

Chapter Four

►► HOUSEHOLDS, WORK AND FLEXIBILITY Critical Review of Literature

SWEDEN

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INTRODUCTION

If one looks at what could be labelled the 'discourse of flexibility' in Sweden, it is fair to say real interest in the issue developed in conjunction with the harsh economic crisis that occurred at the beginning of the 1990s. The debate during this economically difficult period was very much driven by perceptions of the need for individual companies and the national economy to adjust to a rapidly changing financial environment. The basic conclusion emphasised again and again was that in a situation characterised by increasing global competition, new forms of technology and changing consumer patterns, companies needed to be able to adapt quickly to changes in demand (Boje & Grönlund 2001). This need for rapid adaptation to market and consumer demand is described in terms of leaving traditional production concepts in favour of producing the right product for the right customer and delivering it 'just in time'. Such a shift to a flexible production concept also impacted on how companies wanted to manage their personnel. Flexible production also leads to wanting to use a company's workforce flexibly so that only the personnel needed at any given point in time are employed (Grönlund 1997).

With this backdrop, the debate in Sweden thus to a large extent took the form of a classic conflict between capital and labour. The perceived financial needs of companies for increasingly flexible employees and labour laws was adamantly formulated in a large number of newspaper articles with titles such as: "Flexible employees, an article in short supply" (SD 1992-08-17) or "Flexibility creates growth" (SyD 1996-

09-27). On the other side, concerns were expressed about the consequences of flexible forms of work for employees. Fears of worsening working conditions, segmentation of the labour market and flexibilisation as a shift of power in favour of employers was expressed in articles such as: "Rent, wear out, and throw away: the new flexible work life" (Arbetsmiljö 1995:11) and "Undemocratic flexibility" (Arb 1999-06-16).

It is clear that this debate was influenced to a great degree by ideas about changes in corporate organisations and strategies that were predicted and discussed in international research relating to flexibility. The seemingly contradictory Braverman's ideas (1974) on technological change and the global economy routinising and dequalifying work (thus creating exchangeability) and Piore and Sable's (1984) ideas about the globalisation of the economy and the stiffer competition on markets spelling the end of routinised work, fordism and exchangeable employees played a role. But most important was, without doubt, the model presented by Atkinson of both upgrading and downgrading of the workforce at the same time, leading to a segmented labour market. Here it was argued that the response of companies to an increasing need of flexibility in relation to their markets is characterised not by one personnel strategy, but by two parallel strategies towards what could be labelled flexible specialisation. One strategy strives for increasingly numerically flexible personnel, and one strives for increasingly functionally flexible personnel. Numeric flexibility is the aspiration of the company to be able to

adjust the number of employees and their work time through, for instance, temporary employment contracts or employing people on a part-time basis. Functional flexibility means personnel with a broad range of expertise and widely defined work tasks, making them flexible for differentiated use (Atkinson 1987).

Due to the limited ability of short term and atypically employed personnel to acquire the competence needed for functional flexibility, there is somewhat of a contradiction between numeric and functional flexibility. This is solved by companies through segregating the employed in a core and a periphery, thus seeking different forms of flexibility from different employees. A core of qualified employees with permanent full time contracts and high wages on the one hand satisfies the need for functional flexibility. The need

for numeric flexibility is on the other hand satisfied by a periphery of less qualified personnel more loosely tied to the company doing simpler tasks under worse conditions that can function as a buffer against shifts in market demand (Atkinson 1987).

Atkinson presents this picture of a segmenting flexibilisation process that is also evident in the Swedish debate and that forms a basis for Swedish research interest. Given that Sweden is a relatively small country, it is hard to delineate something that could be labelled a coherent "discourse of flexibility" outside this basis. Quite a lot of research however has been done that has helped to better elucidate the issues relating to flexibilisation in a Swedish context.

1. FLEXIBILISATION IN SWEDEN – A BIG THING OR NOT?

One Swedish attempt to apply and develop a model for flexibilisation of the labour market on a more theoretical level has been made by Ekstedt. This attempt is in effect very similar to what Atkinson has done. Ekstedt's starting point assumes an increase in the use of projects and temporary organisations in industries as well as in society at large, something which is argued to be related to demand for specially designed production in conjunction with the increased technical capability for flexible production. Whether this in fact is happening is not argued, but rather what this change will mean for the individual and his/her organisation, and whether an increasingly project intense economy will contribute to a segmentation of the labour market. A simple four field model (see figure 1) of the relationship between the organisational form of activity and the individual's contractual situation is developed. In quadrant "A", the shrinking classic forms of organising production in flow-process operations with permanent employment for the production of long series of goods and services is found. In quadrant "B", we find a combination of flow-process operations and temporary employment

that is argued to be currently less common but to be gaining ground.

This combination consists of manpower leasing companies that have a broker function; their customers eliminate costly search processes to recruit staff for routine tasks that are only of short duration. In quadrant "C", the combination of project-type operations and permanent employment is found. This is a combination which contains companies that perform advanced industry-related services on a project basis, a sector that is expanding rapidly. Quadrant "D" combines the possibility of project-type operations and temporary employment. This is where professionals or practitioners with both good basic knowledge and a good reputation on the market for their services can be found.

Figure 1. The relationship between the organisational form of activity and the contractual form between the organisation and the individual

	Permanent employment	Temporary employment
	A. Industrial Companies and Public Services	B. Manpower-Leasing Companies
Flow-Process Operations	<p>Assembly line production, multilevel managerial decisions, bureaucracy, stationary real capital</p> <p>Strong Permanent Organisation and weak Temporary Organisation</p> <p>Limited negotiation and search costs and great monitoring costs</p>	<p>Firms which hire and lease out staff for current activity during periods of shortage of staff in client companies.</p> <p>Temporary assignment in A by individuals E.g. typing/office service, Putting Out Systems, gang leader system</p> <p>Permanent Organisation with broker function to reduce costs</p>
Flow-Process Operations	<p>Assembly line production, multilevel managerial decisions, bureaucracy, stationary real capital</p> <p>Strong Permanent Organisation and weak Temporary Organisation</p> <p>Limited negotiation and search costs and great monitoring costs</p>	<p>Firms which hire and lease out staff for current activity during periods of shortage of staff in client companies.</p> <p>Temporary assignment in A by individuals E.g. typing/office service, Putting Out Systems, gang leader system</p> <p>Permanent Organisation with broker function to reduce costs</p>
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Flow-process Operations	<p>Assembly line production, multilevel managerial decisions, bureaucracy, stationary real capital</p> <p>Strong permanent organisation and weak temporary organisation</p> <p>Limited negotiation and search costs and great monitoring costs</p>	<p>Firms which hire and lease out staff for current activity during periods of shortage of staff in client companies.</p> <p>Temporary assignment in A by individuals e.g. typing/office service, putting out systems, gang leader system</p> <p>Permanent organisation with broker function to reduce costs</p>
	C. Commissioned companies	D. Professionals/practitioners
Project-type Operations	<p>Recurring project operations</p> <p>E.g. construction companies, technical/organisation/management/IT consulting firms</p> <p>Weak Permanent Organisation with broker function and strong temporary organisations</p> <p>Great negotiating costs and limited monitoring costs</p>	<p>Individuals who are recruited to projects in A and C, or who creates projects ("free agents")</p> <p>E.g. free-lance writers/Journalists/artists, craftsmen, longshoremen, self-employed consultants, construction workers</p> <p>Lacking Permanent organisation</p> <p>Great investment costs to make a name for themselves and keep updated</p>
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Source: Ekstedt 1999

What implications are then drawn about the assumed flow from the "A" quadrant to the others? Ekstedt argues that the size of the "B" quadrant is limited because of these companies having problems penetrating into knowledge intensive activities. In Sweden, however, it is assumed that there is still considerable growth potential for this quadrant. Due to the demands on those recruited, the barriers for employment in the "C" quadrant are very high and thus there will not be a large flow from "A". It is also argued that the "D" quadrant cannot receive very much flow from "A". The net result of this reasoning is a division of the labour market in different segments. In the middle there is a core group consisting of staff with permanent contracts in parts of the organisations. Around this nucleus, there is a ring containing the project employed in the "C" quadrant and those who work as industrial subcontractors in the "A" quadrant. The next ring is composed of those who find temporary employment in the "B" and "D" quadrants. The outer ring consists of the unemployed, which have not managed to overcome the barriers to working life (Ekstedt 1999).

This picture of a segmenting and unstoppable flexibilisation process has also been questioned. In the Swedish academic debate, a number of issues have been raised that to some extent problematise the scope of the flexibilisation process or its content as put forward in the public and academic debate. Eriksson and Karlsson for instance question the picture of a complete shift from one system to another, from fordism companies to companies characterised by flexible specialisation. Fordism was never so widespread as the theories characterise it; it has for instance never been applied in large sectors of the labour market. In addition, they point out something interesting regarding the idea that companies strive towards increased numeric flexibility is a new feature on the labour market. They argue that one of the very purposes of Fordism was to create numeric flexibility and exchangeable employees through simple monotonous work tasks (Eriksson & Karlsson 1995).

Additional critique has been directed at the loop-sidedness of the public debate on flexibilisa-

tion measures. Boje and Grönlund argue that most political initiatives implemented to increase flexibility in the labour market typically are concerned with how to facilitate the need of employers to change the size and composition of the labour force. They argue that the consequences of flexibility have to be seen from both parts of the industrial relations, and it has a completely different meaning seen from the workers' point of view. Introducing a certain kind of flexibility may favour one side and hurt the other side (Boje & Grönlund 2001). It is not certain that flexibility, even in the form of functional flexibility, is a good thing for the workers. Functional flexibility could for instance be achieved through rotation between several unqualified work tasks instead of through upgrading. It could also mean that responsibility and working speed increase, while wages remain unchanged (Eriksson & Karlsson 1995).

That there is a wide-reaching flexibilisation process involving both numeric and functional flexibilisation has also been questioned from an institutional perspective. It is possible that the setting of the Swedish labour markets serves to constrain the segmentation process. Le Grand notes for instance that the theories to a large extent build on an American reality (Le Grand 1991), and in Sweden labour laws, solidaric wage policy and a large public sector work to maintain stable and more equal employment conditions than in many other countries (Aronsson & Sjögren 1994). Another factor pointed to is the scope of the internal labour market in Sweden. Although the average Swede spends roughly half his or her working life at the same employer, they do switch jobs within the company. The internal labour market in Sweden is not however a creation of the employer, as is the case in the U.S. Instead, it is to a large extent the result of the efforts of organised labour and political pressure to counteract market forces and improve the situation of weak groups. Groups that in other countries often tend to have more insecure employment conditions (women, blue-collar workers, lower educated) often have longer employment periods than others in Sweden (see for instance Le Grand 1991, 1993, Holmlund 1995).

2. PREVALENCE OF NUMERIC AND FUNCTIONAL FLEXIBILITY ON THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

On the empirical side there is quite a lot of information available that can be related to flexibilisation of the labour market and atypical forms of employment. Relatively good information exists on the national aggregate level of the prevalence and development in relation to numeric flexibilisation in the form of temporary employment, part-time employment, diversity of hours, overtime and leased personnel. What is interesting here is that the trends relating to these forms of atypical work do not seem to unequivocally support conclusions about an ongoing flexibilisation and segmentation on the Swedish labour market.

Taking a shorter-term perspective, by the mid-90s there were several indicators that seemed to support conclusions about an ongoing segmentation process. In conjunction with the Swedish economic crisis in the beginning of the 1990s, there had a for instance been a marked increase in the proportion of temporary employed. The rise was also reflected in a rise of the kind of temporary employment conditions that characterised the most tenuous positions on the labour market. The same was the case with underemployment and the short part-time positions (SOU 1995:56). This picture and the conclusions connected to it might need to be somewhat revised when taking a somewhat longer time perspective, including more recent data and examining the actual prevalence of different forms of numeric flexibility.

There are signs that the levels of temporary employment are not very high and there does not seem to be a steady increase. In Sweden the trend seems to be changes more connected with the business cycle than a steady increase. The levels of temporary employment dropped from roughly 12 percent of all employed in 1987 to roughly 10 percent during the economic boom years of the late 1980s and early 1990s. After the recession that started in 1992, the proportion of temporary employed rose to roughly 13.5 percent by 1994 (Holmlund 1995, OECD 1996). This cyclical prevalence in the proportion of temporary employment

in Sweden is also something that seems to be confirmed by recent figures. The number and proportion of newly employed with a permanent position has risen steadily since the low point of the Swedish 1990s recession (SCB 2001). In Sweden as in other OECD countries, temporary employment is something that seems closely connected to age, with a majority of employed 16-19 year olds employed on temporary contracts. This level drops however drops rapidly with age, and between 1987 and 1994 at no time were more than 10% of those over 25 years of age employed on a temporary basis. Also worth noting is that the uneven distribution of temporary employment is connected not only with age, but also gender. The proportion of women in temporary employment is consistently somewhat higher than the proportion of men (OECD 1996).

There is a similar situation when it comes to working hours on the Swedish labour market. While the long-term trend of a drop in average annual hours worked has slowed in almost all OECD countries, some countries actually have had an increase in hours. Sweden belongs to these countries with annual hours rising from roughly 1450 to 1550 between 1980 and 1996; this was however from the position of the country with the shortest annual working hours in 1980 (OECD 1998). This rise is partly explained in the rising proportion of women part-timers in Sweden doing relatively long hours and the sharp decrease in absenteeism after the beginning of the 1990s economic recession. It should be pointed out that in Sweden, as in all EU countries, women work part-time to a much greater extent than men the 1990ties economic recession (SCB 1992). Another explanation for the somewhat divergent Swedish trend can be the fact that Sweden has not had the same rise in part-time employment as experienced in many other countries. In fact, the proportion of part-timers seems to have been relatively stable in Sweden since the 1970s. In 1979 Sweden had among the highest proportion of

part-time employed at 23.6% of the population, while the same proportion of part-time employed in 1996 (23.6%) did not stand out in international comparison. The stable level of part-times in Sweden and the trend towards women part-timers working longer hours probably explain the relatively small shift in the diversity of hours on the Swedish labour market. Although the proportion of employees working 40 hour weeks has dropped a little over time (from 63% in 1985 to 58% in 1994), there have been remarkably stable proportions of employed working either short hours (usually less than 20 hour a week) or long hours (usually more than 45 hours a week)(OECD 1998).

The measures regarding the two major forms of numeric flexibility do thus not support, and in fact to some extent contradict the predicted ongoing flexibilisation process. This is especially obvious when examining national statistics and the proportion of the labour market they concern. The increase in the number of people employed in manpower leasing companies and the use of overtime do however lend support to this predicted process to some degree. Manpower leasing companies have been a rapidly growing sector of the Swedish labour market. This growth has been from an extremely low level, though, and the proportion employed in manpower leasing companies is still both very small from a labour market point of view and from an international perspective. In June 2000, manpower leasing companies only employed 33,000 people or 0.73% of the Swedish labour market. This is a proportion which is similar to the other Nordic countries, but roughly half of the EU average (approx. 1.5%) (<http://www.spur.se/>). Overtime is also something that can be regarded as a form of atypical work related to numeric flexibility. Paid overtime

is something that has increased in Sweden. This is of course an effect of the business cycle for export-oriented industry in the mid to late 1990s, but is on a much higher level than during similar phases in the business cycle during the 1970s and the 1980s (Agnarsson & Anxo 1996). At the same time, unpaid overtime has also increased among white-collar workers. Twelve percent of white-collar workers and 32% of university graduates stated that they worked unpaid overtime in 1995; it was twice as common among men than among women (Aronsson & Göransson 1997).

If the trend on aggregate level does not seem to strongly support the notion of a flexibilisation process when it comes to the development of numeric flexibility, there seems to be better support for the other side of the flexibilisation or segmentation process. Although good national and comparable statistics on functional flexibility in Swedish companies perhaps not are so readily available as information on temporary employment or part-time employment, the information that is available does seem to indicate a high level of functional flexibility in Swedish companies. Several studies have found that it was very common for Swedish companies to increase functional flexibility through broadening work tasks (Le Grand 1993, Brewster & Hegewisch 1994). In international comparisons Swedish companies appear to be at the forefront. This at least with the variables used to that effect by OECD's study of workplaces larger than 50 employees, the incidence of job-rotation, team- team-working and managerial initiatives thereof are found to be particularly high in Sweden and some other Nordic countries. Similarly, the highest incidence of delegation of responsibility to lower level employees is found in the Nordic countries and the Netherlands (OECD 1999).

3. FLEXIBILISATION IN SWEDISH COMPANIES?

The empirical results on the prevalence of different forms of numeric or functional flexibility in Sweden are of course of importance for understanding the level and trend in international comparison. Although possible flexibilisation of the labour market is an issue that is of relevance on both the national and global level, flexibilisation can be understood as a process being driven and functioning through the actions and the needs of individual companies. To understand the existence, strength or direction of such a process, it is important to look at what actually is happening in the companies.

There are a number of studies investigating the proportion of companies applying different numeric or functional flexibility measures. In a study by Mattson it is shown that numeric flexibility in the form of temporary employment is still a very uncommon strategy for companies. A majority of the companies in the study stated that they did not wish to increase the proportion employed on a temporary basis. Instead, the companies use other strategies to achieve increased flexibility. Ten percent of the companies use adjusted working-hours based on demand and another 20 percent plan to introduce it (Mattson 1997). This general proportion might seem quite low, but there are clear differences between different branches of the private sector. It was more common in the service sector than in the manufacturing sector. Twice as many service sector companies had demand adjusted flexitime (Näringslivets Ekonomifakta 1996). Rented personnel is a rising solution to the growing need of numeric flexibility and is predicted to become more common in the future. In 1997, 40 per cent of the companies rented personnel, though at very low levels (Mattson 1997). Companies ambition for increasing flexibilisation is perhaps more clear when it comes to functional flexibilisation, something that corresponds with the OECD findings on aggregate level. The Swedish Business Development Agency noted in a study that 27 per cent of private companies that changed their organisa-

tion during the 1990s have introduced a more functionally flexible organisation with decentralised decision making and organised competence development. The flexible companies are found to be more productive and have lower personnel turnover and fewer sick days (NUTEK 1996).

A couple of interesting studies have also attempted to directly investigate the applicability of Atkinson's flexibilisation model on Swedish companies and organisations. After investigating a random sample of 2000 individuals and their employers, Karlsson came to the conclusion that flexible organisations hardly exist in Sweden. A great number of the companies of course strive for numeric flexibility (41% have at least some personnel employed on temporary contracts), and many also fulfil some criteria for gaining functional flexibility (for instance 54% have employer-provided training). Karlsson however argues that Atkinson's model stipulates the use of numeric, functional and financial flexibility, such as in the form of incentive pay. With this definition, no Swedish companies could be regarded as flexible. Removing the criteria of incentive pay, only 9 percent of companies could be regarded as flexible. The study however also shows, in accordance with Atkinson, that differences in working conditions are larger in flexible companies. Working conditions in flexible companies are better for university graduates, but not for blue-collar workers (Karlsson 1997).

In a critique of this, Håkansson and Isidorsson argue that Karlsson makes a much too strict interpretation of Atkinson's model. They show in a study of 17 (10 Swedish) manufacturing companies that the companies in fact work with different models for increasing flexibility. The companies often combine different strategies (temporary contracts, broadening of job tasks and demand adjusted work times), and these strategies function at different levels of success for different jobs; temporary contracts function well for simpler tasks, while flexible employment times were hard

to apply on simple regular tasks where long workdays become very tiring.

They find support for Atkinson's model insofar as the companies' strategies for increased flexibility lead to uncrossed security for the already employed. But opposite to Atkinson's model, they do not find evidence of the temporary employed being a separate, peripheral group at work places. The temporary employed are integrated in the ordinary personnel. This makes it hard to broaden the jobs in a functionally flexible way. Interestingly enough, this was especially the case for the foreign companies studied. The use of

temporary employed personnel led to work tasks being kept on a simple monotonous level. This points to the dilemma that if the temporary employed are integrated in the normal personnel, the ability for broad, developing work tasks is limited also for the permanently employed. If they on the other hand are segregated, there will be a core vs. periphery problem. This was however less of a problem in Sweden. Temporary employed in Sweden were well educated and multi-skilled and did thus not provide the same obstacle to functional flexibility (Håkansson & Isidorsson 1997).

4. PENNOESS TO FLEXIBILISATION IN THE SWEDISH LABOUR MARKET

An issue related to the actions and strategies of Swedish companies is the potential for flexibilisation on the Swedish labour market. There are assumptions in the public debate about the inability of the Swedish labour market, which is politically regulated to a great degree, to facilitate companies and organisational need for flexibility. Labour laws, strong unions and active involvement in the labour market could function as constraints for the flexibilisation process. Whether the institutional setting in Sweden has such an effect is however not empirically clear. In a comparative study of Sweden, Denmark, Canada and the U.S., Boje and Grönlund find that the labour markets in all three countries are flexible seen in an O.E.C.D perspective. The levels of job turnover are high and, except for Sweden, the average tenure of employees is low. All countries experience a growing diversity in working time patterns with more workers employed on both short and long hours instead of 'normal' week hours (37-40 hours), and finally more workers are employed on flexible work time schedules. Against this backdrop, Boje and Grönlund find only little evidence of the highly politically regulated Scandinavian labour markets being less flexible than the more open and market-regulated North American (Boje & Grönlund 2001).

Another and more direct indicator of the potential for flexibility in different institutional con-

texts is the attitudes and acceptance of workers and unions of different flexible reorganisations of the workplace. A number of studies have been conducted that compare the attitudes to and perceptions of different flexibility issues among Swedish and Canadian industry workers. These studies have examined the differences in the level of security that institutions in Canada and Sweden provide, attitudes toward job security, labour relations and flexibility differences between Canada and Sweden. Looking at job security, the findings show that Swedes were less likely to accept pay cuts and to worry about unemployment, were more inclined to favour geographical mobility, at least in *principle*. The interesting point was that this issue was on the attitudinal level and not caused by actual differences in job security. Differences in security lay rather in which industry the labourers were employed rather than in which country they worked. The source of confidence among the Swedish labourers must thus be sought outside the actual employment relations. Swedish workers were concluded to be inflexible in areas where the Swedish labour market model prescribes inflexibility, i.e. wage cuts. Regarding functional flexibility, however, Swedish workers had a more positive attitude towards technology and in practice also accepted more flexibility with respect to job descriptions (Smith et al. 1997, Van den Berg et al. 1998).

In further analyses that try to explain these differences in openness to functional flexibility between Swedish and Canadian workers, three possible perspectives on how workers adapt to technological change in the workplace are applied. The adversarial perspective argues that employment security produces resistant workers, and conversely that insecurity assures efficiency in adapting a workforce to technological and organisational change. The institutional perspective argues the opposite, emphasising that secure workers have little to fear from change. Finally, a neo-corporatist perspective that sees managers and powerful trade-union leaders as capable of successfully negotiating changes independently

of rank and file preferences is presented. The result of interviews with respondents at seventy-three plants in a three-industry, two-country comparison seems to contradict the strict adversarial theory. Data provides some evidence in favour of the institutionalist perspective, insofar that some of the differences might be produced by the greater sense of security among Swedish workers. Neo-corporatist arguments are however have found the most support. Swedish trade union officials were viewed by managers and viewed themselves as more positively disposed to change than either their Canadian counterparts or workers in either country (Van den Berg et al. 2000).

5. CONDITIONS FOR PART-TIME AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYED IN SWEDEN

As has been shown previously in this paper, there has been quite a lot of research on the scope, content and even potential (and to some extent also the implications) of flexibilisation on a national or company level in Sweden. Another equally interesting aspect of the academic research and available information are the studies that focus on the implications of flexibilisation for the employee. There are many sources of information on the conditions for part-time employed and temporary employed workers. A starting point for this interest is of course the implications of downgrading and marginalisation that can be derived from for instance Atkinson's picture of the segmenting flexibilisation process.

A strong argument has been made for not classifying part-time work in Sweden as unstable work or a form of labour market marginalisation. Nätti, for instance, argues that part-time employment to a high extent is self-imposed in the Nordic countries. Part-time work is also often over a long period, and the part-timers often have permanent positions and full eligibility to job-related social benefits. In Sweden and Norway the differences in pay between part and full time employees also tends to decrease. This Nätti argues points towards a normalisation of part-time employment rather than a marginalisation (Nätti

1993a, Nätti 1994). Supporting such conclusions is the fact that many part-time workers work part-time only when their children are small and then go back to full time (Sundström 1991, OECD 1999). As women are highly over-represented among part-time workers in Sweden, one can describe part-time work for many women a "self-chosen" transitional phase rather than a form of labour market marginalisation. Similarly, there are no signs of instability as there is no difference in tenure between part-time and full-time workers in Sweden, unlike in North America (Vejsiu 1997). The terms under which Swedish women work part-time are thus argued to be completely different than for American women for instance. In the U.S., part-time work is often for a short period of time, pay is bad and the level of unionisation is very low. A lot of part-time work is also involuntary and mixed with periods of unemployment (Sundström 1991, Petersen 1991). This is a situation that better fits the label of labour market marginalisation.

That part-time work in Sweden does not fit descriptions of unstable or marginalised positions on the labour market does not mean, however, that there is no evidence of less advantageous employment conditions for part-timers than full timers. Part-time work in the Nordic countries can

be a trap in terms of decreased career opportunities (Peterson 1993), and even if income differences are lower in Sweden, differences regarding incomes, working conditions and employment conditions remain. OECD statistics for 1997 indicate that, though Sweden does belong to the countries with more equal earnings, the level of hourly earnings in Sweden for part-time employees were somewhat lower than the hourly earnings of full-time employees (part-time workers earned an average of 87.2% of full time employed). The picture was the same with employer-provided training with part-time employees receiving somewhat less than full-time employees, while the proportion of temporary contracts was much larger among part-time employees. As many as 43% of part-time employed men and 21% of part-time employed women were on temporary contracts (OECD 1999).

In terms of temporary employment, it is clear that there are several negative aspects connected to it in Sweden. Having a temporary job implies substantial financial insecurity, making it hard to plan life outside paid labour and in turn reducing the propensity to point out risks in the work environment (Håkansson & Isidorsson 1997). Nätti finds that temporary employees in the Nordic countries also have relatively insecure positions on the labour market. They switch jobs more often and suffer higher risks for unemployment. The background of temporary employees varies, but a large proportion is made up of women in the public sector that have had extensive work experience and several years of employment at the employer.

It is concluded, however, that this is somewhat less problematic in the Nordic countries than in the rest of the EU, due to among other things a relatively high degree of "own choice" (Nätti 1993b). Nevertheless, temporary employment does show signs of being a somewhat marginalised position on the labour market in Sweden.

There is however also some evidence that temporary jobs do serve as stepping-stones into more secure positions on the labour market and thus do not represent truly marginalised positions. When following the same individuals in the Swedish labour force study 1994-1995, Holmlund finds that every quarter almost ten percent of temporary employed transition to a permanent contract, often with the same employer. He concludes that temporary employment thus seems to be a stepping stone to some extent into a more stable position on the labour market (Holmlund 1995). This however does not apply to all temporary employees. In a longitudinal study following temporary unemployed individuals over four years, Håkansson finds that characteristics such as being a man, highly educated and being a Swedish citizen are connected to a high probability of entering permanent employment after being a temporary employee. In these cases, temporary employment really seems to function as a steppingstone. For women, people with low education and foreign citizens, however, temporary employment risks becoming a dead end (Håkansson 2001).

6. WORKING FOR MANPOWER LEASING COMPANIES

There has also been some research done on the experiences of manpower leasing companies and their personnel. Although this form of numeric flexibility is still very small in Sweden, as concluded above, the rapid growth of the sector has made it an interesting field for worklife researchers. The research has primarily taken an interest in the experience and attitudinal side of agency leased personnel, probably for two reasons.

Firstly, it is a relatively new and growing phenomenon that in a sense introduces several new features to the labour market. The implications of working place mobility for the employee and a relationship not between two parts (company and employee), but at least three parts (manpower company, company and employee) raises issues of the motivation and experiences for the involved parties. Secondly, the rapid growth and

prevailing thoughts about an ongoing flexibilisation process lead to leased personnel being regarded as harbingers of the employees of the future. Understanding the motivation and experiences of manpower leasing employees makes it possible to understand the future worker and labour market, or indeed the future individual and society.

Although leased labour makes up a small part of union membership, they are a growing part and as such, their conditions have attracted some attention from the unions to which they typically belong. A study of members in the Salaried Employees' Union in manpower leasing companies painted a relatively negative picture of employment conditions in this employment form. They were found to have much poorer employment conditions than other members in the union. Most were paid on an hourly basis and less than 30 percent had a guaranteed income. Forty percent worked less than they wanted to and most would have preferred having a permanent job at one work place (HTF 1996).

In an academic study, Isaksson and Bellagh investigated the satisfaction, social relations and access to social support among employees at a large manpower leasing company. The findings indicate that leased personnel are satisfied with their employment situation to a large extent, but that a large proportion rather would rather work at a single workplace. Central for a positive attitude was to have voluntarily chosen to work in the personnel-leasing industry. The finding of such positive attitudes to their work was a surprise given the very high personnel turnover in the manpower leasing companies. Isaksson and Bellagh explain this paradox as the manpower leasing companies serving as a transit for the employees, where they are quite satisfied to work on their way to permanent employment at an individual company. The downside to working as leased labour was related to the access to social support. Although the work was characterised by a lot of social encounters, there was a lack of continuity in social relations (Isaksson & Bellagh 1999).

Taking a somewhat different approach, Garsten uses Swedish and US interviews in order to investigate the implications of the liminal position of manpower leasing employees. The position of the temp is suggested as being an ambiguous position involving both risks and opportunities for the individuals, staffing agencies and client organisations. There is a creative side where old perspectives on work and subjectivity are contested and new ones created. An attractive side of it promises the individual freedom to transcend institutions of regular, full time employment and to create a personalised work biography. The transient mobile character of temporary employment however carries with it an awareness of substitutability and a reflexive preoccupation with manners, appearances, and competencies. The mobile and temporary character of assignments further leads to the development of episodic imagined communities at the workplace. Garsten's conclusion is that the temporal and contractual flexibilisation of work challenges old boundaries and suggests new ways of experiencing work, as well as new ways of constructing organisational subjectivity (Garsten 1999).

In analyses concerning the cultural construction of temporary agency workers, Garsten and Turtinen point towards an interesting paradox. While flexibilisation appears to mark a contrast to rigidity, structure and standardisation, the individualisation of risk in the labour market goes hand in hand with a cultural construction of a category of workers—the flexible temporary worker—where procedures for being employed, assigned and evaluated involve new patterns of regulation and governance. The discourse points at the versatility of temping, as a flexible way of working that allows you to tailor work to your own needs and desires. At the same time as temping thus craves adaptation, versatility, and reliability, the flexibility for a temp carries the potential for freedom. An interesting point however is that this freedom is of a potential character rather than of a realised character. Few of the temps actually make use of the advantage. The explanation for this is the fact that temps hardly dare use

their freedom to turn down offers of assignments, since their refusal could jeopardise future opportunities of getting another assignment and that they need all the money they can earn.

Additionally, it is interesting that in conjunction with the discourse that points to individual flexibility and control of manpower agency workers, Garsten and Turtinen find a striking lack of awareness among temporary agency workers of

the local, corporate and global organisational structures of which they are a part. The episodic and transient character of their involvement with other temps and with the agency makes for a local and individualised perspective, with very little interest in exploring the wider network they are a part of (Garsten & Turtinen 2000).

7. EVALUATIONS OF WORKING-TIME FLEXIBILISATION PROJECTS

Another source of information on the more consequential side of flexibilisation are the studies that evaluate working time flexibilisation projects within one or a few companies or organisations. A main purpose of these studies has been of course to evaluate the effects of flexibilisation reforms for the organisations. Quite interesting is that they point at the differences in what working-time flexibilisation projects imply within different sectors of the Swedish labour market. It seems as the motivation for reorganising working time and the way working times are made more flexible are quite different in the public and in the private sector.

Lundström finds that the motives and flexibilisation of companies in the private sector correspond closely with the numeric flexibilisation changes predicted for companies. The new working time models tested in the private sector were found to have been of the employer-controlled type of flexitime devoted to increasing adjustment to shifts in demand experienced by companies (Lundström 1996). The models for flexibilisation of working-time in the private sector were thus carefully designed to fit the demands of the production and the customers, not the employees. This is however not to say that it resulted in negative consequences for employees. The change in working time models of companies also included increased opportunities to adjust working time (in the form of compensational leave) to individual needs for workers. Another somewhat positive aspect for employees was that the increasing employer-controlled flexibilisation of working time

was connected with drops in overall working time. This is probably because the opportunity for companies to introduce employer-controlled flexitime increased when work times were shorter as well as with the ability (level of control) of employees to decide when compensation leaves could be used. When flexitime was introduced, employees generally were compensated by reimbursements in the form of money and/or shorter overall work hours (Håkansson & Isidorsson 1997).

Working time flexibilisation models in the public sector were motivated and designed differently. In the public sector, care giving dominated in the implementation of new working time models. The main reason for the changes were to find ways to reduce sick leave and occupational injuries (Lundström 1996). Thus, the models were very concerned with increasing the control employees, who are often women working part-time, have over their working times. The new models, for instance, increased employee control over working time through increased general control over scheduling or increased control over parts of working time in the form of time banks where hours could be saved.

Evaluations of the models showed that employees generally appreciated the increased freedom of choice and that there was no conflict between this and the demands for efficiency. In most studies, almost all affected personnel wanted to keep the new flexible working time models. The main reason for this was that through increased control over working times,

employees also gained increased control over non-work related aspects of the life. Work was thus more easily adjusted towards employees' social needs (Nilsson 1993, Bergstrand & Persson 1995). Hedén notes that the most important aspect for the relationship between work and spare time does not seem to be when an employee worked, but rather the degree of predictability (knowledge of schedule with enough lead time) and control over scheduling (Hedén 1997). The positive effects of increased flexibilisation also had a wider positive impact on the work situation. Employee view of the work time was found to be a decisive factor for how the general work situation was viewed. The ability to being able to influence the scheduling was the central factor in this respect (SPRI 1995, SPRI 1996).

The increase in employee controlled working time flexibility also had an additional bonus of importance for care giving in the Swedish public sector, which is characterised by many part-time employees. Working-time flexibility that made it easier to combine work with family life also helped to increase the number of hours worked for part-time employees who wished to do so (Larsson 1997). In conjunction with one new

working time project studied, part-time employees, especially those working 50%, increased their hours to 75% (Schönfeldt 1994). These findings indicate the potential for employee controlled work time flexibilisation to increase the general working time of primarily women, who combine work with the main responsibility for the household.

There were also some negative aspects of these new working time models in the public sector, although they were considered to be of minor relevance in the studies. Occasional difficulties of combining individual schedules and somewhat varying levels of staffing were mentioned. This was considered negative both for the staff and the organisation (Nilsson 1993). Another negative aspect mentioned, which is more interesting as it emphasises the potential problems for solidarity and workplace community of increasing individual work time flexibilisation, was the individualisation of scheduling. This resulted in such consequences as to reduced opportunities for spontaneous social time together at the workplace (Hedén 1997).

8. GENDER ASPECTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT IN SWEDEN

Even if it is difficult to discern a truly coherent 'discourse' on flexibilisation of working life in Sweden, there is at least one perspective on different aspects of flexibilisation that is recurrent either explicitly or implicitly, and that is gender. As seen in previous chapter gender is used as a key variable both in international comparisons and in the form of implicit assumptions on the effects of different forms of flexibilisation. Gender is represented in comparisons of who is involved in atypical employment (part-time employment is a central issue in Sweden due to the large gender differences) or, as in the case of evaluations of flexible working conditions where assumptions are made about outcomes through gender-based assumptions and realities. An example of this is the reasoning behind the importance of increased

employee controlled over working times for increasing female overall working hours. The analysis is based on the necessity of women to work part-time in order to manage their dual responsibility for both work and the household being offset by more employee control over working time. This is concluded for instance in a government investigation on the consequences of flexibilisation (SOU 1996:145). The correctness of this conclusion is given the empirical evidence is probably unquestionable. It is however evident that gender in such analyses is applied in a less extensive way than is possible. With the analysis taking the uneven distribution of housework as a given, and related the employee controlled flexibilisation of working hours to this as a solution

for women, instead of taking the analysis further to the structures behind the original situation.

There is some research that takes this much broader gender perspective in the analysis of differences in labour market participation and working hours differences between men and women. The debate in comparative research using institutional explanations for country differences and developments in country differences in labour market equality is quite interesting. The high level of female participation in paid labour is the sources of the traditional picture of the Swedish labour market being favourable for women by enabling the combination of work and family through labour laws and family policies. This is exemplified in a study by Bailyn that compares the U.S., the British and Swedish response to women's ability to deal constructively with the needs of work and family. The starting point is that this ability is dependent upon the kind of work that they do, the organisation that employs them, and the social, economic and national context in which they live. The conclusion is that the efforts in the U.S. has been to allow women to meet male work demands and in Britain the emphasis has been on providing flexible arrangements for mothers who work. Sweden stands out here in so that additionally political efforts have also been made to try to equalise gender roles relating to the home sphere, making many aspects of life easier for women. These efforts have however not solved the difficulties women have had in reaching top positions or influenced the gender-segregation of the Swedish labour market (Bailyn 1992).

This positive picture of female integration in the Swedish labour market might however have changed radically during the 1990s. This is argued in the Gonäs study of employment changes during the Swedish crisis years of the 1990s. She argues that through welfare state retraction and retrenchment in conjunction with the economic crisis, essentially there was a shift in the labour market regime on both regional and national levels that has had severe implications on women's ability to attain financial independence. The 1990s

essentially mean more equal employment rates for men and women in Sweden, but this changes when looking at stability and flexibility of employment. The gender differences are argued to actually have widened if looking at the prevalence and content of flexible hours and contract forms. Women reduce their working time to a far greater extent than men do when looking at the actual use of employers' offers (regulated by the welfare state) of flexibility. It is this that enables people to reconcile work and family life, but with clear gendering, it conflicts with the income equality of households. Regarding the contractual situation, the trends appear to be similar for both men and women with a greater proportion on non-permanent contracts. They are of quite different nature, though, if one looks at the content of these temporary positions. While men have had an increase in contract work that can be highly paid, women have had an increase in temporary work that is related to being substitutes or to being on-call in the public sector (Gonäs 1998).

The same picture of actually increasing gender differences through flexibilisation of working time is painted in an evaluation in 1993 of how the EU directive on the organisation of working time affected the gendering of work time. The focus is placed on the labour market regulations and policies that enforce the difference between women and men as labourers. It was found that despite the cultural and institutional differences between Germany, France and Sweden, similar patterns of gendered working time are emerging. A new gender order based on differential working time is being offered as an institutionalised solution for women combining paid and unpaid labour. The gendering of working time is reinforced by public policies that promote part-time employment as the primary solution for women balancing paid employment with domestic labour. Although written in gender-neutral language, these policies are predicated on the assumption of a gendered division of labour in the household. They therefore cast women workers as different from male workers (Figart & Mutari 1998).

It has however been questioned whether there has been such a fundamental shift in labour market equality in Sweden through the changes in working time and employment forms. Ellingsaeter takes such a contrary position, especially in relation to part-time work among women. Taking a starting point in the Scandinavian countries' record of high employment rates for women, she asks how robust women's labour market integration has been during the growing external pressures. The study analyses continuity and change in gender divisions in employment, unemployment and flexible work forms in Denmark, Norway and Sweden during the 1990s. Ellingsaeter finds that women's labour market integration has been a very robust feature of the Scandinavian models despite the turbulence of the 1990s, although Scandinavia does not hold the supreme position concerning women's employment it used to. The economic recession of the 1990s increased socio-economic polarisation in the labour market, but these processes were connected to educational

level and not to gender. Although women were still found in marginal employment relationships more often than men, the Scandinavian countries generally had the most integrated labour markets. The external pressures that the models were subjected to have not generated radical change in welfare state activity or employment regulation, the restructuring has been primarily of a quantitative nature and not of a qualitative nature. On the positive side, there was a shared trend regarding part-time work during the 1990s in the Scandinavian countries, where a marked decline in part-time work among women (including mothers) had taken place. This shift is attributed to structural shifts in the female labour force with increasing educational levels associated with higher rates of full-time employment. Another factor is argued to be women's increasingly continuous work patterns, which are usually associated with longer working hours (Ellingsaeter 2000).

9. GENDER AND THE IMPLICATIONS OF FLEXIBLE EMPLOYMENT IN SWEDEN

Another part of the academic debate taking a gender perspective on flexible employment has focused on the definition of these work forms as new or atypical, and on the possibility that the consequences of flexibilisation of the labour market and the atypical work forms are gendered. Looking at the concept of atypical work, Nätti found that it bases itself on a standard, which implies permanent full time employment at one and the same employer. What becomes atypical is thus what deviates from this norm. The extent to which this norm really has been the standard on the labour market is however questionable, as it for instance has been relatively untypical for female employment (Nätti 1993). Men have served as the norm on the labour market and deviations to this norm were labelled atypical. Several researchers have pointed this out in relation to the Swedish flexibility debate about the existence and growth of atypical jobs in the form of temporary contracts or part-time positions. Already in the

beginning of the 20th century, it was common that married women took temporary jobs as wash women or cleaners in the same way female part-time employment was not something that came into being with the expansion of the Swedish public sector during the 1970s (Petterson 1981, Wikander 1995, Grönlund 1997).

In the same way as flexible employment forms and conditions perhaps never have been atypical for women, it is quite possible that they do imply different consequences for men and women. One obvious thing that has been touched on previously is that women are over represented in flexible forms of employment. This is related to their greater need to facilitate paid labour with responsibility for the household. Gonäs findings on the aggregate level of women reducing or shifting their working time to a far greater extent than men do when examining the actual use of employers' offers of flexibility point to the gendered effect of flexibilisation in today's Sweden.

Similarly, her findings of the general trend of increasing proportion with non-permanent employment contracts differing in nature for women and men point towards quite serious gendered effects of increasing flexibilisation of the labour market (Gonäs 1998). When examining whether temporary employment serves as a stepping stone onto the labour market, there have also been findings that indicate that its function differs between men and women. When following people laid off from 17 different manufacturing industries, Gonäs and Westin find that women had a much harder time getting new permanent employment than men. Many women entered a state where they rotated between unemployment, temporary jobs and active labour market policy measures, a situation that is labelled 'permanent temporariness' (Gonäs & Westin 1993).

These negative conclusions about gendered effects of numeric flexibilisation in Sweden however are somewhat put in perspective when comparing the effects on the Swedish labour market with other labour markets. Besides the previously noted (and increasing) prevalence of longer part-time employment among Swedish women, the part-time employment seems to fill transitional functions in Sweden which are important for women's longer term participation in paid labour. In a comparison between Sweden and the Netherlands, not surprisingly it was found to be clear that the incidence of working time transitions is much higher for women and of a different nature in both countries. The difference between the countries was however that Sweden had a much higher incidence of working time transitions and much lower levels of transitions out of the labour force. The very plausible explanation for this pattern was that part-time work in Sweden is used as a way of combining paid labour with family responsibilities during periods of women's lives where demands are changing. As such, part-time work for women is an interlude to a great extent in an otherwise full-time career. This however did not change the basic gendered pattern in Sweden and the Netherlands that women in part-time employment were significantly less likely to be in

full time labour within a five year period as compared to men (Anxo et al. 2000).

Women's dual responsibility for both home and career thus play a central part for who or when part-time employment or flexible working arrangements are used in Sweden. Elvin-Nowak points to this balancing act in a study of 17 working mothers who had differing degrees of control over their work times. She found that the worklife for the mothers was very much balanced and evaluated in relation to responsibilities towards the children and that notions about gender division of labour were very important for these evaluations. An interesting point made in the study is that the level of flexibility and control over working times was of course positively related to being able to adjust to the demands of the household, something that often is emphasised as a very positive thing. Elvin-Nowak found however that a high degree of flexibility and control over working times also was coupled with feelings of guilt. This is because of increased individual responsibility for the organisation of everyday life in response to the demands of work and family (Elvin-Nowak 1998). The dual responsibility thus becomes a difficult balancing act where working mothers gain greater responsibility for satisfying both employer and family.

In fact this balancing act could lead to very different implications of flexible forms of employment for working conditions. Salmi finds for instance that the current household division of labour leads to gender specific ways of dealing with working at home. In a study of both men and women, Salmi shows that men organise their workdays very much in the same linear ways that paid labour is normally organised. Women, however, arranged their workdays more freely and adapt them to fit their children's schooldays. There were also interruptions of the work by children and other events outside paid labour to a much larger extent for women than for men. The flexibility that home-based work provided was thus used by (and to some degree forced upon) the women to organise labour around the needs of other family members (Salmi 1997).

Swedish research shows that there are gendered implications of flexibilisation of time, employment conditions and even place in Sweden. The findings are coherent and very much connected to the differences in distribution and responsibility for housework. Regarding functional flexibilisation, there has also been some interest in the possible gendered implications of increasing delegation of responsibility and broadening of work tasks. In a study of workplace-based projects aimed at introducing work rotation and work in independent teams, Blomqvist concludes that it seems to have benefited the women more than the men. The work of women has been made visible and their abilities have been better appre-

ciated (Blomqvist 1997). Functional flexibilisation thus seems to have the potential to increase the equality at the work place. Petterson's study of the reorganisation of two industrial workplaces shows that this does not necessarily have to be the case. Men who moved in to female-dominated work received more training/education and higher wages than women, while women who moved into male-dominated areas received the least qualified work tasks, lower pay and education than men. In this way the changes resulted in a new segregation and continued dominance (Petterson 1996).

10. HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF FLEXIBLE WORK FORMS

Relatively little Swedish research has looked at the consequences of flexible employment outside of actual working conditions or financial consequences. This is the case even though such effects are often believed to be either possible or actually present. Håkansson and Isidorsson argue for instance that company efforts for increasing flexibility can mean increased health risks for the employed. In practice Flexible work time leads to longer days, something that affects rest and sleep. Temporary jobs imply a major financial insecurity, making it hard to plan life outside paid labour and reducing the propensity to point out risks in the work environment (Håkansson & Isidorsson 1997).

On the empirical side, there has been at least some empirical research that directly or indirectly takes an interest in such potential negative health effects of companies working for numeric flexibility. Most importantly, there have been some studies from the National Institute for Working Life Research directly targeted towards somatic and psychological consequences of contingent work and work in manpower leasing companies. The findings have shown that there could be somatic and psychological effects and an increased risk of workplace accidents related to manpower leasing work and contingent work. Decreased financial

security and declined working conditions through serving as a relief in acute working situations and/or receiving too little information related to the work task, and less access to social support were some interrelated factors behind these effects. The worst effects were found to be for contingently employed women in the public sector and in service industries of the private sector. People employed with manpower leasing companies do have more secure sense of belonging through their manpower leasing company and feel financially more secure, although they switch workplaces often. But they also experience being outside the workplace community in the form of not being called to meetings and not taking part in work-related training (see for instance Aronson 1999, Isaksson 2001).

Similar findings relating to the consequences of psychological well-being in differential contractual situations were also found in a study of individuals exiting unemployment. It was assumed that the dualistic picture of mental well-being as poor when unemployed and good when reemployed needed to be modified in order to take into account the very different employment conditions individuals entered into. Focus was on the effect on mental well-being of exit from unemployment to three possible contractual situations,

a permanent employment contract, a temporary employment contract and self-employment as compared to remaining unemployed. While exit from unemployment to paid labour was found to increase mental well-being in general, significant differences in impact were found depending on the contractual situation the individuals entered. Entering a permanent employment contract meant a larger increase in mental well-being than entering temporary employment or self-employment. These differences in well-being were not found to be the direct effect of differential financial situations, although the financial change caused by the entry into paid labour was found to be an important explanation for the improvement in mental well-being for all three contract conditions as compared to unemployment. Instead, the results were interpreted as being caused by of how the new status was managed differently to resolve the longer-term uncertainty and lack of predictability about the future faced when unemployed (Strandh 2000).

These three studies relate to what can be labelled health consequences of numeric flexibility

CONCLUSION

Summing up the review on the academic 'discourse of flexibility' in Sweden we can conclude that there has indeed been considerable work done which relates to the flexibilisation process or flexible work forms. Although this research does not form what could be labelled a coherent discourse, a large interest for these issues in Sweden, as well as a good base of knowledge relating to many aspects of flexibilisation have developed thanks to the research on these different issues. The starting point for interest in flexibilisation among Swedish worklife researchers is to a large degree the same. This in the form of the public and international academic debate relating to companies' strive for increasing numeric and functional flexibilisation, which is assumed to lead to a segmented labour market. On the theoretical level the assumption of a flexibilisation process and the assumed content of it has how-

ever both functioned as a starting point and as a point of critique. The picture of a complete shift from one labour market system, the fordist, to another, flexible specialisation, has been questioned, as has the neglect of the possibility that the institutional context can be of importance for the flexibilisation process and its consequences. It is however not sure that functional flexibility would imply no possible negative health effects. Håkansson and Isidorsson point out that functional flexibility could also be perceived as negative by employees, as it could mean that they have to take on more tasks and responsibility than they can handle. In the same way, having to switch between work tasks on short notice while also having the length of the workday vary could be perceived as stressful (Håkansson & Isidorsson 1997). Blomqvist's findings of increased stress levels in workplace-based projects aimed at introducing work rotation and more independent teams at the workplace show that this could be the case. An increased sensitivity to disturbances within the organisation could also led, for instance, to sick leave being regarded as a major disturbance, something that has clear health implications (Blomqvist 1997).

On the empirical side Swedish research (as well as international research involving Sweden) present a picture that fits relatively poorly with an ongoing linear process relating to increasing numeric flexibility. Although there has been some increase in for instance manpower leasing, the proportion in such employment is still negligible, and neither the development of temporary employment nor part time employment/divergence of working hours fit a picture of an ongoing numeric flexibilisation process in Sweden. The development of flexibility on the Swedish labour

market does thus not conform to the predicted increase in numeric flexibility. An explanation for this that is often used in the public debate is that the politically regulated Swedish labour market is unable to facilitate companies' and organisations' need for flexibility. Strict labour law, strong unions and active involvement in the labour market could here function as constraints for the flexibilisation process. Given the actual level of flexible work in Sweden, in comparison with less politically regulated markets, this does however not seem to be the case in Sweden. Instead of functioning as a constraint on flexibility there are findings indicating that the Swedish labour market model actually increases the potential for functional flexibility and the acceptance for functional flexibility among workers and organised labour. In line with this there was also slightly more support for a move towards increasing functional flexibility in the Swedish workforce.

The conditions of numeric and functional flexibility in Sweden do not seem to fit the picture of increasing segmentation of the labour market and workplaces. Although there were some indications of worse pay and working conditions for temporary and part time employed, it could be argued that, in international comparison, these aspects were less severe. In particular the conditions of part time employment does not fit the description of a marginalised position on the labour market, with part times leading to full eligibility to job related social benefits and differences between full and part time employed tending to decrease. In addition, there was no evidence of temporary employed being a separate, peripheral group at the work place. Instead, they were found to be integrated into the organisation as much as the ordinary personnel. Regarding consequences of flexible work forms outside the working life, findings for Sweden suggest that temporary employment and work for manpower leasing companies negatively affect somatic and psychological health. On the other hand, there seems to be potentially positive effects of part time employment and 'functional' flexibilisation measures, such as increasing worker controlled scheduling

flexibility. This kind of flexibilisation was in several studies found, or argued, to facilitate the combination of employment with family demands for women.

The relationship between control over scheduling or part time employment and increased ability for women to meet the demands of family life points towards something that is important to note. Flexible employment is gendered in Sweden, both in regard to prevalence, conditions and consequences. In the case of temporary employment women were also somewhat over represented. It is interesting to note, however, that when in temporary employment women tended to be involved in those forms of temporary employment with the worst conditions; they were also at a greater risk of getting stuck in non-permanent employment. Part time employment is in turn a form of flexible work that in Sweden is female. This can be seen as a result of the existing unequal gender division of labour in Swedish society where women, despite their role in worklife still bear the main responsibility for the household. The dual responsibility of working women was in Swedish research also found to be of importance not only for part time work, but also for the implications of being in other forms of flexible employment. The balancing act between the responsibility of employment and family was for instance found to structure the workday of men and women working out of their home in different ways.

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