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Mechanisms of Labour-Control in Network-Organisation-Models: On the Case of Projectification at Weizenbaum Institute

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CIÊNCIAS SOCIAIS
E HUMANAS

Department of Political Economy

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“we are at a moment when
the principles of institutional critique
are being pushed to a breaking point
and opening into something
radically new and radically old
at the same time.”

MTL Collective. (2018). “From Institutional Critique to Institutional Liberation?
A Decolonial Perspective on the Crises of Contemporary Art”. 123-125

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*From the bottom of my heart: Thank you!
I would not have done it otherwise.*

Resumo

Nos últimos anos, tem havido um interesse crescente em compreender como o trabalho projectual é organizado em modelos de organização em rede, como os projectos de investigação colaborativa. Este estudo insere-se no âmbito da investigação sobre “projectificação” - a tendência crescente para organizar o trabalho em projectos distintos com objectivos e prazos definidos. Esta tendência tem impacto nas estruturas organizacionais, na subjetividade e no bem-estar dos trabalhadores, bem como nas dinâmicas interinstitucionais. O estudo combina entrevistas narrativas e trabalho de campo etnográfico num estudo de caso exploratório realizado no Instituto Weizenbaum em Berlim. O estudo centra-se na análise da forma como a estrutura projectiva aí existente gera uma nova combinação de mecanismos de controlo do trabalho e coloca a ênfase nas experiências dos trabalhadores neste projeto de investigação colaborativa, caracterizado pela interdisciplinaridade, hierarquias participativas e múltiplas filiações institucionais. O objetivo desta investigação é examinar os mecanismos de controlo formais e informais em vigor e a forma como estes afectam a clareza dos papéis, as práticas de comunicação e os níveis de stress dos trabalhadores. O estudo procura igualmente compreender de que forma esta estrutura molda os processos de tomada de decisão e a cultura organizacional. A investigação visa contribuir para uma compreensão mais ampla do modo como o controlo do trabalho funciona em contextos em que as hierarquias verticais são menos pronunciadas e os modelos organizacionais abraçam a flexibilidade e a autossuficiência. Os resultados lançam luz sobre as consequências e os riscos de uma distribuição pouco clara de funções e responsabilidades e de canais de comunicação difusos, e revelam um regime de controlo do trabalho predominantemente hegemónico, com uma forma de lidar com a situação discursivamente internalizada, avaliando também a eficácia da liderança do projeto na resolução destes problemas e na mitigação dos riscos.

Palavras-Chave

Projectificação, Projectos de investigação em colaboração, Modelos de organização em rede, Mecanismos de controlo do trabalho, Investigação e desenvolvimento, Clareza de papéis

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in understanding how projectified work is organised in network-organisation models, such as collaborative research projects. This study falls within the scope of research into 'projectification' - the growing tendency to organise work into distinct projects with defined objectives and deadlines. This trend impacts organisational structures, workers' subjectivity and well-being as well as the inter-institutional dynamics. The study combines narrative interviews and ethnographic fieldwork in an explorative case-study carried out at Weizenbaum Institute in Berlin. It focuses on analysing how the projectified structure there brings forth a novel mix of mechanisms of labour-control and puts emphasis on the experiences of the workers in this collaborative research project, that is characterised by interdisciplinarity, participatory hierarchies and multiple institutional affiliations. The aim of this research is to examine both formal and informal control mechanisms in place and how they affect the clarity of roles, communication practices and workers' stress levels. The study also seeks to understand how this structure shapes decision-making processes and organisational culture. The research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how labour-control works in contexts where vertical hierarchies are less pronounced and organisational models embrace flexibility and self-reliance. The results shed light on the consequences and risks of unclearly distributed roles and responsibilities and diffuse communication-channels and find a predominantly hegemonial labour control-regime with discursively internalized coping and also evaluates the project's leadership's effectiveness in solving these issues and mitigating risks.

Keywords

Projectification, Collaborative Research Projects, Network-Organisation-Models, Mechanisms of Labour-Control, Research and Development, Role-Clarity

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INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter sets the stage for this study by outlining the research's context and relevance. To achieve this, it discusses contemporary work-organisation and defines certain key concepts like that of projectification or mechanisms of labour-control, to then present the research-questions. The first chapter situates the topics of the research within the existing literature, highlighting gaps in current knowledge and conducting a nuanced examination of how the related issues of role-clarity and communication-dynamics play out in organisations, such as the specific case at hand. The second chapter outlines the analytical instruments and methodological approach that guides this study, as well as the methods employed to collect and interpret the data. It provides the foundation for the third chapter, which presents the results of the analysis of the empirical data and their implications for theory and practice, in order to provide valuable and impactful insights for workers and organisations. These are summarized in the conclusion, where the example of the case, is used to depict the inherent complexities of projectified work in network-organisation-models and some of the trade-offs regarding functionality of internal communication and hierarchical efficacy, as well as giving recommendations for possible structural improvements and future research avenues.

1) Aims of the Study

Today, how we conceptualize and organise work is constantly in flux (Rosso et. Al, 2010). Since the ways in which work can be organised are continuously adapted in contemporary societies, the modalities and conditions of work are also subject to change (Castells, 2010). As generations before have witnessed changing modalities of work, first during the time of the industrial revolution, then later with the advent of Fordism and more recently as result of deindustrialization and the parallel growth of the service-sector, each of these shifts affected what is understood and acceptable as a form of work, thereby impacting new generations of workers, who are shaped by new demands and pressures (Chiapello & Boltanski, 2005). Today, a generation is witnessing the modalities of work change again, and alongside them, corresponding changes within themselves (Sennet, 2006). Our minds and sensibilities, both the product and catalyst of political and socioeconomic circumstances outside of our control, we adapt to these new ideas, without any real agency in becoming this new type of workers. Instead, workers unknowingly collude with and police contemporary normative values around self-reliance and flexibility as if they were of their own making, misreading the relationship between them, their employers and the market as voluntary and even liberatory, missing the full picture where material interest govern individual subjectivity subversively (Harvey, 2005).

It is therefore of political interest to elucidate what this generation of workers is facing, as studying this contains the potential for gaining emancipatory insights on the psychology and conditioning of workers, helping to better understand why we organise work the way we do and how we can improve the living- and working-conditions in our society in relevant ways. After all, it was those fundamental paradigm-shifts in the history of society, brought on by crises and catastrophes, which gave a chance for real change to take hold (Harvey, 2005). It does for this reason appear absolutely paramount to closely examine those contemporary challenges to the organisation of work, the twenty-first-century has brought (Castells, 2010).

Central among these, have been those only made possible by advances in technology, such as the normalization of remote-work or digital supervision and algorithmic management within globe-spanning chains of command and production (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). In particular, European workers, have experienced a continued erosion of labour protections, under the guise of liberal reforms, leading to an effective segmentation of the labour-market, where new employment pushed large parts of the workforce to depart from more conventional forms and with it; their hard-won benefits and protections (Barbieri & Cutuli, 2016). The shifts in the mentality and discourse around work, also play a role how workers perceive it. In these advanced stages of liberalization of labour-markets, workers witness the dissolution of boundaries between private and professional spheres, in a trend away from formal towards informal mechanisms of labour-control (Bjunggren 2017). Other notable aspects of this are things like the prevalence of what are commonly referred to as atypical forms of employment, pertaining to phenomena such as platform labour and the “gig-economy” (Giesecke, 2009). Be it the projectification of work or the ubiquity of bogus self-employment, an ever-increasing share of work takes place outside of the conventional modes of work-organisation, and has become characterized by fluid and temporary dependencies, flexible time-space-regiments and a lack of clearly defined roles and responsibilities (Cicmil et. al., 2016).

However, the motivation for this research lies not in demonstrating that this is the case, but rather with observing the advantages and disadvantages workers’ experience, analysing these new models of organising work non-normatively and outlining the important trade-offs and compromises, which are necessary for their overall structural efficacy and functionality. In the media and in managerial discourse, these circumstances are frequently justified as developed in response to a new generation of workers, while many relevant contributors mentioned here, view the causal relationship between workers and forms of employment to be more complex, as the changing demands of the labour-market, are also re-shaping and conditioning workers in the process and not just vice-versa (Boutang, 2011). Showing this, can help empower workers, to reflect upon and change, instead of adapt to the structure of work and find an equitable balance, which allows for the requirements of capitalist contemporality, without compromising their productivity, quality of life or physical and mental health.

2) Research Context & Questions

This research is situated within the larger “PROWORK”- research, that was developed by a multi-disciplinary team of researchers, from CIES - Centre for Studies in Sociology at Iscte - Lisbon University Institute, CIUHCT - Interuniversity Centre for the History of Science and Technology and CRIA-Interuniversity Centre for Research in Anthropology. PROWORK is funded by the Foundation of the Portuguese ministry for Science and Technology and aims to analyse the projectification of work and create a new framework of analysis to study it.

The selected case of Weizenbaum Institute (WI) exemplifies this organisational structure and how the coordination and conditions of work within affect workers' experiences and lives. WI was initially founded as a collaborative research project (CRP) in 2017, but also exists as a project-dependent temporary association since 2019. It is the result of the collaboration of five universities and two renowned non-academic research-institutions from Berlin and its surrounding state of Brandenburg. As case-study it is well-suited to analyse the particularities of this organisational model, that is characterized by participatory hierarchies and the dual affiliations of workers between WI and their respective universities. It is particularly relevant due to its relatively unique organisational structure which puts a lot of weight on participatory and decentralized hierarchies to facilitate its declared purpose of conducting research on digitalization in a decisively transdisciplinary manner.

A CRP can be defined as a temporary framework for the organisation of workers from multiple participating institutional partners who have shared objectives (Chen et. al., 2017). This model has seen great success with academic and non-academic research institutions, because of how it allows for them to profit from sharing in each other's resources (ibid.). The interest for PROWORK here lies with analysing the projectification of work in contemporary network-organisation-models in the area of research and development such as CRP's, which have become prevalent there over recent decades (Kalff, 2017). This model mainly relies on leveraging the expertise, human- and monetary resources from participating institutions to host collaborative transdisciplinary research on “neutral ground” (ibid.). As instances of CRP's can be assumed to vary greatly, the goal is here, is to find communalities by way of an explorative case-study, where transfactual insights can be generated and later shared.

The complexity of organising knowledge-workers with differing disciplinary backgrounds, expertise and institutional affiliations represents an especially difficult challenge. Adding the factors of exclusively temporary funding and contracts, and an initially non-existent internal administration, CRP's seem like an amalgamation of many of the core-issues from all forms of atypical employment and more specifically projectified work. Studying them can thus not just offer insights into the current state of research-work, but also how it is affected by trends like projectification and labour-market-liberalization (Fowler et. al., 2015; Dollinger 2017).

Studying workers' experiences ethnographically in this setting furthermore allows for both the themes of projectification and research-work to be put into relation with one another in an attempt to fill gaps in the literature pertaining to this intersection, related to larger trends and aspects unique to knowledge-work, including possible trade-offs and coping-strategies.

The research questions outlined below address these dynamics and aim to enable the study of workers' perceptions around control, feedback and hierarchy, as well as the overall organisation of work at WI and makes observations possible which may highlight disconnects between institutional objectives and workers' subjectivity. The questions complement this via addressing the operational aspects of the structure and how workers at WI are coping with them. The research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on projectification, providing results with possibly, both practical and theoretical applications for understanding network-organisation-models on a more intricate level. The insights can help reveal systemic issues concerning the hierarchical efficacy and linear communication in the fluid and discontinuous settings of contemporary organisations and in identifying consequences and solutions for improving the organisational structure of projects and the experience of workers respectively.

The case provides the opportunity to examine how control-mechanisms and hierarchies are being redefined through the projectification of work and can shed light on some of the resulting problems and risks this brings for workers and the organisation/project itself. The case-study seeks to examine the mechanisms of labour-control in place in these projectified network-organisation such as CRP's, which represent a substantial share of the nowadays majorly third-party-funded research-work and aims to elucidate how they bring with them new mechanisms to control a new type of worker (Heyes & Lewis, 2014). Analysing it, may assist in uncovering and describing the mechanisms of control in place, and how they are partially representative of a new regime of accumulation, where knowledge-work is both the primary source of value and the principal location for the valorisation of labour (Boutang, 2011).

Research Questions:

Q1: What are the mechanisms of control that shape workers' experiences in projectified network-organisations and how do these function to foster the establishment of stable working-conditions while retaining the flexibility needed to achieve the projects goals?

Q2: How are hierarchical and participatory structures at WI navigated and balanced in this organisation-model, and what are the consequences and coping-strategies, for workers and the project itself, which can be observed in the given case?

Chapter I: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the existing literature, which is relevant for analysing the trend of projectification and how it relates to mechanisms of labour-control. It begins by delineating the central ideas behind the trend, highlighting its prevalence in some sectors, particularly research-work, and presenting network-organisation-models such as WI. It first addresses the main characteristics and drivers of projectified work, then continuing onto CRP's, and their implications for the marketization of research and academia, due to the short-termed funding cycles, and central focus on measurable output-goals in research-work. It then examines some of the model's characteristics, which affect its stability and security, as well as the well-being and professional development of workers, highlighting both benefits and limitations of this specific approach to projectification. The second part considers the clarity of roles and responsibilities in participatory hierarchies and evaluates its influence on the experiences and productive dispositions of workers in these settings. That section also addresses the abject tension between the need for flexibility and that for control, which this model is plagued by, taking into consideration presumed advantages, drawbacks and points of contention. Following this, the literature review delves into theories on the mechanisms of labour-control, examining how formal and informal mechanisms are employed to maintain control and achieve productive goals. This section then turns to the influence of social norms, peer pressure, and intrinsic motivation in environments where formal hierarchical structures are less dominant, exploring how informal mechanisms may operate alongside formal ones. Lastly, the chapter closes with drawing a line back to the empirical case-study at hand, outlining which aspects of the literature should be considered the most relevant for this study's objectives and for answering its research questions in an adequate manner.

1) Working in Project-Society

In the PROWORK-research and with it, in this present study, the concept of the *project-society*, by Lundin (et. al., 2015) serves as narrative backdrop and expository assumption. Here, Lundin envisions a society becoming more and more projectified to a point where it is projects which are the standard-model for how work is organised (Lundin, et. al., 2015). This holds applicative potential for the insights gathered here, in terms of changes to underlying control-mechanisms representing a paradigm-shift in how society at large is organised (ibid.).

The term projectification refers to a shift in organisational practice towards a temporary organisation of work and was first introduced by French scholar Christophe Midler (1995) who used it to describe the transition from Taylorist organisation-models of work into projects, in his case study about car-manufacturer Renault projectifying its product-development.

In PROWORK, projectification is defined as the tendency of projects and in particular project-networks, intermediately becoming the new dominant model for organising economic activity in many areas (Jensen et al. 2016). Corresponding and relevant literature highlights this critical transformation of how work is organised in contemporary capitalist societies, as driven by a need for flexibility and efficiency (Schor, 2020). According to Midler as well as Walter Powell (2001) this stems from the perception of projects as a less constraining for the organisation of work, especially when trying to combine the efforts, expertise and skills of several participants for one short-term goal. This trend of atomizing work into a series of short-term projects, relies on promising potential gains in efficiency and flexibility and can be observed in many areas of economic activity, i.e., research and development (Powell, 2001).

The phenomenon of projectification comes justified by managerial cost-rationales which promote improved efficiency and output, and which have been demonstrated (Powell, 2001). Another consequence is the weakening of organisational boundaries, as it makes institutions become more willing to accept and share-in expertise from outside (Jensen et. Al., 2016). As such it challenges previously prevalent 'Taylorist' compartmentalization, seeking to achieve a more fluid and discontinuous division labour (Jensen, 2023; Powell, 2001). Collaboration like this intensifies to accommodate for the increasing value put on knowledge, while the results promote projects as an attractive organisational models (Blume et. Al., 2009). At the same time, studies observe it negatively impacting the quality of jobs and the well-being of workers, along with their bargaining power, and stress-levels (Cicmil at. Al., 2016).

Powell (2001) extensively discusses how projectification affects various dimensions of work such as employment relations and the structure and skills demanded in labour-markets. According to him, project-work often requires a re-organisation of tasks which typically must include moving away from the traditional and non-temporary division of labour and roles and towards more temporary organisational structures. Powell acknowledges how this shift can lead to flexible, albeit more precarious jobs that are defined by immediate demands rather than stable, ongoing office-jobs (Powell, 2001). This partial abolition of conventional work-modalities in several sectors of many economies has been shown to have negatively affected for the growing number of people earning a living this way (Chung, & van der Lippe, 2018).

With an ever-larger share of work being projectified, scores of workers today have little chance of opting-out (Engwall, 2003). These analyses still preclude that projectification can also significantly reduce the cost of labour for employers (Florio, 2014). For organisations, projects therefore come with potential financial gains on top of the aforementioned gains in flexibility and shared expertise, while workers stand to lose out on substantial parts of their income (Kalleberg, 2009; Greer et. Al., 2019). This is a crucial factor in economies where previously conventional forms of employment are tied to welfare-benefits, which firms have to pay into on behalf of workers for their retirement- and health-insurance (Kim et. Al., 2012).

Müller (et. al. 2019) describes how projectification serves the added benefit of identifying “redundancies” and inform restructuring or layoffs, as workers observe others, learn from them or deem them redundant for the project, thereby assisting in “slimming down” the HR-structure of organisations (Pitsis et. al., 2004). All of this serves in marking projectification as part of a broader paradigm shift away from the traditional modalities of work, affecting both unqualified and qualified workers in a myriad of ways as their organisations are restructured into temporary projects (Jensen et. Al, 2023). This restructuring of work to be in part or fully projectified in large parts of the economy, should thus be considered symptomatic for novel modalities of work emerging along a societal re-evaluation of work (Lundin et. al. 2015). Most importantly, showing that projectification needs to be understood as a discursive construct on top of just an increasingly prevalent organisational practice (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2018).

2) On Collaborative Research-Projects

Recently there has been extensive discussion about the growing trend of managerialism in academia. CRP's have emerged as a common model for work-organisation, supported by an established set of managerial tools and professional networks (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007). Through the process of projectification, time becomes limited without lowering expectations for productivity, which are made measurable via numerical metrics (Midler, 1995). In this way, temporal and monetary pressures on research-work grow, preceding to atomize it to favour distinct output-goals, reorganising researchers into compatible project-units. This intrinsically alters how the work is conceptualized by workers, as this reliance on managerialism implies that their productive efforts are balanced out by oversight and direction (Dollinger, 2020).

Packendorff and Lindgren (2016) among others, assert that projectification does not stop at merely organising work differently but changes its perceived nature via the use of ideology, promoting specific vocabularies and visualizations. Throughout large swaths of the economy, this projectification-discourse facilitates and is conditioned upon those same aforementioned managerial trends, which then imbue in organisations the need for rationalized planning and delivery of marketable outcomes. This in turn serves to normalize sentiments of temporarity and worker-autonomy, as opposed to the formerly prevalent notion of procedural freedom, albeit rooted in vertical hierarchies with authorities taking responsibility (Dollinger, 2020).

Mollie Dollinger (2020) observes the underlying trend of marketization in academia, that she accuses of reshaping academic research to comply with capitalist norms and targets. Morris' (2013) gives as reason for this, that project-discourse views output as primary entity of interest, leading to measuring the effectiveness of a project via cost-benefit-rationales only.

As is the case with managerial rationales rising to prominence, so can further drivers of projectification such as ex-post impact-targets, increased dependency on third-party-funding and high administrative costs, be identified as part of this trend, reflecting similarly resource- and time-limited perspectives. These changes manifest in the transformation of the formerly hierarchically structured departments at universities into project-units, better suited to fulfil more output-oriented goals and strategies (Sinha & Van de Ven, 2005).

Studies reveal those aspects of project-discourse which might be specific to research. The focus on short-term goals and the increased administrative workload, can, according to Kalff (2017) lead to workers internalizing narratives about their own resilience, subjugating them to unrealistic deadlines and never-ending tasks on agendas they are forced to set for themselves (Cicmil, et. al., 2016). Without clearly established lines of communication and oversight, mistakes or unfinished tasks become attributable to workers' time-management or substandard work-ethic, alleviating superiors of any responsibility. Hessels (et al., 2014) also mentions a trade-off between enabling access to a range of expertise and struggling to manage and implement it. Kloet (et al., 2013) views this as especially valid for university–industry networks because of rising administrative costs from having to coordinate the agendas of so many different institutions and researchers over the course of a given projects runtime.

Kalff (2017) points out an issue in interdisciplinary CRPs, in their struggle to coordinate across different institutional affiliations, having to define administrative roles and manage accountability. However, such network-environments have also been shown to allow for more flexibility and autonomy, thus making them more attractive to knowledge-workers, than rigid department-hierarchies (Kalff, 2017), a likely consequence of academic workers being more likely to appear sceptical of overt directive mechanisms of control, often preferring to set their own schedules if they are able to (Ylijoki, 2016).

Another important aspect to look at, is the make-up of CRP's in terms of the participants, funding-sources and the network's organisational structure. Teirlinck and Spithoven (2015) study influences of the network's breadth, composition, and depth on the outcome of CRP's. They are concerned with how networks that consist of public–public and public–private partners where just one university is involved, may end up forcing everyone to think in managerial terms, i.e., economic applicability of their research (Teirlinck & Spithoven, 2015). They also differentiate between the number of partners in a network as a measure for *breadth*, thus distinguishing it from *network-composition*, which captures the diversity in partners (ibid.). The apparent trade-offs are predominantly related to the scope number of partners rather than types of partners, since universities opt for larger networks, expecting additional participants' contributions to exceed the increased costs of coordination (ibid.).

Takahashi (et.al., 2018) provides insights on delegative versus participative leadership-styles for the managing of inter-institutional networks which are knowledge-intensive and collaborative, similarly showing that tie-strength, network range, and gender difference are important factors within CRP. The latter often being a direct consequence of flexible worktime arrangements. *Flexible working* is when workers have some or full control over when and where they work (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2018). Different types of flexible worktime-regimes exist. *Working-time autonomy* is when the workers are completely free in deciding their schedule, while *flexitime*-arrangements differ in that they do revolve around some constraints in terms of adhering to a set of core hours, workers have to work in a day or a week (ibid.). Flexible working may also entail autonomy in where workers are working from, meaning when and if they come to the office. In *flexiplace*-arrangements, remote-work- or home-office-permissions allow workers to work outside of their normal premises, e.g., from home (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2018). Both these types of work-flexibility are present and definitive for working at WI, making the analysis of their control- and organisational-functionality, and how these circumstances affects workers in CRP's that much more important.

Key findings from examining the intersection between flexible working and gender-equality-outcomes and the consequences for the well-being and job-satisfaction of workers, are presented by Chung and Van der Lippe (2018). Here the increasing demand for flexibility in the workplace drives time- and place-flexibility, with some scholars expecting it to become the norm in many industries, thus putting even more weight on female workers by doubling their burden of private responsibilities in matters of reproductive labour (ibid.).

3) Role-Clarity in Network-Projects

Classical organisational theory emphasizes rigid hierarchical structures and formal rules to achieve efficiency and control in organisations. Key principles include *unity of command*, meaning that employees report to a single superior (Simon, 2018). In essence this prevents workers from being caught in a crossfire of incompatible expectations from above, as the classical model coordinates tasks authoritatively and exerts direct control over workers, while also relieving individual workers of taking responsibility for the entire organisation's success. Most organisations today are structured on this principal basis of vertical hierarchy and with authority flowing clearly from the top towards the bottom (Ashkenas et.al., 2015). Simon (2018) critiques this approach, arguing that it conflicts with the need for specialization and flexibility in contemporary organisations. He suggests that decision-making often requires input from multiple sources, challenging the emphasis put on one single chain-of-command, which Simon views as unpractical in modern-day organisations (ibid.).

For understanding the difference in functionality between these two approaches, the concepts of *role-clarity* and *-ambiguity* as found in Rizzo (et. al., 1970) are crucial. It is here, where the elementary trade-off between these models can be situated. The terms refer to the extent to which workers understand their own role and that of those working around them in clear terms and if they confirm to the expectations for those roles in a given structure (ibid.). As authority becomes diffuse in project-environments, so does the clarity of roles become ambiguous (Packendorff & Lindgren, 2016). In projectified work, role-clarity can therefore often become diffuse, as the focus lies with empowering workers to collaborate freely, at the expense of blurring the lines separating each worker's responsibilities and authorities (ibid.). A lack of role-clarity can cause job dissatisfaction and stress, due to resulting administrative challenges and workers easily feeling overburdened from having to solve issues which stem from these unclear structures and responsibilities within their organisation, leaving them with less time to focus on the actual project (Rizzo et. al., 1970).

A recent global observational study showed, how trust in the structure can be crucial for workers' satisfaction and performance (Henderson et. al., 2016). In analysing organisations such as CRP's and other network-organisation-models, their structures appear exceedingly intricate, due to the multiple institutional affiliations. An issue which stems from organisations such as this representing an attempt to abandon centralization in order to allow for flexibility and resource-sharing, but then struggling to sacrifice the more straightforward enforcement of rules and responsibilities (Sydow et. al., 2004). Research reveals an array of negative aspects of projectification for workers, which can be juxtaposed against positives such as improved task-flexibility and dissemination of expertise. Flexible conditions and temporariness of projects have been shown to induce stress through a variety of factors, impacting job-satisfaction and work-life balance (Darling & Whitty, 2019). Coordination-associated stress for example, is often an effect of having to specify roles and tasks across *hierarchical levels*, inter- or intra-organisationally (Sinha & Van de Ven, 2005). Non-hierarchical structures and flexibilized schedules additionally do not allow nicely for the establishing of routines, often resulting in more overtime, higher time-pressure and bigger workloads (Bowen et. al., 2014).

In CRP's, authority and with-it responsibility is usually distributed more evenly. This is the case in research, where authority emerges along lines of subject-specific competence or academic seniority, as opposed to positions in hierarchies. While ideal for resorting to their expertise in decision-making-processes, where subject-specific competence is elementary, project-workers do not always perform seamlessly when it comes to administrative matters, especially if they have not had to deal with personnel- or admin- responsibilities of this kind (Faraj & Sproull, 2000; Hoegl & Parboteeah, 2006). This leads to environments with unclearly defined responsibilities, causing stress and confusion for workers struggling to comprehend all of the expectations placed upon them (Mulgan, 2003; Smith & Wohlstetter, 2001).

Existing research on cross-boundary teaming highlights how these fluid overlapping responsibilities may create challenges on the part of coordination and fixed accountability (Sinha & Van de Ven, 2005). Scholars respond by pointing out the need for clear communication channels, to mitigate these risks (Edmondson & Harvey, 2018). Lasauskiene and Rauduvaite (2015) find that deviations by those in projectified work-settings, leads to blame-shifting and workers avoiding responsibilities, highlighting missing training for social and team-leadership. As networks expand to include an ever more diverse range of institutional participants, the potential for innovation might increase, yet so does the number of workers who are not used or trained to exert control over others, who now find themselves needing to do so in order to be able to achieve their own goals, forcing them into leadership-positions against their will and in opposition to applying their subject-competence (Lasauskiene & Rauduvaite, 2015).

Another result from this opaque distribution of roles and responsibilities is the loss of shared identity among workers, which may hinder efforts of labour-organisation and industrial action (Heyes & Lewis, 2014; Mäkinen, 2014; Van Gyes et. al., 2018). Obfuscated or non-existent hierarchies then coincide with the dissolution of private-professional and employee-employer distinctions, incentivising competition among workers and creating an environment prone to conflict, which can further increase stress (Minavand et. al., 2013).

4) Mechanisms of Labour-Control

Projects with especially high degrees of complexity such as CRP's involve a balancing act between flexibility and security, as is apparent when reviewing the literature on formal and informal mechanisms of labour control and how they can be used in conjunction with each other to coordinate work effectively (Heales et. al., 2007). Literature suggests that striking an effective balance also depends significantly on the strategic use of a combination of informal control mechanisms with formal rules (Claggett & Karahanna, 2018). In Pryke (et. al., 2018) and Liu and Moskvina (2015) the promotion of informal mechanisms of control is highlighted and how it can improve productivity and project-results, if responsibility is distributed well, and including the facilitation of internal communication-channels and constructive feedback. Claggett and Karahanna (2018) and Gupta (et al., 1994) demonstrate supplementing formal rules with informal control mechanisms is essential for maintaining a project's productive-outputs, as well as perceived stability and satisfaction for workers.

Erik O. Wright (2010) delineates four distinct types of controls: *Coercive*, *Institutional*, *Ideological or Cultural* and *Material-Interest-based*, each of which can, according to him, mostly originate from one of two sources: *Despotism* or *Hegemony* (Wright, 2010).

Wright explains that despotic control employs coercion and formal rules, while ideology and material interests only serve in reinforcing these rules normatively. Hegemonial control, conversely is grounded in material interests, while also utilizing an element of *active consent*, which is elicited ideologically: “people willingly participate and cooperate in reproducing existing structures of power and inequality not mainly out of fear, but because they believe that doing so is both in their interests and is the right thing to do” (Wright, 2010, p. 289).

A correlation between organisational structure and individual agency within workplaces has been analysed via a variety of lenses (Brass, 2011). Chiapello and Fairclough (2013) suggest that shifts in the discourse have profound consequences for workers. Project-workers, who do not adhere to the dominant value system are viewed as lacking initiative or commitment, leading their institutions to disregard or dismiss them even though they could have added lots of value in other settings (Jensen, 2016). Cicmil (et Al., 2016) explains how certain discursive constructs such as *resilience*-narratives, which are internalized by invoking projectified work characterized as a never-ending series of emergencies, forcing workers and projects to cope. *Resilience* can be defined in this context as a normative concept about the capacity to manage one’s own vulnerability (Cicmil et. al., 2016). It normalizes for workers to cope with their vulnerability by themselves, compromising their capacity for resistance, as they are forced to jump from one exceptional circumstance to the next (ibid.).

Kalff (2017) describes how informal control is embedded discursively within CPR’s and otherwise projectified knowledge-work and manifests there implicitly, inscribed in structural processes, technological artifacts and managerial practices (ibid.) He gives the example of missed deadlines, which are made visible to the entire project team, and thus creating objective constraints based on a dependent chain of task, wherein the fulfilment of one worker’s tasks is pre-conditioned on others. Kalff also remarks on how working in temporarity creates conditions where knowledge workers’ subjectivity is forced to cope with its own precarity. The organisational structure of the project is the key to reforming workers perceptions as well as their subjectivity, destabilizing them both materially and immaterially. He terms this inherent precariousness of each individual worker and their labour as *projectified-self* (Kalff, 2017).

Projectified work partially departs from conventional mechanisms of control, instead opting to also instill subtle expectations to establish control normatively (Rioux et. Al., 2019). It is in terminology like that of the “entrepreneurial employee” where we can make this observation, implicating a kind of hegemonial control (ibid.). Workers feel guilty about “underperforming” and blame themselves or others for their situation, as they are left to their own devices, seemingly uncontrolled. Workers now internalize the project-discourse socially, adopting the discursive notions inherent to projectification (ibid.). Failure becomes indistinguishable from personal failure and workers become victims to their internalized pressure (Powell, 2001).

This resonates well with criticisms of contemporary project-management-practices by Boltanski and Chiapello (2005), who examine the historical paradigm-shifts in managerial -practices, as any generation of workers differs from the last, based on how control manifests: “cadres are not controlled in the same way as blue-collar workers; blue-collar workers who have gone through the education-system are not controlled in the same way as workers who are first-generation immigrants or of rural origin,” (p. 80). They point out how structures are reshaped in network-approaches, so that demands of flexibility and adaptability can be met normatively and without overt or formal control: “the transition from control to self-control, and the externalization of control costs formerly met by organisations on to workers and customers, can be regarded as the most significant feature in the evolution of management” (p. 81). The ongoing transformation in the modalities of work comes with a respective normative one, establishing control via a hegemony and informal mechanisms such as social feedback and performance-evaluations, which serve to quantify worker’s behaviour and utilize their shared social accountability to enforce control indirectly (Hodgson, 2004).

5) Implications for this Case

The literature presented above provides the groundwork for assumptions which represent the theoretical superstructure for the analysis conducted here. On one side, projectification has been shown to benefit workers, allowing them autonomy in the scheduling of work-time and enabling them to work across various projects at once (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). On the other it elevates levels of job-insecurity, as temporary employment becomes the norm, and workers are left with a never-ending series of short-term arrangements with little room for mistakes, let alone any kind of long-term career-planning (Cicmil et al., 2016). The risk here, is that workers subject themselves to harmful conditions, feeling like they have to go on as if past successes do not count and nothing is outside of their purview (Araújo, 2009).

Summarizing the literature, it should be pointed out, that the interplay of responsibility and authority determines the efficacy of many informal control-mechanisms. Role-ambiguity in CRP’s complicates and diffuses responsibilities, blurring command-chains, which can lead to challenges in ascertaining and maintaining accountability and communication among workers who work closely with each other but lack structures delineating their roles (ibid.). In the case of knowledge-work, which is dependent on social-relationships and -networks, this makes it necessary to maintain more non-project-related administrative taskwork, thereby distracting workers, costing them time and energy (Cicmil et. Al., 2016).

The analysis will delve into the experiences of workers, to identify control-mechanisms or the lack thereof and the consequences. The outcomes of the study are expected to reflect on these issues, observing hegemonial control-regimes combining informal and formal control as well as challenges stemming from role-ambiguity and clear delineations of responsibility. As the object of this research is a case-study, it can give examples of such mechanisms for the functionality of CRP's. This pertains to the existence or lack thereof, of norms and rules controlling how work is organised as well as defining roles and establishing channels for communication. Conclusions can be drawn from this, in that the delegation of tasks must be managed carefully, so that role-ambiguity does not undermine the productivity and stability of the workers or the project itself. Further, the study seeks to elucidate the advantages and disadvantages which can be ascertained for this novel mode of work-organisation. This puts weight on working towards a more integrated and nuanced understanding of how projectified work functions, and which issues appear on all levels of the structure, from the project itself, to workers at the bottom, with micro-, meso- and macro-planes each mirroring one another.

Chapter II: METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the methodological approach adopted to investigate the mechanisms of labour control in projectified work, for this study. It further details the research design, and explains the rationales behind the chosen set of methods, and the analytical processes used for the collection and analysis of the data. Given the purely qualitative nature of the study, the findings are context-specific and can not be expected to be broadly generalizable across different settings. However, the methodological rigor applied here, seeks to ensure that the study's results are nonetheless robust and provide valuable relevant insights on the projectification of work and the complexities of organising work in contemporary network-structures. The chapter begins by outlining the case-study approach and why it was selected for answering the research-questions. This involves justifying WI as a relevant case-study for analysing projectification in contemporary network-organisation-models. Subsequently, the chapter describes the combination of qualitative methods used to collect empirical data during fieldwork. This means describing the instruments used during fieldwork, which include narrative interviews with staff in many different positions at WI, ethnographic observation of daily routines and team interactions noted in an observational diary, as well as document analysis of internal and publicly available textual material. The chapter further discusses the ethical questions present when conducting this kind of research and how they were handled here. Lastly, it delves into the special process of data-analysis, detailing the structured approach, accommodating both inductive and deductive category-formation, the use of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to assist in systematically categorizing and interpreting the collected data and how textual data from interviews and the field-diary was coded to identify patterns and draw conclusions.

1) The Case at Hand

At the centre of this case study is Weizenbaum Institute, located in Berlin. It was founded in 2017 and is funded by the Ministry of Education and Research and the states of Berlin and Brandenburg. The WI is carried as a CRP, with network-partners consisting of Free University Berlin, Humboldt-University, Technical University Berlin, Berlin University of the Arts University of Potsdam, Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems and Social Science Centre Berlin. Consistent with casing-principles, WI was identified as a representative case, as it is itself a project effectively bound in spatial and temporal terms and therefore offers a far-reaching bandwidth for observing and analysing control mechanisms in CPR's.

A 'casing' process made sure that WI is an adequate microcosm for exploring broader patterns and trends at work, while allowing for the specificity needed for detailed exploration and the generation of hypotheses. The case-study functions as contribution to PROWORK and focuses on analytical dimensions outlined there, in order to analyse projectification. WI was chosen as case of projectified work in the area of research and development, due to its unique structure and characteristics, including its inter-institutional network-affiliations, its participatory hierarchies, the emphasis put on interdisciplinary collaboration, and its reliance on temporary and flexible working conditions. This choice was rooted in the PROWORK-research-design, seeking use explorative ethnographic approaches to study how and which control mechanisms function or fail in projectified network-organisations, and provide transfactual insights that could be partially transferred and applied in other cases.

WI also stands as an exemplary case for the area of research and development, due to its position in the transition away from traditional academic models for coordinating research encouraged by trends in funding- and management-practices. The selection is aligned with the aims of the research questions and represents a significant locus of investigation for theoretical insight, that offers degrees of variation conducive for comparative analysis in future studies. In line with case-study theory, the investigation of control mechanisms at multiple analytical levels can enable the generation of more specific hypotheses, which might inform subsequent studies in different, albeit comparable networks. The findings are equally supposed to guide larger case-studies for PROWORK and contribute to the body of knowledge on mechanisms of labour-control as part of that research's broader goals.

The study employed a qualitative approach, with ethnographic post-censurist fieldwork. Multi-Sited-Ethnography outlines two factors that pose the contemporary challenges for the field of ethnography; *fluidity* and *discontinuity*. *Fluidity* recognizes the mobility of people, in order to enable the adaption to a world where voluntary or forced displacement, migration, and transportation are common. It refers to the broader set of challenges which result from contemporary circumstances where often-times geographical location or social-relationships develop apparently independent of spatial constraints, necessitating to "follow" one's subjects of research. *Discontinuity* presents the other major condition limiting ethnographic research, wherein studies which previously would have entailed ethnographic researchers embedding themselves long-term, have become unfeasible for most, due to resource-constraints. Post-censurist fieldwork has embraced this metaphor to effectively capture the dynamic reality of studying populations, cultures, and territories, as part of a significant shift towards ethical, inclusive, and critically aware research-practices, encouraging researchers to engage deeply with the complexities of acknowledging their own limitations and responsibilities.

2) Fieldwork at Weizenbaum

Applying Vennesson's (2008) acknowledgment of the importance of multi-source data, the approach employed here consist of an intensive process of data-collection, using explorative narrative interviews, as well as ethnographic observation and document analysis, to acquire and compare qualitative data. Thematic analysis and pattern recognition techniques will be implemented on data collected. The research followed several teams, projects, and workers at WI to discern distinctive structural mechanisms of control, which are applied, or missing in planning, management, and execution, and how the precariousness caused by uncertainty and instability of conditions at WI may lead to a lack of stability or security for workers, in turn affecting their contributions to the project.

The empirical research was conducted in-situ over a period of 6 weeks from 15th of April, ending on Friday, 30th of May. As guest-researcher the author was able to work from and at WI over the course of this time, enabling engagement in interpersonal and informal contact as well as intimate observation of all levels of staff at WI. Due to difficulties in relation to planning and setting up interviews with staff to take place within the set time, the selection and number of interviewees had to be refined. Other instruments supplemented the data gathered in the interviews and consisted of observation of day-to-day at the WI and in team-meetings using a partially generative approach. The sample consisted of 11 workers, who each embody one or several functions in the project's organisational structure, including the variety of conditions of employment compared to one another. This includes "founders" and directors of WI, members of the managerial board, principal investigators (PI's), research-group-leaders (RGL's), administrative staff, associate researchers, and former, as well as current doctoral candidates. While a bigger sample could have improved the traceability of the analysis, it would have with drawbacks to the practical side of research, in terms of time available for fieldwork, availability of interviewees and final workload during analysis. Instead, this study applied the contrasting sampling-approach, which seeks to include a diverse range of participants and perspectives in a so-called saturated sample (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Due to the sensitive subject-matter of the research, it was decided to employ a narrative-interview-technique as seen in Wern (2001) as well as in Jovchelovitch & Bauer (2000). For this particular research, interview-questions were open-ended in order to encourage candid discussions and reflect on subjective experiences related to how control is implemented at WI and where any potential points of contention or conflict are. The issues of labour-control and hierarchy had thus to be approached carefully without explicitly mentioning them, or the specific aim of my research, because of its nature and themes, it was important for those participating to feel safe from any repercussions. By employing this technique, it allowed for engaging in themes relevant to the research on CRP's and control mechanisms within.

The narrative interview-technique represents a suggestive and conversational approach and is designed to elicit detailed and personal stories from daily life, by creating a relaxed and open-ended conversation. With this technique, interviewers let each participant respond in their own words and at their own pace. In addition to creating a conversational flow it was paramount that interviewees will not restrict their responses, instead giving the answer that comes to their mind, regardless if it seems relevant to the question or the research at large. The interviewer guides the conversation but in a way that allows interviewees to lead with their narrative. This is done when interviewers provides context after an answer and steer the conversation toward certain topics of interest or to draw out informative anecdotes.

This approach aims to make participants feel as safe as possible, to truly understand them and their experiences and perspectives through their own perspective and storytelling, which makes it particularly useful for exploring such complex social phenomena. Since the interviewer's role, impact and social position in any given setting should not be taken to be neutral or ineffectual, he/ she actively creates an environment free of criticism giving only vague but strictly affirmative response on sensitive matters. This includes the sharing of less relevant information or asking questions to prompt reflections and storytelling. This allows for in-depth exploration of events, experiences, and memories, helping to uncover the hidden meanings that individuals attach to their experiences, consciously or not.

For this reason, the question-guide is adaptable, allowing for the interviewer to follow the natural flow of the conversation and explore new topics if they arise during the interview. First, as interviewer, one seeks to only use open-questions: "Can you tell me about your experience while working here?" As they share their story, the interviewer can then provide context, asks follow-up questions, and prompt the interviewee to elaborate on points: e. g.: "You mentioned feeling a lot of pressure. Can you tell me more about what caused that pressure and how you handled it?" to then ask the interviewee to reflect on the meanings and implications of their experiences: "How do you think that experience has influenced your approach to work?" Toward the end of the interview, the interviewer summarizes key points and asks if there are any additional details or stories the interviewee can share. This approach can provide rich data to capture complexities in individual experiences. It is reliant on the building of a strong sense of empathy and rapport between interviewer and interviewee, facilitating open communication and helping to uncover individuals experiences and offering insights into social phenomena. The guide can be found in the annex, along with other relevant materials, such as the informed consent form.

Other data-gathering involved observations of day-to-day worklife at WI, engaging with daily routines and interactions at WI, and attending lunches, talks and events to capture the organisational practices; collecting soft and informal data from interactions in-situ, and sitting-in on weekly jour-fix team-meetings to observe decision-making and participation.

3) Instruments for Data-Analysis

The methodological approach for data-analysis in this study consists of a multi-stage process starting with transcription of the audio-recordings and digitalization of the field-diary. All the interviews were first transcribed using the built-in Microsoft-Word-Transcription-feature in a first step with another manual run necessary to make sure, that the text keeps the correct grammar and retains its original meaning. After this initial process of preparing raw data for analysis, and in another step the transcripts were pre-liminarily coded by hand according to three base-themes, *Projectification*, *Labour-Control* and *Organisational Structure* which were initially deemed relevant for analysis. This step served only to put the data into a rough order, making easier in later stages of analysis to distinguish those passages with inherent explanatory value in the text. These first three categories applied in this step, did in most cases not decide anything for the final coding of the respective segments.

Main analytical framework in this study is QCA, which makes it possible to systematically reduce and interpret qualitative data while retaining the depth inherent to the text. QCA is considered the methodological framework most suited for analysing textual data collected in this kind of field-research (Mayring & Fenzl 2019). In interpretation, data is reformulated, in an effort to reduce its complexity. After a few rounds of category-formation, categories are generalized into main and subcategories (p.638f.). The categories are defined in advance, but can be adapted if necessary, and interpretational techniques such as summarization, explication and the structuring of meaning are used (p.637). Manual coding was done with the assistance of the commonly used MAXQDA-software, which made it possible to handle these amounts of textual data without losing any of the interpretative value (p.635).

Although this approach requires the coding along deductively developed rules, for this study, a more open direction was taken, as both the subject-matter and chronology of the research made it difficult to formulate rigid frameworks of analysis in advance, without having sighted any of the data. This approach facilitated a more iterative development and refining of the category-system, for it to be formed both inductively and deductively, over the course of the primary stages of analysis. The iterative refining of theory is emboldened by the strengths of the narrative interview-method, making it possible to refine hypotheses in time. In addition to opening the study to continuous refining of theoretical frameworks, an adaptive approach such as this, accurately reflects on certain complexities of the case and made it possible to react by making changes to the methodology, during and after fieldwork.

The observational categories of the interpretational scheme were developed to dissect how dynamics and control-mechanisms function or not. They utilize a system, wherein each segment of text conveys an idea or concept related to the categories, which were formed in consideration with literature and how pertinent they are to answering the research questions.

The categories were formed in a two-stage process: In a first step, categories of analysis are to be developed inductively. In the second step, data is analysed along these categories. Each category does represent aspects of my analysis in form of short formulations, oriented towards the source-material, and organised (Mayring & Fenzl 2019). The data to be analysed consisted of textual data from sources mentioned above such as interview-transcripts, and field-diary. QCA is theory-driven, so that results are interpreted in front of a background and guided by theory, making it an inferential method of text analysis, where no numerical-scales or quantitative methods are used. Instead, subtleties of conversation are taken into account, helping to put possible insights into the correct perspective and each task is informed by theoretical and practical circumstances of the study. This way, qualitative content analysis attempts to capture latent meaning and subjectivity and the interpretation immanent to the text focuses on the meaning of words or undertones, as well as the overt information given.

The four primary categories for coding were defined as follows: *Organisational Structure*, *Mechanisms of Control*, *Role-Clarity* and lastly *Resilience & Coping*. The first examines structural characteristics and the impacts of projectification on work-organisation. It, like every category, includes two subcategories. These are: *Projectification* and *Organisation* each pertaining to; the characteristics of projectification and the necessitated shifts for workers in the form of fluid and temporary dependencies (Cicmil et. Al., 2016) and; how these characterise procedural freedom and the division of labour in relation to organisational characteristics observed (Packendorff & Lindgren, 2014). The second category *Mechanisms of Control* explores the effectiveness of control mechanisms, both formal and informal. It includes *Formal Mechanisms* and *Informal Mechanisms* capturing either type of mechanisms, such as rules, feedback-loops (Wright, 2010), or self-regulation (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005). *Role-Clarity* ascertains the balance between responsibility and accountability and the resulting conflicts, (Brass et. Al., 1984; etc.). This category acts in identifying whether roles are clear or ambiguous and also contains the subcategories: *Communication* and *Responsibility*, *Resilience & Coping* contains the subcategories; *Stressors*, (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007) as well as seeking to note *Coping-Strategies* on both individual and project-levels (Cicmil et. Al., 2016).

Analysis of the organisational structure including existing enabled the generation of a systematic overview of the structure, placing each worker in relation to those working around him or her. Role-Clarity is looking at who holds what responsibility and to what extent this translates to effective authority in the structure. This highlights challenges in maintaining the balance between flexibility and oversight, while internal communication was examined to underscore its importance in shaping workers experiences and engagement. Resilience and coping are discussed in terms of the stressors, such as high workloads, demands, and job insecurity, and coping strategies workers and the structure employ to address the perceived inequities among its members

4) Ethical Concerns

Potential ethical concerns lie with the rights of the observed institutions and individuals, and regarding their anonymity and security of personal information provided in interviews, events, or jour-fix meetings. To safeguard for this, none of the original data will be published, nor kept after analysis is over. Furthermore, this study's results do not allow for making any normative judgement on WI as a project or employer, but instead are concerned with overall abstract implications and challenges for project-network-organisation-models.

It needs to be made clear at that working conditions at WI are good and cannot and should not be taken any sort of negative example. This work did not set out, to make any normative judgment of the situation of workers at WI, but instead to observe processes and phenomena present in the experiences of workers there, all in order to abstract from them towards more general observations about projectified research-work. Focus lies solely on the analysis of mechanisms, which do not necessarily present negatively in the given case.

Since the literature and PROWORK is in English, the circumstance that the data was gathered in the original German, made direct quotability of the results questionable. The German text was translated into English by hand and with using DeepL-translation-software for support, as a matter of being able to triangulate the research with English-speakers and writing the final study in English as well.

As one central and unique principle of this research it was decided to abstain from using any direct quotes from the interview-transcripts. The assumption, which serves to justify this is that the ex-ante assurance to do so presents as the best or only way to have interviews take place in an open and free environment and make it possible to explore aspects of work at WI without taboos or participants hindered by fears of repercussions. It was possible to actually gather the deep data required to gain an idea of the situation of workers on the ground. This is also helped by the nature of the long-form anecdotal answers, which do not easily allow for choosing a few simple and concise statements to represent the data fully.

Relying on one researcher for the transcription, analysis, interpretation and translation of the research similarly came with added ethical concerns, while the resulting intimacy with the data provides some benefits in form of an extensive and well-studied overview of the data, the interpretation irreversibly takes place hermeneutically, relying on subjective perceptions. Insights are reliant on the researchers understanding, and even measures taken to ensure internal validity, a risk remains that this did not outweigh constraints of this research in terms of triangulation and reproducibility, as well as the authors own limited capacity for resilience.

5) Use of natural-language-input AI GPT4/Consensus.ai

For this purpose, assistance through MAXQDA and the natural language artificial intelligence GPT4 was indispensable, as it allowed for the already translated and categorized text, consisting of over 50 pages, to be sifted through and recontextualized against segments that related to the same issue. GPT4/Consensus.ai was used to develop and brainstorm different category-systems as well as structuring of the results according to the finished hand-coded text-segments. MAXQDA additionally offered ways to systematize data further, while GP4 created a digestible overview of the results, providing an orientation for structuring of the final insights. GPT4 served especially important role during interpretation nevertheless applying certain ethical preconditions of using an application, which sources it's data from research gate and can cite in an academically earnest manner, not uploading an original transcript under any circumstances and not using text from GPT4.

By applying this design, work through the process of analysis encompassed assigning each of the text-segments deemed relevant for one or several categories and subcategories. This helped with the abstraction and pseudonymization of the data, as collected statements were analysed and interpreted outside of their empirical context and instead separated along purely thematic lines to see how they relate to one another contextually, building a larger picture out of seemingly trivial pieces.

Chapter III: RESULTS

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the analysis and interpretation of data collected during fieldwork at WI, consisting of the interview-transcript and the field-diary. As the interviewees agreed not to be quoted directly, the following is an amalgamation of indirect quotes and excerpts from the interviews. If possible or relevant, the position of the speaker is alluded to, however, the pseudonymization of the participants ultimately takes precedence. Due to the wealth of textual data at disposal from the empirical study, it was possible to then regurgitate some of the relevant insights in the words of the interviewees only. Throughout the analysis, the results are therefore meant to represent the interviewees' representations of their experiences very closely, and in their words, while drawing further connections with the literature to a marginal degree of was necessary.

The exact category system, with categories and subcategories explained in detail can be found in part A of the annex. The findings are organised according to the study's' analytical dimensions, which allowed for creating the four main categories, which have been identified and explained in the methodology. Each of these helps improve our understanding of the characteristics of projectified work in CPR's such as WI and answer the research questions. The results reveal several important insights about circumstances. pertaining to the advantages of the organisational model, its clarity, the control-mechanisms in place and how these issues affect workers, and if and how they have been handled by leadership at WI.

1) Organisational Structure

"Working environment resembles more of a coworking space, where groups independently manage their tasks and control their schedules, as everyone comes, goes, and sits when and where they please." - Field-Diary, Day 4 of Week 6

As previously outlined, the Weizenbaum Institute was founded in 2017 and is funded by Federal and State-Governments. The network-partners are comprised of the Free University Berlin, Humboldt-University, Technical University Berlin, Berlin University of the Arts University of Potsdam, FOKUS and WZB. A registered association: Weizenbaum-Institut coordinates the network and represents WI in legal matters. With the start of the establishment phase of the Institute in 2022, a larger part of the research has been integrated into the association as an independent research institution and eighth network partner. At the same time, it is now hub of the CRP's evolving structure.

Since 2017, WI's structure has been consistently growing along revaluation-cycles, that include growing administrative capacities as pressing requirements of the project. WI adopts a participative decision-making model, emphasizing inclusivity and collective input from various stakeholders. Certain governing bodies like Institute Council hold strategy workshops, and management meetings, which are designed to ensure that all groups are represented, and input is gathered equitably. This approach has fostered a sense of ownership and engagement among staff, allowing them to have a voice in decisions affecting their work and the Institute's direction. However, this structure requires substantial time and effort to reach a consensus, slowing down decision-making considerably. Research groups within the Institute operate with a high degree of independence. An Executive Board manages the project and represents the organisation and is responsible for long-term coordination and cooperation. It reports to the Board of Trustees which is made up of further representatives from institutions within the network, related governmental funding-bodies and from the project independent academic institutions. With the Board of Directors, they are co-responsible for the development of the Institute's greater strategy. The Executive Board consists of four members in total: three Directors, one acting as executive for research matters and a fourth administrative executive responsible for managing the association at WI.

Together with Directors, PIs advise the Executive Board on issues of scientific or strategic importance for WI. In accordance with the statutes, the Board of Trustees supervises the Executive Board and is comprised of representatives of the network-partners, relevant government-bodies and further respected universities and institutions. The Institute Council offers a stage for open dialogue on Institute-matters, in it, each representative of a type or group of workers based on their shared contractual status, is spoken for by a spokesperson, with everyone else still free to participate themselves. The Executive Board reports to the council on matters relating to research-strategy, transfer, conditions of labour and career development. These matters are discussed in the Institute Council publicly and everyone at WI can comment and weigh in on them. The Institute Council is not given any authority related to solve or decide on matters brought forward by staff or members. Instead, it serves an important function in providing a platform for communication and feedback which is accessible to everyone and forces decision-makers to confront problems at WI. While WI strives for participatory structures, some of these fundamental hierarchies remain an integral part of its structure, providing a framework for otherwise fluid organisation of work. Executive Board and Board of Directors play key roles in setting agendas, making long-term strategic decisions about the allocation of resources. These decisions are discussed and developed there, and while leaders are expected to justify choices through open dialogue and the building of consensus, the final authority lies with them, as does the larger responsibility for the project.

“Associate researcher highlighted frustrations over the absence of established informational channels and the perceived opacity in decision-making.” - Field-Diary, Day 3 of Week 7

WI's interdisciplinary structure mirrors the evolving 'project society' model with decentralized networks are integral to contemporary research-work (Lundin et al. 2015). According to its statutes, the mission of the project is to promote research related to the Internet as socio-economic-technical construct to promote a comprehensive understanding of digital society in the interest of the public. To this end, WI promotes research projects, transfer-activities and organises research to strengthen interdisciplinarity as well advice on policy. It may promote networking with partner institutions and enacts measures to support early-career-researchers with international exchange and funding-applications. Out of 16 research groups at WI, each belongs to one of four focuses currently, with 9 of these now already under the umbrella of the more recently founded association, and the remaining 7 to be integrated in the coming years. Those groups who are still affiliated with the network-institutions now present as avenues for studying the coordination among network-partners. For the ones already incorporated, the WI-association offers science-supporting areas and acts as primary network coordinator and administrative body. A study-specific organisational chart, its governing bodies and PI's, RGL's and their groups and affiliations can be found in the annex.

Due to this separation between the association and network, combined with number of workers, comparative long-running project-time and highly flexible time-and -space regime, WI is an ideal case to observe effects of this type of complex organisational structure on working conditions. Each group typically has an RGL and a PI who oversee and coordinate the group's activities and research directions. Leaders are given autonomy in managing their groups, set research-agendas, and make some of the decisions collaboratively within their teams, if they choose to do so. PI's are assigned the primary responsibility for at least one research group or other research units each. They are responsible for compliance with standards and achieving transfer objectives in accordance with guidelines, but still perform a main function at their network-partner, meaning they are employed at a public university or research-institute as professors or postdocs. This decentralization allows for flexibility and innovation within the groups while still maintaining alignment with the broader goals of WI and gives RGL's who are usually only moderately experienced or not at all, a lot of room to find their own way in leading their respective group, since most PI's tend to have a more hands-off approach, according to those interviewed and leave a lot of responsibility to RGL's.

“After interview, interviewee reflected on their experience of working exclusively within project-based settings throughout their career, noting the complexities and uncertainties that such a model entails.” - Field-Diary, Day 5 of Week 2

"It is clear that Principal Investigators are often not present on-site due to their commitments at other universities, while their deputies, the designated Research Group Leaders also frequently absent. This suggests a decentralized distribution of authority, where responsibilities are shared" - Field-Diary, Day 2 of Week 1

A characteristic strength of projectified work is its inherent and prerequisite flexibility. Work at WI is organised in dynamic research groups rather than fixed departments, allowing for the continuous adaptation of research agendas to meet new scientific challenges and opportunities. This flexibility is crucial for the focus on flexibility and interdisciplinarity at WI, where rapid changes in the field require swiftest responses. It has become apparent that this flexibility also leads to a sense of "restlessness" and a need to frequently adjust to directions, which can be stimulating, but perhaps also destabilizing for researchers and other staff. On the positive side, the decentralized and small makeup of the groups make it possible to work with a large degree of responsiveness, be it to emerging trends in research or reacting to changing conditions for a given setting. Workers from within the groups recount colloquially familiar treatment of the members towards each other, regardless of status and experience. In this way, groups work together as teams, giving them a base in otherwise isolated settings. Interaction among groups is reportedly rare, depending on their degree of overlap in subject-matter or the methodology of the research. This means, that many researchers at WI may not know each other personally, even though they have worked in the same project for several years. Groups and their members can also meet and exchange ideas at the many events and seminars, which are open to all workers at WI and can be hosted and organised by just single research groups, without needing to regard much oversight or approval from the overarching project-structure. This can be a blessing as well as a curse, as many interviewees recount, as getting administration to provide certain services, such as rooms or travel-expenses is often more difficult doing so at a more conventionally structured institution. The advantages of flexibility and responsiveness mentioned above should be considered substantial, particularly for conducting research in fast-progressing fields like digitalization.

The need to balance disciplinary depth with the interdisciplinary breadth can lead to fragmentation within research groups, according to several RGL'S. The reliance on short-term funding cycles is another defining feature of project-based work at WI. These cycles, often lasting two to three years, create a constant need for researchers to apply for new funding, manage evaluations, and adjust project scopes.

During the "Jour Fix" meetings, concerns about communication were frequently mentioned, including a senior researcher's complaint regarding the slow response times from the communication department." - Field-Diary, Jour-Fix 2

“Work schedules and planning are frequently adjusted to accommodate shifting deadlines”
- Field-Diary, Day 1 of Week 5

While interviewees admit that this structure allows for agility and responsiveness, it introduces a high degree of uncertainty regarding security, progression, and long-term research continuity, as well as putting a lot of added responsibility on them as workers, having to constantly reapply for funding themselves in order to be able to continue their research. This can be stressful for researchers, who must balance their scientific ambitions with practical realities, because WI prioritizes tangible outputs, such as publications, conference papers, and project reports. This focus aligns with the requirements of funding bodies and external stakeholders, who prioritize quantifiable output. WI exemplifies the projectification of work, with activities organised around specific projects with defined timelines, goals, and deliverables and even WI itself being funded only as temporary project, with efforts underway to alleviate some of the resulting added pressures, attempting to transition into a non-temporary institution, in a process of institutionalization or *de-projectification*. The projectified nature of WI promotes an interdisciplinary approach to research-work, thus encouraging collaboration across different fields and institutions, with each research-group containing a variety of different scientists, with many coming from the social sciences, humanities or law, and others being informatics- and technology-scholars. Throughout the interviews and field-diary this reappears again and again, with mentions of how this structure fosters the exchange of ideas during work inside and beyond the groups but poses challenges to communication.

The interdisciplinary nature of WI and the varying levels of overt hierarchy among all of the participants means that communication often feels fragmented. A subset of workers who were interviewed agreed, that WI needs a unified system of communication practices to enhance coherence across different groups and relieve pressure. The association's efforts to navigate these complexities is crucial to safeguard the project while maintaining stability, coherence, and sustainable conditions for the workers there. While WI offers flexibility and autonomy that many find beneficial, there are also risks of overwork and burnout. While this output-driven approach can drive productivity and visibility, it also risks prioritizing quantity over quality or neglecting exploratory or foundational research that does not (yet) yield immediate, measurable outcomes or a secure return on investment. Ongoing efforts of managing and directorial boards are aimed to address some of these problems through community-building and equitable decision-making.

“While the office culture seems to be a friendly and informal atmosphere., there were indications of informal power dynamics, with individuals receiving noticeably more respectful treatment than others.” - Field-Diary, Day 4 of Week 1

2) Mechanisms of Labour-Control

WI has established a comprehensive system of formal meetings and decision-making bodies as part of its control mechanisms. These include Institute Council, advisory board meetings, directorate meetings, and regular team-jour-fixes. Each meeting serves specific purposes, from strategic planning and policy discussions to operational coordination and project management. The frequency of these meetings is supposed to ensure that there is continuous oversight and alignment of activities. However, the extensive nature of these meetings also leads to inefficiencies, such as repeated discussions and slow decision-making in a participative culture with many stakeholders involved. Additionally, WI is in the process of developing formal performance reporting systems to monitor outputs and ensure accountability. A joint performance reporting system with network partners is going to be created to document research activities and outputs, including publications and third-party funding acquisition. There are established guidelines for staff appraisals and supervision, as well as ongoing efforts to establish standardized indicators and metrics for assessing performance, which reflect the project's goals and the expectations of affiliated universities.

While a process of formalization aims to improve transparency and accountability, it is challenged by issues with data-sharing, varying employment statuses, and administrative complexity of coordinating across those entities. PI's and RGL's conduct regular discussions with their teams, and specific guidelines outline how research should be conducted. There is flexibility in how strictly these guidelines are followed, with some leaders opting for more informal approaches. The presence of formal guidelines reflects consistency and fairness in supervision and appraisal practices, but their variable application suggests room for improvement in standardization. Employment contracts are primarily project-based and fixed-term, with most staff employed on temporary contracts tied to the duration of the project. This contractual framework serves as a formal control mechanism, linking employment to funding cycles and thus influencing job security and career planning.

Participatory structures at WI allow for significant flexibility and autonomy. Staff members have the freedom to organise their work, select their research topics, and manage their schedules. This freedom is particularly appreciated by those who thrive in a dynamic, less rigid environment. It also requires individuals to take greater personal responsibility for their work, manage time effectively, and navigate ambiguity in roles and expectations. One of the challenges of non-hierarchical control is the risk of fragmentation. With such decentralized responsibilities and a bottom-up approach to decision-making, there is a potential for groups or projects to become isolated or disconnected from each other. Ensuring coherence and alignment across WI requires careful coordination, communication, frequent interactions among various teams. WI addresses this by creating forums for discussion and collaboration.

“Administrative worker described the constant challenge of switching between offices”
- Field-Diary, Day 2, Week 2,

Administrative workers in the association are responsible for functions, such as signing business trip applications, overseeing financial management, and ensuring compliance with internal processes. Formal assignment of responsibilities tries to make sure that administrative processes are consistently managed and monitored for WI's regulatory compliance. Nevertheless, interviewees from all sides describe reoccurring issues with the coordination between administrative units at universities connected to PI's or research groups, with it often being unclear who is responsible for what.

Decision-making around resource allocation, including funding, staffing and approvals at WI, is similarly governed by formal procedures. The management, including board members and PIs, play a central role in these processes, seeing that resources are being allocated in line with the project's goals and financial constraints. While procedures are necessary for maintaining strategic alignment, they also create a top-down dynamic where decisions are made by a limited group of people, potentially limiting participation. Efforts are underway to develop a systems and processes to enhance efficiency. This includes creating procedures for collecting data, such as implementing performance indicators, and establishing formal reporting channels. German law mandates time recording for staff, including scientists, as part of its formal oversight. While this is legally required, it is viewed as counterproductive to the nature of scientific work, which does not adhere to strict time constraints. This depicts a tension between issues of compliance and the organisational culture WI aims to foster.

Formal policies exist regarding fixed core- working hours and mobile working arrangements. These policies provide a framework for workers when they are expected to be available and outline the conditions under which remote work is conducted. While these policies offer flexibility, they establish boundaries so that that workers remain engaged during key periods. The core hours serve as a mechanism to synchronize work schedules across different teams and maintain a minimum level of in-person interaction, needed for collaboration.

Feedback at WI is often informal and delivered through colloquial conversations or unstructured interactions rather than formal appraisals or evaluations. Informal approaches empower, allowing for immediate and spontaneous recognition of efforts. However, this also means that feedback may lack consistency and clarity, leading to uncertainty about present expectations and areas for improvement or common critique of one's work-ethic.

Communication practices at the Institute appear to be at least a mix of formal and informal. Overheard a situation where negative feedback was given informally in a corridor setting, ad-hoc feedback.” - Field-Diary, Day 4 of Week 1

“Associate researcher discusses how administrative staff, despite their significant contributions to work, were not credited, pointing to control over recognition and acknowledgment within the organisation.” - Field-Diary, Day 2 of Week 7

Feedback occurs spontaneously at the discretion of leaders. This reliance on informal feedback mechanisms can create disparities in how employees perceive their contributions, especially when feedback is not evenly distributed or systematically managed. Feedback comes through many channels, formal ones such as annual appraisals, and informal ones, like day-to-day interactions and comments on specific tasks. There are instances described by lower-level workers, where feedback is ad hoc, and depending on the situation, is both appreciative and critical. There are inconsistent accounts of how feedback is perceived and delivered across the different groups at WI. While some workers, usually higher-ranked employees, feel that the feedback is adequate and constructive, others, usually lower on the hierarchical ladder, report a lack of feedback processes, leading to uncertainty about their performance expectations and improvement areas.

WI promotes a highly flexible organisational culture, allowing staff to work from home or set their own hours. It has to be said, that of course this flexibility can also serve as a form of informal control mechanism. By providing the freedom to manage their time, WI indirectly encourages employees to work beyond regular hours or during non-traditional times to meet deadlines or project goals. This flexibility blurs the lines between work and personal life, thus creating a latent expectation of constant availability and commitment. RGL's in interviews also talk about needing to resort to moral appeals or emotional influence to guide behaviour and manage performance. For example, there are instances where leaders appeal to an individual's sense of duty or the impact of their actions on the group. This method leverages interpersonal relationships and the desire to maintain a positive team dynamic, effectively controlling behaviour without explicit directives. While this can be effective in fostering commitment and cohesion, it places emotional burdens on staff, particularly those who feel compelled to meet expectations to maintain harmony or avoid guilt. Workers describe the need to be productive outside of standard working hours, if current workloads demand it, indicative of an internalized sense of responsibility that substitutes formal oversight. During "Jour Fix" meetings, it was observed how tasks were delegated by the RGL, whose leadership style, though participative, maintained an undercurrent of authority. This suggests a blend of formal and informal practices that shape workplace dynamics, reflecting broader efforts to balance autonomy with accountability. WI relies on several formal mechanisms to maintain work-coordination. This reliance on formal controls, like structured meetings, and informal controls, such as peer pressure and intrinsic motivation, aligns with Wright's (2010) framework, which emphasizes combining coercive and ideological mechanisms to shape behaviour.

“Discussion about the challenges of fostering long-term identification with the Institute, integration between research groups and administrative bodies, and shifting loyalties between”
- Field-Diary, Day 5 of Week 8

A central theme in interviews with workers from all levels of the project, is reliance on a certain level of intrinsic motivation and professional commitment as primary drivers of behaviour and performance. This openly leans on workers' self-motivation, passion for their work, and a sense of ownership over their projects. This reliance is both explicit and implicit; there is an expectation that workers will naturally align their efforts with the Institute's goals without the need for overt control measures. This approach fosters a sense of autonomy and self-determination, but it also places significant pressure on individuals to self-regulate and manage their workload effectively, often without clear boundaries or guidelines. Informal control at the Institute is often exerted through peer pressure and the establishment of social norms. This is evident in the way team dynamics, frequent meetings such as *jour-fixe*, create an environment where expectations are communicated implicitly. Interviewees express a sense that staff are expected to conform to the collective rhythm of work, such as being present during core-hours and -days as well as maintaining productivity standards. While this fosters a cohesive and participative environment, it can also lead to an unspoken pressure to align with the group's informal expectations, even when these are not explicitly required.

The expectation that leaders will provide guidance and set examples indirectly shapes behaviour. Workers are left to navigate ambiguous situations without clear guidance, relying on their judgment to interpret their roles and responsibilities. This ambiguity acts as an informal mechanism by compelling to self-regulate and continuously assess their alignment with WI's perceived values. The expectation that employees will "figure it out" or "make it work" promotes an organisational culture of adaptability and resilience, but it can also lead to stress, especially for those who prefer guidance. The so-called "WI-spirit" itself acts as a form of hegemonial control. The promotion of values such as self-determination, and interdisciplinary collaboration sets a framework within which employees are expected to operate. These cultural norms are reinforced through daily interactions, group activities, and general ethos of WI, subtly guiding worker-behaviour in ways that align with the institution's objectives. While these norms foster a positive and dynamic environment, they create an implicit framework that employees are expected to adhere to, often without explicit directives.

“Research Group Leader articulated that most PIs maintain a hands-off approach, with the bulk of the workload managed by group leaders, typically postdoctoral researchers. This illustrates the blurred lines of responsibility and the informal delegation of tasks that characterize operational dynamics.” - Field-Diary, Day 2 of Week 6

3) Role-Clarity

“It is apparent that while roles and responsibilities are formally defined, their implementation is often ambiguous, with PIs also remaining distant and groups mostly managed by RGLs.”

- Field-Diary, Day 3 of Week 6

WI promotes an organisational culture, with authority distributed broadly across research groups and decision-making intended to be participative, encouraging a balance, where workers are given autonomy, that also comes with implicit expectations regarding how they should conduct their work and contribute to group-goals. This dynamic can create a sense of invisible boundaries that employees are expected to navigate. The underlying expectation that employees remain engaged and available, even outside of formal working hours is not directly imposed but is subtly reinforced through organisational practices, such as scheduling meetings or the need to respond promptly to emails and other communications. This constant state of readiness is seen as commitment to the research-work, but it also serves as an informal mechanism of control, ensuring that workers are always aligned with WI's project-objectives. While leaders often adopt a collegial and supportive approach, they may still exercise control through their influence, charisma, or the way they set agendas and priorities. This is seen in how discussions are handled, resources allocated, or subtle decision-making.

Consistent with Packendorff and Lindgren's (2016) observations, the balance of flexibility and oversight at WI often leads to confusion, impacting worker satisfaction and productivity. WI seems plagued by a deadlock between strong drives for decentralization, participative decision-making, and the need for role-clarity. The organizational culture merely emphasizes flexibility, expertise-based authority, and personal responsibility, but faces challenges in maintaining equitability across different groups and stakeholders. These dynamics provide both opportunities for growth and collaboration as well as areas where further clarity and structure is needed to support staff effectively. The use of both direct face-to-face communication and digital platforms, like chats reflects a diverse approach to internal communication, catering to different preferences.

As described role ambiguity in network- projects like WI's can result in dissatisfaction among workers who navigate fluid responsibilities without guidance (Rizzo et al., 1970). The participative approach at WI, while appreciated, requires clear communication and effective coordination to function smoothly. Instances were noted where this led to unclear boundaries in authority. Authority at the Institute is not as much legitimized by one's formal position only but by professional expertise and commitment, said several workers during interviews. This produces a more fluid understanding of authority where decisions and influence are based on knowledge and experience rather than hierarchical status alone.

“I was made aware of a situation where an RGL had to temporarily relinquish authority due to external teaching duties, resulting in another individual stepping in informally to manage the group.” - Field-Diary, Day 1 of Week 5

This approach aligns WI's organisational culture of fostering interdisciplinary research - collaboration and minimizing rigid barriers. WI provides numerous opportunities for professional growth; it places high expectations on individual responsibility. Workers are expected to take ownership of their work and outcomes, which can be both empowering and challenging, depending on the level of support available. There are mixed perceptions regarding how equitable the distribution of responsibilities and decision-making authority is. While the WI-culture is aimed at equity, some of this study's participants perceive a disconnect between the rhetoric of participation and the reality of everyday operations, where certain hierarchical dynamics still persist. This can lead to feelings of dissatisfaction when expectations about authority and responsibility are not consistently applied. The structure of work at WI often leads to complex organisational structures and ambiguous role-clarity. Researchers are too frequently involved in multiple projects with varying scopes and timelines, thus making it even more challenging to define clear roles and responsibilities. Anecdotes of interviewees in top positions betray how this complexity can lead to conflicts over accountability. Efforts to navigate challenges in authority and responsibility include developing managerial practices, and establishing explicit guidelines, and fostering communication within and across groups.

Even though, WI wants to maintain a participative structure where all are encouraged to voice their opinions and input on decisions. This open approach is intended to make people feel heard and valued, fostering a sense of engagement. Emphasis put on decisions as a matter of documentation, which several of the interviewees talk about, has helped in them being documented and communicated in a way that attempts to maintain openness and make sure that everyone understands the rationales for them. Transparency is one of the core principles of WI's organisational culture. Efforts are made to ensure that decisions are made openly and that relevant stakeholders are included in the discussions. The interviews contain several instances of workers describing these decisions being made by a smaller circle of individuals at WI, which creates perceptions of exclusivity undermining the non-hierarchical ideal. While the structure values participation, pragmatic decision-making seems to require hierarchical practices. Challenges remain, as participants feel that they are heard, but the actual influence of their feedback on decisions seems limited. For example, when urgent decisions need to be made or when consensus cannot be reached, leadership must step in to provide direction. This can create tensions between the ideal of participation and the practical needs of running a complex organisation. Balancing these tensions requires flexibility, a willingness to adapt, and an understanding that not all situations can be managed through a purely participative approach.

Workers who come from non-projectified work-organisation find this approach either refreshing and liberating or challenging, as adjusting to WI's hegemony involves also understanding decision-making, collaboration, and responsibility on an abstract level. The balance between hierarchy and participation aims to maintain order and direction without stifling creativity or autonomy. Authority at WI is therefore often derived more from professional expertise and commitment than from formal hierarchical positions. For example, research group leaders and PIs are respected for their knowledge and contributions rather than their official titles alone. Reliance on expertise as authority fosters a culture where ideas and inputs are valued regardless of rank, encouraging a collaborative environment where staff feel empowered to contribute. This adaptation process can take time, but it also offers opportunities for learning and professional growth. The non-hierarchical structure at the Institute encourages experimentation as workers are encouraged to try new approaches, explore creative solutions, and take risks in their research. This openness to innovation is supported by a structure that values diverse perspectives, willing to invest in collaborative discussions. Culture at WI is routinely described by interviewees as less hierarchical and more participative compared to traditional university structures. Decisions are made collaboratively, involving multiple stakeholders, such as RGL's, PIs and others. This promotes a sense of ownership and inclusivity but can also cause delays and require more negotiation for workers. While WI's organisational culture promotes flexibility and encourages individual autonomy, there is also recognition of the need for a certain degree of authority to maintain structure and direction. These values influence communication, promoting a collegial and therefore less hierarchical style.

While all of this fosters inclusive and supportive communication, differences in feedback delivery, structural integration, and the impact of feedback on decision-making present areas for further development. WI's hegemony shapes its communication style, striving for openness and participation, revealing the need for standardization to ensure coherence and effectiveness. These efforts face challenges due to the diverse affiliations of research groups and complexity across different administrative structures. The goal of formalizing these lies in improving accountability and comes with difficulties in implementing standards in a decentralized structure. Several segments highlight the lack of clarity regarding responsibility for specific tasks and areas. This ambiguity is evident in the division of labour between different groups and the accompanying administrative functions. For example, there is confusion over who is responsible for organising events and managing administrative tasks.

"It was observed that most PIs perceive their primary roles in the context of their respective universities rather than the Institute itself, further distancing themselves from direct involvement in the Institute's daily operations. Consequently, responsibilities fall to RGLs, associate researchers, and even doctoral candidates -> gap between formal structures and practice."
- Field-Diary, Day 5 of Week 8

Resilience & Coping

“Researcher reported working throughout a public holiday due to a pressing deadline.”
- Field-Diary, Day 4, Week 2

. The interdisciplinary nature of WI is seen as a critical asset, fostering creativity and new perspectives. It provides opportunities for unique collaborations and enhances the institute's adaptability to new scientific developments. Since work at WI is characterized by short-term funding cycles and high flexibility, this has profound impacts on individual workers. A constant need to adapt to this inherent uncertainty of projectification, leads to more stress and insecurity for researchers. This precariousness is compounded by frequent multitasking and administrative burdens, which detract from the time available for core research activities. The work at WI is shaped by temporary 3–5-year funding cycles, with a subsequent focus on outputs having the potential of significantly impacting interdisciplinary freedom. On one hand, the flexibility inherent in project-based work allows for more adaptive research agendas, innovation, and individual autonomy, which can be both empowering and disempowering for staff depending on internal and external factors of their work. As noted by Cicmil et al. (2016), the need for resilience in project work fosters a self-management narrative that, while empowering, can also normalize continuous strain and responsibility.

This also presents challenges, such as the difficulty of coordinating across diverse disciplines, managing varied expectations, and ensuring that all contributions are valued equally. The nature of projectified work contributes to narratives of resilience. On the one hand, project-based work encourages adaptability, learning, and innovation. On the other hand, it perpetuates uncertainty and the need for continuous adaptation, mentally and emotionally exhausting for staff. The recurring need to secure project funding and navigate bureaucratic processes can strain resources and hinder long-term planning. There is a tension between autonomy afforded to researchers and the level of institutional support available. While autonomy is highly valued and considered essential for fostering innovation, it can lead to feelings of isolation or being left to navigate complex administrative challenges without guidance.

The perceived lack of a comprehensive support structure for, decision-making, and administrative tasks risk to stress workers. Many participants express that their work requires multitasking and juggling of various responsibilities, from research to administrative duties. Such are the demands of having to switch between tasks, sometimes within the same hour, and being pressured to meet deadlines, contributing significantly to stress.

“The representatives groups such as the doctoral candidates have routinely expressed anxiety about funding and job security in the Institute Council, reflecting uncertainty that pervades workers’ lives.” - Field-Diary, Day 3, Week 8

The fragmented schedules and numerous competing priorities are seen as a challenge and a necessity to maintain productivity in a highly dynamic research setting. Administrative processes and the bureaucratic nature of some tasks are cited as significant stressors. A need to manage complex administrative requirements, often involving coordination between institutions creates some additional pressure. The dual structure, coupled with non-standardized processes, adds to the workload and can make integration and navigation in the institution stressful. WI experiments with a variety of formats, including a data science research centre, and meta-research initiatives. This reflects the deliberate effort to expand traditional boundaries research. However, externally WI faces repeated evaluations and reevaluations, taking up capacities at the top and creating problems like the impossibility of prolonging contracts beyond the current established deadline of the project. Funding and stability of WI are heavily influenced by external factors, like political decision-making and policy-negotiations at federal and state levels. The Institute's status as a state-funded entity means that its size, scope, and future direction depend significantly on government support and policy. It does introduce challenges, such as the risk of research being sidelined if it does not fit into the format, as mentioned in interviews repeatedly. Any given topic is therefore already limited in scope and content, due to the constraints stemming from the temporary nature of funding and work at WI. This approach necessitates constant adaptation and can make long-term planning for workers difficult. This dependence creates an additional layer of uncertainty and impact the strategic planning and long-term sustainability of the research efforts. Internally, this requires continuous balancing between integrating the project and its approach and maintaining contextual coherence across different groups and partner-institutions. According to interviews, researchers at WI find themselves juggling multiple roles, switching between many projects and dealing with overlapping deadlines. This can create a stressful environment where the constant need to jump from topic to topic makes it difficult to maintain focus or engagement with a single topic. While RGL's and PI's are formally assigned roles, actual distribution of authority is often ambiguous. Chung and Van der Lippe (2018) underscore the blurring of work-life in flexible work regimes, a dynamic evident at WI where flexible scheduling translates into implicit expectations of extended availability.

A recurring theme is the uncertainty surrounding WI's future and, consequently, long-term career prospects at WI. This uncertainty affects all levels, from junior researchers to senior staff, contributing to a sense of constant vulnerability. Many are unsure whether their positions will be continued, leading to anxiety over one's job security. Project-based work at the Institute brings emotional and mental strain. Researchers there face continuous evaluation of the overall project and need to constantly prove the value of their, which requires them to remain in a state of high alertness, that is mentally exhausting over time. To cope with these stressors, staff utilize the flexibility and autonomy afforded by WI's structure.

“Researcher recounted being contacted outside of working hours to revise a survey, despite having a clearly designated project lead who was on holiday. “ - Field-Diary, Day 1 of Week 6

WI provides opportunities for learning, mentoring, and networking, which can offset challenges posed by a demanding and uncertain work environment. These opportunities help that workers feel that their efforts are valued and that they have ways to advance. While some workers cope effectively with the challenges they face, others struggle with negative coping, such as overworking or withdrawing from collaboration. Regular meetings, feedback sessions, and open communication allow workers to share their challenges and seek their support. Collegiality and collaboration across different groups foster solidarity.

Many staff members view the opportunities for professional growth and career development as positive aspects that help them cope with the stressors of their roles. Some participants mention working late into the night or on weekends, that while effective in meeting immediate demands, unsustainable in the long term and detrimental to well-being. Others express their desire for a more structured system of channels for communication, especially regarding workers' responsibilities and expectations, as the lack of a rigid framework is leaving workers feeling unsupported and left to their own devices. WI provides opportunities for learning, mentoring, and networking, which can offset challenges posed by a demanding and uncertain work environment. These opportunities help that workers feel that their efforts are valued and that they have ways to advance. While some workers cope effectively with the challenges they face, others struggle with negative coping, such as overworking or withdrawing from collaboration. Regular meetings, feedback sessions, and open communication allow workers to share their challenges and seek their support. Collegiality and collaboration across different groups foster solidarity. Many staff members view the opportunities for professional growth and career development as positive aspects that help them cope with the stressors of their roles. Some participants mention working late into the night or on weekends, that while effective in meeting immediate demands, unsustainable in the long term and detrimental to well-being. Others express their desire for a more structured system of channels for communication, especially regarding workers' responsibilities and expectations, as the lack of a rigid framework is leaving workers feeling left to their own devices.

“Conversations revealed concerns about the precarious funding landscape and the difficulty of managing workloads within official working hours.” - Field-Diary, Week 5 of Day 1

4) Summary of Results

The dual structure of WI, with affiliations to both project and network-partners presents challenges for workers in terms of integration and understanding communication norms. It is formal mechanisms, which are shaped by external regulatory requirements and legal obligations, causing this. This includes adherence to labour laws, financial regulations, and requirements, such as time recording and contract management. Compliance is mandatory and impacts many of the formal processes and controls. These requirements might make sure that WI operates within the legal framework but also impose rigid constraints that conflict with the more flexible, creative type of work-organisation, that WI seeks to promote. This participative approach may strengthen inclusivity and collaborative decision-making but poses a challenge for the effective implementation of formal control mechanisms. While the Institute strives to maintain balance between structured oversight and participative practices, there are instances where such control can contradict the desired openness to discourses.

WI's decentralized structure reflects findings by Teirlinck and Spithoven (2015) findings, where flexible project networks can inhibit clear career progression paths for early-career researchers who often face unclear expectations and role definitions. Similar to the participatory decision-making model observed by Ylijoki (2016), WI's approach fosters engagement but often leads to slower decision-making, pointing to the challenge of balancing inclusivity with organisational efficiency.

As a project, WI is in a developmental phase, continuously evolving its structures. This is marked by frequent changes, ongoing negotiations, and the lack of any predefined paths or blueprints. However, this flexibility possibly contributes to levels of heightened stress and a sense of vulnerability, as evidenced by reports about high workloads, job insecurity, and challenges of balancing multiple roles. The observations and interview data point to the pressure to continuously secure funding and uncertainties associated with short-term cycles as factors for added stress. Kalff (2017) highlighted the administrative burden in interdisciplinary CRPs, which resonates with WI's struggle to coordinate across different affiliations, thus creating challenges in defining administrative roles and managing accountability. The dual structure provides some balance between worker-autonomy and centralized control, but it comes with trade-offs. While workers have substantial freedom to manage their time and projects, this flexibility often results in blurred lines of responsibility, especially since PIs are usually distant from day-to-day operations. RGLs, less experienced, take on a heavier burden of leadership, without having the training or inclination to take on such added responsibilities.

CONCLUSION

The previous chapter has provided an analysis of the key findings from the study, interpreting the empirical data collected from interviews and the observation at WI. The results offer an understanding of which mechanisms of labour-control are at work in settings such as the given case as an instance of projectified work in research. WI is characterized by relatively flat organisational structure, which helps in facilitating the interdisciplinary collaboration it is set up to organise. Projectification involves a shift toward temporary, goal-driven projects over more permanent models. This shift has led to the flexible working conditions at the cost of clarity and stability.

The findings highlight how real-life organisation at WI is fluid, with responsibility and roles distributed across multiple levels, from PIs and RGLs to doctoral candidates and even administrative staff. This fosters a participatory culture, where decision-making is often decentralized, and authority is based more on expertise and knowledge than on formal hierarchical positions. However, perceptions are, that a small circle of people which make up the highest boards at WI end up deciding many things by themselves. The fluidity of authority is more present in research groups, where it can lead to ambiguity, as illustrated by observations of unclear lines of responsibility, particularly in situations where PIs are distant or less involved in day-to-day activities. This role-ambiguity hinders effective decision-making collaboration by creating uncertainties around decision-making processes and accountability.

1) Answering the Research-Questions

The field diary and interview data indicate that control at the institute is a blend of formal and informal practices. While open communication channels and participatory decision-making encourage engagement and inclusivity, inconsistencies in feedback delivery and the lack of clear communication protocols can result in confusion and frustration. The findings suggest that enhancing role-clarity and consistency of formal and informal communication practices would be vital for strengthening collaboration and fostering a cohesive organisational culture. This study's results illustrate that both formal and informal mechanisms play significant roles in controlling and shaping experiences of workers at WI. Formal controls, such as structured meetings, performance monitoring, and centralized resource management, provide a somewhat necessary framework for maintaining a functional division of labour and aligning efforts with project-goals. However, formal mechanisms are limited by the WI's decentralized and flexible organisational structure. Entries in the field-diary reveal that division of labour and the monitoring of performance is perceived as lacking consistency and transparency, reflecting the challenges of applying standardized procedures in a more fluid organisational structure.

This suggests that while the project-based and relatively participatory structure promotes flexibility, creativity, and participation, it also introduces challenges related to ambiguity, workload management, and the maintenance of clear communication and feedback channels. Both formal and informal control mechanisms play crucial roles in managing these dynamics, but their effectiveness is often mediated by the organisational context.

Informal control mechanisms, such as peer pressure, social norms, and intrinsic motivation, play a significant role. Workers are driven by informal expectations like the need to maintain constant availability, even outside official working hours, which fosters collaboration but also imposes stress and a lack of work-life boundaries. These controls operate through everyday interactions and expectations, as seen in the ad-hoc use of peer-feedback and the emphasis on intrinsic motivation. Mechanisms such as this compensate the gaps in formal oversight by fostering a strong sense of shared responsibility and commitment among staff. This does create the risk of internal tension, as informal expectations may not always align and also contribute to increased stress, particularly among early-career researchers.

Informal mechanisms of labour-control are multifaceted and embedded in WI's special organisational-culture, relying on intrinsic motivation, social norms, peer pressure, appeals to moral to guide employee behaviour. While these mechanisms provide flexibility, autonomy, and support they create challenges related to emotional pressure, and a lack of boundaries. Understanding and managing these informal controls is crucial to enforce that they contribute positively to WI's organisational culture without undermining employee well-being or creating undue stress. This tension requires careful management to ensure that formal mechanisms do not stifle innovation or undermine the collaborative ethos of the institute. Control at WI is also characterized by a structured system of meetings, reporting requirements, guidelines, employment contracts, and regulatory compliance. These provide a necessary framework for ensuring accountability, transparency, and alignment with strategic goals. The interdisciplinary nature of the institute present challenges in balancing control with flexibility, creativity, and collaboration. Ongoing efforts to refine these mechanisms are important to maintain this balance and support both WI's operational efficiency and its agenda. While the institute values flexibility, autonomy, and expertise-based authority, it also recognizes the need for structured processes to maintain direction. Navigating these dualities is essential for collaboration and providing effective management and coordination across the organisational structure. The reliance on intrinsic motivation at WI aligns with Rioux et al. (2019), who noted how informal norms can act as a form of hegemonial control, compelling workers to meet high self-imposed standards without overt supervision. These mechanisms create a paradox: while they provide the flexibility which is needed for interdisciplinary research and responsiveness to fast-evolving fields, but also introduce instability. Workers are often forced to manage administrative and project, adding strain.

While WI's project-based structure enables autonomy and innovation, it also blurs role clarity and stretches responsibilities, often to the detriment of work-life balance. Ultimately, control mechanisms at WI foster flexibility and adaptability but at the same time hinder the establishment of a stable organisation of work due to the short-term nature of the project. At WI, hierarchical and participatory structures coexist in a semi-flat organisational structure, where both formal authority (e.g., PIs and RGLs) and participatory decision-making through open forums like the Institute Council shape the work environment. Conversely, informal control, including hegemonial and social norms, peer pressure, and moral appeals, exert subtler yet pervasive influence on workers, independently of a given workers' exact position, status or their affiliation. The findings reveal a complex interplay between hierarchical and participatory elements at Weizenbaum Institute. While the organisation espouses a relatively flat hierarchy, with authority distributed across multiple levels and decision-making intended to be participatory, there remain underlying hierarchical dynamics. For example, PIs retain significant influence over strategic decisions, yet their physical and functional distance from daily operations often leaves gaps in leadership that RGLs or other staff must fill. This balance between hierarchical and non-hierarchical structures appears to have mixed implications for innovation, decision-making, and job satisfaction. On one hand, the non-hierarchical approach encourages experimentation, interdisciplinary collaboration, and a collaborative culture of openness. On the other, the lack of clearly defined authority and inconsistent involvement from senior leadership can create uncertainty, hinder effective decision-making, and sometimes result in feelings of isolation or lack of direction for workers.

The consequences of this balancing act include frequent delays in decision-making, role confusion, and stress stemming from unclear accountability. Workers at WI must navigate complex administrative and research duties without always having the necessary support. Coping strategies include leveraging the autonomy WI offers to manage personal workloads and schedules, as well as a hegemonial control via the "WI-spirit" delineating those with the "right" mindset for taking initiative and responsibility without needing support. This comes at the cost for workers facing continuous pressure to secure funding and meet project goals. This is reliant on intrinsic motivation and peer pressure to drive performance and foster this resilience, but also risk frustration due to the lack of formal guidance. Generally, workers are inherently expected to fit existing preconceived notions of what a good project-worker is like. This means, workers who do not show the necessary level of ambition, intrinsic motivation, and willingness to work with little to no pre-given structure, immediately disqualify themselves for work at WI. Obviously, this presents a problem in reality, as it comes with the expectation of workers simply coping by themselves with whatever difficulties the project throws at them.

Further Directions of Research & Recommendations

Future studies might address the downsides of projectification, particularly in balancing work with stability and well-being (Kalf, 2017; Powell, 2001). Research should also explore how role clarity and leadership training could improve balance in projectified organisations like WI. Additionally, examining the long-term effects of projectification on job security, mental health, and productivity could provide insights into improving workers' well-being in order to investigate the long-term effects of informal control mechanisms on worker well-being, particularly in terms of burnout and job satisfaction. Examining how organisations such as WI can effectively balance project-based flexibility with more stable career development paths would provide insights for the evolving landscape of research-work. A more in-depth study on how control mechanisms interact with formal structures inside these kinds of organisations could also help refine projectified models in interdisciplinary and decentralized settings.

To present a relevant impact from the application of the results, this is also concerned with solutions or conflict-solving approaches, which have already been implemented or discussed at WI pertaining to these challenges. For CRP's as a whole this can mean restructuring towards a less temporary and more continuous model of organising interinstitutional co-operation, without losing out on the advantages of cross-boundary sharing of expertise and knowledge in a dynamic and flexible manner, but simultaneously creating a supportive structure, that safeguards project-workers and -teams from being caught up in conflicts of interest of participating institutions, and from being overburdened with coordinating and administering their own work. This way, project-work can perhaps be allowed to stick to its and worker's strengths, without giving up completely on notions of hierarchy and accountability in terms of communication, clearly assigned responsibilities, and role-clarity. The process of establishing WI as a non-temporary institution obviously plays a role in enabling WI to "de-projectify" itself and thus relieving itself of stressors and copes which it has outgrown. This is commendable from the perspective of these results, if WI uses its established informal mechanisms present in the WI-spirit or narratives of resilience and questions whether they can be improved upon or redirected in favour of a more sustainable model of work-organisation. Building on the existing supportive culture and providing support and communication could enhance workers' well-being. Their *Resilience*, could no longer mean the imagined trying harder to cope, not making virtue of exceptional states rather than resisting or invoking other priorities and discourses. Alternatively, non-projectified approaches which allow for undefined, individually-managed time, thus recognizing worktime's fluidity and how can be used towards a productive end, according to worker's own estimates. This is about finding an approach, which values traits like vulnerability, solidarity and dependency, contrasting with an idealized flexible workforce, reliant on worker's involuntary resilience and normative subjectivity.

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ANNEX A

Interview Guide

For interviews with researchers and employees at the Weizenbaum Institute

Thank you very much for participating in this interview, none of your answers nor your identity will be published or stored as part of our work. In our project, we are interested in how work is structured in research project networks, what is characteristic of this work organization and how decisions are made within the projects, how the work is divided and controlled, and which structures particularly characterize work in this form of work organization. We use the term projectification for this purpose.

I: Introduction & Projectification

Q1: Can you tell me what comes to mind when you hear the term 'projectification'?
Have you noticed any changes in your work related to this?

Q2: Before talking about the WI and your work experience here, could you briefly describe your academic background and career path leading up to your current position?

Q3: When did you start working at the Weizenbaum Institute, what is your current role and what kind of contract do you have?

II: The Weizenbaum Institute

Q4: Which projects are you currently involved in at WI, and can you describe what a typical day looks like for you and the main activities you focus on day by day?

Q5: What would you say are the advantages and disadvantages of how work is organized at WI in terms of funding and the overall work environment?

Q6: What characterizes work at WI in general and how would you describe work culture?
Are there values that seem to be most emphasized here?

Q7: Can you tell me how decisions are typically made within the groups you are part of?
Are you in committees or decision-making structures outside of the research groups?

III: Priorities & Opportunities

Q8: Can you tell me how you prioritize work tasks at the WI and which factors influence these decisions?

Q9: What development opportunities are available to you at the institute?
Have these opportunities played a significant role in your professional growth?

Q10: How do you perceive the current state of research funding in your field, and how does it impact your work at the institute?

Q11: How would you currently assess career opportunities and -paths in your field?

IV: Job-Requirements & Workplace-Dynamics

Q12: Based on what would you recommend WI to someone pursuing a career in research?
Would you say there are any particular skills or requirements necessary?

Q13: Does the relationships between employees and institution differ from other places?

Q14: How would you define responsibility and authority defined, in your work?

V: Evaluation & Feedback

Q15: What's your experience been like with evaluation-systems at WI?
Are they different from other institutions you have experience with?

Q16: How is feedback handled? Could you maybe give an example of when and how you have last received or given feedback?

VI: Work-Life-Balance & Job-Satisfaction:

Q17: How do you manage to balance work responsibilities with your personal life?

Q18: Which aspects of your work do you find particularly satisfying or less satisfying?

VII: Work-Organization & Research-Work

Q19: Looking back on your career, would you say that work in your field has changed?

Q20: If you could draw a picture of your institution 20 years from now?
What major changes would you like to see for the future and the institution?

Q21: Do you have any suggestions or comments that could contribute to better understanding how work is organized in these kind of network-work-organization models?

Q22: Is there anything else you can think of, that would be important to tell me?

Thank you very much for participating in this interview, none of your answers nor your identity will be published or stored as part of our work.

WEIZENBAUM INSTITUTE – Organizational Report & Chart

Consortium

The Weizenbaum Institute for a connected society was founded in 2017 and is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the State Berlin. It is supported by a research consortium from Berlin and Brandenburg, which includes Free University Berlin (FU), Humboldt-University Berlin (HU), Technical University Berlin (TU), University of the Arts Berlin (UdK), University of Potsdam (UP), the Fraunhofer Institute for Open Communication Systems (FOKUS) and Berlin Social Science Centre (WZB).



Weizenbaum-Institut e.V.

The Weizenbaum-Institut e.V. is responsible for the coordination of the network and the legal representation of the Weizenbaum Institute. With the start of the establishment phase of the institute in 2022, a larger part of the research has been integrated into the Weizenbaum-Institut e.V. as an independent research institution and eighth partner in the network. Nine of the Weizenbaum Institute's 16 research groups are currently part of the association. The Weizenbaum Digital Science Center, which bundles the Institute's research activities beyond the research groups and provides orientation and infrastructure services, is also part of the Weizenbaum-Institut e.V. Of the seven other research groups, one is affiliated with each of the association partners. In addition, the association acts as the network coordinator.

Board of Trustees

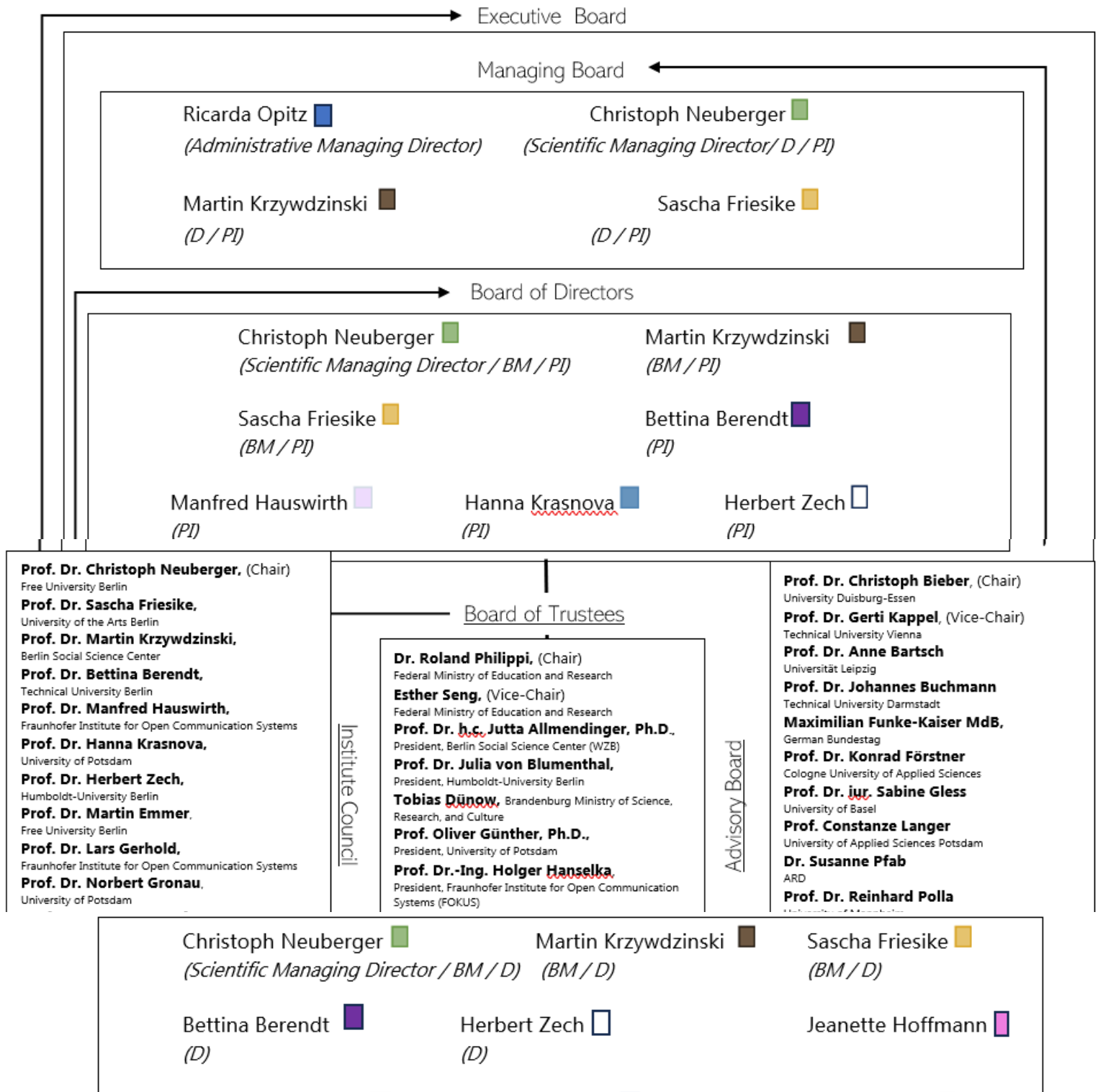
In accordance with the statutes, the Board of Trustees monitors the activities of the Managing Board. Decisions of fundamental strategic, financial or personnel importance and in the further development of the Weizenbaum Institute's research program require its approval. The Board comprises representatives of the partners and the Institute's funding bodies.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board advises the Managing Board and the Board of Trustees on all important issues relating to the Institute's strategy, research and dialog with society. It comprises members from the fields of science, politics, business, civil society and the media.

Institute Council

The Institute Council is the successor of the Scientific Council and the central place for exchange on Institute matters, in which all relevant status groups are represented. The Executive Board regularly reports to the Institute Council on matters of Institute strategy, research, dialogue with society, career development and other significant issues. The Institute Council deliberates on these issues and can comment on them.

Research Focus I:

"Digital Technologies in Society"

Well-being in the Digital World

PI: Hanna Krasnova

RGL: Annika Baumann
Antonia Köster

Digitalisation, Sustainability & Participation

RGL: André Ullrich

Design Diversity & New CommonsResearch Focus II:

"Digital Markets and Public Spheres on Platforms"

Dynamics of Digital News Mediation

PI: Christoph Neuberger

RGL: Jakob Ohme

Platform Algorithms & Digital Propaganda

RGL: Elizaveta Kuznetsova

Digital Economy, Internet Ecosystem & Internet Policy

Research Focus III:

"Organisation of Knowledge"

Working with Artificial Intelligence

PI: Martin Krzywdzinski 

RGL: Florian Butollo 

Reorganization of Knowledge Practices

PI: Sascha Friesike 

RGL: Maximilian Heimstädt
Anne Krüger

Digitalization & Opening of Science

(Frauenhofer FOKUS)

PI: Manfred Hauswirth 

RGL: Sonja Schimmler 

Education for the Digital World

(University of Potsdam)

PI: Norbert Gronau 

RGL: Gergana Vladova 

Research Focus IV:

"Digital Infrastructures in Democracy"

Norm-setting

& Decision-making Procedures

PI: Herbert Zech 

RGL: Simon Schrör 

Digitalization & Networked Security

PI: Lars Gerhold 

RGL: Thomas Kox

Security & Transparency of Digital Processes

(Humboldt University Berlin)

PI: Jan Mendling 

RGL: Stephan Fahrenkrog-Petersen

Technology, Power, and Domination

(Social Science Research Centre Berlin)

PI: Jeanette Hofmann 

RGL: Lena Ulbricht

Abbreviations: BM – Board Member

PI – Principal Investigator

D – Director

RGL – Research Group Leader

Category System for Qualitative Content Analysis

This refined category system provides a structured approach to coding qualitative data such as transcripts and field diaries. It is divided into four primary categories, each with well-defined subcategories. The system is designed to explore themes related to organizational structure, control mechanisms, role clarity, and resilience & coping in project-based work environments.

1. Organizational Structure

This category focuses on examining the structural characteristics of organizations and the effects of projectification on work organization. It explores the nature of fluid, temporary dependencies and how projectification affects organizational processes and division of labor.

1.1: Projectification This subcategory pertains to the characteristics of project-based work, focusing on how projectification influences work dynamics, procedural fluidity, and temporary organizational structures. It examines the nature of dependencies and how these affect workers (Cicmil et al., 2016).

1.2: Organization This subcategory captures the broader organizational shifts due to projectification, including changes in procedural freedom, division of labour, and the overall characteristics of organizational structure. It focuses on how organizations adjust to temporary work dependencies and the flexibility required (Packendorff & Lindgren, 2014).

2. Mechanisms of Control

This category examines both formal and informal control mechanisms within organizations and evaluates their effectiveness. It explores how rules, feedback loops, and self-regulation shape organizational behaviour and contribute to maintaining control in dynamic work environments.

2.1: Formal Mechanisms examines institutionalized rules, protocols, and feedback loops that regulate work processes. This subcategory focuses on top-down approaches to control, such as organizational rules and regulations, performance monitoring, and formalized feedback systems (Wright, 2010).

2.2: Informal Mechanisms refer to the self-regulatory aspects control, which include interpersonal relationships, cultural norms, and feedback processes. This subcategory explores how informal dynamics contribute to control, including peer regulation and tacit rules that shape behaviour (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

3. Role-Clarity

This category explores the balance between responsibility, accountability, and role ambiguity. It focuses on how clear or ambiguous roles contribute to conflicts within organizations and whether employees understand their responsibilities and accountabilities in project-based work.

3.1: Communication This subcategory deals with the flow of information between individuals and teams, particularly focusing on how communication clarifies roles and responsibilities. It examines whether role expectations are effectively communicated, preventing ambiguity (Brass et al., 1984).

3.2: Responsibility This refers to the specific duties assigned workers and teams. This subcategory looks into how accountability is distributed across the organization and whether employees are held responsible for their outcomes and also explores potential conflicts arising from unclear responsibility assignments.

4. Resilience & Coping

This category investigates how individuals and teams respond to stressors and challenges in their work environment. It looks into the strategies employed at individual, team, and project levels to manage stress and maintain resilience

4.1: Stressors This pertains to specific elements that cause pressure or anxiety for individuals and teams, whether from workload, deadlines, or organizational changes. This subcategory focuses on identifying different sources of stress in projects (Hodgson & Cicmil, 2007).

4.2: Coping Strategies Coping strategies explore the methods individuals, teams, and organizations use to manage stress. These strategies include support systems, peer support, individual mental health strategies, and team-based resilience practices (Cicmil et al., 2016).

Declaration of Informed Consent

for participating in an interview and analysis of resulting data for a scientific presentation and publication as part of the inter-institutional PROWORK project funded by the Foundation for Science and Technology of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education in Portugal and a thesis for a Master's degree in Political Economy as part of that research project.

With my signature, I confirm that I am willingly participating in an interview within this framework. I was informed about the research questions and objectives of the project and any questions I had were answered.

I am aware of the fact that

- the interview is part of the PROWORK project, funded by the Foundation of the Portuguese Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education.
- the interview will be recorded (audio) on _____ (date).
- the recording will be used for social research and will be deleted after transcription
 - at the latest in September 2024
- the recording of the interview will not be publicly accessible.
- the recording will be pseudonymised for use for social research purposes, which means that any data that directly identifies me will be replaced by an identification code if used in a report or publication form, which excludes the possibility of me being identified by unauthorised persons.
- using meeting software (Goto, Teams, etc.), data may be transferred to the USA.

The anonymity of the individual interviewees is additionally guaranteed by the fact that the presentation of the study results is based on the content-related questions of the study (and not summarised according to the persons, research groups or institutions surveyed).

Data protection information according to Art 13 GDPR

The legal basis for the processing of the data is my consent.

I can revoke my consent at any time without giving reasons for the future, without any disadvantages for me and without affecting the legality of the processing carried out on the basis of the consent until the revocation on the basis of Art. 6 para. 1 lit. a GDPR. After revocation, the project team will remove all my data from the data set. Please send your cancellation to luisa.veloso@iscte-iul.pt.

Under the conditions laid down by law, there is a right to information as well as a right to rectification, erasure or restriction of processing or a right to object to the processing of the data and a right to data portability. I have the right to receive information about the data concerning me, including a free copy. In case, contact luisa.veloso@iscte-iul.pt.

The project partners University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE), the Association for Innovation and Development of the FCT (NOVA.ID.FCT) and the Centre for Research in Anthropology (CRIA) each operate as independent data controllers within the meaning of the GDPR. Data transfer within the project partners therefore takes place on a controller-to-controller basis. Each cooperation partner will use the data exclusively for the permitted purposes and will not pass this data on to third parties. Data processors within the meaning of Article 28 of the GDPR are used for transcription.

You have the right to lodge a complaint with the respective data protection authority about the handling of your data. In Germany, this is the Federal Commissioner for Data Protection and Freedom of Information (<https://www.bfdi.bund.de>), in Portugal it is the National Commission for the Protection of Personal Data (<https://www.cnpd.pt>).

I have read and agree to all of the above points.

Place and Date

Signature of Participant

Place and Date

Signature of the Responsible