

The 6th Nordic Working Life Conference, Elsinore, Denmark April 25th – 27th 2012

Inside outsourcing: The effects of outsourcing on work conditions within cleaning and construction

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Introduction

Over the last few decades, the working lives of modern societies have changed dramatically. One of the most significant changes is the tendency for private and public organizations to focus on their core competency and core tasks, while outsourcing ancillary services to contractors. These contractors may, in turn, outsource parts of their activity to subcontractors, forming chains or hierarchies of outsourcing. This represents a fundamental change in the organization of work. The framework conditions for developing healthy work conditions and work situations will vary across different work places and industries. However, there seem to be some general aspects that are strongly related to psychosocial work environment. There is much research on psychological job demands, the experience of control over employees' own work tasks, and experience of social relations in the workplace (Karasek & Theorell 1990; Siegrist & Peter, 1996).

This paper discusses how outsourcing affects work conditions in enterprises within two sectors in Norway; Cleaning and construction. We compare and discuss how differences in work organization and work conditions affect the ability to control and have influence on their work situation individually and collectively. Our analysis is based on qualitative interviews with operative employees and managers within these two sectors.

Theoretical background

In the following sections we will give a brief outline of the key concepts and theoretical contributions that have informed our analysis.

Outsourcing

Increased use of outsourcing strategies is one of the heaviest trends in Western working life for the last two decades. The term "outsourcing" refers to processes where companies focus on their core competencies, leaving ancillary services to other companies. Whereas major companies were previously self-sufficient with regard to support functions such as cleaning, maintenance, accounting and finances etc. these functions are now commonly outsourced to specialized companies. Moreover, this trend has continued to an extent that it is no longer only ancillary services that are outsourced, but also functions that are more or less intertwined with the

company's core activities. For instance, Chrysler and Ford produce less than half of the value of their vehicles through in-house production (Gilley and Rasheed, 2000). Their cars are assemblies of parts produced by several manufacturers forming complex supply chains, all providing their products according to the "just-in-time" principle. Arguably, the rise of the outsourcing model of organization has significantly changed working life in Western countries (Forseth & Rasmussen, 2002; Birindelli et al., 2007, Wikman, 2000).

Cost-cutting is usually a key motif in the decision to outsource services and functions (Heywood, 2001). Despite this, the management literature on outsourcing rarely discusses the potentially adverse effects. The emphasis seems to be on the possibility of "making more by doing less" (Gilley and Rasheed 2000: 763). This must be considered a considerable shortcoming. It is conceivable that the employees are the ones paying the price for the companies' cost-cutting, in the form of a more demanding work situation. This is particularly relevant when work is outsourced at several levels, forming chains of sub-contractors. In a "traditional" organization of work, matters of control and influence over work are more or less aspects of the relationship between employers and employees. In a contractor hierarchy, matters of control and influence become far more blurred. When work is organized like value chains, there may be complex webs of power, influence and mutual dependencies.

There is some research indicating that this way of organizing work has negative consequences for the work situations for those at the bottom of the sub-contracting hierarchy, such as lack of control and influence (Mayhew et al. 1997; Collinson 1999; Mayhew & Quinlan 1999; Johnstone, et al. 2005). However, there is still a great need for research into this topic.

Work, power and control

In the 1990s, the field of work sociology was (among other things) preoccupied with the question of whether the working lives of (post-)modern societies were about to leave behind the classical bureaucratic model of organization and the industrial or "fordist" mode of production. Writers like Manuel Castells proclaimed that we were about to enter the "network society", where organizations were non-hierarchical and interconnected, and an "information age", where production and productivity was increasingly based on knowledge and information. In many respects, our analysis of the consequences of outsourcing for working conditions, control and autonomy involves revisiting parts of this literature.

As we have already indicated, the outsourcing model of organizing has the potential to significantly change the work conditions at the shop floor level. However, the "predictions" as to what these changes may be, varies greatly. In a highly useful work, Leiulfsrud and Dahl (2005) distinguishes between two primary schools of thought regarding the development of employee empowerment in Norwegian work-life. The first may be labeled the democratization thesis, which argues that employees are gaining increasing control and influence over their work. The other approach can be labeled a control thesis. This approach, influenced by Marxist thinking, argues that there are little changes in employees' level of control and influence over work. It should be noted that Leiulfsrud and Dahl's work concerns the employee control and autonomy in general, and is not explicitly related to outsourcing models of organizing. However, their main concepts are relevant also when interorganizational relationships are taken into account.

Proponents of the democratization thesis tend to claim that major companies are no longer organized like centralized hierarchies. Castells (1996: 176), for instance, characterizes the organizational changes seen in the 1990's as a "the shift from vertical bureaucracies to the horizontal corporation". A decade earlier, Piore and Sabel (1984) argued that the shift from a standardized to a more flexible and specialized form of production, would lead to an "upskilling" or "reskilling" of employees, as well as a decentralization of power and influence. These changes are also seen as changing the role of managers, from controlling the details of work, to "facilitating" and supporting the employees' ability to govern themselves (Leiulfsrud and Dahl, 2005). The result is organizations where "control and lateral coordination depends on shared goals, and expertise rather than formal position determines influence" (Walton 1985:7).

In stark contrast to the (mainly American) literature emphasizing the development of less bureaucratic organization models, several writers have argued that the majority of employees have yet to see any real empowerment in their work situation. Writers like Bennett Harrison (1994) and Richard Sennet (1998) have argued that automation, computerized worker control and outsourcing involve a continuing of the taylorist model of work. Proponents of the control thesis would argue that the new models of organization involve new and more subtle mechanisms of power, rather than a more democratic work-life (Leiulfsrud and Dahl, 2005).

The possible consequences of outsourcing may also be posited according to these two theses: On the one hand, outsourcing involves a growth in autonomous small and medium companies, which are specialized around a set of core activities. This may provide grounds for a professionalization of the work force, and more formalized working conditions. On the other hand, outsourcing may involve less time available due to strong competition, lower economic margins, and more power to customers.

The "consequences" of control on work conditions and health

Issues of employee control and autonomy in work-life are, in addition to being of a general sociological interest, of great importance for the performance of organizations, and the well-being of employees. Research into the relationship between psychosocial work environment and employee health is one example of this. Psychosocial work environment includes the employees' experience and interpretation of their surroundings. Here, much research has focused on psychological job demands, the experience of control over their own work tasks, and experience of social relations in the workplace. Some of this research can best be described as a sociological direction, focusing on properties on the context, in the sense of workplace and work environment (e.g. Nytrø 1995; Forseth, 2000). Other parts of this special field have a more psychological orientation that puts the individual at the centre (e.g. Savinainen et al., 2004). The assumption in both of these approaches is, however, that the experience of control or reciprocity in social relations in work plays a crucial role in the experience of stress and health consequences of the work. There is a lot of research that suggests that these factors are associated with adverse health effects such as muscle and skeletal problems, mental illness, cardiovascular disorders and increased sickness absence among employees (e.g. Peter & Siegrist, 1999).

These factors have also been examined through the framework of the Demands-Control-Support model (D-C-S) and through the Effort-Reward-Imbalance (ERI) (Karasek & Theorell, 1990; Siegrist & Peter, 1996). In this model, the combination between the (high) demand, (low) control and (low) support seems to be the cause of stress and increased risk of disease (Morrison et al.,

2003; Tsutsumi & Kawakami, 2004). According to Vahtera, et al. (2000) long term absences were more common among people who experienced low degree of control, low social support, high psychological jobs and high physical work load.

These brief examples from the research literature illustrates that the interest in issues of control and social support are not only related to job satisfaction and well-being, but that such factor can also be related to the health of employees. Moreover, this literature is to a large extent based on an intra-organizational perspective, in the sense that work conditions and are seen as

Methods

The empirical data for this study is based on qualitative studies within construction and cleaning; semi-structured interviews and observations conducted in 2011. The first case is about the work conditions of construction workers, while the second case is about the work conditions of cleaners.

We have studied work within *construction* at a large building site. When we did the interviews the building period had lasted for approximately one year, and was expected to be finished within three months. So, it was a busy period at the building site - with workers from 12 companies present, and there were many nationalities present; from Poland, Sweden, Latvia and Norway. In the construction case we have totally interviewed 21 persons; Leaders and construction workers within different disciplines (carpenter, ventilation, concreter) at the building site, where all levels in the contractor hierarchy was covered; interviews with total entrepreneur – contractors – and sub-contractors. We have also been present at meetings and HSE inspections at the building site, and have thus studied the collaboration and coordination across companies and disciplines. In the interviews we asked about tasks/responsibilities, work conditions, work environment and safety/health issues.

We have studied the work of *cleaners* employed in a large cleaning company in Norway that sell cleaning services/personnel to different companies. The cleaners we have interviewed did their job in banks and shopping centres and in smaller firms. In the interviews we focused on cleaners' work tasks and work conditions; how they were integrated in the company that they were working in, and how they influenced or controlled their own work situation, and we also looked upon social support and leadership. We have totally interviewed 12 persons from a Norwegian cleaning company; 9 cleaners, 2 team leaders and the head safety delegate.

Results and discussion: Job demands, control and support in outsourcing relationships

First, we present findings from the interviews with cleaners and construction workers. Second, we compare and discuss the similarities and differences in work conditions for these two industries/groups of workers – regarding their *job demands, influence and control, and social support* in the work place (Karasek & Theorell 1990, Leiulfsrud & Dahl 2005).

Case 1: Fragmentation and low influence within cleaning

Over the last three decades there has been a silent value chain repositioning of cleaners, from support to core activity. Structurally, cleaning has changed from being a support activity in various organizations to becoming a core activity for cleaning companies (Torvatn 2011). Where a large company might have employed its own cleaners thirty years ago it does not today. These services are now outsourced. Many municipalities have organized their cleaners in organizational units with other cleaners, instead of the old practice of assigning them to particular buildings or sites. Some municipalities have also outsourced cleaning services altogether. This is an important change; because where cleaners were earlier led by the local leader of what ever business/space they cleaned in they are today led by cleaners/ managers of cleaners. The relationship between cleaner and those working at the cleaned premises have changed from (inferior) co-worker in support function, to a transactional and contractual service provider- client relationship.

Based on the interviews with cleaners and theirs team leaders, we found these characteristics of work conditions:

- A fragmented work situation
- High efficiency demands
- Professionalization through new cleaning technology and methods
- Low status and skills
- Replaceable labor

A fragmented work situation

We found that the daily work conditions may vary a lot for cleaners. Cleaners employed in a cleaning company will in their daily work life relate to personnel employed in the companies were they are doing their cleaning jobs. Their working conditions will differ if they are performing their job in one particular company or in many different companies during their working day or week. In both cases, most cleaners have little daily contact with their line management, as the work is performed outside the company offices. Moreover, a cleaner may have limited contact with his/her colleagues, apart from possible coworkers working at the same location. The same level of “isolation” applies to the cleaners contact with union representatives and safety representatives.

In addition, a cleaner’s relations (close or distant) with customers will affect their work conditions. This work situation makes it a challenge to create a work place with strong social support and support from management in the cleaning industry.

High efficiency demands and customer orientation

The work environment for cleaners is strongly influenced by the type of contract their company has for the cleaning job. The contract may specify key parameters such as the extent of the job, which cleaning methods to use, how much time that is to be spent on different tasks, and the quality criteria against which the job performance is to be measured.

The tender processes where the different cleaning companies compete for contracts, involves strong incentives for cost-cutting and doing more work for less money. This often leads to increasing job demands. However, the relationship with customers is sometimes highlighted as a positive factor for cleaners’ working conditions. Some of the big cleaning companies have long

term contracts with companies and the same cleaner may be dedicated to the same work place for a long time. We found that this is positive for the cleaners' work conditions because they are more easily integrated in the company where they clean. For example, one of the cleaners we interviewed told us how she was "one of them" through the daily contact with employees' and the leaders in the same company over years. This was a small and transparent organization. She was integrated in the firm through common social arenas such as lunch, coffee breaks and Christmas parties. This way, she experienced a high degree of social support, and she felt much appreciated by the management and colleagues.

However, this situation is more rare today, and the cleaners have a more contractual and invisible relations to the company where they work. The contracts are usually negotiated without involvement from the cleaners, which means that they have little influence on decisions regarding work pace, compensation and quality criteria.

Professionalization through new cleaning methods and technology

In Norway as well as other countries, cleaning is a physically demanding occupation with a high degree of sickness absenteeism, high turnover and early retirement and many musculoskeletal problems (Enehaug 2008). The cleaner has to do a lot of physical work, and often work under unfavourable ergonomic conditions. However, the introduction of new cleaning methods and technology has changed this, and cleaning is becoming more professionalized. In the last two decades several technological changes have been introduced within the cleaning sector, such as less use of water, reduction of chemical detergents and use of machines for cleaning. The industry has wanted to improve efficiency through development of new technology and methods, and to reduce the level of manual labour. The industry has been successful in this respect.

Low skills and status

Today, it is more common that cleaners have a certificate of apprenticeship because of the development of new cleaning methods. However, cleaning is still regarded by many as an occupation requiring no skills, and low skills tend to imply low pay and low status. Furthermore, cleaning has often been done outside of normal business hours, which has undoubtedly contributed to making cleaning "invisible" work (Torvatn, 2011). Sometimes they work early in the morning and late in the evening, with the inconvenient this lead to for their personnel life and stress level. Cleaning during office hours increases the visibility of cleaners. Still, cleaning can be said to be invisible work, in the sense that it is more noticed when it is not done, than when it is done. The cleaners often work individually which means that they also become invisible for each other, but they meet in lunch hours and if they are cleaning in the same area/floor.

Replaceable labor

The quality of a cleaner's work is of course important, but errors or poor quality can usually be easily repaired and improved. Moreover, their work is usually not part of a complex work process or production processes with interdependencies between the tasks of other actors involved. These aspects, in addition to the being low-skilled workers, makes cleaning personnel are relatively replaceable; when a cleaner quits, the costs of the training needed to replace him or her, will generally not be very high. This represents an important framework condition which is likely to influence the level of power and influence cleaners can be expected to have over their working conditions.

Case 2: Integration and high influence within construction

In general, the construction industry in Norway is characterized by complex contractor hierarchies where total entrepreneurs buy services from contractors and sub-contractors. The work contracts/relations with contractors and sub-contractors are project based regarding the need of tasks/services during the building period. In Norway there is a tendency that large total entrepreneur companies are outsourcing more of the core competence compared to earlier. This means that temporary employment has increased and that more and more of the working staff is hired from temporary staff recruitment agencies. This development implies an increase of foreign enterprises and workers which means many different nationalities at the building site.

Based on the interviews with construction workers and their managers, we found these characteristics of work conditions:

- Emphasis on time and cost efficiency
- Interdependencies across disciplines
- Coordination of tasks
- Hands on leadership
- Skills, experience and status

Emphasis on time and cost efficiency

Like cleaning, construction is an industry characterized by strong competition. Contracts are awarded through tender processes, where price is usually the key criterion. This means that there are strong incentives in the industry to keep costs to a minimum and the time spent on each project as low as possible. Moreover, the competition is increasing, as the labour market becomes increasingly international. In a high-cost country like Norway, there are obvious economic possibilities related to hiring cheaper labour from countries in Eastern or Southern Europe. This, no doubt, is a factor which shapes the working conditions of construction workers.

Interdependencies across disciplines

Within construction it is common to outsource or buy services from contractors and sub-contractors. The conditions of work depends on the duration of the building period, and are regulated through contractual agreements. The total entrepreneur buys services from contractors, who again buy services from sub-contractors. At the bottom of this contractor hierarchy there is the temporary workers hired from recruitment agencies. Based on our case study we found that the contractors and the sub-contractors are well integrated at the building site, and there are few differences concerning status among the actors in the contractor hierarchy. Among other things, this can be related to the interdependencies that exist at a building site, both across company borders and across the different disciplines working at the site, such as carpenters, ventilation workers, painters among others. The different disciplines present are all necessary in the effort to complete the construction of this new building.

Coordination and leadership

During the building period there is a strong need for planning and coordination between disciplines, and workers within all disciplines (both contractors and sub-contractors) are

attending weekly coordination meetings together with the staff and management from the total entrepreneur company. In addition, some of the workers from contractors and sub-contractors have important roles/tasks at the work place such as safety delegates and foremen. Workers from contractors and sub-contractors usually work in teams, sometimes together with workers from the total entrepreneur, for example in weekly HSE inspections.

Integration at work is also dependent on how leaders behave to involve the work force (Skarholt et al. 2011). The activities at the building site were lead and coordinated by the construction manager from the total entrepreneur. His leadership style played an important role regarding his responsibility and concern for the whole building site, including all personnel working at the site. We found that the construction manager spent a lot of time outdoors, and thus he became very involved in the work of all disciplines present. Through hands-on leadership he became popular and well known among the contractors and sub-contractors. In this way he contributed to social support and influence among the workers; with the leader's attendance they could for example ask or confront him about safety issues at the work place.

The leaders from the largest contractor companies were located at the building site together with the total entrepreneur during the building period, and thus they managed to have a hands-on relation to their own working staff. However, the construction workers from smaller firms and sub-contractors did not have their leaders placed at the building site. They had thus contact with their foreman and/or the construction manager from total entrepreneur.

Skills, experience and status

We found that both experience and skills (certificate of apprenticeship) are important in the effort to perform qualified work at the building site. Today, it is common that young construction workers have certificates, but it is not that common among the older construction workers. They are highly qualified because of their experience working at many different building sites. The skills of construction workers within different disciplines are crucial at the building site – in the effort to complete the construction within deadlines. All disciplines are part of a value chain and thus go into a totality of tasks and responsibilities. Also, there is a need of high quality of the performed tasks at the building site. Errors are expensive and may be difficult to fix up after the work is completed.

Discussion

The discussion below explores on similarities and differences of work conditions when comparing the cleaning sector and the construction industry. How does employees' work conditions influence on workers' job demands, control and social support at the work place? Job demands refer to the work load and have been operationalized mainly in terms of pressure and role conflict. Job control refers to the person's ability to control his or her work activities – through skill discretion and decision authority. Social support refers to experience of social relations in the workplace (Karasek & Theorell 1990). The combination between (high) demand, (low) control and (low) support seems to be the cause of stress and increased risk of disease (Morrison et al., 2003; Tsutsumi & Kawakami, 2004).

Tender processes and job demands

Job demands refer to employees' work load, pressure and stress at work. Within the cleaning sector there are high job demands because of higher efficiency demands. Outsourcing means contractual agreements and competition between companies which introduces incentives toward squeezing the work conditions negatively. Today almost 75 per cent of the square meters to be cleaned are put out for tenders, according to the Confederation of Businesses (Torvatn, 2011). However in a situation with strong focus on price, the tasks purchased requiring little skill and a large pool of groups wanting access to the job market tenders have also given rise to a black/junk market in cleaning in Norway (Torvatn 2011). According to Berge and Sønsterudsbråten (2011) junk enterprises are often able to win tenders because it is the job of purchasing agents to find the most economically beneficial offer, without necessarily considering the potential effect on working conditions or the legal status of their subcontractors.

There are also higher job demands within cleaning regarding the needs for more skills about new cleaning methods and technologies. However, this has a positive affect on cleaners' job situation and means more training and a professionalization of the cleaners' work. It has also increased the cleaners' influence and status at work to some extent.

Regarding the job demands for construction workers, they also experience higher efficiency demands. This is due to a development of shorter construction time which means that the work has to be performed within shorter deadlines. Many of the construction workers experience a high physical work load through repetition of work processes and routines where the consequences are muscle and skeletal problems and increased sickness absence.

Outsourcing of activities may result in higher job demands (work load) among the hired construction workers. If they do not deliver according to contract agreements, they can be charged for extra days by the total entrepreneur for example.

Control and influence

To have influence and control, and to be integrated at the work place means a lot for employees' psychological well-being and motivation (Karasek & Theorell, 1990). It seems fair to conclude that while there are some attempts to upgrade the skills and status of cleaning personnel, the level of control over key parameters such as time, resources and quality criteria is relatively low. The cleaners may have the autonomy needed to decide which order to do their task, but it may be argued that most decisions, and arguably the most important ones, are still outside the reach of the cleaners' influence. They also have a fragmented work situation characterized by cleaning at different work places and thus more distant relationships - that involves little influence at work.

Compared to the outsourced cleaners, we found that the construction workers from contractors and sub-contractors have more influence and are well integrated at the building site. This is affected by their skills and competence and through the interdependencies across disciplines and companies at the work place. The high level of social support at the building site affects their influence positively. Some employees' from contractors and sub-contractors has tasks as safety delegates and foreman which increase their influence and power base. The foremen also attend at planning- and coordination meetings and become involved in problem-solving regarding their

own work situation. For a “normal” construction worker without supplementary tasks and roles, there is less autonomy and influence over own work situation, because their tasks are planned and defined from the construction management.

The ability to control own work activities at a building site (construction) is also affected whether one are employed by the total entrepreneur or hired from a temporary recruitment agency. It is an increased amount of hired workers within construction in Norway. We found that employed workers (from total entrepreneur) used their power to make sanctions and demands towards their management regarding to affect their work conditions, while the hired personnel from Poland and Latvia had the least control of all the workers. The contractual agreements and distant relations between total entrepreneur and hired personnel made it possible to use sanctions if breach of contract. This kind of relation means more power and control with management and less control with the workers. This way, we can argue that the workers at the bottom of the contractor hierarchy have lowest control at work.

Integration and social support

Social support refers to experience of social relations in the workplace – that affects employees’ well being, health conditions and sick leave. The individual and fragmented work situation among cleaners affects their experience of social support. We found that cleaners often have a low degree of social support. This has to do with their working time (cleaning are often done outside of normal business hours). A fragmented work relation with frequently changing work places also contributes to make the cleaners invisible. At the opposite, integrated cleaners that have a long-lasting relation to a work community gain social support. As cleaners often have a distant relation to their manager, the social support they experience are mostly from customers and among the cleaners cleaning at the same work place.

Compared to the cleaners’ experience of social support at the work place, the construction workers are through their tasks and interdependencies achieving high degree of social support both from colleagues and management. The construction site constitutes an integrated (although temporary) organization where managers, workers, union representatives and safety representatives are all present at a relatively confined site. This allows for a far greater level of social support, and a higher potential of developing strong and well-organized unions. In addition, the tasks of all the various disciplines working at a construction site, are strongly interwoven in the overall production process. The same cannot be said about cleaners, which perform tasks that are more or less isolated from the work and production processes of their clients. In Marx’ writings on the capitalist mode of work, the relationship to the overall production process is a key variable for the level of alienation involved in contract work (Morrison, 1995).

We found that the challenges according social support is the lack of integration of the different nationalities at the working place. There is little communication and collaboration between the Norwegians and the Polish workers for example. This has to do with language problems and the skepticism among the Norwegian workers towards the increasing trend of outsourcing of core competence in the construction industry. Sufficient support from managers is important regarding good work conditions. Research within the oil- and gas industry shows for instance that hands-on leadership, that is a close and daily contact and dialogue between an employee and

her/his leader, will have a positive effect on employees' well being and stimulate to good work conditions (Skarholt et al., 2011).

Conclusions

The object of this paper was to discuss the effects of outsourcing on work conditions within cleaning and construction - with emphasize on job demands, control and social support at the work place. We found that the work conditions for construction workers were characterized by high social support through the integration off all companies and actors present at the building site. The level of control was dependent on if the workers had additional tasks as foremen or safety delegates or not, and the hired foreign workers in the bottom of the contractor hierarchy had least control of all. The job demands varied due to activities during the building period, such as particular high job demands towards the final deadline – with more overtime and stress. The job demands may also vary across the contractor hierarchy and if you are in the top or the bottom of the hierarchy. As an employed worker (total entrepreneur) you can negotiate work conditions that affect on job demands, while hired foreign workers can be sanctioned by total entrepreneur if they do not deliver according to contracts agreements.

We found that the cleaners' work conditions were characterized by low social support, low control, and high job demands – which are a demanding work situation that can cause stress and increased risk of disease. Through a fragmented work situation with many different customers and work places it is difficult to be integrated in a working community. It also difficult to gain social support from line (own) management because cleaners and their leaders are not co-located, and the local management were the cleaners work are not concerned of the cleaners' well-being. So, social support is first of all gained through collaboration among the cleaners located at the same work place. The influence/control over work conditions is low because the cleaners are not involved in the contract agreement or planning of their work. However, they have control over their daily tasks and responsibilities. Regarding high job demands this is both positive and negative. Positively, the need for skills in new cleaning methodology has increased the cleaners' status. On the negative side, the increased emphasis on time and cost efficiency has resulted in negative work conditions.

What this shows us, is that the claims of increased autonomy and democracy often made by scholars describing new organization forms and knowledge-intensive work, cannot be generalized to the more traditional forms of work. While employees in both the industries studied seem to have some level of control over their work performance, key decisions regarding work pace and work load remains out of their reach. The study also illustrates that organizing work according to an outsourcing model *may* involve a reduction in employees' control over important aspects of work, as tender processes tend to transfer a great deal of power to the customers. The effects of this, however, vary somewhat between the two sectors studied. In the construction case, we found a largely positive work environment. This was related to the social support that comes from working in geographical proximity to managers and coworkers. The level of social support should also be seen in relation to the close integration of the *tasks* performed by the various professions working on the site. In the cleaning case, we found a low degree of control *and* a low degree of social support. This can be related to the fragmented nature

of the work performed in the cleaning industry. This is seen as negative for the work environment in the industry.

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