

Klaus Kock

Between Chairs and Work Benches

Tasks and Functioning of Cooperation Centres

Working paper 139

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Editorial

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"A collection of rules, even of practical rules, is termed a theory if the rules concerned are envisaged as principles of a fairly general nature, and if they are abstracted from numerous conditions which, nonetheless, necessarily influence their practical application. Conversely, not all activities are called practice, but only those realisations of a particular purpose which are considered to comply with certain generally conceived principles of procedure. It is obvious that no matter how complete the theory may be, a middle term is required between theory and practice, providing a link and a transition from one to the other. For a concept of the understanding, which contains the general rule, must be supplemented by an act of judgement whereby the practitioner distinguishes instances where the rule applies from those where it does not. And since rules cannot in turn be provided on every occasion to direct the previous rule (for this would involve an infinite regress), theoreticians will be found who can never in all their lives become practical, since they lack judgement. There are, for example, doctors or lawyers who did well during their schooling but who do not know how to act when asked to give advice."

(Immanuel Kant: "On the Common Saying: 'This May Be True in Theory, but it Does Not Apply in Practice', 1793)

1. Introduction

Cooperation between science and labour – where is the problem, one might ask. Are scientists in our knowledge society today not able to cooperate with stakeholders from labour, with trade unions, workers' committees and employees? Do not numerous projects show that labour is quite capable of implementing scientific ideas into practical innovations? Do businesses not practice "knowledge management"? Do not numerous people with an academic education work in enterprises and administrations as well as in trade unions? In other words: Do we not already live in a society, in which science and labour interpenetrate each other so that cooperation is the order of the day and does not require a special institution?

Practical experiences of the "Cooperation Centres Science – World of Work" and "Cooperation Centre University – Trade Union" respectively, which will be dealt with and examined in this study, present a different picture. "Knowledge society", in which all areas generate new knowledge due to permanent self-reflection in order to reform themselves continually, can be found as a political mission statement at the best. Often, however, this term serves to camouflage inequalities concerning the access to knowledge. Practical on-site experience proves to be rather cumbersome and contradictory on closer inspection. Cooperation between stakeholders from science and labour still need an active mediation. Intermediary agencies such as cooperation centres, which act as mediators and organisers between different areas of society, are not anachronism from the last century, but quite to the contrary, they might even be forerunners of a future "knowledge society".

The question of the whole purpose of cooperation centres has been examined systematically for the first time in a research project from 1982 to 1986. "Cooperation centres are necessary, because cooperation between universities, trade unions and employees in the region needs a stable form of organisation that is able to identify the need for cooperation, to monitor cooperation processes permanently and implement the results of cooperation projects in order to improve the working and living conditions of employees." (Beck/ Feldengut 198, 62 f.). That was the résumé of the research project "Regional Opening of University Research for Employee Problems through Cooperation Centres", in which five cooperation centres were tested in practice and were evaluated scientifically. The book with the title "Regional Cooperation of Universities and Trade Unions" (DGB 1986) can be considered as a sort of founding document of cooperation centres.

The project could already draw from previous experience. Based on the fact that science is applied with increasing frequency and more systematically and hence influences living and working conditions tremendously, in the 1970s already the Confederation of German Trade Unions demanded more participation of employees and their lobby in research and development (Bamberg et al.). The first cooperation centres were founded at the University Oldenburg and

Bochum in 1974/75. Chances and barriers of science which is oriented towards employees' interests has been investigated and documented thoroughly in the context of a project with the title "Working and Living Conditions of Employees as a University Research Topic" at the University Bielefeld in 1977 – 1980 (Katterle/ Krahn 1980) and 1981).

Then in 1982 pilot projects for the establishment of cooperation centres in five university regions (Dortmund, Hamburg, Kassel, Oldenburg and Tübingen) started. Given the greater chances of influence of employers – thus the initial thesis of the project – employees need "special information and coordination instances, which take up their specific problems, articulate the need for further research, monitor research and are able to implement research results for those concerned. This was the foundation for the idea of establishing professional cooperation centres with full-time personnel as 'translators' between science and employees." (Beck/ Feldengut 1986, 20 f.) Under the direction of two colleagues from the Social Policy Department of the federal board of the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), financed by the Federal Ministry for Education and Research and the Hans Böckler Foundation, different forms of continuing cooperation between trade unions and universities on topics concerning labour have been developed and tested (ibid., 18).

As a result, some success of the cooperation centres could be identified, from which important consequences were drawn for future work. The cooperation centre managed to win the confidence of the trade unions, workers' committees and employees, and to reduce the social distance to science. This proved to be a prerequisite for transferring research demands from labour into university research. The cooperation centre was able to initiate and organise specific cooperation in several projects, through which some new advances concerning the regional working and living conditions could be initiated in turn. At the same time, working together expanded the problem perception of the researchers involved as well as their view on the object of research (ibid., 53 ff.).

For the future it has been suggested in a project report that the work of the cooperation centre should focus on discourse. It has also been proposed to organise the discussion between trade unionists and works committees with scientists of the regional university in order to further mutual understanding and to initiative cooperative projects. Clarifying the chances of cooperative science was regarded a major task of cooperation centres. "In detail this means

- to identify deficits and possible meaning of employees' problems in research,
- to point out chances of improving the quality of science through access to those concerned and through interdisciplinary reference,
- to present enhanced possibilities of implementing research results." (ibid., 61)

A cooperation centre – thus a further conclusion of the project report – should at least consist of two research assistants and one office worker; their work should be monitored by representatives of the university and trade unions; cooperation centres should not be established at the university, but rather in the area of trade unions; finally a supra-regional coordination of the cooperation centres by the federal board of the DGB was recommended. (ibid., 63).

Twenty years later the landscape of cooperation centres has changed and expanded tremendously. After the "Office of Cooperation Ruhr-University Bochum - Industrial Metal Union" in Bochum (1975), three cooperation centres that had been established in the pilot project 1986 could be transferred into aided institutions (Dortmund, Hamburg, Oldenburg). In the following years, further cooperation centres emerged with the support of the Hans Böckler Foundation so that in the year 2006 the number has risen to 20 (Federal Association of Cooperation Centres 2006; and www.kooperationsstellen-de).

With the number of cooperation centres increasing, also the concepts, functions and topics have multiplied. Depending on the local circumstances, the activities of cooperation centres have developed differently. Some have focussed on public discourse between science and labour,

others rather intensified and monitored research and design projects, yet others were more concerned with teaching and continuing education. Also the institutional integration differs. In contrast to the recommendations of the project report in 1986, most cooperation centres have been established at universities, and yet others have been organised as autonomous institutions. Some receive public funds, others rely on projects and third party funds. The personnel ranges from one established post (financed by public funds) to ten project posts (financed by third-party funds).

What is the use of cooperation centres? This question has been answered differently at 20 locations up to now, which in part differ greatly from those general systemic arguments given in the 1980s. On the one hand, this indicates the integration of cooperation centres into their regional environment, but on the other hand it also raises the question, whether there is still some common ground.

This is the problem which kept the “Federal Association of Cooperation Centres” (BAG) busy, a loose consortium with the main purpose of exchanging experience. After a joint workshop in 2001, a mission statement has been formulated, which emphasises the argumentative character of the cooperative work: “Cooperation centres expand and develop ways of thinking, freedom of action between science and labour, they organise and moderate the exchange of knowledge and experience, they further discourse about different approaches, they pick out new forms of employment and work organisation as central themes.” The broad range of cooperation work could be seen in the contributions to a joint book publication of the cooperation centres (Färber et al. 2003) as well as on the joint website in the internet (www.kooperationsstellen.de).

On the basis of empirical data, the examination at hand aims at identifying the common ground of different cooperation approaches, and at identifying what is fundamental in all diversity. This serves two purposes: Externally, towards (possible) partners from science and labour, it shall be made clear of which significance a cooperation centre can be at the interface between science and labour, which benefits and contributions can be expected. In the light of the precarious situation in which many cooperation centres are concerning finances and personnel, also support for the cooperative concept and its institutional establishment in form of cooperation centres shall be promoted. Inwardly, oriented towards the cooperation centres themselves, the report at hand shall make a contribution to the discussion about the self-concept as an intermediary institution. Certainly, the integration into the local stakeholder constellation must take place on the spot; tasks and function have to be determined by the respective cooperation centre in agreement with local partners. The system of science as well as labour in enterprises and administration are, however, structured as social sub-areas according to overall rules and regulations. Meditation activities, as conducted by cooperation centres, therefore require not only an understanding of those rules and regulations beyond the specific local practice, but also an own social positioning and role definition as a basis for the specific tasks and the establishment as an autonomous institution with a specific mission.

In the context of the study, guided interviews have been conducted in 12 cooperation centres after the analysis of written material and web presence¹. Every interview took approximately 2.5 hours. The interviews were written down and were evaluated on this basis, whereby from the material itself, categories were won that seemed appropriate for describing and explaining the functioning and logic of action of cooperation centres. The intermediate result was put up for discussion at the meeting of the Federal Association of Cooperation Centres in December 2006.

The following presentation is oriented towards the method of the ideal type that has been mainly shaped by Max Weber. An ideal type is a thought-image, a theoretical construct, in which the idea of a certain social phenomenon is manifested. What has to be understood by a cooperation

¹ Colleagues from the Cooperation Centres FU Berlin, Bochum, Braunschweig, Frankfurt/Oder, Göttingen, Halle/Saale, Hamburg, Hannover, Oldenburg, Osnabrück and Saarbrücken have been interviewed. The experience of the author has been incorporated into the study as a 13th case.

centre? What is the essence of the diversity discovered? In an ideal type, all the occurrences and processes of real life, which can be found empirically in different situations and at different times, are combined in thought into a coherent ensemble. By means of this theoretical construct the functioning of cooperation centres can be described and explained. None of the cooperation centres interviewed shows all the criteria analysed in the following; each has its own specificities and focal points. The later, however, becomes obvious when relating the individual case to the general notion. Whether the ideal type of a cooperation centre, as presented in the following, is a useful concept, remains to be seen depending on whether it can make a contribution towards explaining specific occurrences.

Only by means of a general concept, a criterion can be derived that allows to measure criticism. If the following explanations appear to be too optimistic for some readers in the light of contradictory or negative experience, it can be ascribed to the author's effort then to identify the chances of cooperation centres in order to generate a benchmark for their evaluation. Criticism based on unrealistically high expectations contributes just as little to changes as depreciation of the chances of cooperation centres would. In this respect the study at hand shall provide a foundation for the necessary debate about chances and barriers of the work of cooperation centres.

At first, the following chapter 2 describes the general tasks of cooperation centres as active mediators between science and labour. In chapter 3 considerations on the intermediary position of cooperation centres follow. Chapter 4, 5 and 6 deal with some important aspects of the functioning of cooperation centres. In chapter 8 the institution itself as an agency is discussed. Finally, in chapter 8 and 9 the social benefits for labour and science will be analysed. A short conclusion in chapter 10 completes the analysis. The systematic presentation will always be interrupted by examples serving as illustrations of the work of individual cooperation centres.

I would like to use the opportunity to thank all those who have contributed to this study, particularly the colleagues from the cooperation centres as well as Uwe-Dieter Steppuhn from the Hans Böckler Foundation. A special thanks also goes to the Hans Böckler Foundation for the financial support of this study.

2. Mediacy Tasks

Even today the cooperation of scientists and employees is no common practice, yet. In science, much has changed towards more appliance-orientation indeed; also in enterprises and administration the handling of scientific findings is no longer reserved to engineers and managers. Usually, however, employees are confronted with scientific results that change their work reality. Transfer of results, not cooperation in projects is the common link between science and labour. Still processes of common handling of problems in cooperative projects are rare (Fricke 2003). The reasons are not so much to be found among the acting persons due to structural circumstances. Science and labour operate according to different logics; practical courses of action require a different approach and a different mode of operation than scientific analysis does.

Cooperation centres consider it their task to communicate these different logics, approaches and modes of operation with the aim of establishing an active cooperation. Scientists gain a better understanding of their empiricism this way, employees gain new capacity to act. Mediation refers to all aspects of the cooperation, starting with the definition of the problem that has to be worked out, methods and ways for its analysis up to the reorganisation in practice. The mediacy tasks comprise theoretical as well as practical, communicative as well as analytical activities, research and reorganisation. Cooperation centres initiate, organise and moderate the process between science and labour.

Access

Science approaches reality from the distance of reflection. For science, reality is an object of analysis. The questions researchers are concerned with often do not arise from practice, but from scientific discussion. In these discussions research results have to prove themselves; their implementation is said to be an additional transfer problem, which more or less belongs to the world outside of science.

For actors from the world of work, however, reality often displays itself as a need for action and decision-making. They actively intervene. Many things take places as routine. Whereas permanent doubts are characteristic for science, they are inappropriate here, because they would cause uncertainty and hamstring practical action.

Cooperation centres extend these respective accesses. Scientists who are interested in a practical implementation of their results beyond scientific discourse consider the cooperation as much a contact as other actors from labour do, who strive to reflect upon and change their daily routine. Thereby the work of the cooperation centre is ideally aimed at organising a process in which actors from both parts of society communicate directly with each other. Practical problems are transferred into scientific questions, scientific results into practical assistance for action. Actors from labour are offered new possibilities to reflect upon their action and scientists get the chance of action-oriented reflection.

The "Office of Cooperation Ruhr-University Bochum - Industrial Metal Union (IG Metall)" works together with the Professorship for Information and Technical Management at the Institute for Work Science on a project about the implementation of the wage compensation collective labour agreement of the IG Metall in North Rhine-Westphalia. From the trade union point of view it is certainly interesting to find out how this contract affects the reality in enterprises and what should be improved in further labour agreements of this kind. For Work Science the project is interesting under the following aspect: How do social negotiation processes take place in an enterprise, in which each position has to be categorised anew now? Which aspects play an important role, how are results from Work Science implemented?

Course of Action

Practical action in labour is interest-oriented. Power relations and authority play a crucial role in change processes (in enterprises). Discussions and negotiations are finalized through decisions and agreements which guide and structure action. In order to gain influence here, an interest representation of trade unions and business aims at unification and joint action. Once progresses have been made, they are defended, which often seems like a controversy to outsiders.

Science on the other hand is considered to be an interest-neutral search for the truth. Here as well we may find disputes and rivalry, here as well people fight about resources. At the same time however, the scientists' interests have to hold their ground to scientific discourse, which again is obliged to the criterion of truth. S/He who wants to achieve something, needs solid arguments (Bourdieu 1998). The debate seems endless, every result is integrated into discourse, which again is questioned and analysed anew. To outsiders it often seems as if science were not able to make definite statements let alone giving advice for practice. "Es ist so. Es könnte auch anders sein." („It is like this, but it could also be like that") reads a book title from the science researcher Helga Nowotny.

Cooperation centres make both sides of the logic of action understandable to the respective other side and show their respective potential. Practical action cannot question itself permanently, otherwise it has no effect. Science must question everything, otherwise no new insights will be gained. The synthesis lies in questioning routine practices on both sides. Agreements, rules and structures in labour can be checked for sense with the help of science, in order to maintain the ability for regeneration. Science can gain precise findings about reality in direct contestation with the actors from labour.

The Cooperation Centre Dortmund deals with the increasing uncertainty of work relations under the title "Fair instead of Precarious". Increasing precariousness of occupation is a scientific topic which is discussed among the broad public, too, nowadays. The discussion is based on research results and press articles, but lacks Know-How. For trade union secretaries, workers' committees and employees, it is not clear yet what increased precariousness means for their own course of action. Who is responsible, where must one intervene? Politics needs new perspectives for courses of action, otherwise the topic remains abstract. Trade union secretaries know from experience that they rather frighten the employees, if they only describe the consequences of the increased precariousness without providing possible perspectives. Based on the daily work of trade unions and workers' committees, the cooperation centre clarifies the topic. At first, research is conducted about the various forms of precarious occupation and its regional manifestations. In the discussion about the results further steps for action are agreed upon, e.g. a workshop on the topic of interest representation in temporary employment.

Communication

In science only s/he who publishes prevails ("publish or perish"). If something is not written down, it is regarded a (preliminary) result, which may be received, cited and criticised. Only as an author, the individual person obtains a scientific identity. In science, written publications as well as oral debates are oriented towards the search for the truth, but at the same time they are also influenced by the aspiration of the scientist to establish him/herself in the scientific community and to distinguish him/herself from others. Many new terms are generated, not because they describe the issue in more accuracy, but because an author wants to assert him/herself this way against his/her competitors. This "subtext" of scientific debates usually remains hidden to outsiders.

In labour, face-to-face conversations are the decisive form of communication. S/He who wants to make a difference has to speak and negotiate with many people. S/He must achieve consensus, agreements and resolutions. Managers spend a lot of time in meetings, and workers' committees in conferences and sessions. Often it is not transparent to outsiders what exactly happens and who pursues which interest. Written notifications often become announcements with appellative character from which any form of contradiction seems extinguished.

Cooperation centres loosen up habitual communication structures. Employees engage in conversations and organise discussions, take part in meetings and gatherings, but they also publish documents. This way they gain recognition in both fields. Thus conventional barriers are crossed unconsciously. Problem-oriented contributions from actors from labour are included in written publications; scientists are integrated into informal talks.

The Cooperation Centre at the Freie Universität Berlin organises a conference on workplace health promotion. It provides opportunities for discussion. The employee of the cooperation centres organises and moderates the event in a way that allows all participants to have their say so that an exchange between science and labour takes place. The written documentation of the conference in scientific book series takes effect in the area of science. Seminars are developed for actors from labour.

Time Horizon

Science requires time to research. If a team of researchers picks up a question from labour, it might happen that in practice the prerequisites change during the course of the project so that decisions have to be made instantly without research results being available, yet.

On the other hand, many scientists themselves work in short-term research projects with third-party funds. The principals do not always come from labour themselves, but they might come from ministries, project coordinators and foundations. Thus it can happen that a project has long but been finished, once actors from labour have decided to include scientists in the change processes after political disputes.

Cooperation centres coordinate those different time horizons. For short-term decision guidance in labour, counsellors from friendly institutions are found, who proceed pragmatically and who do not conduct a project first like scientists would do. For short-term scientific projects those areas from labour are chosen which already have a clearly defined problem that fits the research question. Cooperation centres intervene most notably where problems are not defined well yet, and where questions are so new that a scientific analysis seems promising. They organise a rather long-term process of cooperation concerning a relatively broad topic from which short-term projects as well as decision guidance, long-term research and change processes may arise.

In the context of their main focus "European Integration", the Cooperation Centre Osnabrück has conducted a series of lectures with the title "Understanding Europe" for a couple of years now in order to make research results available to a broader public. They worked closely together with the teaching staff of the study programme "European Studies" of the university. Also natural scientists from two graduate study programmes were involved. In the context of a project funded by the EU, the cooperation centre organised a public debate about the EU Eastern enlargement with the aim of allowing for a substantiated opinion and to reduce prejudices. Together with the trade unions, seminars for Euro-Workers' Committees are offered. Furthermore, the cooperation centre establishes contact between scientific experts for speeches at trade union or workers' committee meetings. Following the congress "Pathways to Social Peace in Europe" organised by the cooperation centre, a forum was founded – again under moderation of the cooperation centre - which deals with social justice and poverty in the region. Trade unions, charity organisations, churches and some scientists are involved. With the help of science, concepts for the further development of local self-reports are developed. By means of conferences, speeches and statements, the forum gets involved in local political debates.

Understanding of Education

Academic teaching aims at enabling students to work scientifically. Practical competences and experience are often considered additional skills, which have to be acquired outside the curriculum.

Businesses as well as many students, however, demand that application-oriented and economically utilizable knowledge is imparted, e.g. by lectures from actors from labour in seminars or by internships. In part, cooperation centres also organise seminars to impart

knowledge about competences from labour independently. In doing so, the occupational practice is critically reflected upon and tendencies, which reduce teaching to functional workplace competences, are countervailed.

Every semester, the Cooperation Centre Saarbrücken conducts partially interdisciplinary and “credit point”-relevant seminars on different topics under the title “World of Work Competences” at the university. Students shall learn to engage target-oriented and productively and to understand labour as appreciative, cooperative, fair and integrating. First of all they shall do so by acquiring professional, economic and judicial competences and secondly by obtaining personal, social and methodological competences. Particularly in the later field of competences the cooperation centre gets involved in order to influence the social constellations and organisation culture of labour through consciously-chosen and learnt practices. They also promote diversity and work-life-balance in labour. The topics of the seminars are analytical such as “Change of the Work Society” as well as application-oriented, for example “Organisation Culture and Organisation Counselling”, “Primary Competences for Labour”, “Team Development”. Taken together, these are “Instruments for Organisation Design.”

Through the students’ feedback, the Cooperation Centre Halle gets to know from students, whom they have helped to get an internship and that competences demanded in practice are usually not taught at university. Thereupon the cooperation centre organises continuing education seminars on topics such as rhetoric, time management, presentation and moderation techniques with project funds. Because of the feedback from participating students, the seminars are continuously improved and extended towards a comprehensive programme that accompanies the internship.

Mutual Exploitation

Often the high reputation of science is strategically used by actors from labour to add more legitimacy to their own interests and demands. Scientists are invited to congresses and conferences for speeches, in which not the content, but rather the reputation of the speaker is of importance. The “scientific input” often remains without consequences; one listens and goes back to normal. Another case would be that of asking for an expert in case of a workplace dispute, an expert who represents a certain view in accordance with the workers’ committee against the employer. In this case, a discussion does not take place, either. The scientific opinion merely serves as a justification for the actions of the workers’ committee.

The opposite case also occurs: Since nowadays many project funds are only granted if the applicants prove a certain reference to practice, it is advisable to use contacts to labour strategically in order to get one’s application allowed or to obtain access to enterprises. Once one has the signature of the “social partner”, the participation of the actors from labour is often reduced to formal procedures, e.g. to the group of monitors which meets not too often, because it is hard to find a date that suites everyone. Research results are often only made known to the workplace actors once a publication is available – a process which may take months or even years depending on the circumstances.

Cooperation Centres on the other hand initiate cooperation in regard to content, in which the specific potential of both sides is respected. For that purpose a common ground is defined: Where can scientific as well as practical stimuli for action be expected? How can the cooperation be organised in particular?

The Cooperation Centre Saarbrücken supports practice-oriented projects with funds that are provided by the Chamber of Employment of the Saarland. In the context of a call for proposals, university and trade unions have, for example, chose a project from computer scientists on the topic of Work-Life-Balance. In that faculty and in enterprises close to the university, one wanted to examine how the often very flexible and long working hours – often hard to plan in the context of project work – could be made more compatible with the personal interests of the employees or free-lancers in this area. The project workers pursue a research interest that is also helpful for the arrangement of their working situation. The cooperation centre has developed the call for proposals for this project together with the partners. After the project has been chosen by the advisory council, it monitored such projects e.g. by means of workshops in which besides researchers and interested cooperation partners from labour also trade unions and the university could actively engage. The cooperation

centre got involved in building mutual understanding and appreciation for the sometimes divergent viewpoints of the university, the trade unions and the Chamber of Employment. In the case of the computer scientist project, the concern of the project workers is to promote an innovative topic of the interest representation with new instruments and methods, oriented towards the target group. The specific solutions have to be newly developed, because classical tariff and business rules in this area only apply in parts. The support of trade unions and the Chamber of Labour make it possible to transfer the solutions worked out in this projects to other enterprises.

3. Intermediary Position

In order to explain the mediative position of the cooperation centre the term “intermediary” seems most appropriate. Cooperation centres move systematically between actors in their respective areas and sectors. They consciously betake themselves into the area of conflict between social divisions of labour. Thereby structures are unclenched, contradictions are bridged and one mediates between different logics of action. Intermediary institutions act at the interfaces with the aim of stimulating cooperation, facilitating participation and activating people to introduce changes (Trier et al. 2003, 192 ff.). From this intermediary position areas of conflict result, which account for the bulk of the work of cooperation centres.

Working at the interfaces

Cooperation centres can be found where the interfaces between science and labour occur. Partly, these interfaces are visible as huge gaps, e.g. in regard to the practice-orientation of study programmes. Cooperation centres fill these gaps, for example through their activities in regard to internships or supplementary courses.

The Cooperation Centre Region SouthEastLower-Saxony at the Technical University Braunschweig proves this together with the trade union Education and Science in the restructuring process of study programmes into Bachelor and Master degree programmes in the humanities, teaching and social sciences. Since the faculties change the study programmes parallel to the studies, there are many starting and implementation problems. Together with the GEW and the student bodies of the respective faculties, the cooperation centres organises several discussions which provide space for the students to voice their criticism, difficulties and barriers and to achieve changes and improvements. Also externally, towards potential employers, it becomes clear which qualifications students with a Bachelor or Masters degree will have. The cooperation centre hence organises, also together with the GEW and the student bodies of the faculties, a road show for employers and thus contributes significantly to the public relations of the TU Braunschweig. Besides, the cooperation centre designs its own seminars on the topic of health promotion for teachers. Problems, such as the Burn-Out-Syndrome, are discussed to prepare students also for the problematic side of their later occupation and to show them options for action. The cooperation centre has been able to win an expert for health protection from the state supervisory school authority (Landeschulbehörde) as a speaker. Similarly, further seminars for the practice-orientation during the course of studies shall be developed in future.

Sometimes the gaps between theory and practice are not that obvious, e.g. if scientists speak at trade union events or if research projects work out their empiricism in labour without problems. At closer inspection, however, one often notices a lack of contention with the respective other side, the active exchange of opinions and experience. The scientists’ speeches are noticed benevolently, but no consequences are drawn. The actors of labour are interviewed, but the results of the research projects are not discussed with them. By means of discussions, workshops, working teams and cooperative projects, the cooperation centre creates a new context beyond conventional structures, which facilitates and promotes an exchange both sides benefit from.

This work at the interfaces is often arduous communicative detail work, which takes place in numerous talks with different persons at different occasions. Uncertainties of actors due to unusual challenges from a different social context are compensated by the building up of trust and an atmosphere of partnership. Every event has to be carefully planned, because there is always the danger that actors from science and labour talk at cross-purposes if they attend such events at all. This is especially true for joint projects or long-term working groups.

Every year the Cooperation Centre Hannover arranges a major discussion event (Science D@y) to which scientists, trade unionists and the public is invited. Contributions are made from science and trade unions. According to timeliness the topic is chosen by the cooperation centre together with their advisory board, which consists of representatives from the universities and trade unions. Particularly

many experts from local health care came to the event 2003 on the topic of health policy. It turned out that there is a large demand for discussion in the face of the forthcoming reforms of health policy. In the aftermath of the debates on "Science D@y", the cooperation centre was asked if individual aspects, which directly relate to the regional health care, could not be taken up in individual workshops. Together with some participants from the universities, the cooperation centre organises some of those workshops thereafter. Also a research project of the University of Applied Sciences on the topic of "Need for care of MS-patients" is included.

Independence and Interests

Neutrality and the autonomy as an intermediary institution are the necessary prerequisites so that the cooperation centre enjoys public confidence. Cooperation centres relate to the interests of employees and are hence not without interests. Neutrality does not mean political arbitrariness. As a public institution, the cooperation does, however, remain open also to other actors from labour, beyond trade unions and advisory boards. Thus the field of cooperation expands. The intermediary position can only be maintained if cooperation centres are not pocketed in the sense of legwork for this or that other institution or interest group. Cooperation centres define their specific tasks themselves in the context of themes agreed upon.

Acting neutrally is easier if a cooperation centre is publicly funded. Then it can act mediatively in an environment that is increasingly becoming characterised by projects with third-party funding. A competition with potential partners is prevented from the start due to public funding. Where the cooperation centres finances itself by means of third-party funds, an enormous amount of energy is necessary to build up project partnerships and networks which allow for a cooperation of competing institutions. Cooperation centres mobilise third-party funds for projects on questions from labour, which might not be taken up elsewhere.

Because of their autonomy cooperation centres can deliver critical statements on topical developments in research and teaching or enterprises and trade unions. This, too, is more difficult if private clients are involved, and easier if financing is provided for by public funds. In times of privatisation of universities, research, counselling and continuing education institutions, cooperation centres are an important starting point to include adversary viewpoints in public debates as well (Zeuner 2003).

Cooperation centres often take up especially those topics which are not "marketable" or which do not appear in current calls for proposals of investors. Here, too, a basic funding by means of public funds is of advantage, because particularly projects divided into small sections with the participation of actors from labour can hardly be financed by third-party funds.

The Cooperation Centre Hamburg finances its activities by public funds and can hence negotiate independently with private clients. Thus it is able to take up problems from employees and their interest representatives without having to prove in how far the enterprise would benefit from the project. The different workplace projects on the substitution of dangerous material in production and processes have been introduced in participating enterprises by the company management and advisory councils. Thereby it becomes possible to create better preconditions for later measures of adjustment.

Building the Cooperative Field

Which topics a cooperation centre deals with and which actors from science and labour participate, basically depend on the activities of the cooperation centre itself. Rarely one finds work and discussion relations that work and in which the cooperation centre can limit its activity to moderating. Normally, it is their task to build the cooperative field (cf. Trier et al 2003, 216), Usually, the first step is to analyse the situation on the spot and to identify the problems, which have to be solved in dialogue with potential partners. This includes research on the spot as well as the processing of scientific literature. In a second step different actors are addressed to arouse their interest and to find out opportunities for cooperation. If this is not the case, even the

most interesting of all subject-matters cannot be worked out. In a third step, the subject-matter is narrowed down so that it becomes operable. Depending on their respective interests, different partners can work on the individual aspects.

The field of activities is thus outlined with different local partners. Cooperation centres construct their cooperative field by balancing problems and options, their own competences and those of potential cooperation partners as well as the different interests of the actors. From this initiating function, a high autonomy of the cooperation centre follows, but at the same time also a high amount of responsibility towards partners from science and labour. Their anchorage in the region is a big strength of cooperation centres. Local particularities and procedures are the main reasons why cooperation centres differ so much.

The main topic of the Cooperation Centre Dortmund is regional structural policy in relation to labour and the interests of employees. The content as well as participating actors have to be defined first. After viewing material and scientific findings numerous talks take place with different regional actors. Only then the subject-matter can be clearly defined: the utility of the endogenous potential for structural change in an "old-industrial" region. These potentials include the competences of those employed as well as the social relations in the enterprise and region. Trade unions and workers' committees can exert influence hereunto. This is the starting point for the working group Structural Policy organised by the cooperation centre. Here actors from trade unions and other institutions or the region meet in order to discuss starting points for a work-oriented structural policy.

The primary subject-matter of the Cooperation Centre Frankfurt (Oder) is the creation of a joint labour market in the border region Germany-Poland and the enlargement of the EU. From discussions with trade unions, job centres, scientists and other regional actors on both sides of the border project, ideas are generated and then one looks for funding possibilities. So far, projects have been among others: the integration of female graduates into the local labour market, supporting the unemployed with the realisation of – usually alternative – business concepts, continuing education concerning working and living conditions in Poland and Germany as well as the compilation of respective material. The cooperation centre includes partners in its projects in several ways. Often the projects evolve in agreement with other organisations on the spot; sometimes they even apply for funding together. The projects provide financial means for discussions and conferences. Several sub-assignments are assigned to partner institutions. In the length of time, a sustainable network has been created, in which one informs one another, one engages and supports each other.

Specialisation and Versatility

Cooperative fields can only work if content and form of the activities arouse interest in participation. This, in turn, only becomes possible if the subject-matter of the cooperation is designed in a way that all participants can put forth their special competences. The "art" of the cooperation centre lies in integrating different special interests and competences into a cooperative working context.

In order to specify the topic, the employees of the cooperation centre get acquainted with the contents to a high degree. Getting scientists to cooperate requires a competent appeal. The topic is to be reformulated in a scientific way – regarding the respective scientific and special disciplines – to be able to talk to scientists on an equal footing. On the other hand, the practical relevance of the topic is explained to understand the course of action and parlance of the actors from labour, and to communicate which specific targets shall be met. Constructing cooperative fields inevitably demands specialisation and the setting of priorities for the work of the cooperation centre. Too much specialisation and professionalisation, however, bears the risk that the ability of taking up current topics and needs and including them in the cooperative field gets lost. The dilemma is: if a cooperation centre does not show enough professional competence, it is not taken seriously. If its competence is broadly accepted, it might get limited to the respective topic and lose other problems out of sight. Hence cooperation work permanently requires balancing between specialisation and versatility, between absorption and broadening of one's competences.

An employee of the cooperation centre at the Technical University Berlin, originally an engineer, has become acquainted with questions of energy technique very well. His opinion is appreciated at the university; he even discusses special questions with professors. Now and then, however, he notices that his discussion becomes very technical and that he relates to labour less and less. At the same time new topics for the cooperation centre arise, which have to be attended to as well. That is why he turns away from his special topic and takes up further topics, which he has to become acquainted with again.

Commitment and Dissociation

A similar balancing act is necessary between commitment and dissociation (Elias 1990). Science requires a certain distance from the object in order to examine it with appropriate methods. Personal feelings and social obligations should be avoided or at least controlled. Distance is necessary to maintain the autonomy of science not to become a means of external aims, but to search for new findings with controlled methods, whereas if one wants to get things moving in labour, one has to show personal commitment. Labour is characterised by power relations and political controversy. Those who just watch and do not get involved run the risk that others will decide over them. Not neutrality but partisanship is in demand, particularly concerning interest representation in the field of trade unions and companies.

The employees of a cooperation centre want to make a difference in practice and become actively involved. An additional lobby would, however, be not of much use to actors from labour. They need somebody who takes a look at their practice from the outside. Maintaining the distance and approaching things from a neutral point of view - that is exactly the contribution of a cooperation centre.

In science, an employee of a cooperation centre is only considered to be someone if s/he can maintain the distance to practice and his/her autonomy of thinking. The cooperation centre must not be suspected of being a mouthpiece of the trade unions. But neither would an additional post for a scientist be helpful for research and teaching. What is needed is somebody who has deep insight into practice and can thus only be won for the cooperative work if s/he is provided with the opportunity for own experience and commitment.

The cooperation centre gains credibility if it is competent in topics relating to science and labour without becoming associated with the interests of one or the other side. Topic-oriented work allows the cooperation centre to address a broader audience and thus open up new space for the active discussion between actors from science and labour. A cooperation centre must not act as a lobby, but on the other hand, its work might get stuck in a fruitless discussion if it is not connected to the activities of actors from labour.

The dilemma between commitment and dissociation cannot be dissolved; the cooperation centre has to deal with it. In spite of all commitment, one always looks for some distance, though, in order to take a critical look at the practice. In spite of all scientific dissociation, one always looks for opportunities to participate in practical processes of change without which no deeper insight into labour would be possible.

The Cooperation Centre Saarbrücken furthers “meta-communicative” conversation situations, which help to explain the needs and views of science and labour in regard to closeness and distance to partners in order to further mutual understanding. The actors from labour and trade unions often wish for a knowledge that supports decisions and engagement for trade unions or knowledge that furthers the operationalisation of organisational policy, which can be integrated into their organisation. In contrast, scientists emphasise independence of research, knowledge and teaching in context of the ethics canon and respect the distance to the views of cooperation partners (from labour) concerning organisational policy and lobbyism. They further knowledge which may be challenged again and again. In some critical cases – where there is the danger of exploitation from the point of view of

science or where there are not enough adaptable findings from the point of view of trade unions – the cooperation centre actively approaches the actors in individual talks as to create a fruitful basis for mutual understanding and thus also for tolerant cooperation. One example for the need for talks, which was caused by the demand for trade union commitment on the one hand and scientific dissociation on the other, was the speech of a critical ethics scientist at the Saarland University, which had been organised by the cooperation centre: The scientists held a dedicated speech against the current policy of cutting-back the welfare state. With his unambiguous statements he enthused the trade union representatives, who felt affirmed in their criticism of the government. Some of the scientists in the audience, however, looked at each other dumbfounded: How can someone dare to take sides so openly and lobby with his statements? That is no longer science, but political speech, which they did not expect here and which they would personally oppose here. After this common experience, the cooperation centre tried to initiate some talks again to further understanding. It would be harmful if the cooperation centre would defend one side in these talks. The cooperation centre shows that it acts between the cooperative worlds.

Becoming Renown as an Institution

For structural reasons it is difficult for a cooperation centre to make its intermediary work known as such, and to distinguish itself as an autonomous actor between science and labour. The work of the cooperation centre aims at constantly integrating new partners and to animate them to become active themselves. A well-working cooperation centre results in a broader range of possibilities for courses of action in labour and findings in step with actual practice on the side of the scientific cooperation partners. In the results, the cooperative work disappears and is accredited to the partners from science or practice if the cooperation centre does not manage to present its mediary role as an autonomous contribution.

Furthermore cooperation centres usually only consist of one to three employees, who are identified with the institution as a matter of course. The institution as such remains unclear in its profile. Staff and focuses change and therewith seemingly also the identity of the cooperation centre. Neither does a supra-regional comparison help to make out the characteristics at a first glance, because cooperation centres orientate themselves towards very different local conditions in their activities.

In order to be perceived as an autonomous institution and to better judge its own effectiveness, cooperation centres have begun to evaluate themselves by first describing their processes and aims, and then to develop measures and success criteria. As recent experience shows, this is a precondition for the evaluation of cooperation centres by external evaluators. Traditional scientific criteria – number and ranking of publications, dissertation, postdoctoral lecture qualification, number and quality of the final theses supervised, raising of third-party funds – can be named as well as economic and political criteria from practice. Criteria and measures for the work of the cooperation centre are rather on the discursive level, for example:

- In how far does the cooperation centre succeed in organising a broad exchange of experience and a process of discussion?
- In how far does the cooperation centre succeed in promoting the cooperation of regional actors from science and the field of work?
- In how far does the cooperation centre contribute to the establishment and maintenance of regional networks?
- In how far does the cooperation centre help to generate new courses of action and new findings through its own project?

The Cooperation Centre Hamburg has organised an internal and an external evaluation in the context of the establishment of a quality management system over three years. In the context of the introduction of a quality management system, all aims and work processes are described in great detail. Core as well as supportive processes are defined and presented, means and measures are agreed upon and criteria for evaluation are developed. The cooperation centre has been certified according to EN ISO 9001:2000 for four years now.

To distinguish itself for the outside world, the cooperation centre relies on strategic public relations. Besides the announcement of events, flyers and letters with invitations, some cooperation centres also regularly issue a newsletter, in which they report from their work. Others send out newsletters via email. On the internet, the cooperation centres can be found with their own homepages, of which you get an overview on: www.kooperationsstellen.de. These independent public relations efforts are all the more important, because cooperation centres can seldom report spectacular events that are of interest to the local press. Thanks to their good contacts to journalists, some cooperation centres, however, have managed to be get into the news more often, e.g. with the announcement or report of events in the local press.

The Cooperation Centre Dortmund sends out a "Cooperation-Info", a quarterly, to about 900 persons and institutions to inform them about the current activities of the cooperation centre.

Further enquiries on particular articles show that the content is taken up by the target group. These 12 years of experience demonstrate that cooperation centres can gain visibility or remain present in one's mind. For a couple of years, the cooperation centre has been running the internet offer www.werkstadt-dortmund.de It has been developed by the employees of the cooperation centre together with scientists and trade unionists. Above all, the website informs about topics of the cooperation centre. Hence it further develops as those topics are taken up. Moreover, information, discussions and hints are given. The website combines information with discussions and activities of the individual actors (from trade unions and science, from politics and initiatives) in the region. Although it takes a lot of time and effort to keep the content updated, checking all links pays off as the growing number of internet users shows. The website is used for information purposes as well as a forum.

4. Cooperative Knowledge Production

Cooperation centres are not content with transferring existing knowledge into the practice of labour or practical knowledge into scientific contexts. Cooperation centres see themselves as a sort of factory for the production of knowledge. They organise a process of dialogue and reflection in which actors from science and labour jointly work on generating findings, which are relevant for practice and science. Thereby both sides learn from each other, and scientific as well as practical knowledge is incorporated into the process. Both parties “step outside their respective context for a certain period of time and make the situation accessible for them in a joint process of learning and action” so to speak. “They communicate about the initial situation, the objective, methods to be applied, the evaluation of the result and about the organisation and monitoring of the implementation process. Each of them thus learns and takes this new knowledge back with him/her to his/her respective system of reference.” (Fricke 2003, 39) Through their work, cooperation centres bring forward an understanding of methods, according to which knowledge is produced in dialogue.

Initiating Function of the Cooperation Centre

Starting point of a cooperative knowledge production are problems from labour. Often they are not very obvious so that the cooperation centre has to explore the field first and has to define the problem and look for adequate partners for the problem-solving. In order to win scientists for cooperation, the problem has to be defined in all its scientific terminology, in which only rarely the borders of the individual scientific disciplines can be taken into account. By initiating and organising processes of knowledge production, cooperation centres fulfil an important initiating function in the transition from science to labour or vice versa.

Cooperation centres take up problems, define them and reformulate them in a way so that the cooperative process becomes apparent. As cooperation centres point out the practical implementation of their findings in cooperation with actors from labour, they arouse the interest of scientists. New insights into practical processes are a crucial appeal for cooperation. On the other hand, the cooperation centre shows actors from labour a perspective, of where they are heading, e.g. how practical work could be improved by means of cooperating with scientists and which new findings can be expected.

Against the background of a political discussion about the privatisation of the water supply in Berlin and Brandenburg, the Cooperation Centre of the Technical University Berlin takes up the topic “Sustainable Water Management”. First of all, research is conducted together with the Centre for Cooperation and Consulting for environmental issues (kubus). Then the preparation of a conference at the university follows, to which not only scientists and trade unionists are invited, but also representatives of the city and from water management. In the run-up already the conference caused a stir at the university, because here a research topic was about to become politicized. Previously research and teachings on water had not touched upon the topic of privatisation. The conference itself provides a lot of information and a broad range of opinions. A very vibrant discussion evolved, particularly between the trade unionist and the professors of the university. The conference is documented in a book. Now it is imperative to draw practical conclusions from the debates. The cooperation centre narrows the topic down to the question of regional water supply in Berlin and Brandenburg. A better cooperation of the numerous water works could create a balanced supply and jointly build up new supply structures. In the aftermath, the cooperation centre and ver.di representatives discuss these topics with diverse actors.

The Cooperation Centre as a Knowledge Factory

If the interest in cooperation has been raised on both sides, the next step is to create an appropriate frame for concrete cooperation processes. Cooperation centres organise a sort of knowledge factory, i.e. a place where knowledge is produced and processed. Usually, at first

some joint workshops and other forms of discussion without any compulsion for action evolve. One exchanges experiences and different views. The problem is rendered more precisely and its processing is divided into different steps. Intermediate results are discussed and specified. Also Continuing Education events of cooperation centres are often designed in such a way that it is not one party that lectures while the other one learns. It is rather about joint learning and bringing together scientific and practical knowledge.

Not seldom the cooperation centre undertakes the task of describing a topic as a project, i.e. as a project limited in time with a restricted number of qualified persons, resources that can be named and a specific objective. Even if no third party funds are to be raised, this step aims at a structured cooperation. In certain circumstances, the project development could also result in a project application for money-lenders.

The employees of the cooperation centre further structure the process of knowledge production by creating the surrounding conditions (coordinating appointments, sending out invitations, providing adequate rooms), preparing the discussion regarding the content (setting the agenda items, attuning the sections so each other), moderating meetings and conferences (welcome speech, introduction, collecting requests to speak and questions, taking notes and visualising ideas) as well as writing the minutes of the results and preparing them for further activities.

Normally there is little time for workshops and working team meetings. Cooperation centres hence keep in contact with the diverse actors, also in order to maintain some information exchange between the meetings. Working results are then integrated into the joint discussion by the cooperation centre and new questions arise. Groups concomitant to the projects, steering groups and similar practices, which are implemented in many projects, but which often suffer from the surrounding conditions or a lack of structure, are transformed into vibrant forms of cooperation by the cooperation centre, transformed into factories of cooperative knowledge production.

Together with a professor, the Office of Cooperation Ruhr-University Bochum / Industrial Metal Union held several workshops for workers' councils and the management of a car manufacturer. In the light of the acute threat to the location due to the global strategy of the company, possibilities of innovation were discussed in the automobile industry. The professor analysed the global competition in the automotive industry and brought in his knowledge about innovation management. Workers' committees and confidants contributed their knowledge about the production processes and the employees' qualifications. In the end, the employee's representatives were able to counter the management's argument that only the cheapest locations will survive by pointing out possibilities for innovation and new market opportunities ("better instead of cheaper").

Action Knowledge

In the different processes, which are organised by the cooperation centre, scientific as well as practical knowledge accumulates. Typically this knowledge is bound to perspectives on further action, which is why it can be called action knowledge. Cooperation centres consider it their responsibility to edit such knowledge systematically and to provide it for those who are interested in it. In doing so, different forms of media are used. In scientific publications – brochures, handbooks, anthologies – different aspects of a topic are highlighted. In speeches, employees of cooperation centres provide an overview about the problem and the cooperative problem-solving. Collecting different contributions on the topic at hand from science and labour by means of links on websites already can be a worthwhile contribution by the cooperation centre to the discussion.

Over the period of five years, the Cooperation Centre of the Technical University Berlin has edited a series of smaller projects and events on operational environmental protection for the website "oekoline.net" together with further publications. The website provides action-oriented information for workers' committees and the employee committees. Through links and the collection of further documents, an information and communication platform on environmental protection has evolved, which, as a project, will be finished in this form by 2005, though.

In the course of time, employees of a cooperation centre gain a lot of experience with initiating, organising and moderating cooperation processes. This methodological knowledge can be viewed as a kind of “cooperative knowledge” and be presented accordingly provided that such experience is edited, e.g. by means of regular self-evaluations of the cooperation centre, through which its activities are described and evaluated. Cooperative knowledge will then be provided as a counselling service, as guidelines or a methodical handbook for external prospects. Through the federal working committee of the cooperation centres, local experiences are exchanged and generalised.

The Cooperation Centre Hamburg has been entrusted with the task of analysing barriers in the handling and steering of project consortiums with partners from different countries by the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry of the EU-Commission. From there a handbook shall be developed, which can provide support for further projects. The cooperation centre is said to be particularly eligible for this task, as it has conducted and successfully steered several international projects with different partner institutions itself. The cooperation centre knows from its own experience which problems can evolve in the cooperation in international projects.

5. Processes, Networks and Projects

It is one of the particularities of cooperation centres that they arrange long-term cooperation between actors from science and labour, and – if possible – even initiate an autonomous process of cooperation. In such a project, manifold forms of dialogue and cooperation are practiced and linked to one another. Ideally, the cooperation develops from simple forms of information and experience exchange into permanent partnerships and networks. The process is complemented and deepened through individual projects, in which a restricted number of persons work on a certain project for a certain time. The questions of such projects often develop out of a long-term process; project results are then taken up in the process again.

Long-dated Processes

Cooperative work needs some stamina. The mediation between two such different social fields like science and labour, the bridging of interfaces and overcoming opposition are long-term processes, which require a lot of patience and endurance. Cooperation centres practice different forms of dialogue and cooperation, ranging from small discussions, workshops, conferences, symposiums, panel discussions, lectures, seminars and study groups to the screening of movies, readings and galas. They are complemented by written publications, lectures and internet presence. Sometimes also research is done, which not rarely results in cooperative projects.

The form of dialogue practiced depends on the resources available to a cooperation centre and its local surroundings. On the other hand, the procedure also depends on the target group, the topic and the stage of the cooperation process. By inviting to discussions, the cooperation centre reaches many people, who at first only want to listen. Those interested additionally get the opportunity to work on some aspects in a rather action-oriented workshop. Ideally, participants are recruited this way for a working group, which deals with analysis and the development of problem solutions and its implementation in the long-term. From the discussions of the working group, certain topics can be consolidated for joint projects, on which some participants work in more detail. The cooperation centre is that institution which has the right feeling for what is possible and necessary. They know the target group and which kind of event appeals to them most. They know how certain topics can be approached best and when the form of the events should better be changed. They can also evaluate best when certain topics have been discussed enough and possible action can be taken up; they elicit where the demand for further research is and where a new project could be initiated. And finally, cooperation centres present the results from discussions and research in a way that also actors from science and labour who have not been involved can take them up.

From a process originally intended to provide for an exchange of experiences and opinions, a permanent, topic-related cooperation between different actors develops - first in the way that individual activities are coordinated, but then also in forms of development partnerships, in which partner institutions develop and implement joint projects. Networks evolve, which sometimes even function independently, i.e. without the mediation of the cooperation centre.

The more intensive the cooperation, the more trust develops between the participants. At the same time, joint knowledge is generated. Hence the cooperation becomes more and more concentrated on a certain group of people, which has the advantage that they know and understand each other. A possible disadvantage might be that others, who are interested and have good ideas, could feel excluded, because they do not have this kind of "insider knowledge". The activities of the cooperation centre are oriented towards opening the process of cooperation again and again in order to attract new participants and integrate other experiences and new ideas. Projects are accompanied by public discussions, workshop results are documented and possible prospects for working groups are approached.

The processes themselves are designed in a reflexive way, i.e. there are always phases of consideration and discussion about the respective form of work in between so that things can be changed if necessary.

Together with a local ver.di-Secretary, the Cooperation Centre Dortmund established a working group „Call Centre Talk“. As found out in first talks and in research, the main problem of call centres is the regulation of working relations. The classical trade union approach on ensuring good working conditions has had little success so far. The cooperation centre addresses different people who deal with the work in call centres: trade unionists, workers' committees, employees, but also employees of research, counselling and continuing education institutions as well as the city's business development. At first, the exchange of experience was the main concern, e.g. breaks when working in front of a computer display, the salary structure or a participation-oriented work organisation. First approaches for cooperation between a university project on health promotion and the employee committee evolved. Together with the cooperation centre, a scientist conducted a research project on gender relations in call centres. The intermediate results as well as possibilities for action and its barriers in the enterprises involved were discussed in the group. From the joint discussion, the idea arose to further deal with the working atmosphere. The cooperation centre takes up this idea and implements it in a project for which third-party funds from the European Social Fund can be raised. In the context of this project, different aspects of social relations in enterprises are discussed in a series of working groups for workers' committees and human resource managers. Those from practice get a number of explanations for their problems, and in part even possible solutions are discussed. Scientific theses are specified and in parts also falsified in the discussion. The employees of the cooperation centre evaluate the workshops by formulating new topics, which have proven to be of general interest in the discussion, where scientific and practical approaches complement each other. These topics are further dealt with in the aftermath.

Broadening through Networks

The spatial expansion of the cooperation work can best be described as network work. Social networks are based on voluntary interaction of those involved, which differs in its intensity – that is what makes it different from organisations with definite membership rules and obligations concerning contributions. Networks differ from market exchange, because interaction is characterized by personal relations and reciprocity. The work of cooperation centres aims at bringing together different actors from the local scientific community and the local world of work and to link their activities. In interaction and relations of exchange, cooperation centres create a cooperative field.

In order to find its intermediary role, a cooperation centre has to determine which actors pursue which goals, who the acting persons are, which competition there is between them and which alliances they form. Joint topics are defined in dialogue. The cooperation centre then looks for connecting factors in its surroundings. The employees participate in existing networks, take part in conferences, meetings and conventions to establish contact and to keep in touch.

Different institutions, initiatives and persons, who might not have any linkages with each other, are included in discussions and the exchange of experience due to the working forms of the cooperation centre, which is based on dialogue. Time and again, the cooperation centre provides new possibilities to make contact and build up relationships. The networking partners thus gain the opportunity of viewing their activities in context, of developing new views in discussion with others, or realizing commonness and differences so that activities are adjusted and a concrete cooperation develops at certain points.

By means of written information and personal talks of the employees, the cooperation centre sees to it that there is also an exchange between the meetings. This way the cooperation centre becomes the crosspoint in a topic-oriented regional network, where everything comes together. As crosspoint and central office, it becomes an attractive partner for further institutions and projects outside the network, precisely because it is able to establish contacts quickly and effectively through its network and to organise exchange processes.

The work of networks takes time and requires working capacities. Due to its informal and long-term character of the establishment of contact and keeping in touch, the success of such activities is hard to be measured. For the networking partners themselves, the participation in network meetings often seems to be of secondary nature in comparison to meetings where decisions are made. The network appears to be rather diffuse compared to an organisation with fixed objectives. Cooperation centres hence also regard it their responsibility to point out the advantages of networking always anew: They enable the institutions and initiatives involved to extend their sphere, not by means of a joint strategy but rather by means of adapting to the actions of the respective other.

The project "Knowledge Transfer Association" of the Cooperation Centre in Halle is integrated into a network of various institutions, which deal with internships for students – from student representatives to student counselling, the employment agency, counselling and continuing education institutions as well as enterprises in the region. A lecture series on different trade union and work related topics shall encourage the dialogue between students, trade unions and workers' councils in the future. A University Information Office of the trade unions has been established so far and some counselling is already offered.

The Cooperation Centre Hannover is active in a network, which aims at making public the documents and research results about the workers' movement in Hannover from the archives. On the one hand, the project "Maintaining" was initiated by a trade unionist from an education institution, who had already collected many documents. On the other hand, there had been a number of research projects at the university, particularly in the 1980s and those involved also had many documents at their disposal. The Cooperation Centre organised a circle of institutions close to trade unions as well as various persons and institutions from science and regional archives in order to get an overview about what already exists in the archives on the topic of workers' movement. First, the inventory is viewed and an overview in form of a brochure is provided. Thus further prospects can be won. Moreover, the circle conducts various discussions on the general topic of "Archive Conversations". This way, a network of persons and institutions developed, which all deal with the history of the workers' movement in Hannover.

Deepening through Projects

The cooperation process is always narrowed down to specific questions, which are dealt with in a project - by the cooperation centre or others involved. Generally, a project is considered an intention, which is "characterised by the singleness of the conditions, e.g. set target, restrictions due to time, financing or personnel, differentiation from other intentions, project specific organisation." This can be a research project with the aim of gaining knowledge as well as a project with rather practice-oriented aims. Projects of cooperation centres typically aim at combining both.

Projects offer the possibility to include also those actors into the cooperation process, who want to work on a certain problem selectively and who cannot be won for a long-term cooperation. Project groups working outside the cooperative context on the other hand, not seldom develop an interest to discuss their experience with others and to reflect on results in a scientific or practical context. The cooperation centre offers different possibilities for that. This way, the cooperation centres integrate projects into the process of cooperation and stimulate further networking of the actors.

The Cooperation Centre Saarbrücken has been tasked with driving forth two to four projects on work-related topics each year. The Chamber of Employment provides funds for this. Moderated by the cooperation centre, its advisory board consisting of representatives of the university, the chamber of employment, trade unions, the University for Applied Sciences of the Saarland, the Minister-President's Office (Staatskanzlei) and the Ministry of Science determine the main topic for the next year. A small steering committee consisting of all close cooperation partners – prepared and moderated by the cooperation centre – develops a tender. Based on this, the cooperation centre sends out the research tender to all university members eligible for research. Incoming applications are viewed by the advisory board; the researchers are heard in a selection session and two to four projects are chosen for funding. This way, the cooperation centre takes a leading role in approving and accompanying the projects. Often, these projects are practice-oriented, e.g. on the organisation of "Work-Life-Balance in Enterprises" or "The European World of Work in the Inter-region Saar-Lor-Lux ". But projects can also

be solely focussed on research. The cooperation centre attends to the ongoing projects and integrates them into a discussion context. Often the projects thus become the starting point for a final joint publication of the cooperation centre and a long-term cooperation.

Sometimes employees of cooperation centres even participate in the project acquisition and processing directly. This particularly holds true if a cooperation centre gets (additional) project funds. Hence the role of the cooperation centre changes. In addition to mediating and moderating, new tasks in research and processing arise. It is characteristic for projects of cooperation centres that they are designed for participation in a cooperative knowledge production, i.e. the research objects become co-researchers, the scientists also take on responsibility for the implementation of the results. In order to maintain the intermediary character of its work, cooperation centres always include further actors into monitoring circles, discussions and publications.

Due to numerous discussions with workers' councils and trade unions, the Cooperation Centre Hamburg deals with the topic of replacing hazardous substances in enterprises. After first research, the need for scientific support was identified. It turned out that there are no "big scientific questions" to be answered. There are rather problems with innovations on the "medium level": A lot has to be altered and organised in a new form so that a substitution can be found. Natural scientists at the universities cannot be won for such questions. The cooperation centre hence decides to conduct a project in this area itself, for which funds from the environment programme of the European Union can be raised. The project work comprises visits to the enterprises, counselling, providing information, scientific research, the awarding and monitoring of individual studies, presentations at fairs and conferences. At the end of the project, one has results that have been tested in practice and one has gained experience with cleaning substances based on vegetable oil. In many enterprises, vegetable cleaning substances have been introduced in the context of this project. Results and experience are collected in a handbook in order to make them available for other enterprises. In a follow-up projects further enterprises are included. A third follow-up project that aimed at building a data base for enterprises who are interested has been successfully concluded and extended to other branches.

6. The Subjective Factor

Cooperation work can rarely resort to tested routines or formalised procedures. Due to the complex assignment of tasks, always new and unplanned situations occur, new topics are to be defined and new persons need to be included. Cooperative work is primarily based on subjective, individual skills of the employees regarding improvisation and structuring new situations as well as on their interpersonal skills. Cooperative processes are usually open in regard to the result; possibly the success can only be seen in the long-term. Without a certain degree of trust in the partners of the cooperation centre, such work would hardly be possible.

Informal Relations

The communication and cooperation of the employees of the cooperation centre is usually of informal character, frequently they are based on personal contacts. Informal talks at a conference are often more important than requests to speak at board meetings. The informal, however, is everything but coincidental. Sometimes they are based on longsome and laborious efforts. The members of cooperation centres make themselves familiar with the different milieus, the approach to work and manners in science and labour. They participate in discussions and events ranging from academic colloquia up to trade union demonstrations. They learn to judge which informal processes take place according to which unsaid rules. They know whom to talk to in order to achieve something. Through experience a sort of intuition develops that tells you what something depends on, how you have to behave in this or that situation and in which language you have to speak. Cognitively, this “habitus” (Bourdieu) can only be acquired to a certain extent. Primarily it develops through active participation, through entering the respective milieu.

This time-consuming way, cooperation processes are initiated, common interests are identified and interfaces for joint activities are defined. Main topics and projects of the cooperation centre develop from the active participation in board discussions, but just as well out of informal processes of the partner institutions and numerous talks with individuals. An active listening, watching and analysing of the environment in science and labour is an important element of the cooperative work. Based on this, decisions and attempts are made and by and by new fields are defined and projects are designed.

The activities of the cooperation centre remain open and can be corrected by the influence of the partners. Also their integration is conducted not so much through formal monitoring bodies but rather in the context of personal contacts and work. The employees of the cooperation centre establish and maintain contacts – knowing well that the success of their work as an intermediary institution depends on feedback, comments and modification proposals from the cooperation partners.

The events of cooperation centres are designed in such a way that besides moderated discussion they always take the level of informal relations into account. In a relaxed atmosphere, every contribution is appreciated and every person is accepted, even if s/he asks “stupid questions” or has a different opinion. Seemingly trivial things such as a round of introductions at the beginning of a workshop or the moderation of a discussion, which sees to it that everybody has his say, can play an important role for the success of the intention. Furthermore, time and again, cooperation centres create new possibilities for informal talks, e.g. in breaks at a conference. Often the best ideas develop here. The events of cooperation centres are places of encounters.

The Cooperation Centre Osnabrück has been organising an “Osnabrücker Evening” following its annual conference. At conferences with a tight schedule – thus the experience of the cooperation centre – participants do not have enough time and space for talks which are not on the agenda. That is why the cooperation centre had reserved a room at a restaurant and provided the opportunity for a joint dinner after the official conference programme. Over the past years it has almost become something like a

tradition. Here people have the chance to talk to each other, to address things, which have been missed out during the conference, to meet people, whom one has only shortly met in a working group, etc. For the cooperation centre, this evening also provides the opportunity to see how participants liked the conference programme and what needs to be improved. Even a project idea, which has later been implemented with trade union partners from the Netherlands, developed from such evening talks.

Person-bound Competences

Due to the uncertainty and complexity of its tasks, the work of the cooperation centre very much relies on the individual person and his/her individual competences – in more than one respect. Most of the times, cooperation centres recruit employees who have in one way or another gained experience in science as well as in labour. The specific skills for an intermediary activity are usually only acquired during the work at a cooperation centre. Since there is no specific job description, let alone an education or an additional training for the work at a cooperation centre, the employees develop their profile independently by getting acquainted with circumstances on the spot and through discussions with partners. Since this is experience-lead knowledge, the acquired skills contain a high degree of implicit knowledge, which can not explicitly be passed on to another person.

The topics a cooperation centre deals with, in which intensity they are worked on, and which partners take part, very much depends of the commitment of the employees of the cooperation centre. Where there are no rules, routines or guidelines from a boss, one has to be creative – which again requires the identification with the work. The members of a cooperation centre literally adopt the tasks as their own and regard them as personal challenges. But at the same time, they have to be able to recognise the limits, so as not to overburden themselves.

The surroundings of the cooperation centre and its partners only get a picture of the institution if there is appreciation for the employees who work there. At first, this appreciation can be seen in the fact that the respective person is considered “one of us”. But the specific skill of the employees of the cooperation centre is to make a contribution to science or labour, although simultaneously belonging to the other context. They know what is important in the respective context, how you have to behave in this or that situation, which language you have to speak – in short: They have the “practical sense” (Bourdieu), the ability to behave appropriately and resourcefully in their environment. At the same time, however, in the respective context they address things from the respective other context in the “right” language in a given situation. In the length of time, sustainable personal relations to the different partners in the surrounding of the cooperation centre develop.

Cooperation, which is based on personal contacts, might be more vulnerable than factual and formalised forms of cooperation. Personal animosities, misunderstandings and disappointments can cause major disturbances. That is why cooperative work also always takes place on the relational level, the attempt to address cooperative relations independently in order to avoid conflicts or to deal with them at the right moment. Problems naturally also occur if personnel at the cooperation centre change. Every new employee starts from scratch so to speak to acquire personal competences and gain appreciation in his/her surrounding.

The Cooperation Centre Oldenburg aims at organising discussions, in which workers’ councils and scientists from the university can involve in an exchange. In order to arouse their interest, the topics have to be oriented closely towards the practice in enterprises and trade unions. The employee of the cooperation centre holds many conversations, visits trade union events, board meetings, workers’ council meetings and works meetings. On the other hand, he also keeps himself informed about current projects and focuses at the faculties and chairs of the university. Only if he knows both sides, he can define interfaces for topics which might be worthwhile for an exchange and possibly even for cooperation. That is why, for example, an event on problems of an internet-based administration for local government is conducted. Trade unionists and workers’ councils take part who are in charge of the local administration as well as scientist who deal with e-government. Thus a working group develops, in which specific questions are jointly discussed, e.g. data protection for employees. The personnel

boards receive proposals and directions for their work as interest representatives and scientists gain more insight into their field of research. This is only made possible, because the employee of the cooperation centre takes some time for such searching processes, even if their profit is not guaranteed from the start. The success depends on the commitment of possible cooperation partners on the one hand. On the other hand, it also depends on the personal experience and competences of the employee of the cooperation centre to arouse interest and to encourage participation.

Trust

For the partners, the cooperation with the cooperation centre is always a kind of experiment. Usually topics are taken up, for which there is no tested procedure. Beyond regulated ways, something new is tested – without knowing which tools are used and whether the objective can be achieved. The partners rely on it that the employees of the cooperation centre not only work according to what has been agreed upon, but also that they make decisions in unplanned situations in the common interest of everyone involved.

In return, the cooperation relies on its cooperation partners by always breaking new grounds, which always bear the risk of failure. Relying on it that mistakes are being criticised, but that they do not threaten the cooperation as such and that the intermediary position is accepted and that the cooperation centre is not pocketed, the employees of the cooperation centre set sail.

Most of all, trust develops in the context of long-term cooperation, in which partners get to know each other and learn to appreciate one another. Besides the personal abilities to “enter” the respective milieu and to develop a “practical sense” for the respective environment, mandatory action plays an important role. Trust develops if things, which have been agreed upon, are kept. If decisions are to be made, they are made by the cooperation centre in the “interest” of the agreement. Should something be opposed to it, it is being discussed with the partners. Controlling the respective process is hardly possible and hence mutual obligations are of high importance for the functioning of the cooperation. Ideally, the cooperation centre meets some interest in science and labour already, because it is already known for its sincerity and reliability.

The Cooperation Centre in Frankfurt (Oder) finances 98% of its work by project bound funds. It differentiates itself from other regional project participants in that it is capable of organising a cooperation of scientists and trade unionists. Regarding the trade unions, this becomes possible, because they trust the cooperation centre to act in the interest of the trade unions, it is regarded as “belonging to them.” This trust is based upon the experience in former cooperation projects. It is essential that the employees of the cooperation centre do not only work in the interest of the respective money source, but also in the interest of the actors involved from labour and from science, who shall profit from the projects. Sometimes trade unionists demur they lose influence on the (at times) numerous projects, but this is put into perspective by the trust into the competences and the interest of the project workers, to take up trade unions concerns autonomously.

The Cooperation Centre Saarbrücken has supported a continuing education measure in which 15 professors and other lecturers of the law faculty gained some knowledge about counselling skills in judicial vocations. The cooperation centre supported this continuing education seminar financially with money from the chamber of employment in the context of the research projects on continuing education and helped to choose the top-class speakers and actively accompanied the seminar. The background is that students increasingly have to acquire key qualifications for the appropriate contact to clients besides professional competences according the current Judge Law in order to work out cooperative judicial solutions while including the clients. This cooperative continuing education measure has been made possible, because during the course of time a trustful working relation between the cooperation centre and a particular law professor developed, who has also been appointed to the advisory council and the standing committee of the cooperation centre. In the context of the allocation of project funds of the cooperation centre, his application on the topic of counselling competence, too, has been granted. The continuing education seminar took place in the context of this approved project. The competent monitoring of the project by the cooperation centre and the trustful relation that has been built have resulted in an employee of the cooperation centre being responsible for individual parts in a jointly established lecture “Negotiation” during the summer semester in the Bachelor study programme Economy and Law. It is a prerequisite for such a cooperative involvement into research and teaching of new study programmes that the cooperation centre can prove its professional competences in

communication, counselling and organisation skills. For her own skill enhancement, the employee of the cooperation centre has taken part in a measure on the topic of systemic coaching and counselling parallel to her occupation for several years. The formal certificate of such skills and the trust that has been built through working together allow the cooperation centre to competently support the continuing education measure mentioned above for professors and to arouse the interest of professors and scientists in the work of the cooperation centre and to integrate itself as a competence institution into lectures and seminars on key competences.

7. The Cooperation Centre as an Agency

Cooperation centres do more than maintaining and supporting the cooperation of actors from science and labour. They play an active role in cooperative knowledge production. That is why cooperation centres are called intermediary agencies, which systematically move between other institutions in order to stimulate activities and cooperation in different areas of activity. (cf. Trief et al. 2003, 179 ff. and 203 ff.).

The Organising Core

The work of cooperation centres is oriented to detect the existing local potential of different institutions, initiatives and persons from science and labour, to bring them together and to let them take effect in cooperation. This requires permanent research. Who is competent in regard to topic X, who works on which aspects, who would be interested in an exchange of opinions and in cooperation? Besides universities and trade unions also other institutions, e.g. from continuing education and counselling, citizens' groups and local politics, churches and charity are considered.

The scattered knowledge that exists is brought together by different means. In the context of a conference, for example, one discusses different views on a topic controversially while simultaneously mutual thought-provoking impulses are given. In working and study groups, certain questions are worked on more intensively under the moderation of the cooperation centre. During the course of time, sometimes a network of actors develops who coordinate their topic-related activities with each other and develop joint activities. The cooperation centre functions as an organising core here. It is the place where everything and everybody comes together. Also it is the cooperation centre which always brings in reflexive elements into the joint work by initiating discussions and making them available to a wider public.

The Cooperation Centre Osnabrück has become the organising centre of a local association for social justice, which consists of citizens' groups, churches, charity organisations, science and trade unions. The association developed after a congress on social peace in Europe, which had been organised by the cooperation centre. Afterwards a call for proposals was published which asked to jointly deal with the problem of growing social inequality and its specific local characteristics in order to find starting-points for counter-steering. Series of lectures and poverty conferences (with more than 100 participants each) were organised. By purposefully addressing further people who are interested, the association was extended to a local network. It is the task of the cooperation centre to prepare the discussion in regards to the content as well as to organise the meetings and the events. The association even manages to engage in the local election campaign by prompting the top candidates of the parties to give their opinion at a panel discussion. A group of unemployed people organised an exhibition "Making Poverty Visible". The attempt that had been made a year before to establish concepts for focussing social news coverage on poverty reduction and prevention in Osnabrück and which failed, shall be taken up again. For this project, scientists from the university and the university of applied sciences must be won.

Cooperation centres have taken the initiative in regards to a rapprochement of students and trade unions at different places. Many university information offices of trade unions were established in recent years with the active support of the cooperation centre. University information offices offer counselling for students in regard to labour legislation concerning their status as employees in internships and side jobs. Further partners in such networks are the student advisory service and student representatives. The cooperation centre ensures that their specific competences in regards to the student organisation and additional qualification are taken into consideration as well as the interest representation of the university. Cooperation centres consider it their responsibility to build such networks. Moreover, they make contributions to the discussion concerning study contents and how they relate to practice as well as the ability to positively respond to criticism. For trade unions this is often still a new territory, but quite soon in the network it becomes clear that their contribution is needed and appreciated.

Since the Cooperation Centre Region SouthEastLower-Saxony sits at the Technical University Braunschweig, it can give hints to trade unions where to begin in order to get into contact with students. Particularly student employment, be it in form of side jobs or internships, is a topic to which trade unions can make contributions and offer their support. The Industrial Union IG Metall founded a university information office. One of its tasks is to look into the topic of internships with a group of students. It has become clear that there is a need for counselling in regards to labour legislation for students in jobs or internships. At the same time, the DGB-Youth started the Online-Counselling project "Students at Work" at the Technical University. The counselling is offered weekly at the shop of the university information office on the campus of the Technical University Braunschweig, and bit by bit it is established at other locations of the university partners. After the IG Metall project university information office, the employees of the cooperation centre and the university try to maintain the university information office. Further trade unions got involved. A university information office shop is established as a joint contact point of the trade unions on campus. The cooperation centre accompanies this process. It considers it its own task to integrate topics of labour into the curricula of study programmes.

Project Development

Depending on local circumstances and agreements, cooperation centres have made it their business to develop projects to a different degree. Partly, they work on the projects themselves, and in parts the work is done by other cooperation partners. Projects are integrated in a long-term process of cooperation.

Concerning the project development, one can basically differentiate three different ways. First of all in the process of cooperation certain problems are identified which should be dealt with in more detail. The core of the problem is identified and integrated into a question that can be worked on. This is an independent step which is either conducted or supported by the cooperation centres. If cooperation centres themselves grant funds – as is the case in Saarbrücken – one can transfer the work to another institution by means of a call for proposals or assignment. Then other partners in the network do this or the cooperation centre itself in order to carry out the project.

Secondly, it happens that actors from labour approach the cooperation centre with a suggestion to examine this or that problem more closely. Only rarely can the cooperation centre name someone at once who deals with or might be willing to deal with this topic scientifically. Here too, translation and mediacy are demanded in the sense that the problem has to be more closely defined and described before it is formulated in such a way that it might arouse the interest of prospective partners from science. Finally, also the question of financing has to be taken into consideration and be negotiated.

Thirdly, the cooperation centres observe calls for proposals from potential money sources and evaluate them. If there is a relevant call for proposals, the cooperation centre either informs potential prospects and offers to accompany the application or it files an application itself, which shall enable the work of the network to become even more intensive by means of the project.

Ongoing projects of the cooperation centre are integrated into the process of cooperation again and again; their intermediate results are put up for discussion in the network. Projects, which can always only deal with an extract of a given topic, are being made ready for follow-up activities and other projects. New questions and new approaches for action for practice can arise from such an ongoing discourse.

For years, the Cooperation Centre at the Technical University Berlin has offered a well-attended seminar for students of engineering with the title "Sociology of the Profession of the Engineer", which enables students to critically reflect upon their later professional practice. In the context of discussion in the seminar it turned out that the majority of students do not only have a job during the free period, but also have a permanent job during the semester parallel to their studies and that this already corresponds in great parts with what they will do later as engineers. A first survey of workers' councils by the cooperation centre shows that working students are integrated into the working processes to a large extent, however, with a "salary" that is by far lower than that of their salaried colleagues. At the

university itself, the risks (students have less time for their studies) as well as the chances (practical experience of implementing the knowledge gained in seminars) are not taken up. The cooperation centre conceptualises a representative survey of students, which is conducted as a project by scientists at the University Dortmund. Together with the cooperation centre, the project officers integrate the results into the discussion of enterprises, trade unions and universities.

The Cooperation Centre Göttingen agreed with the trade union ver.di to initiate a discussion on regional logistics economy. Considering its importance for the regional economy, this branch of the economy has not received the attention it deserves - neither in local politics nor from trade unions, which are still rather organised according to the classical branches transport, conveyance, storage and parcel service. The cooperation centre could win over a student who conducts some research. The report which results therefrom serves the local ver.di sections as a basis for discussions about a re-structuring of their work. The next step would be now to conduct a joint analysis, on the basis of which a qualified statement from the employees' point of view could be brought into the emerging local political debates.

Institutional Integration

Cooperation centres are usually not autonomous units in the legal sense, but are organised as a sub-division of a bigger unit. This is usually the university, within which the cooperation centre can be designed differently, though: as a central facility or as an administrative department, as part of a bigger transfer facility or centre for continuing education, affiliated to a chair or as part of an institute. The cooperation centres which have been newly founded in East Germany since the mid-1990s are institutions of supporting associations with members from science and labour on the basis of cooperation contracts of the respective university with local trade unions. After the initial financing by the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, they get their funds mostly out of project-bound third party funds.

The respective institutional integration of the cooperation centre has consequences for its positioning. A cooperation centre, which is integrated into a centre for continuing education of a university, orients its work towards aims and goals of the overall institution. It seeks cooperation with actors from labour foremost in the field of continuing education.

The Cooperation Centre of the Free University Berlin developed, because a colleague from the centre for continuing education had made it his business to cooperate with trade unions. In 1983 a cooperation contract with trade unions was placed. The cooperation centre works within the context of the centre for continuing education, i.e. it must seek acceptance in the field of continuing education. This is possible as long as there are enough lecturers at the university, who seek contact to labour themselves and who conduct seminars for employees and workers' councils with the help of the cooperation centre. Today, one hardly finds those lecturers any more and the cooperation centre cannot provide those offers alone. It has specialised on certain topics, such as health management at work, which is of interest to both sides.

A cooperation centre, which is affiliated to a chair, is active in academic teaching with the aim of integrating views and problem backgrounds from labour into seminars and lectures. Being part of a research institute, the cooperation centre is evaluated according to its contribution to the research profile of the institute. With cooperation centres which have to maintain their financial resources by means of third-party funds it is yet a different matter. They focus on making acquisitions concerning research and design projects which relate to labour.

Concerning their institutional integration, the cooperation centres respond differently to their task. Some exceed the range of tasks of the overall institution, of which they are a part. As described above, intermediary action at the border between science and labour is an autonomous task, which comprises elements of research and teaching, continuing education and design, but which is not limited to this. In some respect, cooperation centres complement the range of activities of the respective institution. But they can also be perceived as a foreign object. In addition to that, they are often only successful in the long term so that their success might not become visible in short projects. It is not always easy to justify the special features of a cooperation centre and its existence.

Cooperation centres financed by third-party funds integrate intermediary tasks into their work plan by involving different actors into their project. This, too, is no easy task in the face of the scarce financial resources of most projects. The acquisition of third-party funds further bears the problem that one has to compete for funds with institutions with which one has cooperated in previous projects. Agreements and project partnership can help to avoid futile competition.

The accomplishments of the cooperation centre cannot be merchandised in the same way as e.g. mission-oriented research or counselling services. Viewed strictly economically, the cooperation centre will not “pay off”, because its contact persons in science and labour are economically not potent enough. Cooperation centres need political support to accomplish their intermediary role.

For reasons of profile establishment and appreciation from externals, cooperation centres also conduct an active self-description and self evaluation combined with public relations besides their work in regards to content. The integration into local networks procures appreciation from many partner institutions, initiatives and persons. A broad participation of actors from science and from labour in the activities of the cooperation centre is the most important indicator for its institutional integration and appreciation.

Most cooperation centres are politically and content-wise supported by an advisory board or by an association with representatives from science and labour. They represent the cooperative idea in their own organisations and in public. Their membership in various other bodies allows them to also advocate the cooperation centre there and to promote its specific tasks.

The Ruhr-University Bochum has appointed a so-called appointee for the Office of Cooperation Ruhr-University Bochum - Industrial Metal Union IG Metall, who represents the interests in all bodies of the university as an ordinary professor. Besides that, there is also a colleague in the administration of the board of directors of the IG Metall, who undertakes this task for the trade union side. This way, the cooperation centre gets tied to the structures of the supporting association while simultaneously maintaining the necessary autonomy for its daily work.

8. Benefits for Labour

The contribution, which cooperation centres can make for labour, often only shows in the process of cooperation. Usually cooperation centres do not offer direct counselling for practice; its activities are situated at a level before that, namely the level of discourse about problems and possible solutions. Cooperative work depends on the active participation of actors from science and labour. This presupposes that actors from labour not only take some time and make some efforts, but that they are also willing to engage with a certain degree of insecurity or uncertainty. It is the nature of science that secured findings, which can directly be applied, do not automatically arise from cooperation. Cooperation centres see it as their task to turn such uncertainties into something constructive in the sense of thought-provoking impulse and seeing new chances for action. By means of the knowledge produced during the process, the daily routine is reviewed again and again in order to recognise chances for innovation. Cooperation centres get involved where innovation in labour is demanded.

Knowledge-intensive Services

The service of the cooperation centres is called knowledge-intensive, because it generates new problem solutions by applying knowledge. At the same time, the experimental character, which is far from daily routine, causes a certain precariousness about the kind and amount of such services. A great deal of a knowledge-intensive service cannot be described in the forefront, but is only defined in the process of conduction in interaction with the cooperation centre and its partners. It is typical for knowledge-intensive services that the later users are integrated into the planning and production already, which is why cooperation centres often bring together more than one partner institution and actor.

As described above, the range of activities and the specific tasks of a cooperation centre are negotiated and defined anew in cooperation with partners from science and labour. Seldom one can determine the need from external observation of the field. Just as seldom do actors from labour approach the cooperation centre with a specific problem. The demand for services rather develops in active interaction with the respective actors. By participating in discussion processes within the partner institutions, the employees of the cooperation centre are able to define those issues which ask for the services of a cooperation centre.

The Cooperation Centre Dortmund conducts a scientific monitoring for the sector of the Industry Trade Union Construction-Agriculture-Environment (Industriegewerkschaft Bauen-Agrar-Umwelt, IG BAU). According to the interest of the members, the tasks and procedures of workers' councils shall comprehensively be defined as soon as possible. In site groups, ideas for the content and form of the work of site groups were collected. The draft for a "Guideline for Site Groups" ("Leitfaden Betriebsgruppenarbeit"), which was presented by the cooperation afterwards, was put up for discussion and revised. The guideline "Assets on the Spot – the Site Group of the Industry Trade Union Construction-Agriculture-Environment" ("Aktivposten vor Ort – die Betriebsgruppen der IG BAU") was accepted by the federal committee and is published as a brochure. First experiences of the site groups in the region Bochum-Dortmund shall be exchanged in the aftermath of a further workshop.

Such services are only possible because the members of the cooperation centre enjoy so much confidence that problems can be talked about openly. The employees of the cooperation centre "belong to them" and are regarded to be parts of labour. On the other hand, they stir things by breaking with routine and pointing out problems and making suggestions for their joint handling. This, too, is only accepted and not misunderstood as political intrusion if there is a trustful relationship.

If a joint plan is implemented, it changes according to the circumstances and participating actors. The cooperation remains a permanent negotiation process, in the course of which the accomplishment of the cooperation centre and the composition of the group of partners changes.

He who breaks the mould, always runs the risk of causing new problems, which could not be foreseen. There is also always the risk of failure. Besides making contributions to problem solving, the cooperation centre analyses the process itself, questions its approach and makes suggestions for corrections if necessary.

The project "Knowledge Transfer Association" of the Cooperation Centre Halle arranges internships in enterprises in the region for students of the local university. In discussion with student representatives and trade unions, one addresses the fact that a successful internship requires the development and implementation of certain quality standards. From the point of view of trade unions, workers' councils would be the appropriate contact persons in the enterprises. Together with the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB), the cooperation centre thinks of conducting events for workers' councils now in order to sensitize them for the interns' problems and to start thinking about how to design a good internship and how interns can be attended to in enterprises.

Once the cooperation process has gained a certain steadiness and consistency in regard to the actors, some recurring services are standardized and then also offered to other "customers". And still one finds the interactive element of knowledge-intensive services. The activity of the cooperation centre is always consulted with the users and adapted to changing needs.

The Cooperation Centre at the Technical University Berlin designs the internet presence for regional trade unions. This service developed from joint workshops and conferences in the 1990s. Today it is almost routine, but at bigger events they still conduct workshops.

Furthermore, during the cooperation process the need for services, which can be carried out by third parties, develops, e.g. when a continuing education measure shall be conducted. If its content can sufficiently be described, the cooperation centre can refer to the offer of existing institutions. The cooperation centre can then confine itself to its mediary role. Almost the same holds true for counselling services.

Social Innovation

Innovation means something new; a new idea is implemented into practice. Without implementation into new products or procedures, ideas and inventions remain theory or prototypes at the best. Although an innovation does not even have to be totally new in the strict sense, the value of being new rather refers to the local context of the respective actors. Something which might already have become a routine in context A, might actually be an innovation in context B. In this sense, cooperation centres stimulate innovation in practice by cooperating with science. Usually these are social innovations, i.e. new ways, new forms of organisation and new regulations, which are capable of solving problems better than previous practices. The productivity of social innovations depends on human creativity. This is exactly what a cooperation centre is about: facilitating creativity through mutual stimulus from science and labour, by bringing together knowledge from science and from practice for new ways of problem-solving.

On the one hand, cooperation centres view themselves as service providers, who allow for a science-practice-dialogue in the sense of knowledge management and as moderators. They also perform a critical role in that they design the cooperation as a reflexive process in which means and ends are put up for discussion again and again (Roßmanith 2003, 255 ff.) Innovations are possible if scientists engage in specific problems from practice and if actors from labour question their own practice and are willing to jointly analyse it. Science offers them the opportunity to embed their activities in a larger context, to systematically rethink them and to search for new ways.

In a working group organised by the Confederation of German Trade Unions (DGB) and the Cooperation Centre Göttingen one found out that small and medium-sized businesses are a little antiquated concerning certain innovations, particularly in regard to new forms of work organisation with the participation of the employees.

This way, social innovations become the common objective for actors from science and labour. The cooperation centre arranges the cooperation of scientists, who are interested in transferring their ideas into innovations, with actors from labour who in turn are interested in going new paths. The cooperation centre organises the process which makes this possible.

Usually, the activities of the cooperation centre go beyond moderating but comprise an active and constitutive role. For example, cooperation centres process the scientific discussions so that they get manageable for actors from labour. In brochures and on internet webpages, at information events and presentations, they give thought-provoking impulse and point out options for action. In continuing education events, not only theoretical knowledge is given, but mutual learning becomes possible. Event series provide the opportunity to question changes which have begun to get implemented.

In a series of continuing education of the Cooperation Centre at the Free University Berlin on workplace health promotion, participants from an enterprise have already declared that they are willing to implement changes in the operational procedures during the course of the seminar.

With its project "Knowledge Transfer Association", the Cooperation Centre Halle fills a gap in the regional innovation concerning student internships in regional enterprises. Results from Regional Science show quite clearly that the economy in Eastern Germany has its difficulties, because there is a lack of academic, skilled labourers. The ability for technical and social innovation is underdeveloped. Graduates migrate to the West. Ways to change this drawback have hardly been discussed. The University Halle concentrates on academic education to a high degree, but for the transition into vocation there are hardly any methods of resolution so far. One way discussed in Halle would be the establishment of a career centre at the university. The cooperation centre shows students employment possibilities by means of internships in local enterprises and provides first experience in the hope that more graduates get an orientation of the regional labour market und that enterprises can better evaluate the skills of the graduates.

Cooperation centres play an active role in such projects. Their work is measured against the success of the practical changes that they cause. In order to generalise the social innovations which have been achieved, speeches are held at conferences or continuing education events are conducted. By such means of generalisation, the cooperation centre can have an effect on the science system in turn.

9. Contributions to Science

Generating scientific knowledge typically takes place in social distance to the rest of society. In independent institutions, scientists decide among themselves whether a new finding can be recognised and secured. A general knowledge about nature and society is produced, which requires special transfer activities when it is transferred back. This dichotomy - science here, the rest of society over there – has become fragile in recent decades, though. By now, scientists switch over to integrate the later implementation context more into their work. The cooperation centre makes crucial contributions to such a contextualisation of science in regard to labour.

Society is still characterised by inequalities, i.e. not everyone has the same opportunities to have a say when it comes to scientific research and teaching and the innovation which depends thereupon. Cooperation centres make a contribution to the democratisation of science by giving actors from labour the chance to bring in their point of view into the discourse.

Contextualisation of Knowledge

The work of cooperation centres starts where science takes up the context of the application of their own results into the process of knowledge production in order to produce knowledge suitable for practice, which does not only prevail in the laboratory or in scientific discussion, but also in the practical implementation.

Cooperation centres establish the dialogue with actors from labour who do not only use the results from science themselves, but also actively engage in the process of science production. This usually takes place at conferences and discussion events. Scientists are often surprised when trade unionists and workers' councils relatively quickly refer the respective topic to questions of safeguarding and creating jobs. For scientists, this context is rather of secondary nature, for actors from labour, however, it is of utmost importance. On the other hand, the practitioners get thought-provoking impulses on those occasions, which open up new dimensions of the topic. Some lecturers purposefully use the events of the cooperation centre to initiate a discussion with a broader audience. Their scientific activity is enriched by the knowledge about the circumstances under which science is transferred into practice.

At a conference of the Cooperation Centre Osnabrück on the European Unification, scientists gave presentations about sub-issues of the extension process. They had to realise then, though, that the majority of the audience questioned the extension as such and that some flatly opposed it. They argued that the "cheap workers" from the East endanger jobs in Germany. Many of them have their own experience with off-shoring or East European colleagues who work for half the wages. Political science has widely ignored those questions so far, but its solution will be crucial for the implementation of their results.

The presentation of scientific results in front of a wider audience provides a challenge for many scientists. How to explain the status quo of research to laypersons without oversimplifying so much that it is no longer scientifically tenable? How to convey a "message" while at the same time presenting the contradictions and uncertainties which characterise science? The members of the cooperation centre support scientists in coping with such dilemmas. Particularly natural scientists willingly take up this offer.

In research, practical knowledge is not regarded as inferior, but as a necessary supplement of scientific knowledge. Research and practical innovation often blend into each other. Cooperation centres create the necessary framework by bringing together practical and scientific knowledge in projects and organising the joint work. In contrast to conventional research projects, researchers and the cooperation centre take responsibility to actors from labour. They participate in the implementation into practice beyond the publication of their research results. For scientists, this means that they have to adopt a different working attitude, not only watch the real process, but also to intervene.

The practice of labour is pervaded by different interests, and on a political level it is characterised by negotiation and contention. Science, which wants to produce results which are suitable for practice, must take this into consideration. Cooperation centres help scientists to organise a discourse with actors from labour. They allow for a reflection on the scientific process as well as for the formation process in practice and for the engagement of practitioners in scientific projects.

Researchers from Work Science, who deal with the ergonomical design of cockpits in airplanes, approached the Cooperation Centre Oldenburg and asked to establish contact to a trade union expert to join the project. The background is that they did not dare to measure and contain the noise level with scientific methods in such a way that pilots would not perceive it as a strain and an obstruction. Practical knowledge about the daily work is necessary to correctly assess real impositions. Knowing that such a topic is always very controversial between employers and employees, both sides wanted to participate in the development.

The engagement of cooperation centres in academic teaching is oriented towards establishing a reference to practice. This happens in different ways. Cooperation centres find speakers from labour for ongoing seminars or lectures of lecturers who are interested. The objective is to stimulate a dialogue between students and the actors from labour so as to connect academic teaching and practical experience. Cooperation centres clarify the expectations of those involved and support speakers in their preparation. Sometimes employees of the cooperation centre themselves become speakers in order to extend the discussion by means of examples from practice. Cooperation centres offer seminars at some universities, often in cooperation with actors from labour.

Cooperation centres support students in regard to their orientation for their later field of occupation. At information events, occupational perspectives are presented and discussed in cooperation with actors from labour. In addition to professional skills, which are still the main focus of university education, students need skills to evaluate their chances on the labour market, to behave versed in the enterprise, to get an eye for hierarchies and power relations, to represent their own interests, to qualify themselves independently, to practice solidary action and so forth. Cooperation centres impart those skills for labour by including practical knowledge into their seminars in different forms. Trade union secretaries are of special interest for those offers, because they can give a broad overview and insight into the daily work.

At the same time, cooperation centres always stimulate a critical reflection from occupational practice. The simplified opinion that that one just has to be qualified enough and that the job would be safe then must always be put into perspective again. The ability to critically question one's own occupation and the circumstances in the enterprise is also part of one's working skills. Adaptability is only one aspect, co-determination and creation skills are the others. In cooperation with actors from labour, cooperation centres already integrate them into higher education.

The Cooperation Centre Hannover invited the workers' council to a discussion in a business studies seminar. The seminar had the title "Economy of Participation". For the purpose of science, the professor took up questions of efficiency and effectiveness, costs and benefits in his seminar. The workers' council and trade unions are considered to be factors, which cause or help to save transaction costs, and which help to shape the production processes according to efficiency issues or prevent this. These institutions want to be: the lobby of salaried employees is not dealt with, is considered a problem of economic studies. The employee of the cooperation centre knows, however: Every business economist, who comes into an enterprise with the knowledge gained in the seminar, will be surprised that workers' council represent other interests than the management does, that negotiations are not always about the most efficient solution, but about achieving a compromise between different interests. The cooperation centre could win the workers' council over to present its work in the seminar. Knowledge from business studies is thus embedded in a realistic context. Furthermore, the cooperation centre offers enterprise visitations, particularly for students in the middle of their studies, who want to get some orientation regarding their later profession. In the context of such visits, talks with the management and workers' council take place in order to convey a realistic picture of the occupation.

Democratisation of Science

In contrast to traditional science, which is only interested in pure research, according to Max Horkheimer it is characteristic of critical science that it takes the development process into account as well as the objectives, for which their findings are used. Cooperation centres encourage critical science by establishing a relation to society, in the context of which, science happens with the aim of democratisation. Contrary to the inherent necessity logic, processes in society are considered changeable actions and results of action. Cooperation centres integrate science into public debate, starting with the selection of what is considered in need of explanation, methods and techniques of research and the implementation of the results.

Cooperation centres get involved with the opening of universities and other scientific institutions for a broader audience, particularly from labour. Seminars and lectures are, for example, open to guest auditors. Some cooperation centres create their own calendar of events, in which they point out those events, which could be interesting for actors from labour. Guest auditors are a stimulatory element in academic events if they propose their point of views.

The Cooperation Centre Göttingen regularly publishes a brochure, in which lectures and seminars from the university are listed which could be interesting for trade unions and workers' councils. These are mostly seminars and lectures from the fields of industry sociology, work psychology, labour legislation and business informatics, which are open to guest auditors. The cooperation centre pre-selects and is available for further questions, but besides that it refers to the respective lecturers, whom those interested can contact directly. The brochure is disseminated among trade unions and students. The offer is only taken up by relatively few trade unionists and workers' councils, but symbolically it is very important, because it shows that science is not a closed society, but that it deals with questions from labour and that they invite practitioners for discussions. For specific lectures, the cooperation centre has systematically invited trade unions speakers in agreement with the respective lecturers. Together with a group of scholarship holders from the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, a model on the topic of participation with materials and indication of possible speakers has been developed and used. It is offered to lecturers of different faculties so that they can use it in their seminars

At conferences and series of lectures, cooperation centres put scientific topics up for debate. Often these events are created in such a way that scientists as well as actors from labour are involved as speakers. This requires thorough preparation in order to harmonize mutual expectations and possibilities. Desired controversies are moderated so that knowledge discrepancy does not lead to deadlocks. ("That might be the case in your company, but that is not right" or "In practice, matters look different, you are not in the position to evaluate things.")

Contrary to the general tendency to express public opinion almost solely via media today, cooperation centres with their events allow for direct communication between science and the public. Beyond science devoutness or science adverseness, which are often at close quarters, cooperation centres try to arouse interest in science and to provide a realistic picture of its opportunities and limits. Science benefits from that, because in direct discussion with lobbyists they specify their questions, range their results and last but not least also prove their relevance to society.

Dealing with an interested public entails the embedding of scientific topics in a political context. Participants of discussion events refer the content of special departments to their personal situation, interpret research results with regard to their living situation and ask questions based on the background of their specific interests. The mediation of the cooperation centre consists of making such references possible by pointing out the political relevance of a given topic to the scientific speakers in the course of the preparation of the event and by helping them to design their presentation accordingly. On the other hand, they point out to actors from labour that and how the topic refers to their questions. Eventually, the employees of the cooperation centre allow for an open debate by means of moderation so that all contributions can be put forth equally.

If it turns out in such discussions that certain problems from labour are not sufficiently taken up by science, events of the cooperation centre can also aim at confronting science with questions

from the public. Scientists thus get new impulses for research. The discussion with practitioners strengthens the critical function of science by counterbalancing the tendency of only taking up questions of economic use in mission-oriented research. Often it becomes clear that themselves scientists are unsatisfied with their academic role, too, which is why they seek access to political discussions and social movements.

The Cooperation Centre Oldenburg conducted several events under the general topic of “Science-Practice-Dialogue”. This creates a frame for a discussion between scientists and actors from labour. The events were organised and moderated in such a way that both sides had an equal say. The events took place at the university, workers’ councils were invited to discuss their topics with scientists. Thus reservations were reduced and space for common experiences in the discussion was created. Workers’ councils realized that their experience could also be interesting for science and that they are not simply asked to fill in questionnaires, but also to present their topics. Practical experience complements scientific knowledge and vice versa. On certain topics, e.g. working hours policy, there are further conferences dealing with particular aspects of the topic in more detail. The university becomes the contact point for industrial lobbies. On the other hand, scientists get to know workers’ councils as competent dialogue partners. The questions raised in the events of the cooperation centre and the discussion on them - for example the issue of working hours – are of great importance to researchers, who want to come up with practical results. For teaching staff they provide a pool of practical examples, which can help to make their content more clear.

10. Conclusion

What is the use of cooperation centres? After analysing the cooperative work in all its different facets and local peculiarities this question can be answered more precisely.

Science and labour are still different social fields and their actors act according to different rules and logics. If employees or their lobby reflect upon their practice and are willing to change by not only absorbing science, but by actively engaging in its production and findings, they go beyond their own routines and daily life. Scientists, too, achieve their aims to gain an appropriate understanding of labour and to produce practice-oriented knowledge only if they change classical methods and procedures. A cooperation centre, which is “at home” in both fields can contribute to scientific findings and practical change by creating an awareness of the differences, by taking it up in discourse and by mediation.

Due to its positioning between labour and science, cooperation centres play an intermediary role. They are engaged in both social fields without taking over one or the other way of doing things. They work at the interface in order to overcome it. Through their work they create a new frame, which transgresses the traditional limits. They allow for a conscious reflection upon the differences and their mediation in the process of cooperation.

In the last 20 years, cooperation centres have developed into agencies, which take the initiative themselves and which define and implement their service anew again and again in cooperation with potential partners. The strength of cooperation centres lies in the fact that they detect potentials on the local level, that they mobilise actors and initiate processes. This way, science is referred to a local context and the practice of labour is connected to general knowledge more easily. In the process of cooperation - organised and moderated by the cooperation centre – applicable, scientific knowledge develops, which can cause practical change and at the same time be taken up in scientific discourse.

The wide spectrum of activities of the cooperation centre, the variety regarding the content and the different approaches are due to the local reference of the cooperative work. Depending on the circumstances on the spot, cooperation centres define the fields of work and their focus after consultation with local partner institutions. The skills of the individual employer are demanded here to get acquainted with local conditions, to integrate into the respective milieu and to work for a respectable reputation. In this difficult intermediary position, cooperation centres depend on their employees to emphasize the chances of the cooperation between science and labour, to develop implementation suggestions and organise processes of cooperation. At many places stable networks have developed due to the work of the cooperation centre, in which always new projects develop.

Discursive work approaches are characteristic of cooperation centres as intermediary agencies, ranging from discussion events, conferences and future workshops to cooperative research projects and seminars. It is always about bringing together different actors from science and labour and about facilitating an active dialogue. Through its initiating, organising and moderating activity, the cooperation centre allows for a discourse of “two worlds”, which rarely communicate directly in every day life. Based on this, a form of cooperation in projects is stimulated and organised, which ideally develops into a network.

Furthermore, cooperation centres also conduct projects themselves or offer seminars and other continuing education events. This happens most notably if a particular topic shall be approached in a new way. Cooperation centres raise third-party funds for projects on questions from labour, which might not be taken up otherwise. The spectrum ranges from detailed research, regional measures on employment promotion and operational innovations to applied research. These projects have in common that they are designed cooperatively, e.g. organising a discourse between science and labour, integrating actors from labour into scientific work and integrating

actors from science into practical change. Projects are embedded in a long-term process of cooperation.

Today it has often become a pure necessity due to lack of resources that cooperation centres raise funds for projects. But convincing donors of cooperative projects is still very difficult. Topics from labour are often not "marketable". The work of the local dialogue, which is divided into small sections, can hardly be presented as differentiated projects. Moreover, continuity can scarcely be secured if one is forced to work on different projects due to resource requirements. If employees leave the institution after a project has been finished, the cooperative knowledge that has been gained is lost. A minimum of secure existence of the institution and its employees is necessary to conduct the business of raising third-party funds on a continuing basis.

Trade unions and the Hans-Böckler-Foundation have initiated cooperation centres at many places and have made their foundation possible by means of some start-up financing. The basic idea from the 1980ies is still valid today: The founding and maintaining of cooperation centres is a public responsibility. Cooperation centres are an instrument for the strengthening of the social responsibility of science. It is their task to counterbalance the partial exertion of influence by economically powerful groups by creating the prerequisites for the engagement of the broader public in the production of knowledge.

For this reason, the cooperation centre and its local partners strive towards acceptance and funding as a public institution. At places where this has been achieved, one notices that the potential that has been described so far unfolds much better. On the other hand, in the public sector the pressure to justify one's own work has increased tremendously in recent years. Cooperation centres are on the right track to cope with these demands to describe and evaluate their work. The purpose of this study would be met if it could make a contribution to giving the public a better understanding of the characteristics of cooperation centres, their tasks, functioning, success and its conditions.

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Hans-Böckler-Foundation

The Hans Böckler Foundation deals with co-determination, research and the support of students on behalf of the DGB, the Confederation of German Trade Unions. It was founded in 1977 from the Foundation Participation and the Hans-Böckler-Association. The foundation promotes participation as a principle of democratic society and advocates the extension of opportunities for co-determination.

Co-determination and Counselling

The foundation informs and gives advice to members of workers' councils and personnel boards as well as to representatives of employees in the board of directors. They can approach the foundation with questions concerning economy and legislation, human resource management, welfare or continuing education. The experts also give advice concerning new techniques or operational environmental protection and safety at work.

Institute of Economic and Social Research (WSI)

The Institute of Economic and Social Research in the Hans Boeckler Foundation (WSI) is a policy research institute which undertakes academic analysis of issues of practical relevance to industrial relations. Its work covers a wide range of issues, from globalisation, employment and institutional change to work, distribution and social security, industrial relations and collective bargaining policy.

Macroeconomic Policy Institute (IMK)

The objective of the Macroeconomic Policy Institute (IMK) in the Hans Boeckler Foundation is to strengthen the macroeconomic focus in economic analysis. The IMK combines empirical macroeconomic research and economic policy advice and regularly publishes forecasts.

Research Promotion Program

The Research Promotion Program specifically grants research assignments on co-determination, structural policy, labour society, the public sector and the welfare state. It focuses on those topics, which are of interest to employees.

Scholarship Fund

As the second-largest scholarship fund in Germany, the foundation helps to overcome social inequality in the education sector. It promotes students who engage in trade unions and social policy and PhD students by providing scholarships and non-material assistance, for example seminars and practical work placements as well as supporting periods abroad. It supports graduates from second-chance education.

Information Service

Every two weeks, the Hans Boeckler Foundation's information service accompanies the current political debates in the areas of labour, economy and social policy. The magazine "Mitbestimmung" (Co-determination) and the "WSI-Mitteilungen" (WSI-Newsletters) prove up-to-date information on topics from labour and science. The homepage www.boeckler.de provides a quick access to its events, publications, counselling services and research results.

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