

# **Flexibility meets national norms and regulations: part-time work in New Zealand, Denmark and the Netherlands.**

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## *Abstract*

*Flexibility has been a major labour market issue in all OECD countries in the past two decades. There has been a public policy and employer push for increased flexibility and this has given rise to a growth in atypical employment in many countries. At the same time, concerns over the economic and social impacts of atypical employment have increased. There are, however, several different national trends and the effects of atypical employment also vary markedly across countries. This paper focuses on developments in part-time employment as one manifestation of atypical employment. Through a comparison of developments in part-time work in New Zealand, Denmark and the Netherlands it is shown how these three 'models' have experienced very different trends in part-time work and, in particular, there have been different reasons behind the different employment patterns. The discussion of these differences raise interesting theoretical and public policy questions and issues.*

## **Introduction**

Over the last 20 years, labour market flexibility and atypical employment have increased in most OECD countries. The rise in flexible working patterns has coincided with the development of Atkinson's model of the flexible firm (Atkinson 1984) and of various flexibility typologies (Deeks and Rasmussen 2002: 159) as well as the promotion of more flexibility by international agencies such as the OECD (1987 and 1989). Flexible working patterns have been seen as important elements in improving competitiveness of a company or an economy and regarded as part of a global strategy on deregulating the labour markets (Standing 1999). Although discussions of longer working hours have become more prevalent recently (Campbell 2002, Rasmussen & Lamm 2002), it has been the issues surrounding part-time and temporary employment which has dominated academic and public policy debates over the last 20 years (eg. Hunter et al. 1993, Pollert 1991, Auer 2000).

This paper will concentrate on part-time employment as one of the more well-known examples of atypical employment and changing working time patterns (O'Reilly et al. 1999). It will stress the dual nature of part-time work where it can have both negative and positive connotations (Felstead and Jewson 1999: 7). The negative connotations are associated with a short-term, cost-saving approach from employers with the resultant creation of dead-end, boring and lowly paid jobs (Jepsen 2000, Robson et al. 1999). The positive connotations are associated with a win-win situation where flexibility works for both employer and employee; that is cases where workplace demands and family/leisure time both benefit from flexibility. Thus, the real conundrum appears to be: how to alleviate the negative features of casual and part-time employment without curtailing the flexibility offered to workers and employers. There are major problems associated with creating such a situation. One has to be careful not to overstate the extent of compatible employer – employee interests. An

increase in employee flexibility and protection is often considered opposite to increasing or at least maintaining employer flexibility. This understanding has prompted much of the public policy and employer enthusiasm for further employer-driven flexibility with protection being seen as an antithesis for more flexible and efficient employment practices (Standing 1999). This is a latent interest conflict which will be difficult to overcome, though the flexibility debate has pointed to several different options. Functional flexibility has been touted as a more positive form of flexibility since it tends to involve permanent full-time jobs with a certain amount of training and development (European Commission 1997). Working time flexibility adjusted to employee preferences can be another solution. These 'solutions' can also be an impetus to re-think work organisation.

In terms of working time flexibility, a possible solution is legislative or collective bargaining framework regulations where the precise implementation of working time regulation will happen at workplace level. This allows for adjusting working time arrangements in a way which can be aligned with productivity and service quality considerations. This is particularly the case where there are joint employer – employee decision-making mechanisms at the workplace level since this improves the likelihood that employee choices and preferences can be protected. This has worked well in several European countries where there is a strong union presence and employee presentation through works councils. Nevertheless, the notion of employee choices and preferences is a rather nebulous concept which varies across and within employee groups. There is also a short-term, long-term dilemma since it is often very difficult to align short-term flexibility with long-term goals in areas such as career development and pension entitlements. The individual nature and situation specificity surrounding choice and preference make it difficult to provide solutions which will be suitable for all employees.

In this paper, we confine ourselves to the analysis of working time trends in New Zealand, the Netherlands and Denmark. The three countries illustrate three different 'models' of employment relations changes and working time patterns. Equally important, there are substantial differences in the economic and social outcomes associated with these changes in working time patterns. In New Zealand, there has been a bifurcation in working time patterns with a rise in shorter and longer working hours and less than a third of the labour force now work the traditional 40-hour week. In the 1990s, this coincided with comprehensive labour market reforms, bargaining decentralisation and a sharp decline in collective bargaining which created concerns about unfair and short-term practices (Deeks & Rasmussen 2002). A prevalence of the traditional gender pattern in part-time employment and more generally in terms of paid and unpaid work point to the 'stickiness' of the traditional gender pattern.

Compared to New Zealand trends, the major expansion in part-time employment in the Netherlands is placed in a different employment relations setting. The 'Dutch model' has gained notoriety because of its implementation form – a negotiated, gradual adjustment – and its success in countering unemployment and social welfare costs (Auer 2000, Visser and Hemerijck 1997). Lower unemployment has coincided with an extra-ordinary rise in part-time employment but, at the same time, better protections have been offered to part-time employees in terms of employment rights and income security. Interestingly, this rise in part-time work appears to be sought by

employers and employees alike with many employees having a preference for shorter working hours.

Finally, the chapter puts a lot of emphasis on recent trends in part-time employment in Denmark since these trends are totally opposite to the trends in the two other countries and *confounds the expectation of rising atypical employment found in many discussions of flexibility*. It is puzzling how the Danish welfare and labour market regulations produced first a strong rise in part-time employment and then a subsequent fall. We point to some possible explanatory factors and the discussion of changes in public policy and work organisation changes clearly has wider theoretical application beyond the Danish labour market.

### **New Zealand working time patterns and issues**

The “New Zealand experiment” is renowned in the international literature on public policy and deregulation (Boston et al. 1996, Kelsey 1997). In the decade after 1984, New Zealand introduced wide-ranging economic, social and labour market reforms which transformed the country from being highly regulated to one of the most deregulated OECD countries. In 1991, the new Employment Contracts Act facilitated an employment relations transformation which was extra-ordinary: moving from a century-old conciliation and arbitration system with extensive state regulation to a decentralised bargaining system (Deeks & Rasmussen 2002). The legislation abolished the award system (legally binding industry or occupationally based agreements), abolished statutory protections of unions, and curtailed their bargaining and strike rights. Furthermore, its effect was bolstered by several other changes in public policy and employment practices: the Shop Trading Hours Act 1990 prompted more casual and part-time employment in the retail sector, outsourcing in social services, local government, construction and forestry increased the number of contractors and casual employees, the lack of collective coverage increased casual and part-time employment in tourism, hotels and restaurants, and finally, the phenomenon of call centres created a need for more part-time employees.

The combination of comprehensive reforms and economic stagnation led to widespread labour market adjustments. There were massive job losses in the public and manufacturing sectors during 1987-1992, stagnation in average real earnings, a marked widening in income distribution, adjustments to collective bargaining outcomes and changes to working time patterns. Unemployment fluctuated wildly with a rise from 4% to 10.6% in just five years (1987-1992) and a fall from 10.6% to 6.2% during 1992-1996. Following the Employment Contracts Act, there was a sharp reduction in union density (from 43% to 17%, during 1991-1999), collective bargaining declined in importance and the locus of collective bargaining moved to enterprise level. However, employment growth was generally strong from 1992 onwards and there were often localised skills shortages.

Thus, it is no surprise that there have been substantial changes to working time and work patterns since the current survey of working time (Household Labour Force Survey) started in 1985. This has led to a fragmented labour market with a bifurcated working time pattern (see table 1). The traditional 40-hour or 38-hour working week

has become less prevalent, with a particular sharp reduction amongst males. There has been little percentage change in the 41-49 hours bracket while longer hours (50 hours or more) have increased substantially. While male employees still constitute the bulk of employees working long hours (more than three times that of female employees) there is a growing number of women who work long hours. Interestingly, the female pattern is nearly a mirror image of male part-time employment: it starts from a low base but the percentage rise is high and it constitutes nearly the same proportion of total employees. There is a clear indication that professional and predominantly younger women have started to take on the working time pattern of their male counterparts.

Table 1 here

Table 1 illustrates the continuous growth in part-time work. It covers now more than one-third of female employment.<sup>1</sup> While male part-time employment is considerably lower it has doubled in the 1987-2000 period. These increases in part-time employment have occurred with more women joining the labour market. Overall, New Zealand has experienced strong employment growth post 1990 and much of this growth has involved part-time employment.

The rise in part-time employment becomes problematic when the sharp rise in preferences for more hours amongst part-timers is taken into account. There was a rise from 12.2 per cent of part-time employees in 1986 to 29.2 in 1999 (Statistics NZ 2001a: 82). At the same time, more part-timers have expressed a preference for having a full-time job: an increase from 2.2 percent in 1986 to 6.8 in 1999. This raises an important question: to what degree does the high level of part-time work really reflect the preferences of employees.

“Between 1988 and 1999 there was a large change in the proportion of part-time workers who wanted to work more hours (under-employed) and those who wanted to work full-time (involuntary part-time employed). Involuntary part-time employment is likely to be a worse state than under-employment; involuntary part-time employment is likely to mean that the worker wants quite a different working arrangement, whereas under-employment may mean that a worker wants only a few more hours of work.” (Carroll 1999: 114).

Furthermore, there are some indications in official statistics that “part-time employment is associated with lower job quality and lower pay, because part-time workers in general earn less per hour, have shorter tenure in their current job and obtain less on-the-job training.” (Carroll 1999: 113). This might be one of the reasons why multiple jobholders – known as ‘quilting’ and indicating unhappiness with some aspects of the main job – are more prevalent amongst women than amongst men. Research has found that money concerns and sometimes a lack of sufficient working hours tended to dominate in this part of the labour market (Rasmussen, McLaughlin & Boxall 2000).

How the availability – or lack – of suitable employment opportunities and employment conditions can constrain employee choice was illustrated by the income stagnation and growth in atypical working time arrangements in the retail sector (Conway 1999, McLaughlin 1998). Many retail employees had limited choice when

it came to pay levels, working time and career options. Similarly, a detailed, longitudinal study of employment patterns amongst surveyed households in Hawkes Bay found that the decline in regional employment opportunities prompted many respondents to accept more job and income insecurity (Barrett & Spoonley 2001). Likewise, Brosnan and Walsh (1998) detected – based on several surveys of employment patterns in New Zealand - a significant rise in casualisation as well as employer expectations of further increases. It was also found that many employers used part-time employees as casual workers, changing their weekly hours at short notice (Allan, Brosnan & Walsh 1998).

While it is unclear to what degree this was influenced by the Employment Contracts Act or by other social, demographic and economic factors, there is little doubt that there has been a sinister side to the rise in atypical employment in New Zealand:

“While various forms of flexibility can provide for more interesting jobs and more desirable employment conditions and patterns, it has been clear that employer-driven flexibility measures have had a negative impact on many workers’ employment conditions and working arrangements. The loss of overtime and penal rates has particularly hurt employees in the secondary labour market (Harbridge and Street 1995, McLaughlin 2000). These employees tend to be employed in the service sector where long opening hours, non-standard working hours and low-paid jobs are common. They also tend to have little bargaining power.” (Deeks & Rasmussen 2002: 164-5).

Although the picture presented so far indicates the sharp changes experienced by employees in the New Zealand labour market, there are also several indications of the ‘stickiness’ of the traditional gendered labour market. This can be detected, for example, in the predominance of female part-time work, the clustering of women in a few occupational sectors, the predominance of women in atypical employment and in the findings of the 1998 Time Use Survey: “Males and females tend to combine paid and unpaid work quite differently. On average, females aged 12 and over spend about 2 hours more per day than males on unpaid work, while males spend about 2 more hours per day than females on paid work.” (Statistics NZ 2001b: 17). These results are clearly influenced by a moderate level of labour market participation amongst women and, in particular, females aged 30-34 and 35-39 have not increased their labour force participation rate by much recently. As women have started to match men in terms of educational achievements, there are obviously other social and individual factors at play. For example, there is evidence that the lack of suitable childcare facilities constitutes a particular problem for a section of the female workforce (Dept. of Labour/NACEW 1999). Thus, the traditional male and female working time and labour market patterns can still be detected, despite the movements in working time patterns found in table 1.

These issues of equality, choice and protection have been canvassed in the media and academic research in the 1990s and they were a significant part of the successful election campaign of the current coalition government. Since its election in October 1999, the Labour-Alliance Government has launched several labour market initiatives: the Employment Relations Act 2000, paid parental leave, regional employment schemes, better funding of public childcare and industry training, increased statutory minimum wages, and improved information and problem-solving

facilities for employers and employees. The Employment Relations Act promotes unionism and collective bargaining as well as making 'good faith bargaining and behaviour' an explicit part of employment relations. The Act has already facilitated a greater role for unions and collective bargaining, though the levels of union density and collective bargaining have only changed slowly. Because of time-lag associated with research, it is still unclear: what are the main changes in bargaining outcomes, how have these outcomes been distributed across the labour market, and what have the effects been in terms of employment relations practices? While these questions indicate the lack of knowledge about regional, occupational and group-level impacts, there seems to be little doubt, in light of a more buoyant labour market with lower unemployment, that the recent labour market initiatives have generally increased employee protection and choice. It is expected that this will have a considerable influence on employee evaluation of part-time employment over the coming years.

### **Going Dutch: facilitating and regulating part-time work in the Netherlands**

The Netherlands is often admired for its 'employment miracle' (Auer 2000; Schmid 1997; Visser and Hemerijck 1997). Between 1983, ending a deep recession, and 2000 the number of jobs increased at a rate of 2% per year, four times the EU average (OECD 2001). The expansion of part-time work was a strong contributory factor: three-quarters of the two million new jobs since 1983 were part-time jobs. Most of these jobs went to women and the female participation rate (in persons) jumped from 33% in 1975 to 59% in 1998.

While the Dutch level of part-time work has been high for some time – it was 16.6% in 1979<sup>ii</sup> – it has expanded strongly since early 1980s. Figure 1 shows how the share of part-time employment of total employment has grown in the 1990s. In the Netherlands, almost 40% of the working labour force works part-time, while in the European Union less than 20% works in part-time jobs. Several factors have conspired to facilitate this rapid growth of part-time work and we will discuss in the following: employer pressure, social and labour market reforms, changing union and employee attitudes.

Figure 1 here.

Employer pressure for more flexible working time patterns must be seen in light of increased international competition, economic stagnation in the 1980s, as well as growing union pressure for reduced weekly hours (Visser 1998). From the employers' perspective, part-time jobs can serve several different purposes. A 1991 survey found that 60 percent of the firms judged part-time jobs as a means to meet extra demand; 30 percent saw access to new labour sources as the main benefit; 29 percent mentioned that part-time work helped to match flexible working hours with longer business hours, while one in five firms stressed that part-time jobs helped to limit costs related to overtime (SZW 1991).

Interestingly, the employer pressure for more part-time jobs coincided with unions becoming more positive towards such jobs. Traditionally, Dutch trade unions shared the sceptical view of other European unions. Part-time jobs were seen as marginal, often dead-end jobs which tended to undermine full-time employment. The unions

were afraid, therefore, that promoting part-time jobs would help creating a secondary and non-unionised job market. During the entire 1980s, the union debates about part-time work continued unabated and with limited changes in union strategies (van Eijl 1997, Sloep 1996). For example, the unions' main working time priority was still a reduction in weekly working hours. This point of view changed in the early 1990s, when the main union confederation FNV started to advocate the 'right to work part-time' for men and women and equal rights for part-time and full-time workers (Passchier and Sprenger 1997).

Accepting and promoting part-time work, trade unions have had some success in narrowing the differences in job and social security rights between part-time and full-time workers in the 1990s. Government policy has worked in the same direction. As a rule, part-time workers now pay *pro rata* social insurance contributions in exchange for *pro rata* entitlements. Furthermore, tax reforms and integrated social security charges have reduced disincentives for second earners to take up more hours (Gustafsson and Bruyn-Hundt 1991). Finally, in the first tier of the Dutch pension system entitlements were individualised, unrelated to earnings (covering about 40% of average wages) and based on citizenship rather than employment, which is the system in which part-timers fare best (Ginn and Arber 1998). Currently, over 90% of all Dutch workers are covered by occupational pensions, which, when fully matured, guarantee 70% of (last-earned or average) earnings. Thus, the 'normalisation' of part-time work has come – as often happens in the 'Dutch model' - through bipartite negotiations and/or tripartite consultations and with resultant piece-meal adjustments to the rights and protections of part-time employment.

While it is unclear to what degree demand side changes and better conditions have influenced the growth in part-time work, they have undoubtedly increased the interest of women in such jobs. It is namely a key characteristic that *the level of professed involuntary part-time employment is low in the Netherlands*. In Eurostat surveys, the Netherlands figures as the country with the lowest share of involuntary part-time work (Rubery *et al.* 1999, table 7.5). According to Eurobarometer data, analysed by Schulze Buschoff (1999), part-time work is evaluated more positively by Dutch (and Danish) women than by their sisters elsewhere in Europe as regards contractual status, tenure, perceived career chances, job satisfaction and social security, though on all these aspects part-time jobs attract lower scores than full-time jobs even in the Netherlands. Additionally, only 5.5% of all part-time workers indicated that they wanted but could not find a full-time job. This was almost four times below the average of 19.7% for the European Union (Eurostat 1998: 138). This was detected already when "a union-survey in 1993 revealed the rising popularity of the '1½ job model' among (younger) working couples, both with and without children" (Visser 1998: 287). Employees, when asked why they worked part-time, mentioned study, social responsibilities (family, childcare) or a preference for more leisure time (CBS 1997). Another reason may be that earnings differentials between full-time and part-time jobs, when controlled for sector, occupation and seniority, have narrowed to seven percent in the private sector, and are practically zero percent in the public sector (STAR, 1997).

While the level of involuntary part-time employment is low, not all negative impacts have been overcome. There are still several issues: sectoral and occupational factors have a major impact on earnings levels (that is, a concentration of part-time jobs in

low paying service sectors and in construction), part-time employees tend to participate less in job-related training than full-time employees (OECD 2001), and there are less opportunities to create long-term career paths. However, the key issue is probably the lack of suitable family supports with work-family being the most important 'driver' of part-time work. By its own admission, the Dutch welfare state ranked in 1996 lower than most European welfare states in terms of provisions and services supporting young families (SZW 2000). This has been confirmed by other studies (Daly 2000; Korpi 2000; Rostgaard and Fridberg 1998.).

It would appear that the absence of facilities constrains many mothers to take anything but a small part-time job. Dutch parents, and in particular mothers, assume a much larger share of household burdens than in the Scandinavian countries and this is one main feature in which the Dutch 'Social Democratic' welfare state model deviates from its Northern variants (Esping-Andersen 1999; Korpi 2000; Lewis 1992). However, this may be about to change dramatically. The Dutch Central Planning Bureau (CPB 1998) has argued that the lack of childcare facilities is becoming a constraint in labour force and economic growth. In 1998, the Liberal-Labour coalition government decided to double the day-care places to 150,000. So far, a shortage of staff has prevented such a rapid expansion, but the underlying financial structures and political will are certainly in place. It will be interesting to watch whether further availability of childcare facilities will move the 'Dutch model' closer to a Scandinavian type of welfare state and what the impacts of such a change would be on part-time employment.

### **Something Rotten in the State of Denmark?**

The shift towards an industrialised, full employment welfare state in Denmark in the 1960s coincided with a strong rise in female participation rates. This was obtained by a massive increase in part-time jobs and in this area, Denmark was a leader amongst OECD countries. However, the rise in part-time jobs stopped in the late 1970s, as can be seen from table 2. Since the late 1970s, there has been a sharp decline in female part-time employment which is rather surprising given the rise in female part-time employment in most other OECD countries. This change prompts a lot of interesting questions: why was there such a sharp rise in female part-time employment until the late 1970s, why the subsequent sharp decline, and how does the working time changes align with employee preferences?

Table 2 here

### **has it happened by design?**

The initial surge in female part-time employment in Denmark can be relatively easily explained. High demand for labour and low unemployment coincided with a development of a 'social democratic welfare state' with extensive childcare, education and transport facilities. This made it easy for women to join the labour market and the tax and benefit system conspired to make part-time employment advantageous. Furthermore, Esping-Andersen (1990) has argued that 'social democratic welfare



states' - as opposed to the two other forms of welfare states he discusses – have ideologically a commitment to equality and opportunities in the labour market, in the family and in the education system. An integrate part of this type of welfare state is the crucial role of unions in developing protective measures through collective bargaining and through influencing state regulation (Lind 1998). Thus, Danish unions have worked hard to create 'good jobs' and job prospects – similar to the 'normalisation' strategy of Dutch unions.

It is more complicated to understand the shift towards employment in full-time jobs. Partly drawing on Esping-Andersen's work, Yeandle (1999) shows that the Danish welfare state and labour market is rather different from the other non-Scandinavian countries in her comparative study. She explains the shift to full-time work amongst females as linked to the equality achieved by Danish women with 'the emphasis on self-maintenance' (Yeandle 1999: 160).

This is a problematic interpretation because the extent and wider implications of 'self-maintenance' need further discussion, and it begs the question whether 'the equalisation in the labour market participation patterns of men and women' really is such a great victory if it implies longer working hours for women? Instead Lind puts emphasis on regulatory and benefit changes:

“During the past 20 years or so, part time employment has been decreasing after a peak in the late 1970s. The part time rate for women has more than halved and doubled for men. A number of factors have influenced this development, such as more equal status for women in the labour market, family structure (single parent family), men taking more part in family work and improved coverage of day care facilities for children but the main reason is presumably that changes in unemployment insurance have made part time work less attractive (either part time insured or full time insured working part time). In this sense the unemployment legislation reduces the frequency of non-standard employment. The assumption that employers take advantage of a high unemployment rate and a general tendency to deregulation and create part time jobs is certainly not feasible in Denmark.” (Lind 1998: 13)

Besides the factors mentioned by Lind, it must be mentioned that comparative research has shown that the emphasis on work and career in the Danish society is very high (see ISSP 1997, Smith 1998).

Management attitudes has probably also been influenced by continuous pressure for full time jobs from the trade unions, the reluctance of many women to accept part-time work for career and income reasons and, since the second half of the 1990s, a general shortage of young people (Regeringen 1999). Even in the case that management had wanted more part-time jobs, it is doubtful whether management would have a lot of takers for narrowly-based part-time jobs with the current 'tightness' (unemployment below 5 per cent) and demographic characteristics of the Danish labour market.

However, the liberal-conservative Government has recently passed a legislation that removes some obstacles to part-time employment. This may counter the shift towards

full-time employment by eliminating all collective agreement regulations that limited employers' and employees' free access to make a part-time contract (EIRR 2002).<sup>iii</sup>

The Danish trends in part-time employment also indicate the scope for re-thinking work and work organisation. It has been a major part of the discussion of atypical employment that the growth in service sector jobs (the post-industrial society, Bell (1974)) would lead to a rise in atypical employment patterns. The arguments have focussed on the fluctuations in service work, following the flow and ebb of customers. This is a well-known issue from retailing and major retail chains now have very sophisticated computer programmes to guide the rosters of their staff (eg. Price 2002). During field studies of New Zealand banks, it was often mentioned how the staffing of bank branches was dictated by the flow of customers during the day (Rasmussen & Jackson 1999). The key implication being that peak periods were covered through the use of part-time employees. This sounded a very reasonable way of dealing with fluctuating customer flows and it could also provided, as discussed above, suitable employment for people who had other responsibilities and interests. This constitutes, however, a particular approach to work organisation and time management and *the Danish trends show there are other options.*

Table 3 here.

As can be seen in table 3, there have been divergent trends in part-time employment in banking in the two countries, with Danish banks following the general trend towards less part-time employment. Why have Danish banks favoured – contrary to trends in British or New Zealand banks – full-time employment? It appears that this has been linked to the way that Danish banks have used new technology and staff re-employment and training to create more holistic jobs. However, Andersen (1997: 118) argues that management's attitudes to part-time work and work organisation have had a major influence:

“interviews in Danish banking indicate that managements consider part-time employment an obstacle to the implementation of full-service banking. Part-time employees are here considered undesirable, a type of employee who should be persuaded to enter retraining programmes or to accept retirement schemes, whereas in Britain they are considered as employees in the new work organization. These differences seem to be highly influenced by the internal division of labour in the banks in the two sectors: the different allocation of tasks to the back and front office.”

### **how does it align with the preferences of female employees?**

When it comes to evaluate how well the shifting working time pattern for women towards full-time employment is a response to shifting preferences amongst women then it becomes more speculative. While Lind's evaluation above pinpoints the income and social security aspects there is also, as already mentioned, some wider family, childcare, and career considerations (Holt 1994, Smith 1998). It is also unclear to what degree the reactions to the changes in the unemployment insurance legislation have been based on income considerations. Although the legislative

changes have made it less lucrative to undertake part-time employment it has been found that around 25 percent of all female employees received no or little economic advantage when taking up paid employment compared with the unemployment benefit (Jespersen 1996). There appears, therefore, to be both economic and social incentives at play. The social incentives are associated with the centrality of work for most Danes – the social aspects of work are very important – and the focus on careers (ISSP 1997). Such incentives are, as discussed above, further buttressed by the development of a social welfare state which supports female employment.

It also appears that there is a profound preference for full-time employment amongst Danish women. Surveys of employers and employees in the European Union have found that Danish women appear quite satisfied with their working time arrangements compared to women in other EU countries (European Union 2000).<sup>iv</sup> As the table 3 below shows, Danish women are considerably below the EU average in terms of wanting less working hours. They are also less keen on fewer hours than Danish men, which is quite unusual in Europe (European Union 2000: 23).

Table 4 here

The survey also asks whether full-time employees would like to work part-time. This is not an attractive option for Danish full-time employees as 82 percent answered no, compared to 64 percent across the European Union countries. It is surprising that part-time employment is not considered more attractive because there are fewer down-sides associated with part-time work in Denmark, compared to most other European countries. For example, it was found in the employer survey that 97 percent of Danish female employees had permanent employment while only 3 percent were characterised as temporary. It is clear that the Danish unions' long-term struggle to 'normalise' part-time work has paid off, though part-time employment may still be less suitable in terms of building a long-term career.

While the survey indicate that Danish female employees have less preference for fewer hours than most of their other EU counterparts the impact of growing work pressure can still be detected. With a high participation rate and the common occurrence of dual income families this is not just a female problems as indicated by table 4 above. "Across the countries, only in Denmark is a majority of workers willing to forego wage increases for a reduction in working time." (European Union 2000: 25). It is noticeable that more detailed analyses of individual answers to different working time arrangements find that Denmark and Finland, the two countries with the longest working hours amongst women<sup>v</sup>, tend to have different response patterns from other EU countries. The recent successful campaigns for longer holidays and extended paid parental leave are clear indications that Danish employees give high priority to more leisure time (see Rasmussen & Lamm 2002). Thus, the balance between income and leisure may have shifted but the remarkable features are: that only a minority of Danish women consider part-time work as 'the solution' and they are less keen than men to have a cut in working hours.

## Conclusion

The chapter has shown how part-time employment and its effects vary across the three national 'models'. The impact of regulatory models, collective bargaining and social norms can clearly be detected in the diverse developments surrounding part-time work in these countries. The countries have experienced a rapid change in the level of part-time work – with the Danish case providing the counter-example. The chapter indicates, therefore, that there are considerable scope to re-think our perceptions about flexibility and atypical employment.

New Zealand trends show the negative impact of employer-driven flexibility on working time choices of some employees in the secondary labour market. The traditional gender pattern is still very strong with women constituting the majority of part-time and low-paid wage earners. There are signs, however, of a break-up the traditional gendered working time patterns (which can also be found amongst Dutch and Danish employees). These signs include that women and men are taking on the working time patterns of the opposite sex: more men work part-time and more women work long hours. Additionally, there have been considerable changes to public policy over the last two years.

As part of wider labour market and social welfare reforms, the Netherlands has recorded remarkable changes in part-time employment over the last two decades. As a result, part-time work has joined full-time work as a mainstream option. For female employees, it is probably a bit of a misnomer to label part-time employment as 'atypical employment'. The attempts to 'normalise' part-time work have succeeded to a large degree: it has made the '1½ jobs model' a preferred options for many Dutch families, there is a high level of satisfaction with the part-time option amongst Dutch women and there is a low level of involuntary part-time employment. While part-time jobs are now less associated with negative connotations and implications, there are still issues, such as pay levels, job satisfaction, training and career development, which will have to be confronted over the coming years. In particular, the impact of inadequate childcare facilities have been pinpointed as a vital public policy area and in this area the Dutch are trying to imitate the Scandinavian type of welfare state.

The Danish trends in female part-time work are really puzzling. This is a well-regulated and collectivised labour market with a strong support of a 'social democratic' welfare state type. And the outcome has been that women have increased their working time considerably over the last 20 years by substituting part-time for full-time work. The paper has highlighted several explanatory factors including changes in supportive welfare provisions together with organisational and employee preferences.

While the Danish case has shown that organisational and employee preferences can be aligned with more standard employment patterns it has also been signalled that added work pressure has prompted a further employee push for working time flexibility and restrictions. On one hand, there is an emphasis on work, career and high incomes and thereby a growth in full-time jobs and longer working hours and, on the other hand, there is strong employee pressure to reduce work and working time pressures for full-time employees through fewer weekly working hours and increased holiday and leave

entitlements. Maybe that is the way to go: making full-time jobs more like the size of part-time jobs?

In any case it is not easy to make ends meet. According to the above analysis employer and employee interests may in some cases coincide and in other cases they may not. The regulation of the access to and the conditions for part-time employment has normally been considered as protecting labour against the more powerful side of working life. This is still a sensible assessment, but regulation may then restrain some employees who want a part-time job under conditions that cannot meet the demands of the regulation. This must be accepted as the cost of regulation. The alternative strategy is to impose the catechism of flexibility. In other words: the free market forces. This is often marketed as 'freedom', but is in fact only a free choice for the powerful.

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## TABLES

**Table 1: New Zealand: Usual weekly hours worked in all jobs (as percentage of total employed males/females)**

|      | Males      |             |             |           | Females    |             |             |           |
|------|------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|
|      | 0-29 hours | 30-40 hours | 41-49 hours | 50+ hours | 0-29 hours | 30-40 hours | 41-49 hours | 50+ hours |
| 1987 | 6.0        | 47.5        | 21.6        | 24.1      | 32.0       | 50.6        | 9.4         | 6.9       |
| 1988 | 6.6        | 48.6        | 20.1        | 24.0      | 32.0       | 51.4        | 8.7         | 6.6       |
| 1989 | 7.0        | 48.1        | 18.7        | 25.4      | 33.7       | 50.0        | 8.5         | 6.8       |
| 1990 | 7.5        | 46.4        | 19.3        | 25.9      | 33.2       | 49.4        | 8.7         | 7.5       |
| 1991 | 8.8        | 45.5        | 19.2        | 26.1      | 35.1       | 48.3        | 8.7         | 7.7       |
| 1992 | 10.1       | 46.3        | 17.1        | 26.3      | 35.9       | 47.1        | 8.4         | 8.3       |
| 1993 | 10.1       | 45.2        | 16.9        | 27.5      | 35.5       | 47.4        | 8.5         | 8.4       |
| 1994 | 9.6        | 44.0        | 17.9        | 28.3      | 35.9       | 46.6        | 8.3         | 8.9       |
| 1995 | 9.6        | 41.2        | 18.6        | 30.5      | 36.6       | 45.2        | 8.8         | 9.2       |
| 1996 | 9.9        | 40.7        | 18.4        | 30.9      | 36.0       | 45.6        | 9.1         | 9.2       |
| 1997 | 10.2       | 38.8        | 18.6        | 32.0      | 37.0       | 43.4        | 9.6         | 9.6       |
| 1998 | 11.2       | 39.0        | 18.9        | 30.6      | 37.4       | 43.2        | 9.2         | 9.8       |
| 1999 | 11.7       | 38.4        | 19.0        | 30.7      | 38.4       | 41.8        | 9.9         | 9.8       |
| 2000 | 12.1       | 37.6        | 18.6        | 31.4      | 37.3       | 42.9        | 9.0         | 10.4      |

**Source:** Statistics New Zealand 2001: 132.

**Table 2. Denmark: Part time employment**

| <i>Number of persons (000)</i> | *1976 | *1978 | *1980 | 1982 | 1984 | 1986 | 1988 | 1990 | 1992 | 1994 | 1996 | 1998 | 2000 |
|--------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Employees                      | 2337  | 2365  | 2552  | 2521 | 2540 | 2675 | 2741 | 2674 | 2626 | 2585 | 2648 | 2699 | 2759 |
| Men                            | 1394  | 1398  | 1430  | 1399 | 1410 | 1482 | 1500 | 1454 | 1426 | 1396 | 1444 | 1465 | 1482 |
| Women                          | 943   | 967   | 1121  | 1122 | 1130 | 1192 | 1241 | 1219 | 1200 | 1189 | 1205 | 1234 | 1277 |

**Part-time**

|       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| All   | 501 | 537 | 520 | 512 | 498 | 502 | 502 | 488 | 471 | 409 | 387 | 379 | 385 |
| Men   | 76  | 76  | 115 | 111 | 113 | 125 | 139 | 148 | 157 | 144 | 151 | 158 | 165 |
| Women | 425 | 461 | 405 | 401 | 385 | 377 | 363 | 340 | 314 | 266 | 236 | 220 | 220 |

**Part-time (%)**

|       |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| All   | 21 | 23 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 20 | 18 | 18 | 18 | 16 | 15 | 14 | 14 |
| Men   | 5  | 5  | 8  | 8  | 8  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 10 | 10 | 11 | 11 |
| Women | 45 | 48 | 36 | 36 | 34 | 32 | 29 | 28 | 26 | 23 | 20 | 18 | 17 |

\* Numbers are based on a slightly different survey and may over-estimated part-time jobs, compared to following years.

**Source:** Danmarks Statistik: Tiårs oversigt, various years.

**Table 3. Number of Part-time staff in British and Danish retail banking, 1984-1995.**

|      | British retail banks |            | Danish retail banks |            |
|------|----------------------|------------|---------------------|------------|
|      | Numbers              | Percentage | Numbers             | Percentage |
| 1986 | 36,600               | 12         | 5,498               | 15         |
| 1990 | 49,300               | 14         | 4,885               | 13         |
| 1995 | 50,900               | 18         | 4,363               | 13         |

**Source:** Based on Andersen 1997: 117.

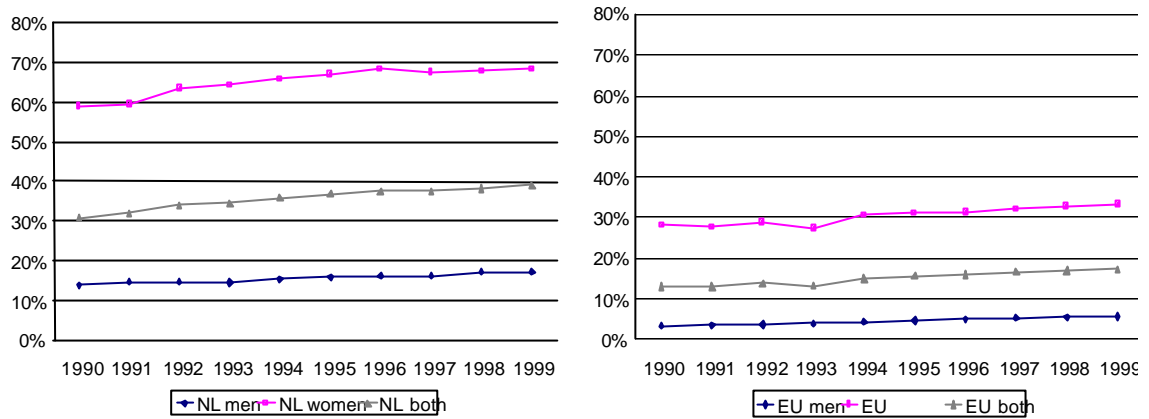
**Table 4. Preferred working time at given hourly wage rate.**

|               | Denmark |       |       | European Union averages |       |       |
|---------------|---------|-------|-------|-------------------------|-------|-------|
|               | Men     | Women | Total | Men                     | Women | Total |
| Less hours    | 34      | 27    | 31    | 37                      | 34    | 35    |
| Length as now | 63      | 66    | 65    | 56                      | 57    | 57    |
| Longer hours  | 3       | 7     | 4     | 7                       | 9     | 8     |

**Source:** European Union 2000: 24

## FIGURES

**Figure 1 Part-time employment in the Netherlands and the EU-average (as % of total employment in group)**



Source: Eurostat.

<sup>i</sup> Although there is an interesting decline in 1999-2000 this is not that unusual since it also happened in 1995-1996.

<sup>ii</sup> The part-time figures in the Dutch section are measured as jobs of less than 35 hours per week and the percentage figures relates to total employment. Thus, the Dutch figures are not comparable to figures from the two other countries.

<sup>iii</sup> This legislation was met by fierce opposition by the trade unions and was also criticised by the employers' main organization because it actually interferes with the so-called 'Danish Model' of voluntarist labour market regulation.

<sup>iv</sup> The so-called ad hoc labour market surveys are carried out by the European Commission to support effective policy decisions. In the summer 1999, the Commission carried out the fourth of these surveys, following surveys in 1985, 1989 and 1994. The surveys cover over 55,000 firms and 15,000 employees in the various EU countries (European Union 2000: 3-5).

<sup>v</sup> When it comes to actual working time, 63 percent of Danish women work the traditional working week (35-40 hours), 70 percent of Finnish women do the same, while across the EU countries only 42 percent work a 35-40 hour week.