



Virtuelles Arbeiten  
und Lernen in  
projektartigen  
Netzwerken

Endworkshop

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# The Social Organisation of Project Networks

## Impacts on Employment

*Tension between Projects as temporary systems and Networks as socially embedded durable system*



## Employment Flexibility and Security

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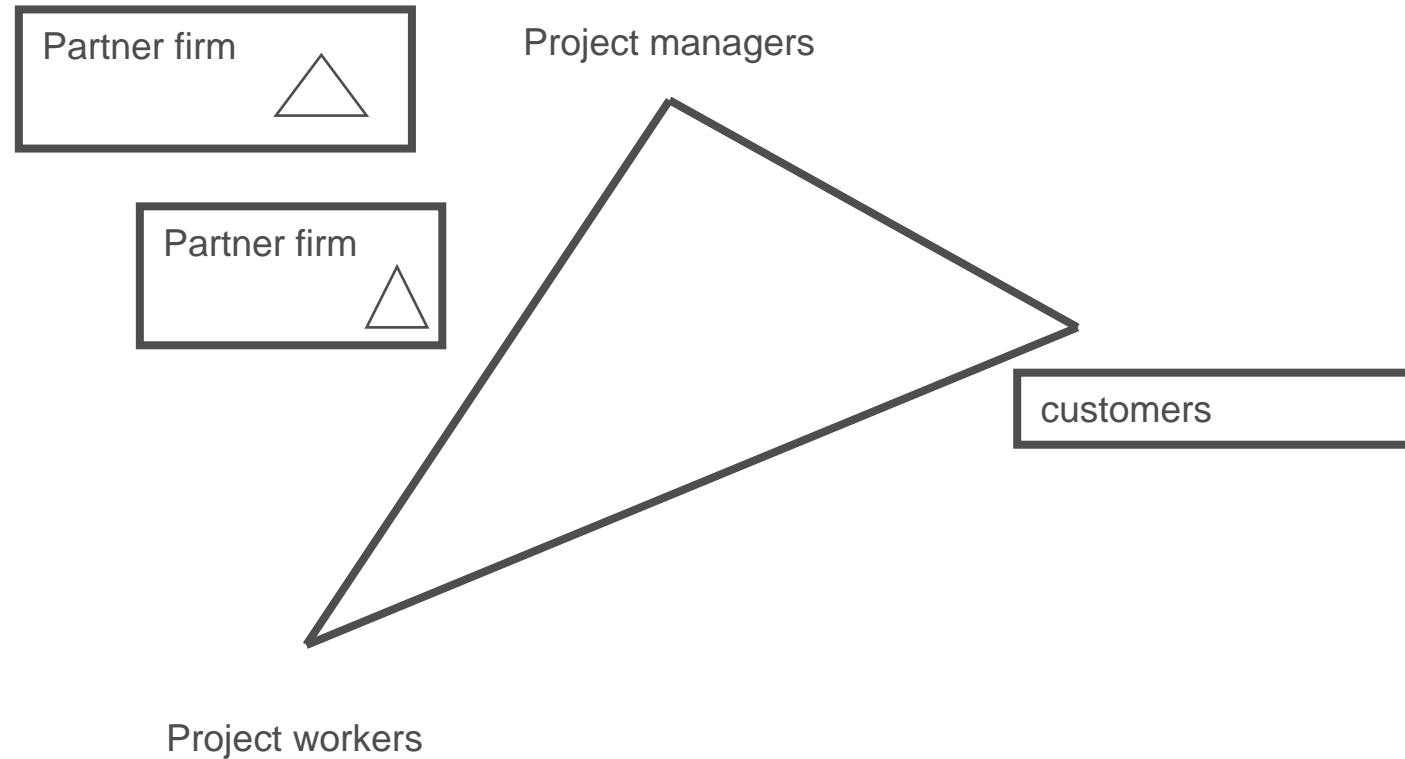
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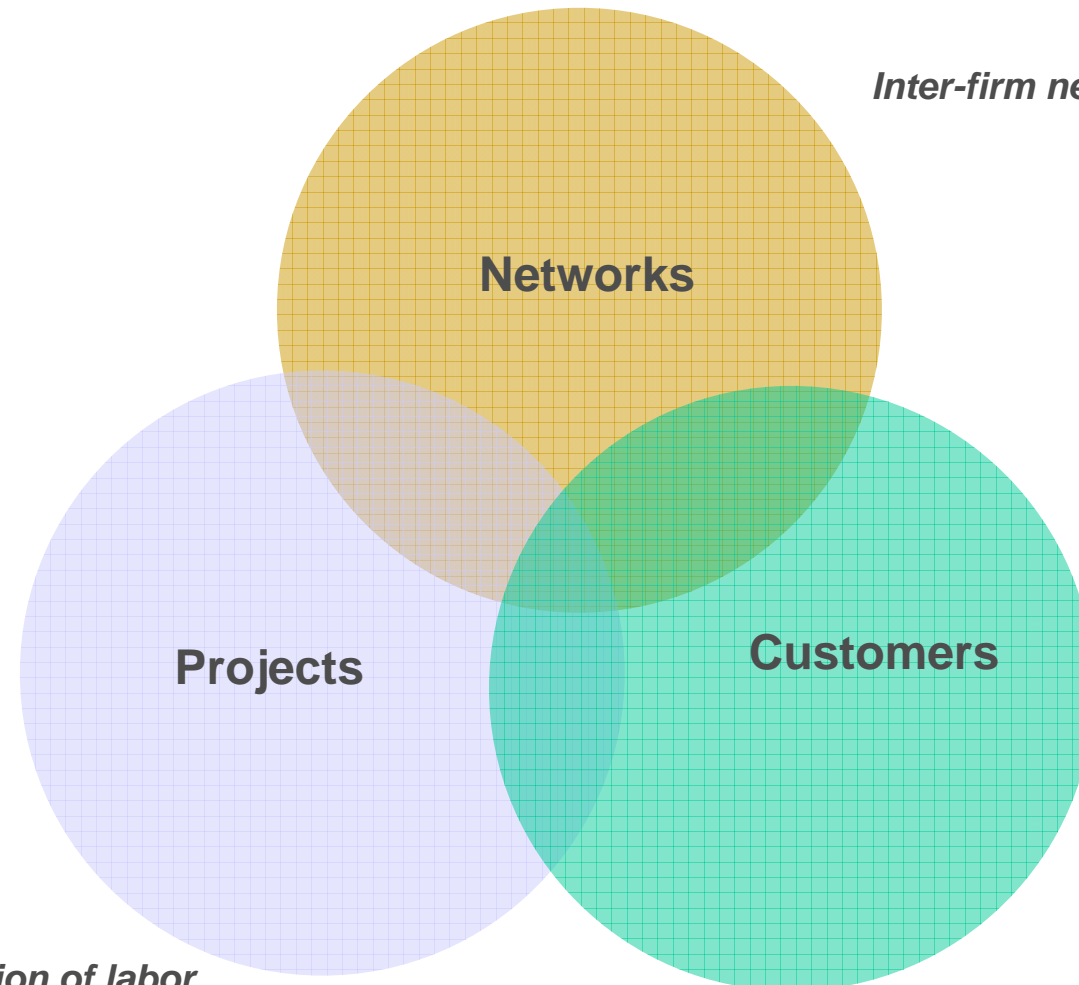
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*Inter-firm networks*

**Networks**

**Projects**

**Customers**

*Division of labor*

*Service market*

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- Strong employment protections, but with considerable deregulation of non-standard work most recently
- Findings of research on project networks in knowledge-intensive services is contradictory
- Research Design: two sectors of knowledge-intensive service work – IT and Architecture
- Selection of dynamic project network cases

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Case Study	Observed Network Organization	Project content	In-depth qualitative case studies
IT-Sector 1	1 large scale IT-firm 2 small IT-firms	Development of a Communication Platform	- 44 semi-structured interviews  - Workplace Studies  - Panel Survey (based on the case studies)
IT-Sector 2	1 small IT-firm 1 public agency	Development of a Content Management System	
Architecture 1	1 architecture bureau 1 building services firm 1 engineering bureau	Renovation of a business building	
Architecture 2	Artists-Network consisting of freelancers and employees	Temporary architecture projects	

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## Inter-Firm Partnerships in IT

- **Firms prefer full-time regular employees (open employment relations)**
- **Flexibility of employment in part through free-lancers, but as long-term relations (‘firm partners‘)**
- **Main source of flexibility was ‘body leasing‘ enabled by network structure of projects**
- **Limitation – knowing what your partners have**
  - assures secure employment in dynamic markets for employees
  - avoids costs of new recruitment/training and knowledge drain in innovative markets for employers
  - strengthens cooperation between firms through acts of reciprocity and within projects by developing working relations directly between employees

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## Inter-Firm Partnerships in Architecture

- **Firms prefer free use of free-lancers for high volume, low specialised work**
- **Free-lancers tended to be in very dependent situations and manage employment risks by dual status as solo-self-employed**
  - keeps labor costs flexible in relation to contract situation
  - fits with the professional development of architects – moving from dependent employment to self-employment
  - prevent relationship-building between customers and free-lancers
- **Limitation – German labor law and workplace investigations to curb so-called ‚pseudo-self-employment‘**

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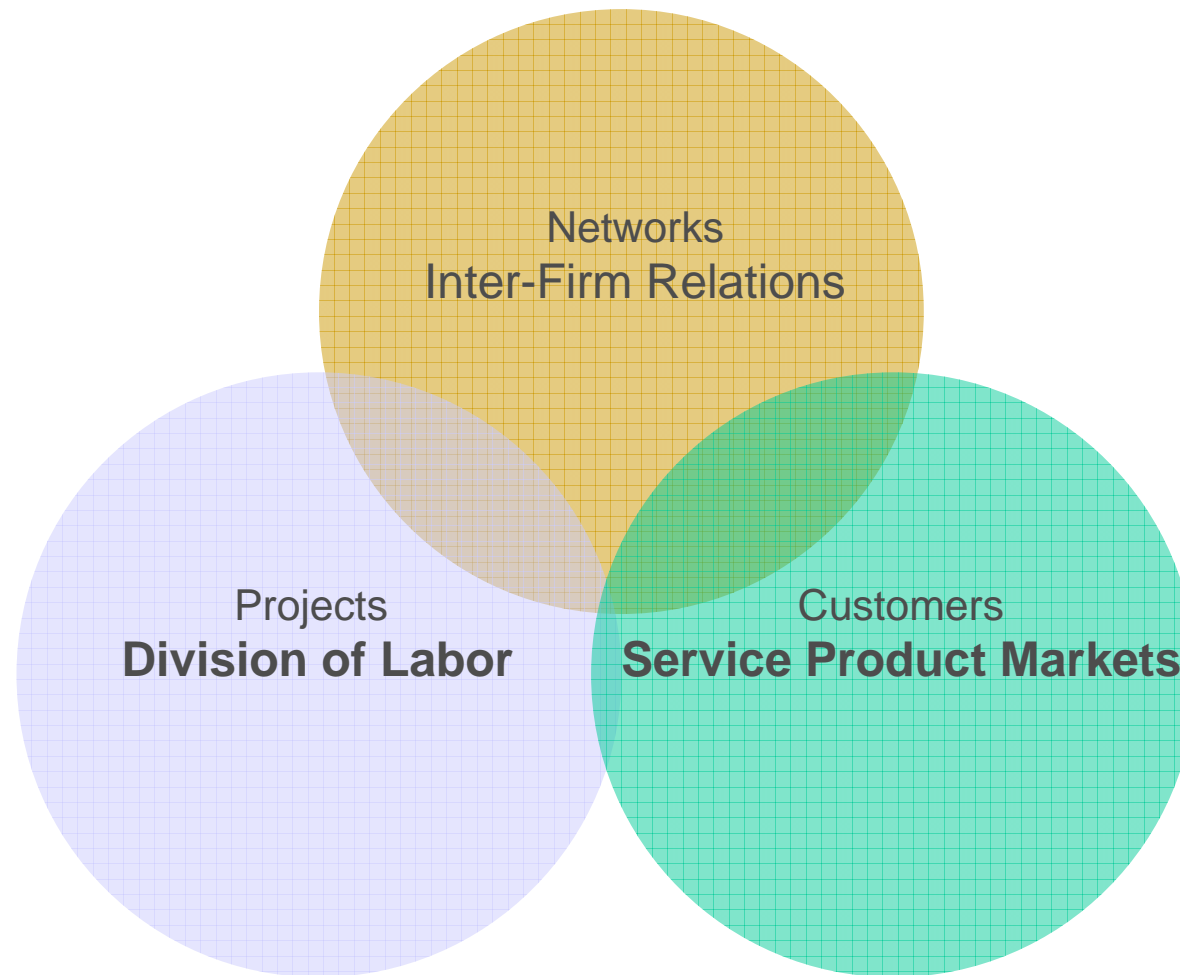
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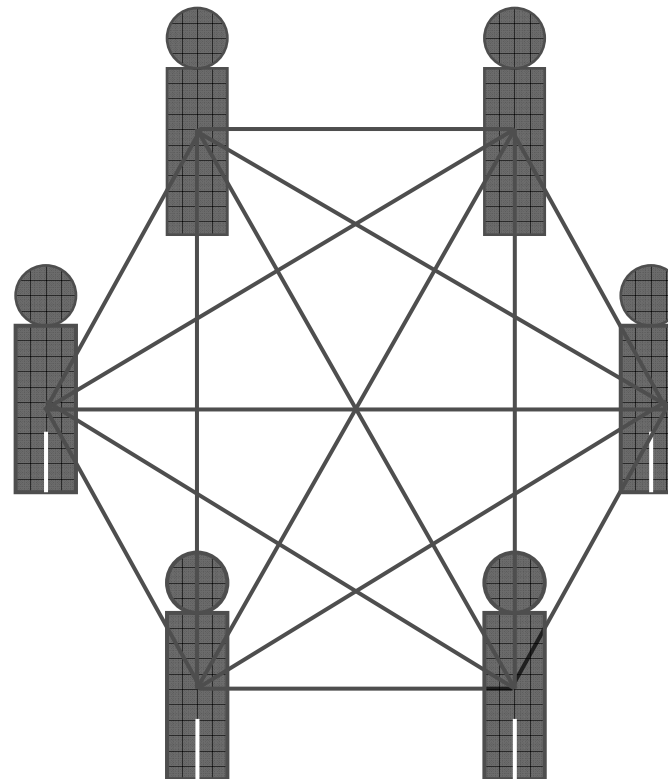
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## Professional Project Networks in Architecture (Artists' Network):

- Non-functional structure between network partners (like IT)
- Professional network (between individuals) emerged out of university training context (unlike IT – not hierarchical)
- In contrast to classic architecture, direct and intense communication with clients (network of professional)





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## Social Organisation of Inter-Firm Networks and Impacts on Employment

**Three types of project networks determined by differences in work organisation, customer markets and inter-firm relations**

**Different mixes of internal and external employment flexibility: Body Leasing versus Use of Freelancers versus Separation of Work and Employment**

**Different Consequences for Employment Security: Employment in a Network, Employment without a Network, Network of Professionals**