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Post-industrial service society and business consulting profession - new terms for professional work and employment

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Structure of the presentation

- Background statistics for expansion of business consulting profession
 - Theoretical framework
 - Data and method
- Multiplicity of assignments, work load, time order and insecurity versus independency
- The article will be published soon online in Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies

Background

The expansion of professional consulting services in affluent Western countries (Boje 2003); and particularly in Finland (Statistics Finland 2018).

Changes in employment patterns, particularly in self-employment (Eurofound 2018; Sutela & Pärnänen 2018 11-13).

The growth in part-time self-employment in Western Europe and remarkable in Finland and Denmark (OECD 2018:89; Sutela & Pärnänen 2018, 11-13).

Among the European countries, multiple job holding tends to be highest in the Nordic countries (Pouliakas 2017).

All these changes are related to expansion and multiplicity of business consulting profession

Theoretical framework

- Post-industrial society: transformation of economy and substantial increase and multiplicity of services (Vallas 2017; Boje & Furåker 2003)
- Increasing flexibility in labour markets (Boje & Grönlund, 2003; Standing 2014)
- Increasing unstability of markets due to global economy (Boje & Grönlund, 2003)
- Horizontal organization of work: outsourcing of tasks and replacing jobs with services (Vallas 2017)
 - Precariousness (Standing 2014, Lorey 2015)

Business consulting profession: knowledge economy and new employment patterns

- Contingent labour force in knowledge economy - required to complete a specific task which is tied to a relatively short or limited duration (Barley & Kunda 2004)
 - Multiplicity of clients: private, non-profit private and public sector
 - Adjusting profession into service mode (Hurl 2017)
 - Contingent employment patterns: income from many sources, combination job, self-employment and short-term contracts
- The social recognition as profession fragile (Maestripiere 2016): it does not put them in a marginalized position, but generates a substantial variety of elite management consultants and knowledge workers in precarious positions (Kitay & Wright 2007).

- **Research questions: how they cope with the contingent pattern of employment?**

Data and method

Interview data of 12 persons, related to the project "Multiple Job Holding – Practices and Institutional Frame 2019-2021, Tampere University, Work Research Centre"

Content analysis

- From 45 to 65 years; 2 men and 10 women; higher education degree in economics or social/behavioural sciences

Table. Employment patterns and professional fields of the interviewees. Categorized by the main task and associated task

Main task	Self-employed	Short-term employment contract	Total
Coaching	7	0	7
Management of development project	0	5	5
Total	7	5	12

Associated jobs

- Coaches: training, management and counselling in short-term employment contracts, 7
- Managers of development project: Evaluation, training, counselling (3 self-employment, 2 short employment contracts)

However

- Main job and associated job were not fixed
- Being flexible labour force, they changed their employment pattern rapidly for guaranteeing income

Coping with the contingent employment pattern

Multiplicity of assignments

1. Professioning

The tasks of the business consulting professionals were often similar or related, which supported coherence of the work

2. Work load

Many assignments and contracts: difficulties of controlling the combo schedule, “client colonization” (Gold and Mustafa 2013)

Insecurity versus independency and freedom

- Constant searching for new assignments or contracts for guaranteeing living
- Insecurity of income and future embedded to contingent work
- Variation: control of insecurity to despair – related to career phase and family responsibilities
- Voluntary and forced to free professioning

Conclusions

- Business consulting profession as an outcome of flexible labour market and professions in knowledge economy
 - Precariousness but also individualization of knowledge workers
 - Traditional welfare system (unemployment benefits and pension scheme) does not recognize the problems of those with non-institutionalized employment patterns
- Thank you!

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