

Chapter One

▶▶ HOUSEHOLDS, WORK AND FLEXIBILITY Critical Review of Literature

OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTION

This document is produced as the first deliverable of the project *Households, Work and Flexibility* funded by the European Commission under the Fifth Framework Programme contract no. HPSE-1999-00030. The project extends from April 2000 to April 2003. We are grateful to the Commission for their support of this work. Further information can be found on the homepage of the project: <http://www.hwf.at>

The project is designed to look at the relationship between households and the kinds of work undertaken by households, including all the family members and using a broad definition of work to include both paid and unpaid labour. The project considers the role of flexibility in this context and for this purpose we have defined flexibility as that of time, place and conditions. That is, we are considering flexible hours of work, flexible place of work and various contractual conditions.

The countries chosen were intended to be illustrative of different policy approaches to flexibilisation and the work-family balance. However, we have also endeavoured to compare Western European EU countries with a range of Eastern European candidate countries in this analysis to understand the effect of such trends across Europe generally. Consequently, the countries chosen were Sweden, the UK, the Netherlands, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria. The research team represent a cross-disciplinary group of sociologists, economists, educationalists and social policy specialists.

The main research instruments are a quantitative representative sample survey in each country and an analysis of policies and labour market trends. The survey was carried out in the first half of 2001 and involved a representative sample of at least 1000 respondents in each country aged 18 to 65 who were also asked about other household members. The policy and labour market analysis will be the subject of a report in 2002.

The project is intended to look not just at the behaviour of people in the labour market (taking into account both domestic, informal and formal employment) but also their attitudes and values in respect to it. In other words, what Glucksman (1995) has called the Total Social Organisation of Labour. Thus, it explores ways in which people feel that family and work should be combined and whether their work impinges on family life. The project also considers the conflicts and tensions that this might generate within the household. Finally, the project will look at the extent to which actors in the labour market are able to control their conditions of work and how they view them.

At the start of the project, each partner was asked to produce an overview of the debates about flexibility and also some discussion of the trends in flexibility in their countries. The aim of this document is therefore not so much to document trends (this comes in a later research report) but to document debates and discourses. Whilst in the EU countries that we are covering (the UK,

the Netherlands, Sweden) flexibility has been a topic for considerable debate and often extensive policy interventions, in Eastern European Candidate countries it has hardly been a topic for discussion at all at the time that we embarked on the study. Nevertheless, there are important ways in which flexibilisation is taking place in the Candidate countries. Therefore, the following reports vary considerably in the amount of coverage that they are able to provide. This first chapter of the report is intended as an overview of the literature reviews, highlighting some of the contrasts and similarities between them.

In many respects, the pressures towards flexibility, such as increased global competition, the introduction of just-in-time production, the restructuring of older formerly-dominant "Fordist" type industries, the flattening of hierarchies, the down-sizing and rationalisation of organisations and the rise of the service sector coupled with developments in new Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) have impacted upon all the countries that we are considering. However, these pressures not necessarily self-evident: they take place in an ideological environment, within economic policy discourse (Bradley et al. 2000, Dex and McCulloch 1997). They have impacted in different ways and the responses in terms of policy have been very different. It is these differences in perceptions, responses and discourses which we aim to explore in this report.

For some time the debate about flexibility was derived mainly from US models of flexibility where the trade off of low unemployment for low wages and flexible work in a deregulated climate was much admired elsewhere (Ganssman 2000). However, US social scientists also described the family stress, long hours culture and personal insecurity caused by this experience (Sennet 1998, Hochschild 1997). To some extent these trends were reflected in the UK too. Europe, by contrast, was seen as suffering from "Eurosclerosis" with an alternative trade off between high social protection, labour market rigidity and high unemployment. This rather stark contrast can no longer

be sustained. The innovative policy responses in some European countries to combine social protection with more flexibility are described in this report. The European Commission has also been aiming to modernise the European Social Model during the 1990s in order to make it responsive to these kinds of labour market changes. These initiatives suggest that there are alternative ways to deal with global economic pressures (see *Employment in Europe 2001*). One of the incentives to produce such strategies at a European level is to avoid "social dumping" whereby one country can undercut the costs of another by providing worse social protection and lower social costs. The success of these initiatives was illustrated in the striking fall in unemployment and increase in the number of jobs in some countries. This has led to increasing interest in how to combine flexibility with economic growth in ways that suit both employer and employee and maintain or even improve the quality of working life.

At the same time there has been a debate about how to combine family with working life as increasing numbers of women enter the labour force and the birth rates have fallen in European countries, creating anxieties about the long term sustainability of the European Social Model. There have been a range of state and other initiatives to address this issue, described in the following reports, and there are large variations across Europe in the extent to which work and family are combined in different ways by different genders.

The inclusion of Eastern European Candidate countries into the project (Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania) adds a whole new dimension to the usual discussions of flexibility, because in these countries there had been very secure and stable full time work for both men and women until 1989. After that, soaring unemployment and the closure or rationalisation of many traditional industries along with the growth of the service sector, the introduction of small, new firms and extensive privatisation mean that they have suffered many of the problems of Western European countries, but more

dramatically and in a compressed period of time. In most of these latter countries, the legacy of childcare facilities, generous maternity leave and other forms of support enabling mothers to work full time have also been under threat.

The following report is divided into three parts. In the first two parts we cover debates

about flexibility and debates about households and work. These two fields are inherently related but often found in different literatures. In the third part we consider cross-cutting factors.

1. THE FLEXIBILITY DEBATES

1.1. What is flexibility?

To begin with we should start to define flexibility. As mentioned already, in this project it is defined as flexibility of time, place and conditions. This avoids the usual distinction between numerical flexibility (a way of changing the numbers in the workforce according to need) and functional flexibility (changing the range of skills held by workers) (Pollert 1988). Rather, our focus is upon the individual worker and the household in which they live in order to understand what flexibility means to them, not just as individuals but in combination with other household members.

Flexible work is usually seen as part-time, temporary and some sorts of self-employed work (for example self-employed without employees, paying own insurance contributions – in other words a kind of casualised employment). These kinds of work have generally been increasing in most European countries over the post war years (Employment in Europe 2001). Sometimes this is called “atypical work” (in contrast to so-called typical work of full time, fully employed people) or “precarious employment” (in contrast to “secure employment”). Yet none of these terms is very adequate for the kinds of work we are describing which are increasingly typical for certain population groups and can also be secure as well as precarious. There is a considerable debate as to whether these kinds of work form stepping stones out of unemployment or whether they lead instead only into a socially excluded backwater from which people cannot escape. Perrons et al. (1998) in a cross national study of flexibilisation in

the retail sector found that this varied considerably between countries. In Sweden, people were able to negotiate their hours one year in advance which meant a certain amount of predictability about how they could organise their lives. In Germany, the various forms of negotiation allowed a range of different contracts to be arranged but the legislation designed to protect women meant that they could not necessarily do the kinds of hours that they wanted. In Spain temporary employment was interspersed with periods of unemployment, whilst in Greece and East Germany, employees were simply phoned up, sometimes the same day and expected to turn up for work. They did not feel able to turn down such offers, leaving them with very irregular employment which was inconvenient for managing family and other aspects of life.

Closer inspection reveals a whole range of different kinds of flexible employment which can take place within the regular workplace as well as outside of it. Our aim is to broaden these definitions of work to include not just hours and contracts but also place of working. Here we can include the following:

Flexibility of conditions

- Temporary Agency work
- Fixed term contracts
- Rolling contracts
- Self-employed
- Casual hours (banked)
- Casual hours (seasonal)

- Supply contract work
- Consultancy work

Flexibility of time

- Standby and “on call”
- Annualised hours contracts
- Zero hours contract (where no times are guaranteed)
- Flexi-time (negotiated hours of arriving and leaving employment)
- Individualised contracts
- Shift work, including rotating shifts, variable shifts, split shifts
- Overtime
- Work at weekends and evenings (outside regular hours)
- Time-off-in lieu
- Short time working
- Part time working (fixed hours)
- Part time working (variable hours)
- Term time working

Each of the above can be part of a permanent or temporary work

Flexibility of place

- Hotdesking
- Teleworking
- Distance working
- Working mainly at home
- Working sometimes at home
- Working from home
- Working in different places
- No fixed place of work

(from the UK report. See also Purcell et al. 1999)

Furthermore, these kinds of flexibility can combine in different ways: thus one, could be a self-employed worker working part time partially at home. However, the different hours and place of work could also be combined with regular employment.

Indeed one author has suggested that we should distinguish between *structured* and *unstructured* forms of flexible employment (which could also be part time, teleworking etc.), the former leading to more predictability for the employee the latter less predictability (Purcell et al. 1999, see the UK report).

There is also a suggestion that we should consider *internal* flexibility (referring to the internal organisation of companies) and *external* flexibility (the hiring and dismissal of additional workers) as well as between quantitative and qualitative aspects of flexibility (see report from the Netherlands). Or between *flow-process* operations and *project-type* operations (see the Swedish Report).

However, it is apparent from these reports that the discourse on flexibility in different countries focuses on different issues. In the Netherlands the model of “flexicurity” tries to combine flexibility with security (Sels and Van Hootegem 2001). This means that part time work and individual contracts are negotiated in the context of strong regulations to maintain social security in general. In other words, the meanings of flexibility of *time* (as something about which employers are obliged to negotiate) and flexibility of *conditions* in the context of general social security are very different to other countries where flexibility means an erosion of security. In the Netherlands the tradition of commuting means that many work in different places to where they live in any case, so spatial flexibility is not regarded as problematic. In Sweden, flexibility is more about enhancing both men and women’s ability to combine full time work with family roles. Hence, paid maternity and paternity and study leaves are encouraged. In the UK the issue has been about reducing the regulations in the labour market so that people can be hired and fired very easily and range of different terms and conditions are possible with minimal state interference. Hence in the UK the number of short term contracts is low, because they are unnecessary – people can be fired without being on short term contracts so there is no need for much discussion about this issue.

Hence, in the UK, the expectation of a life-long job has disappeared after 20 years of de-regulatory policies (Burchell et al. 1999, Quilgars and Abbott 2000). In Slovenia, flexibility is concerned more with flexibility of workplace since the privatisation of property discourages people from moving and encourages them to commute to work. This issue is also one which has emerged in the Czech Republic. There flexibility is seen as a way in which work conditions are being eroded. In Hungary, there have been various rather progressive attempts to introduce flexibility and research shows that a flexible workforce exists alongside a regularly employed one, often through people moonlighting, working in the black economy or being in practice employed in different ways. These are frequently the same people as who are also working in the regular economy, so the discussion about core and peripheral workers or social exclusion takes on a different dimension. This situation of course exists in other countries too, but there is a well developed literature about the role of the informal economy in Hungary. In Romania and Bulgaria flexibility is not discussed at all, but has taken place very dramatically as a result of the disappearance of full time regular jobs and their lack of replacement as well as the inadequacy of the social support system. People become "self employed" or "casually employed" because unemployment is the only alternative. Hence, there are very different preoccupations regarding flexibility in the different countries being studied and some focus more on time, some on place and some on conditions. The result is that different national discourses have evolved.

The debate about flexibilisation really began in the 1980s in some Western countries with discussion about flexibility in organisations (Pollert 1988, Atkinson 1987) and grew out of the discussions of de-industrialisation and the end of organised capitalism, being replaced with "disorganised" capitalism in a new phase of globalisation (Lash and Urry 1987, Offe 1985, Castells 1996) as well as discussions of "postmodernisation" or "postindustrialisation" of the economy (Harvey 1989). These debates emerged in the USA and the

UK where the neo-liberal de-regulation of the labour market was first introduced. This has been later broadened to cover various kinds of work in general that were not previously described as being flexible or inflexible, but rather as marginal or precarious forms of employment such as self-employment, part time work and temporary work. However, as these types of work increased and became increasingly more typical rather than atypical more attention was drawn towards them.

Flexibility is normally discussed as though it were a positive trend, as something dynamic and modern or as something which should or "must" take place. Implicitly it is assumed: better to be flexible than to be rigid. In this way, it can be used to make the development of casualised work, the erosion of social protection and job security, the rationalisation of enterprises and the dismissal of large numbers of workers as well as the attack on labour unions and forms of employee representation – which also coincide with neo-liberalist ideas – seem positive and necessary. Some see this as linked to the development of a new kind of entrepreneurial, self-actualised, individualised worker who holds a portfolio of jobs, who reskills him or herself continually and who is also responsive to change (Bridges 1996, Handy 1994, Leadbeater 1997, Rifkin 1995). This is illustrated in the Dutch report there is discussion of the development of an idea of "a la carte" work contracts in recent legislation: ideally, each employee could arrange their own hours, although this remains more of an ideal than a reality at the moment.

However, others see it more pessimistically as leading to the "Brazilianisation" of the labour market with a few well paid, well protected workers and a large mass of people living on casual work with minimal protection (Beck 2000).

Certainly, it will lead to new challenges for the welfare state based traditionally on the full time male breadwinner to a greater or lesser extent (Behning and Feigl-Heihs 2001, Lewis 1992). It is also vision which is implicitly gendered, as we shall see later.

1.2. Pressures leading to flexibilisation

The pressure towards flexible employment comes from different directions. On the one hand there is a need for firms, organisations and state services to cut costs and be responsive to global market pressures. From the employer's perspective, therefore, flexibility has a number of advantages and they have been concerned to lobby for legislation to make this possible. From the employee's side, flexibilisation is often seen negatively, as a threat to working conditions. Yet there are many advantages for employees too in flexibility, although this depends upon their age and position in the labour market. In this project we are therefore looking at the situation from the bottom upwards, from the point of view of household and individual strategies for combining work rather than from the point of view of employers or the labour market in general (Wallace 2002). This can be used as a useful way to understand the nature of post-fordist restructuring by observing what happens in practice instead of just in theory (Mingione 1994). Therefore, we have broadened the notion of flexibility to include not just temporary, part time and some sorts of self-employed work but a variety of different kinds of economic activities, self-provisioning, informal and casual work and its relation to household, community and caring work. We have also included flexibility of place as well as flexibility of time and conditions.

1.2.1. Employer-lead flexibilisation (labour demand side)

It is often argued that firms need to rationalise due to global competition and they pass these risks on to employees through creating expendable workers. The Swedish and the UK reports also mention the increase in the immediacy and variability of customer demand as a reason for increased work flexibility. This applies not only in

the private sector; in the public sector there is also increasing sub-contracting and cost cutting leading to competitive tendering carried out by flexible workers. In Sweden and the Netherlands it was particularly the economic crisis in the late 1980s and early 1990s that encouraged these tendencies, as governments looked for ways to create new jobs. In Britain it was the restructuring (de-industrialisation, privatisation, competitive tendering) carried out under conservative governments from 1980s and continued by New Labour. The restructuring of firms during the recession of the early 1980s and 1990s in the UK along with policies that aimed to diminish employment protection helped to increase flexibility under the conservative government.

There were a number of academic debates about the rise of the flexible firm containing both "core" and "flexible" employees. Some have argued that this constitutes not just one but a range of segments with employees and employers in different kinds of secure or insecure employment (Atkinson 1987). There is a debate about just how extensive is flexibility and whether it has really replaced older forms of work (Bradley et al. 2000). There seems to be a lot of variation according to countries, sub-regions and according to employment sectors (Perrons et al. 1998). This debate is taking place mostly in the context of Western Europe.

In Bulgaria by contrast, economic pressures such as privatisation and restructuring have also lead in the direction of functional flexibility in the sense that people work longer hours on the same job combining different tasks or take on additional jobs to compensate for low wages and insecurity by combining both formal and informal, employed and self-employed work.

1.2.2. Employee-lead flexibilisation (labour supply side).

There have been a range of employment and demographic trends which tend to create pressures towards flexibility from the supply side as well. In particular, we find a general trend towards more women working in the labour market and continuing their careers in spite of family responsibilities, whilst more and more men are economically inactive. Also, falls in birth rates and the postponement of family formation leads to a tendency towards women spending longer periods in the labour market. The single male breadwinner family which was the dominant norm for much of the twentieth century in Western European countries is replaced by two-earner family, which is becoming increasingly common in most countries. This can take the form of two full time earners, 1.5 earner families (with one full time and one part-time) as is increasingly common in the Netherlands or one regular worker and the other showing various flexible characteristics as is more common in the UK. However, in the UK literature there is a debate: do women prefer part time work to fit with family responsibilities? Or are they simply forced to do it due to lack of childcare facilities and other opportunities? (see Hakim 1996, 2000). The dual earner family was the norm in ECE Candidate countries until 1989 and is still something of normative model. However, the reality is that many men, but more often women, have lost their jobs and been forced into flexible employment.

High youth unemployment (in countries such as Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary) and increasingly non-linear transitions into work in all countries, whereby young people support themselves with casual jobs through periods of study or move in and out of the labour market and therefore actually seek precarious, flexible jobs have helped to encourage flexibility (Kovatcheva 2001). Even where youth unemployment is very low, such as in Sweden or the Netherlands, changes in Higher Education funding mean that students increasingly have to support themselves

through education and training by undertaking temporary jobs. These people might actually prefer temporary and irregular jobs that they can fit with their hours of study.

Some studies have indicated that both men and women might opt for more flexible hours and more flexibility of place in order to improve their quality of life (Hörning; Gerhard, and Michailow 1995). Such studies argue that it is time which is becoming the scarce resource in affluent countries and predict that conflicts over time will be ascendant in the future (Robinson and Godbey 1997).

In the Eastern European Candidate countries, women worked full time since the 1950s, but unemployment is new. In Eastern Europe, most prefer secure, full time traditional jobs rather than insecure flexible ones. This is still the dominant model both in behaviour and in attitudes for both men and women. There does not seem to be much demand for part time or flexible work even if it is available. In the Czech Republic indeed, flexibility was seen as a "poisonous cocktail" – a way of threatening working conditions. In Hungary, various progressive reforms to encourage flexibility were introduced during the last twelve years, but often these had unintended consequences (see Hungarian Report). In Bulgaria and Romania the rise of flexible employment reflects the replacement of low paid regular jobs with even lower paid irregular ones. Paradoxically, high unemployment and low wages in Bulgaria has led to the creation of "portfolio workers" – people combining a range of activities – as predicted by one of the most optimistic prophets of the post-industrial society, Charles Handy. However, here it is not a matter of higher modernisation so much as a form of de-modernisation.

However, flexibility from the employee side is usually regarded as threatening. Many studies have pointed out how work has become more insecure and more intensive in the last two decades and that this leads to health problems and family tensions (Burchell et al. 1999). Flexibilisation in Sweden, the Netherlands, the UK and Czech Republic is usually portrayed as negative for employees. Perrons and colleagues (1998) con-

cludes that employees throughout the EU are usually the victims of flexibilisation.

In Sweden functional flexibility was already well developed as a result of pressure from labour unions and is not a new phenomenon. Although the Swedish labour market may appear inflexible in some respects, in fact discussions of what is now called flexibility fit quite well with the tradition of supporting people's full participation in the labour market through a variety of social policies.

1.2.3. Family-friendly policies

There is some evidence of family-friendly policies being introduced by firms who see it as in their interest to retain personnel that way, however take up of such policies seems to be rather low (Hochschild 1997). However, in Europe most initiatives come from the state or from social partners. The Netherlands is an example of where these were initiated by the social partners. Since from the early 1980s there was the introduction of the "Polder model", which included agreements over wage restraint, monetary stability, cuts in public expenditure, social security reforms and lowering taxes. These agreements were also extended to finding ways to combine work and family life. Visser (2000) sees three factors in the Dutch "job intensive economic growth" as being important: wage moderation, the shift to service economy, and working time reduction and job redistribution. This has largely been successful. The growth in the volume of employment has largely been achieved by flexiworkers and part timers. As a result more and more women entered the labour force as part time workers in a country where women had traditionally stayed at home as full time carers. However, this was not matched by a growth in public child care facilities and child care was seen as part of an individualised problem. This brought to public attention the relationship between work and care. In the 1990s a unique attempt was made in the Netherlands to consider how all kinds of work – paid and unpaid – come together. Hence in 1996 a "Task Force on

the Daily Timetable" was set up and also "Task Force on Future Scenarios for the Redistribution of Unpaid Work". Various scenarios were put forward of which the Dutch government favoured the model of the "combination" of paid and unpaid work shared between men and women. It will be interesting to see how these scenarios take effect in future.

In Sweden, the state has been very active in helping people to combine work and family since the 1960s and hence there is strong support (in terms of childcare etc.) for working mothers. However, the normative model in Sweden is that both men and women should have full time careers active in the labour market with public child care rather than caring for their children mainly at home, as in the Netherlands.

In the UK the family was traditionally seen as a private sphere and choices regarding work and family something for individuals and families to decide without state interference (Windebank 2000). Hence, there is little public support for children of working mothers (as in France or in Sweden) but families have to make their own arrangements often by using relatives and friends or private childminders (Lewis 1992). This has changed with the more pro-active policies of the New Labour Government elected in 1997, however.

In Slovenia a range of family friendly policies survived from the previous socialist self-management government giving women generous child care leave and other forms of public support if they have children. However, the assumption is that women will work full time in the labour market, and most of them do. It will be interesting to see if this quasi-Swedish system will continue in future or whether such policies will be cut as in other post-Communist countries. Some studies have indicated that the strong protection for working mothers (for example the possibility of re-entry into the same job after extended child care leave) may actually disadvantage many women in the labour market as employers may be reluctant to employ them in the first place.

In the Czech Republic, Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania, family policies are a part of the legacy of the past and to some extent still part of social expectations. However, many are under threat as the communist ideology of gender has been under attack and the state has had to cut back on public resources. There is a legacy of child care facilities from the previous era. Most of them however, have been cut following the retrenchment in public expenditure and the closure or rationalisation of many industries. This means that in these countries, families, have been forced to use extended family self-help, something which also has strong continuities with the past. However, family policies take a low priority in the current policy agenda.

1.2.3. New technology

Privatisation and computerisation has created new de-centralised work opportunities. The miniaturisation of technologies such as PCs and mobile phones along with networking through internet has potentially quite radical implications for working from home (Castells 1996). However, this seems to have only affected certain regions and certain parts of the labour market. It has had an important impact in the UK especially (for example in the creation of call centres and teleworking). In Sweden and the Netherlands the incidence of teleworking is also above the EU average, although this seems to mainly involve better qualified professional and white collar workers. New technology as a way of introducing flexibility has had little impact in ECE countries except in specialised sectors – for example in banking and science. We could say that this has helped to create a model of very uneven development with some households using all manner of new technology to change their work patterns and others retreating into a kind of new peasant economy.

Others have suggested that there has been a diversification of work forms with the introduction and dissemination of ICT technologies leading to a blurring between public and private spheres rather than a bifurcation between core

and marginal workers. They suggest that a “socially sustainable flexibility” could best be achieved by negotiated management of working time, social rights granted independent of the status of the worker through the EU (that is as “citizens”), the modernisation of forms of employee representation to encompass such types of workers, the better use of human resource management and lifelong learning and the creative management of ICT.

1.2.4. Spatial flexibility

Spatial flexibility is not discussed as much as other kinds of flexibility, although it is also a way of bringing people to jobs or jobs to people (see example of New Technology above, see also Huws 1996, Hochgerner 1998). In the Netherlands there seems to be a tradition of commuting to work and this has also become more common in Slovenia since 1989. In general however, there was not much discussion of this kind of flexibility.

However, there do seem to be trends that an increasing number of people work at home or from home. Felstead (2001) and colleagues using the Labour Force Survey in Britain, found that about one quarter of all workers work sometimes at home, but only about 2.5% actually worked at home and 7% had no fixed place of work. In 3 out of 5 cases this was connected with New Technology. However, they distinguish between high paid professionals working at home (discretionary workers) who get more money than their equivalent colleagues in employment, who were often graduates and could control their work in some way and those who had little discretion over their employment and generally earned less than those in regular work.

1.2.5. The erosion of the formal labour market

The erosion of the formal labour market is the most important factor in Romania and Bulgaria where the disappearance of formal jobs in the state sector and the failure of the private sector to compensate has led to people being forced to

undertake a range of activities to survive and to combine self-provisioning with formal work. We might call this “forced flexibilisation”. It is associated with the informalisation of large parts of the economy. In some ECE countries, such as the Czech Republic, however, the combination of low pay and labour hoarding (not laying off workers) along with a relatively strong economy has meant that pressures to flexibilise could be resisted for as long as possible.

1.2.6. Accession to the European Union

For the countries of Western Europe, labour market policies have become increasingly Europeanised, especially since 1997 with the introduction of the European Employment Strategy and the need for EU states to report annually according to certain criteria and benchmarks. For the countries of ECE the debate about flexibilisation has often been

imposed from outside through international agencies who have made it a condition of various forms of aid (The World Bank, the IMF, the OECD etc.). Under these circumstances, flexibilisation is seen as a benchmark of “progress”. More recently, the process of accession to the European Union has meant that these countries have had to fulfil various criteria and become part of the European Employment Strategy. Consequently, there has been a rapid increase in various kinds of “atypical” work from a situation where it almost did not exist at all just 12 years ago. The fact that Bulgaria and Romania have suffered the most from the transition from Communism and yet appear to be the most flexible reflects a situation of increasing marginalisation of parts of the workforce rather than the consequence of pro-active policies (see Employment in Europe 2001).

1.3. Conclusion: Different approaches to flexibility

Based upon these factors and the regional differences that they embody, we could identify three main approaches to flexibility: proactive approaches, de-active approaches and default approaches.

In the pro-active approaches, there is a desire to embrace flexibility and to turn it into a tool for improving the employability of the workforce and the situation of the labour market. In Sweden this impetus came mainly from the state, in the Netherlands, from the social partners. In this system, the regulatory framework is very important for ensuring protected employment conditions. In pro-active countries, flexibility is combined with prosperity and modernisation of the labour market.

The de-activating approaches involve mainly rolling back the state and the regulatory framework by allowing the market to take priority in flexibilising work. The example is the UK. Hence, it was the newly privatised Telecommunications industry that helped to initiate telework rather than the state. There is minimal state protection

for employees: labour unions and other forms of employee representation play a negligible role. In these countries flexibility is associated with increasing social divisions.

Finally there is default flexibilisation, where there are no real policies to encourage flexibility, and even resistance towards it (as in the Czech Republic). Flexibilisation nevertheless takes place leading to a division between the regularly employed but low paid worker and the marginal flexible worker (who are sometimes the same person in different jobs). In Slovenia and the Czech Republic, the worst of the transitional economic depression was over by the mid-1990s and their relatively strong economic position with low or falling unemployment meant that they were able to avoid or resist flexibilisation. Hungary, however, probably more closely resembles a pro-active approach.

In Bulgaria and Romania, the transition countries still suffering a situation of crisis, there has been widespread flexibilisation not due to policy initiatives but due to strong retrenchment

of the formal labour market. The disappearance of state employment, the lack of development of private sector employment, rocketing unemployment (especially youth unemployment) lack of adequate social policies and social protection for large parts of population means that people have been thrown back on their own resources to survive. The result is informalisation of large parts of the economy and the revival of household subsistence production. Some have called it the “naturalisation” of the economy. For example, one quarter of people in Romania aged 26-45 are not in the formal labour market. The result is a retreat into family-centred survival strategies, the decline of trust in public institutions and suspicion of policy initiatives. This is assisted by very high private ownership of domestic homes (more than 90% in Bulgaria and more than 80% in Romania). There is a debate suggested in the Bulgarian paper: is this an example of an historical continuity

briefly interrupted by socialism? Or is it really a transition crisis? If so, where is it leading? There is some mention of increasing regional diversification, especially between urban and rural locations. Social partnership is weak, not well organised in the private sector and family friendly policies are not on the political agenda under these circumstances.

Hence, paradoxically, it seems as though those ECE countries with the weakest economies are the most flexible whilst those which are stronger, are in a better position to resist flexibilisation.

Hence we have to be careful to distinguish the rhetoric of flexibilisation, which could be said to form a discourse in different national contexts, from the reality. This literature review is concerned with documenting the former. Our later analysis should help to reveal the latter.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOME AND WORK

The aim of this study is to look not just at jobs in the formal labour market, but at all kinds of work. These we can define as household work (including child care), self-provisioning (that is production of goods by the household for household consumption) and community and associational work.

The distinction between “work rich” (multiple earner) families and “work poor” families first coined by Pahl (1984) is a good way to understand social exclusion (Purcell et al. 1999). However, this can depend upon the nature of the benefits system, which may discourage spouses of unemployed to not work and also according to the kinds of jobs available for different family members in the local economy. This is a factor that can be further explored in the project.

Mingione (1994) rather sees this as the way in which the family is integrated into the local economy. For example, in the Northern parts of Italy the family has become part of the industrial system, whilst in Middle Italy it has helped to de-

velop small scale, flexible production which has brought great prosperity to those regions. In Southern Italy, by contrast, where there is a combination of informal economy, economic backwardness and dependency on state patronage, the family becomes a form of self-support but one which precludes economic development. A similar point is made by Hareven with regard to historical changes (Hareven 2000) and Morris (1990, 1997) also considers the dynamics of the household as a way of understanding social change. However, there are also very different cultures of the family across Europe with an individualised culture of autonomy for family members in the Northern countries to a family dependent culture in the South (Gallie and Paugham 2000). We will also seek to investigate differences between East and West in this respect.

For these reasons, the role of the welfare state and the way that it is organised in each country is important for understanding employment and work-family relations (Cousins 1999, Lewis 1992).

2.1. Domestic work

The studies of the relationship between household and work throughout Europe and North America tell a common story: women do most of the household work (Meissner 1975, Berk 1979, Horrell 1994). This seems to be the case whether they work traditionally full time as in the former-Communist countries of ECE (Corrin 1992 and see Czech Report and also Slovenian Report) or whether they work part time or not in the labour market at all.

However, there are some variations in this pattern. For example, there are variations on the extent to which men take part in childcare which seem to be cultural in nature (see Wallace 2002). Furthermore, men seem to do more and women slightly less in households where women work full time (Buck et al. 1994, Pahl 1984). This is modified by the effects of social class – here the relative position of the women to the man in the household is important (the higher her status relative to his, the more likely that the man will do more household work) (Bond and Sales 2000) as well as income (Baxter 1992). According to some arguments, this depends upon the relative income power of the wife.

Although there are no signs of egalitarianism in the division of labour, many households subscribe to an ideology of work sharing (Hochschild 1989, Haas 1998). Gershuny argues that it is more a matter of time for the domestic labour revolution to take effect rather than that it “stalled” (as claimed by Hochschild) (Gershuny et al. 1994).

Furthermore there is some debate about as to whether employment and unemployment affect this model. Some claim that the unemployment of the male partner would lead him to do more work

in the home, whilst others claim that this has little effect. Nelson and Smith (1999) argue that in the households with bad (insecure) jobs, men were likely to do less in the home and women more.

Some would claim that the amount of external support, for example in the degree of publicly provided childcare, would be important. Yet, one study recently found that in France, where women had more public childcare support, men actually did less in the home than in England where there was little such support (Windebank 2000). The message was that if men are forced to undertake childcare, due to lack of alternatives, they will do so. In those households, men and women sometimes arranged sequential shifts to cover child care. However, the availability of paid domestic help can also affect the way in which work is divided (Gregson and Lowe 1994, Haas 1998).

This discourse of the division of household labour was one initiated by feminist scholars who are critical of the extra burden of work that falls on women. It is thus a Western discourse which originated in the USA and in Northern Europe. In Eastern European countries the feminist movement had no influence and was indeed discredited (Wallace 2000). Social policies helped working mothers to fulfil their labour market obligations and the family was regarded as a private sphere, not the subject of scientific investigation. The problem of the equality between men and women was seen largely as having been solved by socialism. This view still prevails to a great extent, even with the evidence of women's position in the labour market weakening and their public token representation having disappeared.

2.2. Self-provisioning

Whilst there has been much discussion of this domestic division of labour between the sexes, there are fewer discussions of other activities that are also performed by or in the household. These would include various kinds of self-provisioning

such as building homes, providing resources produced in the home. Whilst in the USA this activity has been found to be important in the sense of building and maintaining the family home (Nelson and Smith 1999), in Russia, Clarke and his

colleagues argue that the need to dig vegetables and bottle fruits is more a romantic hobby rather than a necessity among households living near Moscow and Samara. However, for households in Romania and Bulgaria this kind of self-provisioning agricultural activity is not a hobby but an economic necessity and has become more important as jobs and social protection have been eroded. Even though this was a traditional supplement to low salaries, the importance of such activities for those without salaries or with declining incomes or no jobs has increased (see Romanian and Bulgarian reports). This is accompanied by a de-monetization of daily life as more and more people are excluded from the formal economy and the fear of market failure encourages

2.3. The social economy

Finally, we should see the household not just in terms of work that it does for itself but also work provided, or support received, from the local community. Hence the degree of involvement in associational life of the community can be an important factor in social integration as well as the extent to which households are involved in various forms of informal support. The latter may be more important in those countries (such as the post-communist countries of ECE) where there is a lack of developed formal associations and where there is a loss of trust in public institutions.

Nelson and Smith (1999) in their study in the USA found a strong division between those families that had "good" (regular) jobs and could plan their household strategies and those who had "bad" irregular jobs and had to more or less manage from day to day to divide up the work between couples. The latter had no long term

2.4. Final remarks regarding home and work

Some aspects of the relationship between home and work are better explored than others. The issue of the division of household labour has been discussed in the USA and Western Europe, mostly from within a critical feminist discourse

more and more of them to see self-provisioning agricultural work as a kind of insurance system, an alternative, self-help system of social protection (Clarke et al. 1999). However, in countries such as the Czech Republic as well as Hungary and Slovenia, there has been a clear decline in such activities (Wallace and Haerpfer 2002). Self-provisioning therefore can take on different meanings in different parts of Europe. The lovingly tended gardens and summer houses in rural Sweden represent a kind of affluent self-provisioning for self-fulfillment whilst that in Southern European Candidate countries reflects need for a form of subsistence in the absence of sufficient social protection.

prospects or strategies. People in stable, regular jobs were able to better cope with self provisioning and household work. They were also able to better become involved in community activities and Putnam amongst others attributes the decline of community activity and therefore "social capital" in the USA partly to the changing patterns of work over the last 20 years (Putnam et al. 2001).

Some authors see the "social economy" as a possible alternative to the crisis of the work society (Beck 2000, Offe and Heinze 1992). The social economy is certainly important for maintaining social cohesion but whether it could provide an alternative labour market is uncertain (Seyfang 2001). Our research suggests that those who are unemployed are also least likely to take part in associational life (Spannring, Wallace and Haerpfer 2001).

(although there has also been "backlash" arguments). This has been of little interest to Eastern and Central European scholars (although with some exceptions – see the Czech Report). The issue of self provisioning, by contrast has tended to

have greater importance in Eastern and Central Europe. The communal economy has been explored mostly from the point of view of its contribution to society rather than from the point of view of households, at least in recent years. The

relationship between the household and the local or regional economy would seem to be a fruitful way forward for future research, but has not been much developed in comparative perspective.

3. CROSS CUTTING FACTORS

Factors that emerged as important in all of these reviews, but of variable importance in different contexts are the following:

3.1. Gender

Women are over-represented in flexible work throughout the EU (Perrons et al. 1998). Flexibilisation without policy direction seems to lead to increasing pressure on women and parents to find their own solutions for child care and to resort to part time work from which they are therefore disadvantaged. In the NL the attempt to raise the labour market participation of women whilst leaving child care as a "private" problem (along with the rather traditional gender role expectations there) means that a gender bias is built into the system of reform. Yet this is perhaps less unequal than the traditional male-breadwinner model and more recent policy debates have started to challenge this bias. In Sweden, public support for working mothers is intended to enable them to participate as equal individuals in the labour market. However, the effect of the kinds of employment that women do means that gender inequalities are nevertheless reinforced (Esping Andersen 1990, 1997). The topic of participation of women in the labour force takes different forms therefore in different national dis-

courses. In the words of the Swedish report "A new gender order based upon differential working time is being offered as an institutionalised solution for women combining paid and unpaid labour. Although written in gender neutral language, these policies are predicated on the assumption of a gendered division of labour". However, whilst in Sweden (and perhaps now UK as well) there is considerable attention devoted to improving the quality of life through family-friendly flexible policies and in the Netherlands this takes the form of getting women into the labour market, in the Candidate countries, the priority is just to restructure the labour market in the interests of economic efficiency. Indeed the family friendly policies (which were also seen as economically efficient) that helped to get women in to the labour market under the former regimes are dissolving in most countries. The issue of promoting family friendly policies is not a policy goal. However, in these countries there may be a continuity in such public support from the previous regimes (see Slovenian Report).

3.2. Age

It is very clear in all countries that the most radical restructuring has been in the opportunities for young people. Instead of going from school to work along well established tracks, young people have longer and more indirect transitions going from school to training, to education, to tempo-

rary jobs and in and out of unemployment (Kovatcheva 2001). This means that much of the flexibility is displaced onto this age group. In the UK there is a discussion about how low paid and flexible work affects the ability of less skilled young men to establish a family and maintain

families/households. In Bulgaria and Romania very large numbers (maybe most) young people are unemployed and are dependent upon the home of origin. In all countries it is not clear in which circumstance this is simply a temporary “clearing” in career tracks and to what extent it may just lead some young people into permanently marginalized positions. One factor which brings young people into the flexible labour market in all countries is the changes in Higher and

Further Education funding such that many young people have to work their way through by taking on occasional, casual jobs (Perrons et al. 1998, Batenburg and de Witte 2001). In Bulgaria, many young people take on temporary work whilst they are waiting for better opportunities in the labour market to come up, ones which better suit their educational level. They are therefore “de-skilled” by this process.

3.3. Ethnicity/citizenship

In all countries, ethnic minorities and foreigners are doing much of the flexible work. In those countries with permanently settled ethnic minorities (UK, NL) cultural and discriminatory barriers in the labour market create a pool of low paid (often women) workers prepared to work for less money and worse conditions than other workers

(even illegally). In other countries foreigners or migrant workers perform the same role. This is also the case in Eastern European Accession countries (Wallace and Stola 2001). However, one study found that ethnic women, although the worst paid, were actually under-represented in home working (Felstead et al. 2000).

3.4. Life-cycle stage

For women especially, but also for men the stage in the life-cycle when they have children, the kind of work taken on is important. Men work more hours when they have families, women less (Ger-

shuny et al. 1994). In Bulgaria it is mainly people at the beginning and the end of their life course who are flexible workers.

3.5. Stratification of labour market

In all countries it seems that flexible workers fall into a number of categories. Some are low paid and disadvantaged. Some are highly educated and highly paid. Contrast for example, the situation of a high paid consultant and a low paid Asian woman doing piece work (perhaps illegally) at home. Both are flexible workers. It seems that the labour market is increasingly segmented

between core and secondary labour markets on the one hand, but also within in each sector according to pay, human capital and conditions (Felstead et al. 2000). In the Czech Republic, older industries provide lower paid, insecure jobs whilst newer ones in services provide high paid and better status jobs. This has reversed the former status and wage hierarchy.

3.6. Informalisation

The role of the informal economy is very variable. In the UK it is low due to de-regulation and exemption of part time work from social insurance payments. In Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia it may have declined, although there is some dispute about this (see Hungarian Report).

In Slovenia it would nevertheless account for almost 10% of the work (see Slovenian Report). In Romania, Bulgaria its role has increased dramatically: one third of jobs in Bulgaria are estimated to be informal. It is not clear if informal work is a substitute for the lack of work in the formal econ-

omy or whether it simply supplements it (Wallace and Haerpfer 2002). Nor is it clear if this contributes towards a work-rich versus work-poor division with society. Thus, are informal jobs more available to those already in work or are they an alternative for those who are not in the formal economy? In the Netherlands, one of the advan-

tages of the expansion of flexible work has compressed the need for informal work according to Visser (2000). On the other hand the “do it yourself” style of childcare arrangements creates a market for various forms of informal response. These are subjects for further investigation.

3.7. Child care arrangements

Since flexibility seems to impact upon working mothers more than many other groups, a crucial issue is the extent to which child care arrangements can be made. The extent of state or public involvement in this is very varied, but we can also assume that at least to some extent child care arrangements are culturally defined. Public childcare facilities are preferred in some countries, private commercial or family arrangements in others and sometimes it is shared between spouses through sequencing of work. In the Netherlands, the expansion of part time work has tends to take place in the context of the idea of “private” or “do it yourself” solutions for childcare. Thus, childcare per se is not the topic of discussion so much as managing hours of work to fit in with private arrangements on the implicit assumption that

women would be prepared to do this (although in principle, men could opt for this solution as well, the traditional gender ideology tends to mitigate against this). However, Perrons et al. (1998) in a cross country study of flexibility in the EU found that child care was not usually available at the hours that flexible workers needed it. Furthermore, there were different arrangements in the different parts of Europe. Whilst in France and Sweden there were good public arrangements, in the UK and in the Southern European countries people depended upon family support. In Greece and Spain family support meant extended family, who often lived in the same building, whereas in the UK “family” usually meant partners. In some cases children were simply not supervised. This will also be a topic of investigation in the study.

3.8. Regionalisation

It is clear from the above discussion that there are some regional variations in family cultures, welfare regimes and economic developments (Gallie and Paugham 1999, Esping-Andersen 1997). The Nordic countries, represented here by Sweden represent a universal welfare regime with more egalitarian gender policies. The Netherlands represents a more conservative-traditional employment regime with policies to get women into the labour market (part time). The liberal or minimal welfare state in the UK sees the family as a strictly private sphere and the labour market as self-regulating. The more successful economies of Eastern and Central Europe (Slovenia, Czech Re-

public and Hungary) are able to reinstitutionalise their welfare regimes and to resist some of the pressures of flexibilisation in the formal economy or even to embrace them. In these countries there is still a strong Bismarckian based welfare state. However, those transition countries with weaker economies exhibit very extensive forms of flexibilisation in terms of self employed and marginal jobs and are not able to sustain the welfare state which the communist regimes extended universally. They could be described as de-institutionalising countries. This description would fit Bulgaria and Romania.

CONCLUSIONS

Whilst all countries have experienced similar pressures towards flexibilisation, the impact of this is very different. The differences derive from the social, cultural and economic circumstances of the different countries. But they also stem from the different policy responses and the different discourses of flexibility affect the way that it is viewed. In the next phase of the project we will explore the different policy responses and in the final phase of the project we hope to evaluate their impact.

Several issues emerge from this comparative overview. First, it seems that there are important differences between different kinds of flexibilisation, especially between structured and unstructured (or unpredictable) flexibilisation with the latter imposing much worse conditions on workers. Secondly, the amount of control which a worker has over their time, their work and their conditions would seem to be very important for the quality of their work.

Whilst flexibilisation is viewed positively by some, negatively by others, the debates focus upon different issues in different countries: in some countries upon part time work in some countries upon temporary work and in some countries upon spatial flexibility. We have tried to

indicate three different approaches to flexibility: pro-active, de-activating and default.

It seems paradoxical that in the Western countries, prosperity and job-creation are seen as going with flexibilisation whilst in the Eastern European countries it is those countries with the weakest economies that exhibit the most flexibility, which therefore has different origins.

Hence, we must be careful to distinguish the *discourse* of flexibility, which can be heavily politically loaded, from the ways in which flexibility takes place in practice.

Other discourses, such as that about the gender division of labour and self-provisioning also have an East-West dimension. Although in other respects it is the different approaches within Eastern and Western Europe which are interesting.

What is clear is that in most cases we are lacking comparative studies. Whilst certain research areas are well documented in certain countries, they are missing altogether from others. To what extent arguments developed in one context could be applied in another is something that can be explored using comparative research. Studies which can compare the different regions and different countries of Europe could help to clarify some of the questions that we have raised here.

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