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Koivunen, T. & Jonker-Hoffrén P. (2020)

Sustainable Work Systems – research and collaboration initiative

Background & Purpose

- Faculty of Social Sciences funding from the **Sustainable Welfare Systems** profiling area of Tampere University (TAU)
- This research and collaboration initiative concentrates on of sustainable work systems as part of the broad concept 'sustainable welfare systems'.
- We concentrate on the key priorities of TAU: health, technology and well-being of individuals and sustainability of the work system in this context.
- Sustainable work has been a core aspect – or umbrella concept – guiding Work Research Center's work since 2013. We aim to foster discussion to update and conceptualize the concept for the new decade.

Network of Tampere University researchers who contributed to the concept:

- Academy research fellow Mia Tammelin, principal investigator of the project, Work Research Centre WRC & Social Policy, Faculty of Social Sciences (SOC)
- Professor Saija Mauno, Psychology & WRC, SOC
- Professor Clas-Håkan Nygård, Occupational Health & WRC, SOC
- Professor Jouko Nätti, Social policy & WRC, SOC
- Professor Pertti Koistinen, Social policy & WRC, SOC
- Associate professor Thomas Olsson, New Social Research, SOC
- Dr. Markus Aho, Principal Lecturer, Head of R&D Group of Intelligent Machines and Smart Devices at TAMK
- Associate professor Annamaria Measaros, Computing Sciences, Faculty of Information Technology and Communication Sciences
- Associate professor Marita Husso, Social policy & WRC, SOC
- Academy research fellow Jessica de Bloom, Psychology & WRC, SOC
- Dr. Arja Haapakorpi, WRC, SOC
- Dr. Satu Ojala, WRC, SOC
- Academy post-doctoral researcher Dr. Paul Jonker-Hoffrén WRC, SOC
- Dr. Tuija Koivunen WRC, SOC
- Dr. Katri Leinonen WRC, SOC
- Dr. Tiina Saari WRC, SOC
- Dr. Kati Tikkamäki WRC, SOC

Focus on three levels; macro-, meso- and micro-levels

- The initiative concentrates on *work*, specifically the characteristics of the job and the work environment, incl. occupational health, and individual in the centre of this.
- **Work** in this model includes policies, regulation and company practices and it is seen as a way to improve overall job quality, including, for example, health and safety, skills, development, work organisation and working time practices.
- The initiative concentrates on various topics of sustainable work systems, that are policy, practice and outcomes.
 - Macro policy supporting/eroding sustainable work systems in the fourth industrial revolution.
 - Technology and well-being at work: promoting sustainable working life with occupational health care.
 - Well-being of individuals in the technological development.

Why sustainability has actualized now?

- Critique on globalization, ie.:
 - inequality as regards to sustainable work on social, economic and environmental terms;
 - potential conflict between the targets of economic growth, ecologically sustainable production and global fairness.
- Ecological crisis
 - the continuous aim to economic growth with increasing consumption vs.environmental sustainability.
- Ageing workforce, low fertility
 - crisis of economic sustainability of Western societies.
- Crisis of financial market
 - disturbances in labour markets and increasing unemployment and non-standard work.
- Social sustainability is eroding:
 - increased demand for social responsibility and calling for social justice;
 - growth of poverty and working poor in prosperous societies.

(Zink 2014; Eurofound 2015)

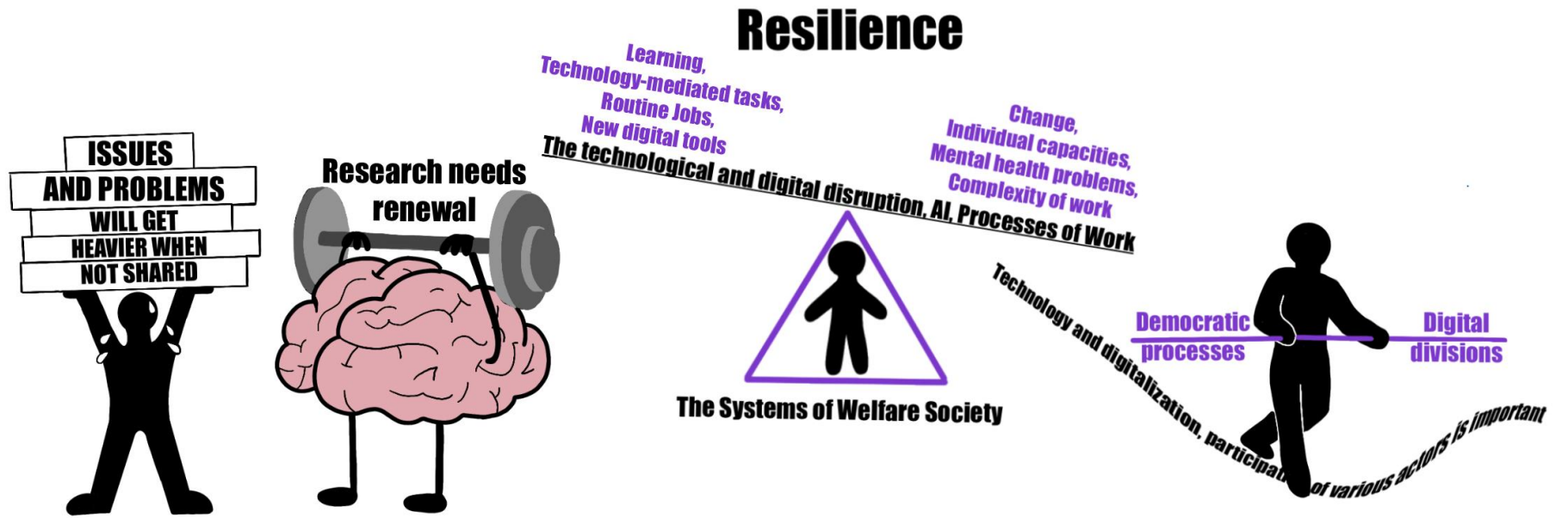
Concepts and rationale:

- The concept 'sustainability' has long history:
 - Zink (2014) argues that sustainability was an economic principle of forestry in the Middle Ages.
- Sustainability has key dimensions:
 - (1) focus on human needs
 - (2) normative claim for intra- and intergenerational fairness
 - (3) combination of economic, ecological and social goals: the so-called three pillars of sustainable development, which should be considered equally
- Zink (2014, 126): *“sustainability shall be understood as the simultaneous pursuit of economic, ecological and social objectives with a development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”*
- Sustainable work systems concept has been discussed extensively by Docherty and colleagues (2009) in *Creating sustainable work systems – Emerging perspectives and practices*
 - Here ‘sustainable work systems’ are contrasted with ‘intensive work systems’

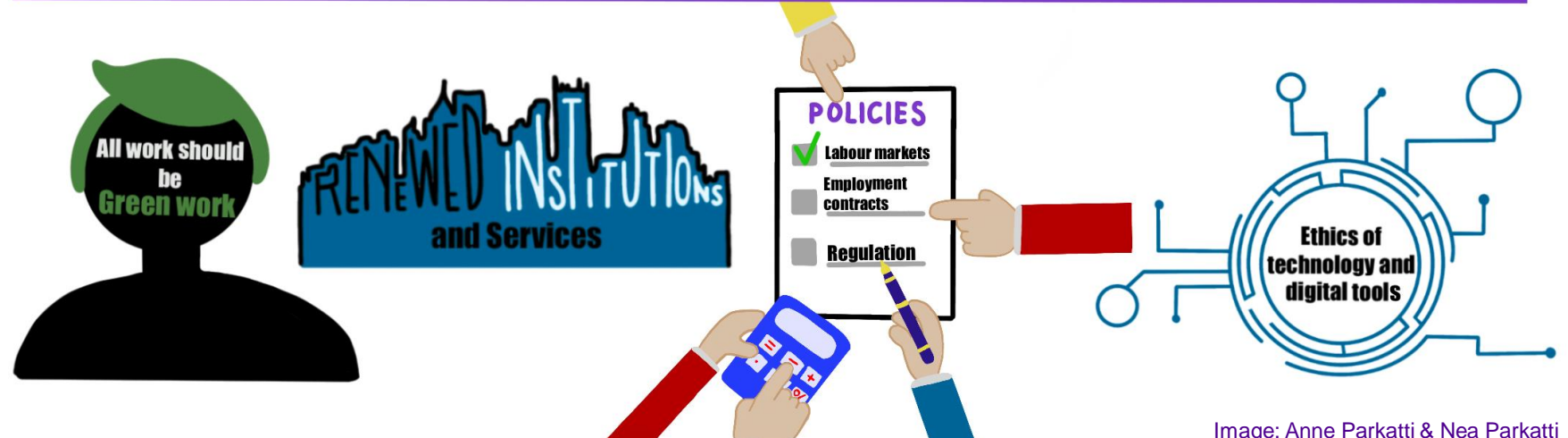
International organisation's responses, e.g.:

- [ILO Decent work](#) concept: securing not only work, but work that fulfils decent conditions and income, and is according to the rules and regulations:
 - Decent work sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives. It involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.
- [Eurofound](#) working definition of 'sustainable work over the life course' means that working and living conditions are such that they support people in engaging and remaining in work throughout an extended working life.
 - These conditions enable a fit between work and the characteristics or circumstances of the individual throughout their changing life and must be developed through policies and practices at work and outside of work. (Sustainable work over the lifecourse, Eurofound ...2015)

Based on seminar and research review our approach highlights the following issues:



SUSTAINABLE WORK SYSTEMS



Conclusions 1

Shared issues and problems but no one solution

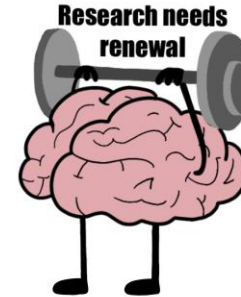
- Sustainability is a bunch of thematic issues which penetrate planning and various operations.
- The core dimensions of sustainability are shared, but sustainable work needs to address important differences in the means needed to achieve sustainability occur.
- It is important to understand sustainable work throughout the life course, with differing needs and requirements of individuals.



Conclusions 2

Knowledge is the key and research needs renewal

- The prerequisite of sustainability is knowledge. Changing behaviour pa organisational practices and policy can be changed with knowledge.
- Knowledge needs to be translated into action and new practices.
- Research should aim to renew theories, frameworks and concepts.



Resilience

*Learning,
Technology-mediated tasks,
Routine Jobs,
New digital tools*

*Change,
Individual capacities,
Mental health problems,
Complexity of work*

The technological and digital disruption, AI, Processes of Work



The Systems of Welfare Society

Resilience is needed and should be supported

- Individuals need to adapt to the growing learning needs and processes of work and society, and employers need to provide opportunities for learning in work and, when necessary, opportunities for education and training.
- Resilience is required particularly regarding to technology changes.
- Supported with learning opportunities; challenges related to mental health problems.

Conclusions 3

The participation of various actors is important: technology-supported democratic involvement

- Technology and digitalisation can assist in democratic processes, but digital divisions occur at all levels of society.



All work should be green work (environmentally sustainable)

- The transition to a green economy (and green work) requires the adoption of smart and sustainable solutions and changes in the structure of society, business and community patterns, and consumption.

Conclusions 4

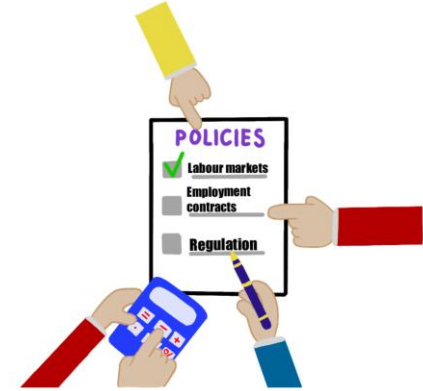
Institutions and services need to be renewed

- To maintain their ability to function in changing circumstances, particularly coping with the complexity of the new employment system and world of work.
- Societal institutions need to be renewed and supported in order to maintain their ability to function in changing circumstances.



Conclusions 5

- **Policies may support or erode sustainable work systems: global trends in economy challenging sustainability**
 - Overall there is a need to explore the regulation of work from the point of view of different groups of workers in regard to the changes brought about by the fourth industrial revolution.



The ethics of technology, digital tools and applications' need to be safeguarded regarding the utilization and consequences

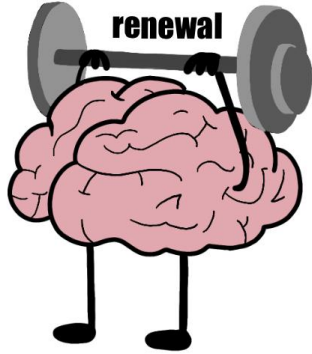
- Specifically, the need to evaluate the use of technology for uses other than the originally intended use requires careful consideration.

Resilience

ISSUES
AND PROBLEMS
WILL GET
HEAVIER WHEN
NOT SHARED



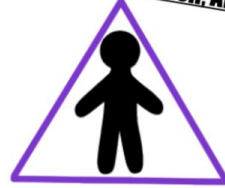
Research needs
renewal



Learning,
Technology-mediated tasks,
Routine Jobs,
New digital tools

The technological and digital disruption. AI. Processes of Work

Change,
Individual capacities,
Mental health problems,
Complexity of work



The Systems of Welfare Society

Technology and digitalization, participation

Democratic
processes

Digital
divisions



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SUSTAINABLE WORK SYSTEMS



RENEWED INSTITUTIONS
and Services

POLICIES

- Labour markets
- Employment contracts
- Regulation



Ethics of
technology and
digital tools

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