

Project B3

Interactions Between Capabilities in Work and Private Life: A Study of Employees in Different Work Organizations

This research project primarily addresses “capabilities,” in working and private life and the interrelations between them. Adapting Sen’s approach, capabilities are the ability to achieve one’s life goals. The project adopts a comprehensive view that identifies multidimensional states of inequality. Crucial is the recognition that pursuing one’s interests in one life domain may even constrain goal attainment in other life domains. The same personal circumstances and employment conditions may be perceived and evaluated differently against the background of heterogeneous life goals.

The concept of employment relationships allows us to gain an overview of a wide range of different gratifications and different demands and stresses, against the background of different psychological contracts. On the level of employees, we therefore firstly study the heterogeneity of different employment relationships in companies situated in various business sectors. Secondly, we assess these employees in terms of their embedment in various forms and phases of life. Thus, also the situation and views of a partner will be considered.

In a next step this project examines how heterogeneities (e.g. gender, age, life style preferences, education) become social inequalities with a particular focus on the role of the organizational context. As possible mechanisms different individual interests within companies and private bonds being negotiated in different ways are investigated. Also health plays a role in these interdependencies influencing the prospects for successful multiple engagement in both life domains. It is a “hard” indicator of maladjustment.

In this project detailed studies of employees and characteristics of their companies are carried out. Companies play a dual role, first as negotiation partners and second as opportunity structures. Various actors within the companies and companies’ institutional and sector-specific context are considered.

Proceeding from a sample of 100 work organizations, an extended linked employer-employee design will be used to study an average of 67 employees in each organization. If employees have life partners, they will also be surveyed with a short version of the instrument. By combining these data with information from the same employees and their companies from the German Institute for Employment Research (IAB), we can achieve a unique density of information for large case numbers. The longitudinal design initiated during the first funding period allows distinguishing causal effects more clearly and to adequately study processes of discrimination and self- selection.

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