

Methodological challenges of researching trade union – university interaction

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(sociology of work)

TULIP-project conference 1-3/07/09 Iasi

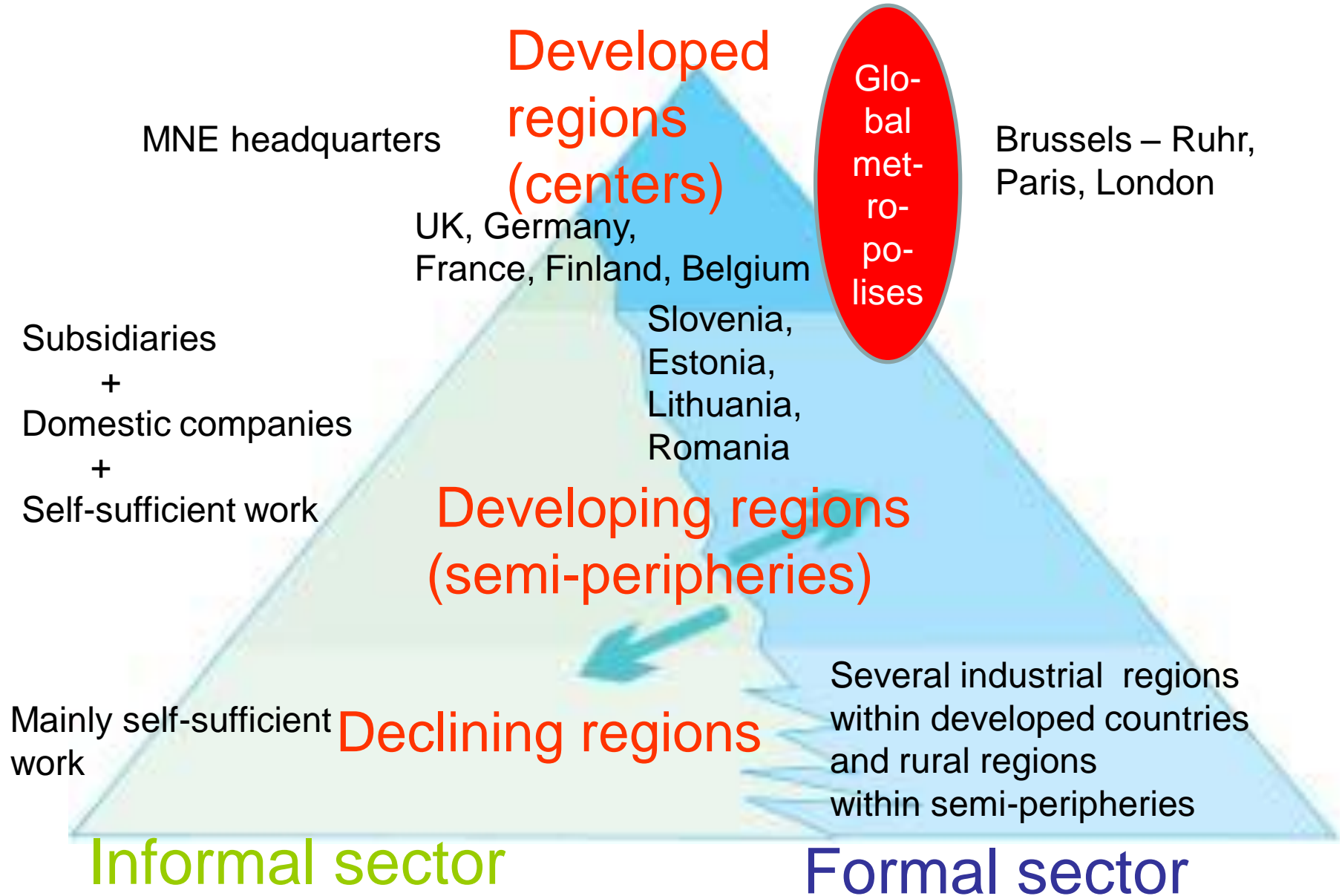
www.kayttotieto.fi, tel. +358 400 500 583

- Research and consultative services for trade unions
 - Learnpartner project 2001-2004 to research and develop life -long learning in 5 European countries
 - WOLIWEB - project 2004-2007 to research and develop work life research tools in 9 EU-countries
 - Wageindicator –project 2006 ->
 - Web-based tools for quantitative and qualitative research data, www.wageindicator.org
- Focusing on global development of work and industrial relations, (from 2006 onwards)
 - Finland as a benchmarking economy, region and country
 - case countries:the UK, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, the Baltic countries, Poland, Hungary, Bulgaria, South Africa, Russia, Brazil, Argentina, China (from 2010 onwards)
 - Finland as a bench-marking economy



- Senior researcher and director
Kimmo Kevätsalo Ph.D. (sociology)

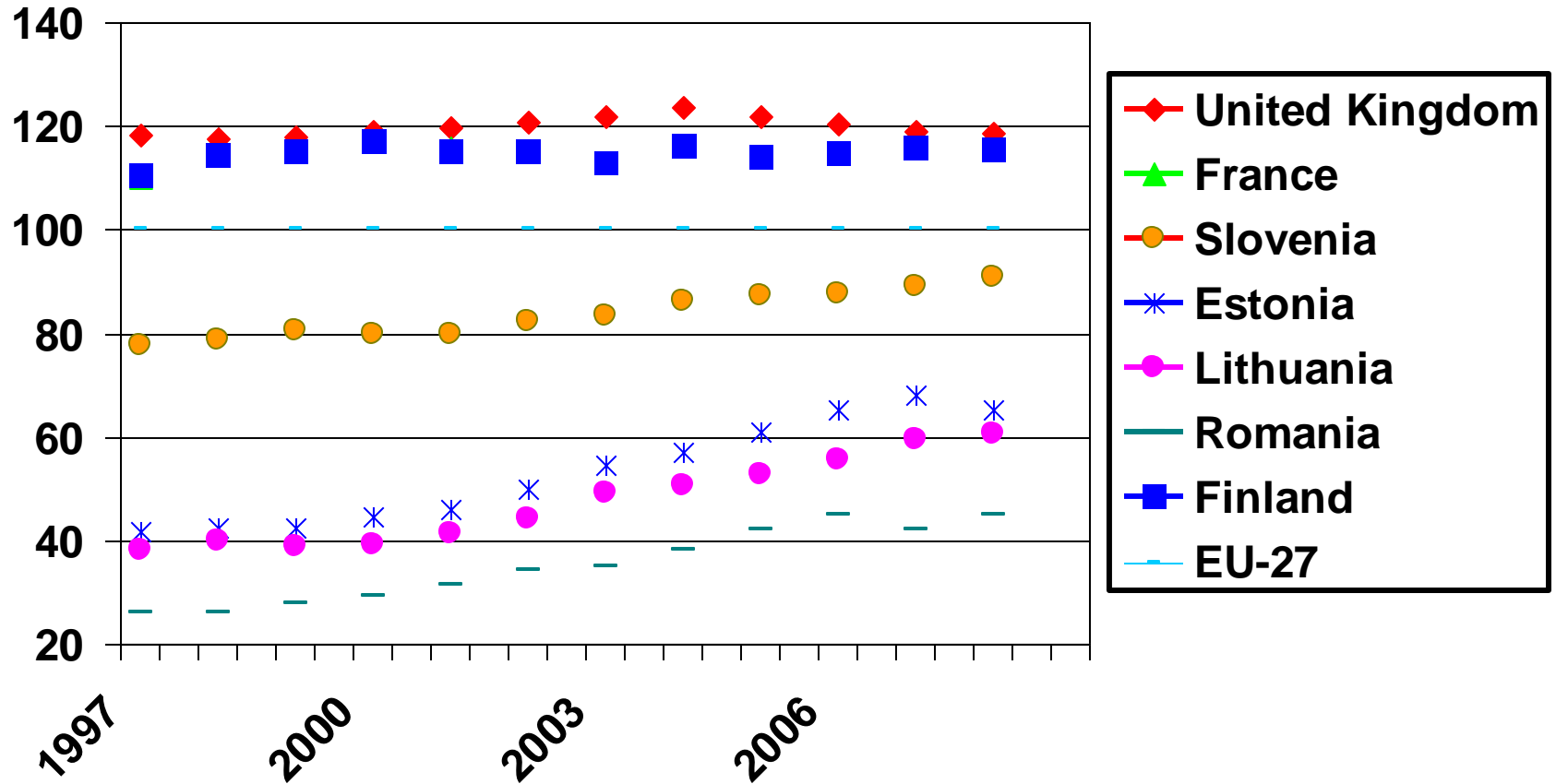
Work in some EU-countries



Skills trends during globalisation

- Brain drain to metropolises
- Semiskilled jobs to semi-peripheries and peripheries

Case countries:GDP/capita PPS (EU-27=100)



Research and trade unions

Period	Present EU-15	Present EU-12
<p>Fordism, - From the 30's to the 70's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No remarkable co-operation - Research supporting mainly management - Increasing critical research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - State controlled trade unions and research
<p>Post-fordism - From the 80's to the 90's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some tripartite R&D projects (state -research institutions - TU:s) -Declining critical research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Weakening of the old TU structure and slowly emerging new one - Reorientation of state supported research
<p>Neo-liberalism and information economy - From the 90's onwards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Most research and several TU:s involved to serve competitiveness of companies and national economies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No independent work life research (strongly dependant on big companies and the state)

Skills within developed economies during latest two decades

- Flexibility rhetoric legitimizes numerical flexibilities and outsourcing of deskilled tasks
- Technology development enables deskilling of knowledge jobs

Neo-liberal period, trade unions and research

- Neo-liberal period in the TULIP-project countries
 - From 1980s in the UK
 - From 1990s in Finland and modestly in Belgium, Germany and France
 - From 1990s in Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Slovenia
- Accelerating globalisation of
 - value chains i.e. money, commodities and people
- Integration of several trade union leaders with company and state policies in Fi, Be, Ge, the UK, Fra
 - Some casual resistance
- Decline of critical research

Consequences of neo-liberalism on skills and qualifications

- Oversupply of labour in general
 - Unemployment
 - Migration
- Oversupply of formally qualified workforce
 - Permanent shortage of qualified workforce within health care sector (ageing of population, cutting the expenses everywhere)
 - Casual shortages of skilled workforce within some manufacturing industries because of overheating
- “Employers need skills, not qualifications”
 - Especially transferable skills (literacy, IT-literacy, maths, language skills)
 - cf. Bill Jones, Tulip project meeting in February 2008

Employers, trade unions and LLL during this decade

Employers	Trade unions	LLL
<p>Participate some EU-funded projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To solve temporary shortages of skilled workforce 	<p>Participate some EU-funded projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To protect core workforce (core membership) 	<p>Some experiments and pilots</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Useful especially for LLL research
<p>No commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No long-term continuity of projects 	<p>Weak commitment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mainly at works council and corresponding levels within some big companies 	<p>Dissemination of results</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No remarkable dissemination outside trade union core reps
<p>Integrating trade union representatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Business economics and competitiveness of companies 	<p>Integration process of works council members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continued decades especially in Germany 	<p>Trade union reps in big companies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some are fairly competent in business economics

Methodological challenges

- Do mainstream management and organisation development models give a relevant basis for research (or are they only well-selling consultancy practises)?
- Who do trade unions represent?
- Are casual cases representative enough for generalized conclusions?
 - Oversupply of employer paid education for some core employee groups (e.g. some professional and skilled blue-collar groups)
 - Increasing proportion of marginalized employees within national economies
- What are the roles of critical theories, especially during the long global recession?