the questions themselves. None of the cluster projects belong clearly in a particular 'discipline' and indeed most participants' own disciplinary adherence or even training is probably unclear. Employment research seems to be an area somewhere in the space between economics, sociology, and management studies.

This relates in part to the research *actors*. The availability of EU funding has contributed to a proliferation of the types of research institutions. Traditionally in countries such as Germany employment research has been carried out in research institutes separate from universities (e.g. IAT), with a mixture of short and long-term funding. Equally in France research has essentially been located in the CNRS, although here the funding has been simply from the state. One could contrast this with the UK model, where research was carried out in universities. EU funding has contributed to the processes whereby in countries like the UK, Sweden and Ireland university research increasingly involves distinct institutions (the Centre for European Labour Market Studies in Gotenburg) within universities. Perhaps more importantly, EU funding has also stimulated the growth of private research organisations and research co-operatives. Even more so than university research 'centres', such non-academic organisations are extremely unlikely to be defined by any particular discipline (private economic research consultancies are perhaps the exception, but none are involved in our project teams).

EU social research has also demanded 'user involvement'. In fact this expectation has become common across a wide range of social science research, and certainly does not involve any particular ideological commitment. While 'user involvement' was long part of politically radical research (from 1970s community activism and feminist claims to be giving voice to the hitherto silenced), it is now integral to management consultancy research. I suspect, though I cannot prove this, that much of the rhetoric of 'user involvement' and even the notion of 'user groups' in EU social research comes from a very different source, namely software and systems development practice and in particular the 'soft systems' tradition (Wilcocks & Mason, 1987). Presumably the objective is to push researchers out of some putative ivory tower and in particular to push researchers into developing networks which again (like the networks between researchers discussed above) should become self-sustaining. For employment research in the cluster 'users' become the social partners: state agencies, trade unions and employers, and of course, those unions and employers oriented towards notions of social partnership. In the Infowork paper on users we have examined this in detail.

Some research actors can accommodate this pressure for user involvement more easily than others. For example, private research groups of necessity nurture relationships with clients, but in our area such clients are probably more likely to be government agencies or social movement organisations than private firms. For independent research institutes the situation is probably more varied. The RISE project has shown that all over Europe funding regimes here have been changing from

long term financial support from government and central interest groups (trade union confederations, employers' associations, etc.) to a much shorter-term, contract based regime. This of itself pushes such institutions into more frequent interaction with potential funders. For example, whereas such changes are only beginning within the CNRS, they are history for German research institutes.

For universities the situation also has enormous national variations. It is probably difficult for university academics to participate in EU projects purely as individual researchers.¹³ The UNIREG project has shown how European universities' ability to interact with other actors in their regions depends on their institutional and indeed legal structures. At one extreme we have UK universities, which are able to generate research groups and 'research centres' which develop their own institutional identity and which are able to bid for contracts and provide institutional support. This means that increasingly research does become separated from teaching (at least from undergraduate teaching) and a separate career track has developed for academic researchers. Such centres can develop their own links with other social actors. At the other extreme there is the Italian or even French situation, where the institutions are more rigid and impermeable. Here academics are more likely to utilise the freedom of their individual position to work with research groups established outside the universities.

Interestingly, these developments can be seen as part of a much wider process whereby the university is losing its brief dominance as the intellectually privileged locus of knowledge production (see Gibbons, 2000). This has been much discussed in relation to the natural sciences, where government and (usually somewhat later) private research institutions are well established, and where these work to rather different agendas. In the natural sciences there has also been an enormous commercialisation of university research. In some areas patents are now important than journal articles. Concern with 'IPR' (intellectual property rights) introduces commercial secrecy into the university;¹⁴ in such areas the 'entrepreneurial university' is increasingly competing with other private organisations (Clark, 1998). Yet such diversification is occurring even in the arts. In areas like history for example, UK university historians are now challenged by the 'TV dons' (Schama, Ferguson) who are now commercial organisations in their own right.¹⁵ Some established historians

¹³ There are some variations by discipline here. Political scientists and economists seem more able to work as individual researchers than sociologists and business academics, probably because they have the clear professional identities and well-established formalised European networks (e.g. the long established European Consortium for Political Research).

¹⁴ In my own university the official concerned with IPR told a seminar that if 'we' discovered something valuable, we must not talk about it until we had patented it!

¹⁵ In most European countries (and to some extent in the USA) there is a long-established tradition that university professors contribute to national debates from their platform in the university. One thinks of Bourdieu, Habermas, etc. However, such distinguished intellectuals have never become commercial organisations, and *that* is the novelty.

never go near universities (e.g. Anthony Beevor) and TV documentaries have become an important source for the production of *new* historical knowledge.

This proliferation of actors means that research teams have members with very different long term aims who therefore have different aspirations from what they wish to gain from participation. Private companies and market-near research institutes are of necessity cash-oriented in several senses. They have to be paid quickly, otherwise they will develop cash flow problems. Once they have been paid and have delivered the immediate product, there is little incentive for such researchers to continue any involvement with their colleagues in other institutions. Because the involvement with the research is short term, issues of intellectual property rights are unproblematic – they are being paid to provide a service, and like any management consultant, expect to have their knowledge purchased from them. By contrast, universities' accounting systems are often quite slow to process claims and may allow researchers to run deficits against anticipated payments. All of this puts less pressure on researchers to be aware of the financial issues involved in their projects. Yet to the extent that academics need to publish their research in journals and books, their involvement with the research material hardly ends when the project is formally finished. In this context one would expect academics to be more likely to want to continue collaboration or at least contact with their partners in the project, and to firmly resist any attempt by the Commission to claim Intellectual Property Rights in the findings.

In the Anglophone world academics' careers increasingly revolve around peer-reviewed publication in 'international' (i.e. Anglophone) journals. Such obsessions strike our colleagues with other institutional bases as completely bizarre. Such publication is claimed to be the 'gold standard' of quality control. However, this is problematic. Firstly, peer-reviewing is a way of enforcing *disciplinary* standards: it keeps research within a Kuhnian 'normal science' and actually blocks major innovations since these by definition do not fit within the existing paradigms (van Langenhove, 2001). Although increasingly the extent to which a journal article is cited is treated as a measure of its importance, some key ideas in our area did not emerge in journals at all (e.g. Atkinson's 'flexible firm' argument can be found in an obscure paper from a research institute). Secondly, peer reviewing is by definition reviewing from within the academic community, which means that the new research actors are excluded.

EU funding involves different types of researchers. Table 2 shows the institutional affiliation of all co-ordinators in projects of the TSER and the first two calls of the IHP. Co-ordinators are roughly equally spread between university teaching departments and research institutes, with interest groups making a much smaller contribution.

Table 2 Coordinator by framework programme: EU social science projects

	Univ. teaching dept.	Research institutes	Interest groups	Total	(N)
Fourth FP	48.8%	48.1%	3.1%	100%	162
Fifth FP	52.6%	41.2%	6.1%	100%	114
Total	50.4%	45.3%	4.3%	100%	276

Source: Greco & Wickham (2002)

Table 3 categorises the participants (rather than just the co-ordinators) in the cluster and differentiates between ‘university’ and ‘university centres’. Obviously the categorisation is somewhat fuzzy. While some university ‘centres’ are simply descriptions that one or more university academics use to describe their activities, others are established institutions with their own budgets, management structures and even buildings. Some research institutes are more or less identified with particular universities, while the boundary line between an institute and a private organisation is also vague. Nonetheless, the table does show the variety of participants in EU projects, and highlights the simple fact that projects are not only multi-national, they are also multi-institutional (no project comprises only one type of research actor).

Table 3 Research actors in the original cluster

	University centre	Institute	Private/NGO	University	Total partners
Servemploi	3	3	1	1	8*
WHOLE	8	2	0	0	10
SOWING	4	2	2	0	8
FLEXCOT	3	3	0	0	6*
NESY	3	4	0	6	13

*includes subcontractors

For our cluster, this diversity of actors is probably more important than the much vaunted question of interdisciplinarity. If we define our projects as concerned with employment, this itself is an interdisciplinary area in which participants have long shed clear disciplinary identities in their research work.¹⁶ For this very reason, it would be unwise to generalise here to EU funded projects as a whole. However, preliminary work in the ‘European Dimension’ project does show a surprising number of sociologists amongst co-ordinators. Arguably disciplines with clear definitions (conventional economics, psychology) find it much more difficult to contribute to these projects than ‘looser’ disciplines such as sociology and management studies.

The combination of diverse actors and loose disciplinary boundaries probably impacts on the dissemination of results. Academic disciplines have clear, if parochial, channels of dissemination, and practitioners have clear incentives to use them. At the other extreme, private research organisations and consultancies are hired to carry out research for a client, so that dissemination is not an issue. Indeed, a normal

¹⁶ Colleagues at universities may be defined by their disciplines in terms of their teaching, but in terms of their public research this has become a private identity only.

consultancy agreement *prevents* discrimination, pledging what Irish agreements term the ‘Service Provider’ from disseminating any findings to anybody but the ‘Client’. In this case the results are simply reported to the client, but with the very important proviso that they have to be comprehensible and useful *to the client* if there is to be any repeat business. EU research projects are carried out by a team which may consist of different types of research actors *with different understandings of dissemination*.

The problem is compounded by the curious intermediary position of EU social research itself. EU social research¹⁷ stands half-way between academic research and consultancy research. It is ‘policy relevant’, so one justification for its existence must be that it reaches policy makers. However, this research has not been commissioned in order to tackle a defined problem – indeed part of its possible value is precisely that it challenges existing definitions of what ‘the problem’ actually is. Because the research has not been commissioned by policy makers, there is no particular reason why they should read it and there are no pre-defined channels through which research results can reach them. Accordingly, it is rather naïve when researchers complain that ‘the Commission’ ignores their research findings (Brine, 1997).¹⁸ It is quite clearly up to researchers to somehow locate an audience and cajole it into reading the results. Hence even in the TSER the evaluation criteria for projects included dissemination plans, and the Accompanying Measures are in part planned as mechanisms to increase the dissemination of the results of existing projects.

Probably researchers and even the Commission itself have underestimated the change that is involved here. Within Infowork our ongoing analysis of users has already shown that there is wide national variation in the extent to which projects have been able to create any sustained user involvement. Where there is little tradition of user involvement, both social researchers and *users themselves* have to go through a cultural shift, for what is involved is nothing less than a re-positioning of the production of social knowledge.

New forms of research activity?

The development of a community of EU social researchers has been interwoven with the development of new ways of working together. One of the cluster teams, the thematic network ‘WHOLE’, has provided the most useful way to understand what is involved. ‘Work process knowledge’ (*Arbeitsprozesswissen*) is the knowledge that participants have of the overall work process within which they work. This knowledge is tacit, constructive and collective.

Participation in an EU research project involves appropriating informal knowledge about how the Commission organises research: the rituals of calls, submissions, evaluation and contract negotiation. Increasingly, formal codified knowledge of these processes is widely available (e.g. the documentation on the CORDIS website).

¹⁷ Here I am of course referring only to research carried out with the scientific research programmes (TSER, IHP etc.). The specific studies often commissioned by different DGs are much closer to conventional consultancy – and issues of dissemination do not arise.

¹⁸ Similar sentiments expressed in the ‘European Dimension’ discussions, e.g. GD2, 185; GD2,186.

Increasingly, but with varying degrees of effectiveness in different Member States, national and Commission representatives attempt to disseminate information about the research programmes. Nonetheless, it is clear that there has emerged a community of 'European' researchers who are bound together in part by their collective knowledge of 'calls', 'technical annexes', etc. Formal documents become invested with a social reality (you 'know' what these things mean, what they should look like). Such knowledge is not evenly distributed: some researchers know more than others, between and particularly within teams. It would be worth asking to what extent team leaders have taken steps to ensure that such knowledge is disseminated within teams to the researchers. Again it is easy to criticise Commission procedures as 'opaque' (Brine, 1997), but this probably misses the simple point that the Commission is necessarily different to the agencies of national governments with which some researchers are used to dealing. In particular, accessing the Commission may require a little more imitative than some researchers are used to using. Interestingly, especially in the smaller Member States, there is probably now a growing number of researchers for whom the EU was their first involvement in funded research, and they are likely to use the Commission as a standard against which to bench-mark their national governments – not necessarily to the latter's advantage.

Once the project is underway, successful participants need to develop a knowledge of how to work within a multi-national team that may well be interdisciplinary and that almost certainly will include a variety of research actors. Researchers need to learn that their colleagues may well have different priorities and even different understandings of what research involves. Team leaders and coordinators need to learn practical project management. Above all perhaps, participants learn how to maintain virtual networks and the importance of 'co-presence' – the awareness of someone else's presence even though they are physically absent (Urry, 2000). Consequently, information and communication technology becomes crucial, although usually in very elementary ways. Thus e-mail is indispensable for all participants, but attempts to use anything more sophisticated than a centrally maintained list server (e.g. team chat rooms etc.) seem to end in failure. E-mail has the enormous advantage over the telephone that it does not depend on the recipient actually being available to answer – crucial given the indeterminacy of most researchers' movements in time and space. It is also probably a better medium of communication than either the telephone or snail mail when the conversation is in English, but at least one participant is a non-native speaker.

In this process the key participants are the full-time researchers, often at the beginning of their careers. Since they are often on short-term contract, a major issue must be the extent to which such informal learning can be retained within the European research community. Such learning usually remains informal because the current funding arrangements involve little provision for formal training (our cluster made no use of Marie Curie fellowship places) – and most research projects have not been very imaginative in developing the limited possibilities that do exist. Project teams are made up of national teams which are essentially autonomous units, but what is desperately needed is a training element within projects that operates across the project as a whole.

Furthermore, building up research team creates the need to obtain further projects, but this oddly enough creates problems for dissemination. The final report on a project is usually completed after funding has finished, which means that the writing up time is not actually funded. The research team however can only be kept together if individuals start work on another project, which means they are unlikely to ever find the time to develop the material from the research project for conventional peer-refereed publication. Good dissemination strategies therefore require a project design that treats such activity as integral to the research – and allocates time and funding to it.

Despite these problems, the Framework programmes have created a new social group of researchers. Their common activities and common work process knowledge are the social reality of the ‘epistemic community’ of European researchers which Brine (2001) claims to deduce from her analysis of the Commission’s documents and the research themes of projects in the TSER. Such researchers now have experience of working in teams which are larger and more internally diverse than previously. This is an experience which is unmatched elsewhere in the social sciences, *including in the USA*.

The Sixth Framework: Colbert’s revenge?

In all the programmes of the Sixth Framework, the key ‘instruments’ are defined as ‘networks of excellence’ and ‘integrated projects’. It is apparently envisaged that the average size of these will be *several times* bigger than the networks or projects in previous programmes. Furthermore, for each area covered by a call, there will only be one successful project or network.

There are instrumental reasons for this. It is well-known that the Commission’s few ‘Scientific Officers’ are simply unable to properly monitor the several hundred projects that may be active at any one time. Presumably, though not much discussed within the research community, the large number of projects also puts a large burden on the Commission’s financial administration. Yet these arguments are not put forward in public. Instead, the Commission’s own documents claim that there will be enormous gains from bringing together in unified teams the best of Europe’s researchers (European Commission, 2001). At least in the social sciences this seems very debatable.

The commitment to large projects marks a return by the Commission to the ‘gigantisme’ of some earlier Framework Programmes. There has long been a belief that for European research the key problem is a problem of scale: national efforts are simply too small to tackle major research problems. This attitude has all too frequently also been applied to the social sciences. I suspect it explains the fact that both the TSER and the IHP allocated funds for the creation of European wide data resources. Yet such data resources actually already exist. At least as far as the social study of work is concerned, the main problem is that existing data is not comparable and not accessible. The most basic resource, the micro-data of the European Labour Force Survey, is not in the public domain. In several Member States the Labour Force Survey (or its successors) are available for researchers’ use, but researchers can only use the ELFS by commissioning special analysis from Eurostat (as was done by NESY). The restrictions this places on serious analysis are hopefully obvious. It is

therefore much more plausible that in the social sciences the key weakness has been the isolation of all but the most profiled researchers within their national boundaries.

The belief that size is in itself a Good Thing is justified by a rhetoric of ‘world class’ or ‘cutting edge’ research. More or less explicitly, the aim is to ‘compete’ with the USA. Again, this may or may not be relevant to the natural sciences, although we should notice in passing that even here the value of a simple ‘catch up’ strategy is not as self-evident as is apparently believed in the Commission. An analysis of technology policy might well suggest that Europe and the USA have strengths in different areas, areas that in turn are related to their different economic structure (Hall and Soskice, 2001: 41). A sensible strategy then would surely be to build on *existing* strengths, rather than try to compete in areas where the competition is strongest. There is a parallel here to broader issue of socio-economic policy. Using concepts of path dependency, Collins has argued (Collins, 2002) that for Europe to try to ‘jump paths’ towards a US style labour market runs the risk of jettisoning the achievements we have, *without gaining any new advantages*.

In the social sciences, the simplistic commitment to ‘world class’ research is dubious for three other reasons. Firstly, we have seen that the European research programmes have stimulated researchers to develop new links with the wider society. This has not been as easy as might have been imagined, but considerable progress has been made and above all, researchers have begun to develop the expertise and the competences to do this. If the key criterion for research becomes simply publication in ‘world class’ (i.e. American) journals, then this cultural change will rapidly be reversed. Secondly, within such a definition of success, the key criteria are defined by established disciplines. The emergence of inter-disciplinary research within the Framework programmes will also be jeopardised: in a manner of which Foucault would have approved, the disciplinary policemen (and they mostly will be men) will find their authority enhanced.

Finally, the rhetoric and the design of the Sixth Framework Programme encourages a ‘winner take all’ market for social knowledge. Interwoven with this is a remarkable naivety about the American educational and research system. Those who hold up the leading US private universities as models for Europe should remember that the last 20 years have seen an increasing polarisation within US higher education. As educational institutions have competed more and more with each other, we have seen the emergence of a ‘star system’ amongst academics, so the academic labour market becomes a rather dowdy version of the market for baseball players – a few key players take an increasing share of the rewards (Frank, 1996). The obvious consequence is that while standards at the ‘world class’ institutions increase, standards elsewhere *fall*. By contrast, at its best EU funding is creating virtual networks, open to the outside world and rooted in their different geographical and social environments. Implicitly the model has not been the ‘spires of excellence’ beloved of American university presidents, but the ‘industrial districts’ of Emilia Romagna!

In a manner reminiscent of 17th century mercantilist state policies, the Sixth Framework programme attempts to steer European social researchers to an unprecedented extent. The worst elements of the French *étatiste* tradition have been

revived at a European level. Not only is the attempt likely to fail, it risks jeopardising Europe's own and very distinctive achievements in social research.

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Appendix

Journals listed in the final reports of four cluster projects (Flexcot, NESY, Servemploi, WHOLE)

Journal	Project	English	SSCI
AI & Society	WHOLE	Y	N
Arbeit	NESY	N	N
De gids op maatschappelijk gebied	WHOLE	N	N
Economia e Lavoro	Servemploi	N	N
Economia e Personale	Servemploi	N	N
Ergonomics	WHOLE	Y	Y
Handbuch Human Resource Management	NESY	N	N
Human Relations	WHOLE	Y	Y
Jour Cognitive Economics	WHOLE	Y	N
Journal of Management Studies	WHOLE	Y	Y
Labour. Review of Labour Economics and Industrial Relations	WHOLE	Y	N
Le Travail Humain	WHOLE (3)	N	Y
Lernen und lehren	WHOLE	N	N
Management y Empresa	Servemploi (2)	N	N
New Technology Work & Employment	FLEXCOT	Y	Y
Northern Economic Review	FLEXCOT	Y	N
Reliability Engineering and System Safety	WHOLE	Y	Y
Sciences de la Societe	FLEXCOT	N	N
Sciences et Techniques Éducatives	WHOLE	N	N
Sciences sociales et santé	NESY	N	Y
Service Industries Journal	Servemploi	Y	Y
Social Sciences & Medicine	WHOLE	Y	Y
Studi Organizzativi,	WHOLE	N	N
Technologies de l'information et Société	FLEXCOT	N	N
Technology and Work	WHOLE	Y	N
Tijdschrift voor Arbeids	NESY	N	N
Zeitschrift für Soziologie	NESY	N	Y

All journals are listed which include articles based on the actual project.