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## Who can you trust?

# The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees (TCO) and trust-based working time 1950-1970\*\*

This article aims to provide a historical perspective to the emergence of trust-based control systems in the workplace. These systems are often seen as a response to increased flexibility requirements following the progress of digital technology, globalisation and an increased knowledge content in production. In contrary to this opinion, it is argued in the article that the phenomenon has much longer historical roots. Based on a theoretical discussion of the concept of "trust", the article discusses the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees, TCO's, approach to working time regulation in the 1950s and 1960s. Through a discourse analytical approach, the article demonstrates that professional employees felt that trust-based elements were important in their professional identity. They were people that you could trust!

**Key words:** trust, professionalism, identity, industrial relations, time management (JEL: J00, K31, M54, N30)

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## Introduction

The framework that previously regulated the content of work, as well as when, where and how it would be conducted, is being under reconsideration in the working life. The Swedish labour market is going through a process of individualization, and as a consequence legislations, regulations and agreements between parties are progressively of lesser importance than before. In order to understand the relationship between the professional employees and employers and the perception of how their work performance is measured and controlled, we argue that the point of departure needs to be based in concepts such as trust and trustworthiness. This study aims to provide a historical perspective on this process by studying the impact that "trust" and "trustworthiness" had on the Swedish labour market already in the 1950s and 1960s. In the article we rise the question whether trust based working time regulation should be seen in a perspective of continuity or as something qualitatively new. The premise of this article is that this discussion could be extended by the realization that trust as a regulatory system is of a much older date. Some individuals and groups have for long enjoyed more trust than others to manage their working time. In this article, we discuss qualified professionals as such a group.

Unsupervised work conducted in a task-oriented context is not an unusual phenomenon; indeed, work generally contains some element of trust. In the overwhelming majority of cases, monitoring and controlling labour at its most detailed level is a practical impossibility. In the Taylorist or Fordist production system, which was based on a scientific quest for maximum labour division and the search for the elementary motions of labour (Braverman, 1999; Thompson, 1989), it was possible to achieve a high degree of control of manual labour while professional labour largely remained complex and operated without supervision.

The criticism towards the Taylorist or Fordist production system was raised first by the Human Relations Movement, and later by the Sociotechnical Movement. Today, an increasing number of work organizations also integrate trust-based elements in their control of production. Within research in this area, this is often viewed from the perspective of the potential to create more flexible production and as a phenomenon that emerges in the late 1900s. These are often linked to digitization, globalization, and an increased service and knowledge aspect in production (e.g. Allvin, Aronsson, Hagström, Johansson, & Lundberg, 2011; Singe & Croucher, 2003), but also to innovation, creativity and knowledge work (Dessein & Santos, 2006; Drucker, 1999; Godart, Görg, & Hanley, 2014).

## Trust-based working time

Trust Based Working Time (TBWT) is a form of flexible working time system, which is based on that the individual, in varying degrees, is trusted to plan and manage their own working time. The actual working time is not controlled in the same manner as previously, neither is the working time of importance but rather the execution of the task. In TBWT the employer's mean to control the employee is to record the goal achievement rather than the working hours. At a practical level it can lead to that the employee may choose to spend part of their time at home or at some other location.

At a more abstract or theoretical level, TBWT results in that the employer does not fully manage and control the work process. TBWT is often described as a new phenomena in relation to the growth of the global economy and the need for a flexible use of human resources within organizations. From a employee perspective it is said to open up new ways to handle the work-life balance, requirements for personal initiative, involvement and commitment (Beckman, 2011; Singe & Croucher, 2003). TBWT can be found in different contexts and forms, but based in Singe and Croucher (2003), it can be specified according to the following three points:

- TBWT entails an increased focus on results rather than the actual time worked.
- TBWT entails that the individual employee, or team, is responsible for the organization of work and working time based in the requirements and needs of the task.
- TBWT entails that management no longer systematically controls employees' working time.

We share this understanding of the concept TBWT and make the same connection between the post-Fordist production system and the growing use of trust-based flexible elements in work organizations. In this article, however, we adopt a longer historical perspective and draw parallels between these new forms of organization and a traditional relationship between employers and qualified professional employees. As demonstrated by the empirical data presented in the article, many professionals in Sweden remained outside working hours and working time legislation. The control system of the Fordist production system mainly concerned workers, while professionals, to varying degrees, had a supervisory role instead (Braverman, 1999). In order to provide some perspective on TBWT, the present article deals with The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees' (TCO) approach to working time regulation prior to the introduction of concepts such as TBWT and flexibility. The study that this article is based on concerns the period 1950 - 1970.

The questions we pose concerning the material are:

- How and in what manner did the officials of the white-collar union confederation TCO discuss "trustworthiness" and "trust" in terms of working time?
- How did the officials of the white-collar union confederation TCO view management, control and regulation of working time?

The initial discussion of the working life transformation is followed by a theoretical discussion concerning the concept of "trust." This is followed by a discussion on methods and materials. The initial theoretical discussion is then employed for an analysis of Swedish working time legislation and The Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees' (TCO) approach to the regulation of working time for professionals. The article focus on trust, and the proportion of the workforce that was largely considered trustworthy – the professional employees and the highly educated – rather than mistrust, and the proportion of the workforce, the manual workers, that was considered to be in need of regulation and control.

## Trust

Research on "Trust" is an academic subject that has grown in scope during the last few decades. These specific studies can be described as interdisciplinary and includes not only management research, but also disciplines such as psychology, anthropology and sociology. One explanation for this strong interest is said to be that it is an area that meets the requirements of social and working life development towards a continuously increasing level of normative control (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Alvin et al., 2011; Lewis, Gambles, & Rapoport, 2007; Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998). Several studies have also indicated that a high degree of trust between employees, and between employees and managers, can significantly contribute to improved communication, work performance and working environment (e.g. Almer & Kaplan, 2002; Barusch, 2000; Beckmann & Hegedues, 2011; Colquitt et al., 2011; Dessein & Santos, 2006; Krot & Levita, 2012). At the same time, other researchers point out that the increased element of trust in work control also has a downside that includes psychosocial problems as well as inefficiencies as a consequence (e.g. Allvin et al., 2011; Schabracq & Cooper, 2000; Singe & Croucher, 2003). Although the concept is assigned different meanings within trust research, it is usually assumed as a psychological state (Barber, 1982; Robinson, 1996; Rousseau et al., 1998; Kramer, 1999) which can be described as "(...) the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p. 712). We share the assumption that the concept of trust must be understood as the expression of an assessed attitude towards the risk involved in making oneself vulnerable. Further, we consider that the notion of trust must be linked to the social context (Kramer, 1999). Risk – and trust – is relevant to consider only when there is interaction between people. The amount of risk taken is dependent on the trustor's knowledge and understanding of the social context. According to Kramer (1999) this knowledge may be based on the trustor's own experience of earlier behaviour of the trustee, or third parties information. In addition, and of great importance for this study, the trustor's willingness to give trust is dependent on the trustee's position in a social or organizational hierarchy, and what role the trustee has in the actual organisation (Ellonen, Blomqvist, & Puumalainen, 2008; Kramer, 1999; Krot & Levická, 2012).

As with category-based trust, role-based trust constitutes a form of depersonalized trust because it is predicated on knowledge that a person occupies a particular role in the organization rather than specific knowledge about the person's capabilities, dispositions, motives, and intentions. (Kramer, 1999, p. 578)

The expectation builds on, for example, positive experiences of past behaviours, an idea of professionalism and of the assumption that both parties share a common identity and culture (Everts, 2003; Levicki & Bunker, 1995; McAllister, Levicki & Chaturvedi, 2006; Rousseau et al., 1998).

Strive for professionalism by the white collars is essential in the relation between companies and the professional employees. According to Fournier (1999) professionalism have different meaning depending on perspective; on the one hand a strive for

autonomy for the professional, and on the other hand increased predictability by more disciplined work force for the employers.

In this article, we chose to emphasise on trustworthiness and trust as a psychological state, which is dependent on two socially related conditions: (1) the nature of the professional's duties and (2) the experience of shared identity and values. We also assume that the professional employees' relationship to the employer parties would include some elements of professionalism (cf. Fournier, 1999) as the basis for perceived trustworthiness. As Ristig (2009) points out, it is also more likely that managers and employees develop good relationships when they feel that they share the same ethical standards of conduct, values and attitudes. This aspect of trust can be linked to theory of the professions. An important component to what is commonly seen as characteristic for a qualified occupation, is that the professional is capable of and can be trusted to self-regulate their labour rather than work according to a pre-defined working time (Evetts, 2003; Fournier, 1999).

We argue that the two aspects of trust stated above: (1) the nature of the professional employee's duties and (2) the experience of shared identity and shared values, are central in the understanding of trust-based control systems. For employers and organizations to be able to step back and relinquish control of working time, preconditions both within the production process and the organizational culture are necessary. An initial precondition is that the work is sufficiently complex in terms of knowledge for it to be profitable from a productivity perspective, but at the same time it must be possible to totally or partially individualize the labour (Drucker, 1999). A second precondition is that the culture supports trust in the work force to be capable of and willing to take their own responsibility (Elgoibar, Munduate, Medina, & Euwema, 2011; cf. Ilsøe, 2010).

We subscribe to a discourse analytical approach, and argue that linguistic expressions correspond to thoughts and social practices and thereby govern how we understand and categorize the surrounding world (Fairclough, 1992; Lakoff & Johnson, 2003). In other words, language specifies not only what we think, but also which thoughts that are possible to think and, as a consequence, which actions that are possible to carry out. In this sense it is plausible to regard the TCO's internal material as a reflection of what was feasible to think, say and write on working hours, the execution of the work and trust during the period.

### **The Swedish white-collar movement**

From an international perspective, the Swedish labour market is distinguished by its high degree of union organization. In comparison with other European countries, this applies particularly to professional employees (Kjellberg, 2000). Most Swedish professional employees are unionized and by the early 2000s, the TCO had attained a full 85 per cent degree of organization of those people who were possible to organize. This state of affairs has also been reinforced by the fact that the labour market has undergone change in the sense that the proportion of professional employees has increased in relation to workers. This development must be seen against the background of a generally higher level of education and that the number of employees in manufacturing has decreased, while the number of people working within service and information

sectors has increased (Alvesson, 2004). Since 2005, the unions that organize professional employees collectively have as many members as the union that organizes workers (Westerlund, 2011).

Union organization of professional employees is a more recent affair than for workers. There have been associations of professional employees throughout the 1900s, but these are, according to research in the field (e.g. Greiff, 1992), primarily to be considered as professional associations that had neither the ambition nor the ability to negotiate with employers. In Sweden, for a long period of time, professional employees did not enjoy legislated collective bargaining rights either, and only by 1937 were unions afforded the legal right to negotiate and come to agreements for individual members. Some years later, in 1944, the TCO was formed as an inter-professional union confederation through a merger of several smaller associations (Greiff, 1992; Westerlund, 2011).

## Materials and methods

In the study we have chosen to examine the work time regulation issue, expressed in the material from the white-collar union confederation TCO's archive 1950-1970. The choice to examine TCO material is motivated by the fact that the major part of working time issues concerning the professional employees were handled – discussed and negotiated – by this organisation during the period under study.

In this study TCO's internal memos, meeting minutes and comments on governmental working time investigations classified by the TCO in its archives as "Working time issues" have been studied.<sup>1</sup> All documents that in any way contained subjects such as trust, faith, work time and work time regulation were assessed. Paragraphs containing TCO's opinions in the matters were excerpted. In the following analysis of the material all excerpted paragraphs, recurrent expressions and core concepts related to the subjects mentioned above were analysed. Based in the theoretical discussion of the concepts of trust and trust based working time above in which we seized upon the nature of the work tasks and social identity, the material was categorized into two meaning-bearing categories: (1) the nature of the work and (2) the nature of the worker (Ottosson & Rosengren, 2007).

There are other union materials that would likely provide interesting aspects to the question of entrusted working time, for example, the minutes from collective bargaining agreements but also material of a more public nature, such as the TCO's member magazine, *Tjänstemannarörelsen* (1947-1955) and *TCO-tidningen* (1955-2014). Furthermore, in this article the arguments of the counterpart, the Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF), have not been studied. In this article, we have decided to take our onset solely in TCO's archives as we consider the material to cover the intersection between TCO's internal discussions and the explicit regulation of working time in the form of laws and agreements. As a consequence of this decision, however, this article focuses more on the volition and experience of being trusted than to entrust – and thus on the trustee's perspective rather than trustor's.

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<sup>1</sup> The excerpts of various documents cited in the article are translated from Swedish to English by the authors.

## The loyal servants

The Swedish trade union movement's organization principle, as it unfolded in the 1900s, was based in a professional principle. The unions affiliated with The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) organized the "manual labourers", while professional employees' unions organized those who carried out "the intellectual work tasks." According to Uno Westerlund (2011), the TCO viewed the professional employee as a mediator between labour and capital. In other words, we see here a group that traditionally has been close to the employer, at a so-called intermediate level, either as civil servants or as assistants to business owners and capital owners. Traditionally, there has been a not insignificant degree of shared interest and loyalty in the professional employees' relationship to employers. This loyalty was furthermore something that employers expected of the professional employee. This expectation is explicitly expressed in the agreements between the Swedish Engineering Employers' Association and the Swedish Union of Clerical and Technical Employees in Industry. In the "general rules of conduct" outlined in the agreements, the loyalty of the professional employees is specifically emphasized. In the principal agreement of 1961 (§2. General rules of conduct. F14d:4. TAM), this is expressed as:

The relationship between employers and employees is based on mutual loyalty and trust. The professional employee is, at all times, to monitor and safeguard the employer's interests.

This declaration of loyalty has a long tradition not only historically, but also remains formulated in literally the same manner in 2014. Viewed in a longer, historical perspective, the loyalty towards the employer among professional employees is nourished by a tradition of bourgeois solidarity, of a patriarchal "craftsmanship" structure based in the model of the apprentice – journeyman – master, in which the professional employee's subordinate position was only temporary (Greiff, 1992). As the body of professional employees numerically increased dramatically during the 1900s, this solidarity became problematic. In the late 1900s, the early, stark boundary between workers and employees begins to disintegrate (Westerlund, 2011; cf. Brody & Rubin, 2011). Already in an internal TCO missive from 1965 it is noted that the earlier, clear distinction had deteriorated. It was established that both working time as well as working conditions were becoming increasingly similar:

Structural conditions in professional employment work (sic). Tendencies towards shift work and overtime increase as employers procure expensive mechanical systems (data centres, automation). Previously existing differences between workers and professional employees in this regard is reduced. (Professional employees' inclusion in working time legislation, advantages and disadvantages 1/2 1965. F10d:3, TAM)

It is reasonable to view the union organization of professional employees as the result of a process in which professional employees were proletarianized. It is also realistic to presume that the explicit loyalty requirement was inscribed in agreements because the employer wished to remind the professional employees of where they belonged and where their loyalties should lie.

At the same time, the trend towards a generally high degree of organization and the large number of members is of interest in a discussion on working time and trust. The strength of organized unions in Scandinavia contributed, according to Ilsøe

(2010), to the development of a negotiation and consensus culture where both commitment as well as trust and confidence are key elements. At the company level, this has meant a high degree of local agreements concerning flexible workforce accounts (Ilsøe, 2010).

### **TCO and working time legislation**

The bulk of the TCO's archive material dealing with attitudes towards working time can be found under the archive heading "Working Time Issues." The majority of this material consists of internal memorandums and comments on working time legislation and in particular with regard to the legislation's scope of application. Since the legislated regulation of working time in 1919, there had been many exceptions. Up until 1970, working time legislation covered less than half of the Swedish wage earners (SOU, 1968:66). For many years, farm hands, military personnel, police officers and health care workers, for example, were exempt from the legislation. A large group that also was excluded was the professional employees. The majority of professional employees were not covered by the legislation until 1971. Whilst there were many exclusions, there was political pressure to limit the numerous exemptions and to subsume more groups of wage earners within the legislation (SOU, 1968:66).

Working time legislation had been based in the need for protection that certain, vulnerable groups of employees, such as industrial workers, had received. The Working Time Committee's final report (SOU, 1968:66) expressed the view, however, that this need for protection was no longer relevant since the unions had levelled the balance of strength in the labour market. Instead of viewing the law from a perspective of protection, the Committee argued that the law in this area should instead function normatively and that the legislation should cover the entire labour market.

Interestingly, the TCO simultaneously argued that professional employees in their entirety should be excluded from working time legislation. Several reasons were offered. Among other things, professional employees had successfully negotiated for better terms of employment and shorter working time than the workers' collective. But a further argument was that the professional employee group should not be divided based on the issue of working hours (Memo regarding the scope of working time legislation 4/4 1966. F10d:3, TAM).

It was noted, however, that there were also advantages in choosing the legislative route. In discussions on the advantages and disadvantages of conforming to the law, it was argued that the legislation would provide a greater measure of security if the relations to employers were changed. "The relationship between employer – professional employees may change in the future, whereby the legal support in regards to working time legislation will be especially valuable" (Professional employees' inclusion in working time legislation, advantages and disadvantages 1/2 1965. F10d:3, TAM). In the same document, it is noted that the legislation would lead to improvements for certain professional employee groups in the form of shorter working hours and less overtime.

TCO's overall assessment was that they would remain beyond the working time legislation and pursue working time issues through negotiations. The TCO therefore claimed in several missives to various working time investigations, such as in 1952 and 1966, that professionals, as previously should remain exempt from the scope of work-

ing hours legislation (Comments to the Working Time Inquiry 26/6 1952 and the Working Time Committee 13/4 1966. F10d:3, TAM; see also SOU, 1954:22 and SOU, 1968:66).

Although the Working Hours Act was general and encompassed the entire labour market, it allowed for exemptions. The formulations remained largely similar since the law's enactment in 1919 (SOU 1968:66).

§1 The law shall apply, within the limitations set out in §2 and §3, to any activity in which an employee performs work on behalf of an employer.

§2 Exemptions from the scope of this law are

- a) Work performed in the employee's home or under such conditions that supervision cannot be regarded as appertaining to the employer,
- b) Work performed by employees in managerial or comparable positions or by employees that, due to their duties, are granted a special position of trust with regards to working time,
- c) Work conducted by a member of the employer's family,
- d) Work conducted within the employer's household, and
- e) Maritime services (...)

§3 In addition to the exemptions listed in §2, exemptions from the application of the law are allowed through collective agreement (...)

(TCO excerpt from the Working Hours Act 1970:103, F10d:1, TAM)

According to an agreement within the TCO in 1972 the law would thereby, in principle, cover all professional employees. This contrasts with the previous state in which almost all were excluded (§1 agreement, TCO unions, 7/11 1972. F10d:1, TAM). The professional employees that would continue to be exempt were those who fell under the Working Hours Act §2b. This included the restriction, however, that unless the professional employee's "working hours are easily controllable," the person would not be exempt. The discussion that took place during this period concerned how this exemption clause should be interpreted. As seen in the quote below, the criteria are vague:

The specified application and interpretation of §2b of the general Working Hours Act is based in the nature of the employees' duties, the difficulties of controlling working time, the degree of freedom that exists in regards to the organization of their own working hours and that the working hours are normally not subject to any real control by the employer. (Agreement TCO unions 7/11 1972. F10d:1, TAM)

Within the (government) Working Time Committee, a corresponding discussion on the problems of the exclusion of professional employees was conducted, and it was argued, in contrast to the TCO, that the legislation should be comprehensive and that historical traditions were not a valid argument. With regards to professional employees, there would be exemptions for "workers that, with respect to work time, enjoy a special position of trust" (SOU, 1968:66, p. 143). This group was defined based on two principles:

1. The Committee denotes the aforementioned first group as employees with managerial or thereto comparable positions. By the expression comparable position, the Committee refers to employees at a managerial level in state and local government agencies.

2. The second group is not as easily defined. A pervading feature of these professional employees, in the Committee's view, constitutes the special relationship of trust with regard to working time that normally exists between employers and employees in such cases. This trust is primarily a consequence of the work task's specific nature. It is above all expressed through the employee being granted some discretion with regards to planning their own working time and that working time is generally not subject to any control by the employer. (SOU, 1968:66, pp. 142-143)

Apart from the fact that this debate is interesting due to its direct relevance to the working conditions of today, the arguments are interesting in themselves since they illustrate the perception of various people's work. In the aforementioned second exemption, positively charged terms such as "trust" and "freedom" are emphasized alongside the absence of control. We argue that within this perception of professional employees' exception from the Working Hours Act, two main strains of argument can be identified: "the nature of work" and "the nature of the worker." Trust and trustworthiness is something that is experienced in relation to certain individuals and groups, but in line with Colquitt et al. (2011), we argue that it does not suffice to pose the question, "Do you trust them?", but that it is also necessary to ask, "Trust them to do what?"

### **The nature of work**

The interpretation that the exemption provision allowed for was, as previously mentioned, very generous. An investigation conducted by the TCO in 1965 established that working time legislation only applied to a minority of the organized professional employees:

As for the other main issue - the scope of the Working Hours Act - it can be stated that the law now in actuality only applies to a minority. Exemptions are allowed for several categories, based in various reasons. For example, exemptions are now made for:

- a) Certain types of work;
- b) Certain work areas;
- c) Certain employers (e.g. the state)
- d) Professional employees in general

(Meeting minutes from the TCO-S preparatory inquiry for working time questions 28/1 1965. F10d:3, TAM)

Several of the arguments for maintaining exemption for professional employees can be linked to the perception that their work either could not be or was difficult to control. In the "Working Time Committee's proposed application of working time legislation, etc." (15/3 1965. F10d:3, TAM) one passage explicitly articulates (by underlining) the concept of uncontrollable work:

*Uncontrollable work:* The inquiry defines uncontrollable work as "work in which the employer either himself, through his subordinates, or otherwise has the opportunity to determine when work begins and when it ends." In such cases, the inquiry emphasizes, the employer may, after discounting for allowed breaks, determine the longest period that the employee can have worked. In some cases, the way in which work is organized determines whether the work could be considered controllable or not. The location for the execution of the work tasks also affects controllability.

Other descriptive formulations are also employed, often with a mathematical or scientific connotation such as "incalculability", which have in common that they express the complexity of professional employees' tasks and the demands on creative ability and personal initiative. Unlike other forms of work, professional employees' work tasks (and thus working time) could not be regulated and controlled in a quantitative sense (e.g. *The Union of Civil Servants'* comments to the TCO 10/10 1958. F10d:1, TAM). It was argued that the work tasks contained elements that entailed the need to make qualitatively based assessments. It was also argued that the work was not always possible to define in a spatial sense, but that it was instead conducted in different locations and for that reason was not controllable.

Within the professional employees' ranks, there are some groups whose duties are such that a precise working time is difficult to calculate due to the independent nature of the work, etc. These professionals cannot be subjected to work time legislation (...) Another, not wholly uncommon type of qualified work, is such that it is conducted either completely or partly in unspecified workplaces.

(...)

For the majority of the abovementioned professional positions, the actual working time is not measurable. Should overtime nonetheless occur on occasion for these groups, it should apply to the portion of working time caused by special circumstances conducted in the workplace at times other than formal ordinary working time. For other professional positions associated with less qualified tasks, the situation is different. Measuring actual work time, here, generally does not constitute a problem.

(Memo on the issue of the scope of working time regulation. Second version 4/4 1966. F10d:3, TAM)

This kind of work also had an "independent character" and could not be "subject to" general assessment criteria and models. It was further claimed that the actual working time was dependent on the tasks. To highlight the task orientation of working time, the agreement distinguished between working time and office hours. Office hours could consist of eight hours while the actual work time could easily be ten. Neither was it a given that the work would be conducted in the workplace.

For some professional employees, the actual working time can be measured and controlled (...) Within the qualified professional ranks, however, there are also large groups whose duties are such that the actual work time is difficult to calculate due to the independent character of the work, etc. To a large extent, the nature of professional work is such that the tasks cannot be assigned detailed instructions for their execution, nor any detailed norms. Not infrequently, therefore, individual assessments of how to conduct the work are necessary and the tasks are often solved on the basis of personal experience from previously executed, similar tasks.

(...)

What is considered unique in regards to positions of this kind is that they often require that the tasks be solved not only by the professional being thusly engaged in the workplace during stipulated working hours, but also by him "bringing work home with him" (...) The work tasks are endowed with a hint of piece-work – a task is to be solved. In these cases, the issue is not primarily a matter of a certain, quantitative, work time standard.

(Work time concept for professional employee groups 13/4 1966. F10d:3, TAM)

The above quote highlights that there were both skilled and unskilled jobs and that uncontrollability was pegged to qualified work. For some of the professionals' work tasks, the time needed could not be determined in advance. This was work of a more intellectual character; it was work that required creativity and development abilities that may not always be possible to order on demand:

Similarly, exemptions must be allowed for workers who perform work of such a nature that is not possible to regulate in advance; not because the work in and of itself cannot be consigned to regular hours, but because the work is of an intellectual, artistic or other comparable nature.

(Internal memo 19/9 1967. F10d:3, TAM)

To a large degree the language employed by TCO and the working hours inquiries was tinged by contemporary context. It was Fordism parlance, based on Taylor's Scientific Management and ideals, that characterized Fordist production (cf. Braverman, 1999; Thompson, 1989). The fragmented work tasks performed by regular workers were possible to estimate and calculate, while the professional's tasks remained an intact whole and contained a greater degree of uncertainty. Qualified work required qualitative judgments and could not be handled as straightforwardly as that of the workers. In the description of the professional's work which justifies exception, negations of technical, mathematical concepts were employed to describe industrial and manual labour (cf. Braverman, 1999). The professional's task was not easy, rather it was "incalculable" and the professional was both the creator and guardian of rational production.

### **The nature of the worker**

In addition to the exclusions based in the nature and character of their work, because the work was not possible to calculate in advance due to the complexity of the work, exemptions were allowed for people in leadership positions. These were managers and supervisors – those who had the task of controlling manual labourers. It also concerned time study officials and people with various administrative tasks. Based on TCO's perspective, exemptions must be made "... for some professional employees who have work of a managerial or controlling nature." (Internal memo 19/9 1967. F10d:3, TAM)

The argument based in the "nature of work" can be said to stem from the employer granting trust in lieu of other options. The complexity of the work simply made it necessary to rely on the professional's willingness and ability to produce good work. In the material we have studied, the professional is described as a person who enjoys "a special position of trust" (SOU, 1968:66, p. 143) in the workplace. The question is to what extent this trust could and would be extended in order for the employer to rely on the professional employee as such. In an internal memo, TCO's officials express that this occurred. Some individuals were not controlled, although it was possible to do so. A distinction was made between cases in which work was not controllable and cases where control was not conducted:

Exemptions are made for work performed by employees whose working hours are not controlled. This provision should not be confused with the decision on exemptions for uncontrollable work (article 1, §2). The latter decision is aimed at cases where it is not

possible to control the working time, while the former refers to cases where control in and of itself is possible, but in practice does not occur.

(Internal memo concerning the new Working Hours Act 15/9 1967. F10d:3, TAM)

In both the working time inquiries as well as the TCO's internal material, this argument expands the exempt group to include experts and specialists of various types. These were described in the Official *Committee on Working Time* discussions in 1965 under the category "other employees of a senior position." This referred to staff who "occupy such a position and have such duties that it would be appropriate to remain beyond working time legislation." By this, the reviewers referred to:

(...) employees who do not have subordinate staff but who occupy such a position, and have such duties, that they should appropriately remain outside working hours legislation  
 (...) an employee who is employed for such production related tasks that he occupies an almost equal status to the company's supervisor.

(Working Time Committee's proposal regarding the scope of working time legislation 15/3 1965. F10d:3, TAM).

This category of professionals had also been discussed in the previous work inquiry (SOU, 1954:23) in which there was a desire to expand the group which often consisted of technicians and engineers.

(...) The categories of the aforementioned employees, occupied an almost comparable position to supervisors. As examples of such personnel the inquiry mentioned laboratory and test engineers, work study staff, service engineers, measurement technicians, geologists and prospectors, as well as safety engineers.

(SOU, 1954:23, p. 24)

The categories of occupations mentioned in this context are consistently technicians or engineers and thus constitute relatively highly educated people. They are also described as trustworthy individuals endowed with good work ethics, individuals who can be trusted. According to TCO's board they do not work beyond office hours because they are ordered to, but because they are professional and desire to conduct their tasks well. The following wording also suggests that these professionals see their commitment as a component of their personal career:

The overtime work of concern here is generally not in the ordinary sense a mandated overtime, rather the official has such duties that he desires to work past regular working hours. That approach constitutes part of his or her career interest. One can also view his duties as being of such a nature as to constitute piece work – a duty – to be managed in the best way, regardless of the hours it takes for the person concerned. It is also in this sense that this concerns tasks that may take a long time for one individual and a much shorter time for another.

(...)

That the concerned person then works overtime or works at home in the evenings is another aspect that the law can hardly take into account.

(...)

He desires to make a valued contribution qualitatively and perhaps quantitatively and finds it incompatible with his interests to argue with the employer if he occasionally has to put work before leisure. Should the workload become too heavy, he may well arrange for support, in some manner.

(Board minutes, TCO 28/8 1967. F10d:3, TAM)

When TCO officials discussed the arguments for union members to remain outside working time legislation, and when they distinguished between higher and lower professionals, this did not solely concern the nature of work, but also the person who performed the work. This view of the relationship between the professional and his employer as being close, being consistent with having a shared interest, was part of an older tradition with a clear demarcation from the working class:

The Swedish Engineering Employers' Association has sided with the position that any collective treatment of office workers' wage issues should not occur. It is assumed that the officials are to be regarded as industry leaders' aides and trustees. They should feel as one with the company and that in such conditions, it is quite natural that every official personally negotiates his benefits with the appropriate manager.

(Engineering Society Journal Workshops, 1920:10, p. 323 cited by Greiff, 1992, p. 349)

The discussion concerning exceptions from legislation for professionals should also be linked to the history of working time legislation. When the statutory regulation of working time was introduced in 1919, it was partly due to the threat of revolution and based in political pressure from the organized labour movement (Ottosson & Rosengren, 2007). The statutory regulation was in part further justified by a need to protect weaker and dependent groups in the labour market (SOU, 1968:66). Professionals who claimed that they did not need protection from being overly exploited can be seen as the aspiring middle classes' (Westerlund, 2010) assertion of their distance to the manual labourer, the blue-collar worker. In the above quotation from the TCO's board minutes from 1967, we do not encounter anyone in need of protection – if the workload would "(...) become too heavy he will simply arrange for relief in some manner" (Board minutes, TCO 28/8 1967. F10d:3, TAM).

## In conclusion

This article aims to provide a historical perspective to how the relationship between trust, work time, and control has been presented during the latter half of the 1900s. The article is based on a study on how, to what extent and in what way trust has been a component of working time regulation in Sweden during the period 1950-1970. The study is based on material from the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees' argumentation held in order to retain general exemptions from the Working Hours Act for professional employees.

From a theoretical point of view, the article is based in contemporary extensive and multifaceted research on the concept of trust. As a general rule within this research, trust is employed as a psychological concept that describes an interpersonal state of confidence between individuals. The perception of shared values and a partially shared identity is important when granting trust. At the same time, one could argue from a research of professions perspective that the trust entailed in being granted autonomy to control one's time is in itself a clear cursor in order to be considered a professional. It is a status marker that one is entrusted to assume responsibility for one's own time, and thus important for the white-collar group's assertion of their social status.

Based on the initial discussion of trust and trust based work time, empirical data has been structured into two meaning-bearing categories, "The nature of work" and

"The nature of the worker." Consistently, the work of professionals was described as impossible to estimate, calculate and control. It was described as an independent project which required the professional to take his own initiatives. The argument was conducted in a technical, scientific linguistic form reminiscent of Taylorist ideals of the atomized and fundamental motions of work. But unlike manual labourers' work, the professional's work was "incalculable". This view of the nature of work finds its counterpart in the view of the worker's nature. In the same manner that the work was complex, the professional was described as knowledgeable, dedicated and willing to engage in work. The professional is represented in the material as an individual who is capable of handling the complex requirements for advanced work. As a professional, one endeavoured to produce qualitatively good work and deliver on time. The professionals endowed with these characteristics were also described as qualitatively different from the routine working and alienated workers. These were people that you could trust. When dedication was required, it was argued that trust was necessary, while control was necessary for the alienated. There was a perception, with regards to the professional's exclusivity in relation to the worker, assuming that the professional was capable of intellectual work and that there was a cultural proximity to the employer.

The argument based in the complexity of the professional's work, the nature of work, does not entail in itself that the employer naturally granted unreserved trust in the professional in a psychological sense. The arguments may have found nourishment in the condition that this complexity meant that trust was profitable, or alternatively, as the only available option. Simultaneously, the professional is described as an individual who is capable of managing such trust and who performs his tasks as well as possible based in his "own volition." In a situation where the positive experience is repeated continuously, it is argued for example by Rousseau (1998) that the experience of shared identity is created and / or reinforced. What is initially a "calculative trust" transfers into a "relational" or "identity based trust" (Rousseau, 1998).

From a historical perspective, the professional's relation to his employer was characterized by a relatively high degree of perceived identification and community of interest, despite that the professional being a wage worker. Their complex class position meant that working time legislation became endowed with a specific form in which the professional was exempted from legislative regulation. The article demonstrates that during the post-war period, the TCO successfully avoided to institute regulation and legislation in the working time area. The article also shows that during this period, the professionals debated the needs for flexibility based on trust in knowledge-intensive work. In historical hindsight, it can be concluded that senior professionals managed to keep their trust-based working conditions, while lower officials were granted flexibility on the employers' terms.

We have not had the ambition to discuss TBWT itself and how today's various flexible working hours system works. It is therefore difficult to make direct comparisons based on the material presented in the article. However, we will nevertheless try to answer the question whether TBWT should be seen in a perspective of continuity or something qualitatively new.

We can conclude that the steering system based on professional employees who were given trust in 1950s and 1960s, and TBWT in early 2000s were occurring in

completely different contexts. The professional employees of the 1950s and 1960s were numerically limited and a privileged group given trust by management, due to professionalism and shared societal values. TBWT and the flexible and task oriented forms of work regulation we can see today is based on different social conditions: The number of the professional employees are significantly larger, with a broader recruitment base, and probably a lesser experience of a common social identity. However, the purpose is the same - and here we see a historical continuity, or trust as an ahistorical phenomenon. Both the 1950s and 1960s relationship between officials and employers and TBWT is about managing the risk it means to trust someone to act as expected.

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