

Work rationalisation and intellectual work of engineers in high performance work organisations: tools of rationalisation in the IT sector

Overview

- The IT industry has lots of things in common with other sectors, but some crucial differences regarding rationalization and pressure on workers.
- Extremely high pace of technological and job change, constant learning and training
- Both harbingers and recipients of rationalisation and automatisisation
- Software developers resistant to commodification, but have their own forms of precarity and face challenges; guild ethics, autonomy and mentality

Research method

- Unstructured qualitative interviews with software developers, snowballing method
- Survey in three languages about first starting out in the IT sector, the current job in the IT sector and current company, and experiences with control, stress and autonomy. Finally some general questions about the career, the IT sector and future prospects are asked.
- Small ethnographic project involving programmers working on a hobby project

Research questions

- What is the nature of knowledge work within an IT framework compared to other sectors?
- How does the work rationalisation of intellectual work of IT workers in Europe express itself? More rigorous supervision, the deskilling of work, splits in skill evolution within the IT profession?
- What are the historical and current ideas behind teamwork and autonomy in the software sector?
- Can we observe strategies of resistance to managerial strategies to rationalise work? If so, what forms does this resistance take?

Next steps

- Are the technological choices in the sector and the way the technology is designed taking away control from the IT workers?
- Future technological evolutions: internet of things, open source movement, peer to peer, ...
- Research of self service and netocracy (Google, Facebook, ...) and impacts on work and rate of profit
- Research of collaborative economy, p2p and open source movement undermining cognitive capitalism

