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Introduction to the special issue: multiple jobholding in Europe

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Summary

In a number of European countries there is a clear trend towards increased multiple jobholding. As things stand, however, little is known about the structure and the potential consequences of this increase, notably in terms of quality of work and social protection. This special issue focuses on contemporary forms of multiple jobholding in Europe. Have the structure, nature and dynamics of multiple jobholding changed over time? What are the roles of labour market flexibility, technological change and work fragmentation in the development of multiple jobholding? And do multiple jobholders benefit from similar and adequate employment terms, conditions and protections compared with single jobholders, or are they worse off as a consequence of their (fragmented) employment situation? What implications do these findings have for unions, policy-makers and the regulation of work? The collection of articles in this special issue adds to the literature on emerging forms of employment in the digital age and challenges for social protection, also in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. This introduction initiates a discussion of central debates on multiple jobholding and presents a synopsis of the articles in this issue.

Keywords

Employment patterns, income groups, job quality, multiple jobholding, moonlighting, platform economy, social security

Introduction

Over recent decades, the nature and organisation of work have been transformed as a result of – among other things – technological developments, institutional reforms and globalisation. This has resulted in more flexible and fragmented labour markets in many advanced economies (Kalleberg

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et al., 2003; Cappelli and Keller, 2013; Eurofound, 2017; Neufeind et al., 2018). Although researchers, employers and employees share the notion that how work and the labour market is organised has radically changed, there is as yet no coherent picture of the implications of these developments, including how these changes relate to – or perhaps even disrupt – established forms of labour market regulation and social protection in Europe (Bührmann et al., 2018; Neufeind et al., 2018).

Some of these developments concern the recent so-called ‘renaissance of self-employment’, the emergence of ‘click-working’ in the gig economy and an increase of a wide range of non-standard employment relations, together with an increase in what has been called ‘multiple’, ‘plural’ or ‘hybrid’ forms of employment. In various countries there is a clear trend towards such increased multiple jobholding (Conen, 2020; Eurofound, 2020a). Interestingly, despite the sheer prevalence and increasing relevance of multiple jobholding, our understanding of contemporary forms of multiple jobholding^{1,2}, and our knowledge about its embeddedness in the institutional landscape and implications for individual workers remains rather limited (Sliter and Boyd, 2014; Campion et al., 2020; Conen, 2020; Eurofound, 2020a). This special issue aims to fill this void by focusing on contemporary forms of multiple jobholding in Europe. Have the structure, nature and dynamics of multiple jobholding changed over time? What are the consequences in terms of social protection and quality of work? What are the roles of labour market flexibility, technological change and work fragmentation in the development of multiple jobholding? And do multiple jobholders benefit from similar and adequate employment terms, conditions and protections compared with single jobholders, or are they worse off as a consequence of their (fragmented) employment situation?

Multiple jobholding in the new economy

On a more general level, there are two major and diametrically opposed approaches in the literature on the implications of the changing nature and organisation of work. On the one hand, it can be argued that changing product and labour markets, diffusion of information technology and participative management strategies – amongst others – have led to job enrichment and mutual improvements for both workers and employers (Handel, 2005; Greenan et al., 2013). This view is related to post-Fordist theory and mutual gain literature, arguing that new work systems have improved the quality of work, for instance in terms of intrinsic rewards (such as job challenge and autonomy), working conditions (such as decreased physical workload) and material rewards (such as wages). In contrast, the more critical Neo-Fordist view argues that any (limited) gains that may have accrued to workers are outweighed by increased effort requirements and insecurity. Recent changes in labour markets and in work organisation have created greater work pressure and for many workers material conditions (such as pay and job security) have deteriorated (Handel, 2005; Kalleberg, 2009; Greenan et al., 2013).

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- 1 Dual or multiple jobholding, pluriactivity, plural or hybrid employment and moonlighting are perhaps the most commonly applied denominations used to describe a plurality of paid activities workers may be conducting at a time. In this study the term ‘multiple jobholding’ will be used.
 - 2 This special issue follows the definition of multiple jobholding proposed by Campion et al. (2020): ‘[Multiple jobholding is] the act of working more than one job simultaneously, including working for employers and self-employment, wherein all tasks, or sets of tasks, are performed in exchange for, or expectation of, compensation’ (see Campion et al., 2020 for a systematic review of the evolution of scholarly definitions of multiple jobholding).

Multiple jobholding has received scant attention in this context, although there seem to be communalities between these more general approaches and ‘traditional’ typologies regarding motives for working in multiple jobs. One of two broad types of explanations for holding multiple jobs connects to the more positive strand, viewing multiple jobholding as an opportunity for those seeking further variety and challenge, or to enhance their employability and career progression (*heterogeneity motive or energetic / opportunity hypothesis*) (Jamal et al., 1998; Guest et al., 2006; Panos et al., 2014). The second of the two broad types of explanations for working multiple jobs connects to the more critical view, stressing the idea that economic factors are increasingly a ‘main driver’ behind multiple jobholding (*financial motive or deprivation / constraint hypothesis*). This special issue helps us to understand which of these contrasting views is closer to reality on a more aggregated level, and how developments and profiles differ between groups of multiple jobholders.

Multiple jobholders include workers with high-quality jobs (e.g. software developers, academics) who take up a second job from heterogeneity motives as well as workers in precarious (household) situations who take up extra work out of necessity (Wu et al., 2009; Dickey et al., 2011). In this special issue we analyse precariousness of multiple jobholders compared with single jobholders. Precarious employment has been defined, conceptualised and examined in several ways and encompasses various dimensions (D’Amours and Crespo, 2004; Stone, 2006; Vosko, 2006; Kalleberg, 2011). This special issue follows a multi-dimensional approach and addresses not only (changes in) material conditions (such as earnings and poverty), but also non-pecuniary aspects (such as security, autonomy, learning new skills and work intensity).

The COVID-19 crisis has added another layer to the issue. The news nowadays regularly illustrates how many non-standard workers, especially those with one or more jobs and categorised as ‘self-employed’, are put at risk as a result of their meagre rights. Many of them have experienced a significant loss of income and security (Eurofound, 2020b: 8). Moreover, given the dramatic increase in job insecurity and (partial) unemployment following the closure of entire economic sectors during the COVID-19 pandemic, multiple employment may continue to grow as a survival strategy for individuals. The crisis also highlights pronounced inequalities and gaps in social security. In addition to empirical analysis of multiple jobholders’ working and living conditions, this special issue explicitly addresses the relationship between multiple jobholding and social protection (see also Jerg et al., 2021).

The present special issue

The authors contributing to this special issue originate from various scientific disciplines (sociology, economics, industrial relations, HRM/management studies, law, public administration). This disciplinary diversity guarantees that a wide variety of theoretical and empirical insights are incorporated in the articles. The occurrence and quality of multiple jobholding is shaped by institutional conditions. The institutional context is not only likely to affect the probability of becoming a multiple jobholder, but also affects the extent to which multiple jobholders are able to gain sufficient income from their jobs and have to deal with various social risks, including the risk of poverty in old age, the risk of disability and the risk of unemployment. This special issue includes articles covering all EU countries as well as articles that focus on a selected number of countries on which country experts provide the necessary expertise. The authors combine various research methods to fill the knowledge gaps as outlined above.

The special issue opens with Conen and De Beer (2021), who analyse the changing scope and structure of multiple jobholding in Europe. Their article provides more insight into the currently

limited quantitative empirical knowledge on the changing features of multiple jobholding and addresses the question whether the economic vulnerability of multiple jobholders has been changing over time. Focusing on the position and trends of multiple jobholders compared to single jobholders, they examine the structure and trends in terms of working hours, workers' desire to work more hours and in-work poverty. To that end, they analyse data from the EU Labour Force Survey and EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions since the early 2000s. Their results show that multiple jobholding is a significant and growing feature of labour markets in many advanced economies, with changing characteristics, for instance in terms of gender distribution and combinations of contracts. In-work poverty is relatively high among non-standard workers, but the results do not suggest a deteriorating trend effect.

Piasna et al. (2021) explore the issue of job quality among multiple jobholders in Europe. They investigate the relationship between job quality features of the primary job and a propensity to engage in multiple paid activities. The analysis covers workers from 28 European countries using data from the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) 2010-2015. The results show that workers experiencing economic and job insecurity in their primary job are more likely to engage in additional paid employment. Multiple jobholders report higher work pressure and more unsocial hours in their main jobs, but also more control over and flexibility in working hours, more autonomy and a wider scope for exercising skills, the latter largely explained by compositional factors. Moreover, the evidence shows that experiences of work diverge among multiple jobholders and they can be grouped into six clusters based on the quality of their primary job. This points to a variety of motivations and factors encouraging multiple jobholding. Finally, they find a considerable cross-country variation in job quality among multiple jobholders, with worse outcomes in more segmented labour markets with a higher proportion of non-standard employment.

Ilsøe et al. (2021) pay attention to the role of the digital platform economy. They argue that multiple jobholding seems to be widespread in the digital platform economy, but research rarely explores the dynamics between the individual's engagement with distinct platforms and the conventional labour market. Their analyses provides new insights into these dynamics by exploring the earnings of individuals combining paid work in the conventional labour market with income from distinct digital platforms. Based on two large-scale and representative surveys in Denmark among a random sample of 18,000 individuals in 2017 and 2019, in combination with administrative register data, they demonstrate how labour platforms and capital platforms attract different income groups. They also find that online income in combination with alternative income sources such as traditional jobs exacerbate segmentation tendencies found in the conventional labour market. An increasing share of both rich and poor seem to utilise different platforms than do the average groups, indicating a potential hierarchy of segments in both the online and the conventional labour markets. Their findings also point to the possibility that multiple jobholding in the platform economy may hold the potential to bridge rather than reinforce segmentation in the labour market between digital platforms and the conventional labour market and thus serve as a route to reduce income inequalities and enhance upward mobility for those struggling in the conventional labour market.

Whereas the aforementioned articles focus on profiling contemporary multiple jobholding, Conen and Stein (2021) contribute to the literature on financial and non-financial consequences of transitions and episodes of multiple jobholding within people's employment biography. They thus contribute to the field of *dynamic* analyses of multiple jobholding, which may reveal more about various mechanisms and determinants behind diversity in outcomes, as well as on the transitory or sustainable nature of multiple jobholding. Is the transition into multiple jobholding

related to upward or downward wage mobility? How does the transition affect job satisfaction and well-being? And for how long do individuals work in multiple jobs? Furthermore, they aim to improve research in this area by examining *within-group* diversity in more depth, explicitly including the impact of flexible work arrangements and household composition on job outcomes. To that end, they examine panel data from Germany, the UK and the Netherlands for the period between 2002 and 2017. The findings underscore the importance of economic factors in the decision to work in multiple jobs and reveal that labour market contexts play a significant role in outcomes. Findings furthermore indicate negative well-being effects for those who have both multiple jobs and children. For a substantial share of workers, holding multiple jobs occurs over relatively short-term episodes, posing the question of whether episodes of multiple jobholding necessarily come with either clear enrichment or depletion effects, or are merely a phase in the overall employment biography.

Furthermore, working two or more jobs at the same time is associated with the challenge of ensuring that social security systems can guarantee adequate protection for the employees concerned. The needs of multiple jobholders differ from the needs of single jobholders in standard employment relationships or self-employment. Current developments surrounding the emergence of the platform economy and gig work exacerbate this trend. In order to investigate how well social security systems adapt to the needs of multiple jobholders, the article by Jerg et al. (2021) reports on case studies in Germany, Denmark and the United Kingdom. In addition, they review the recent sets of policies to address social protection gaps in these countries introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic. In conclusion, they draw out the implications of national policies and their implications for the EU in how gaps in social protection for multiple jobholding need to be reformed. Their article is an addition to the literature on emerging forms of employment in the digital age and the challenges for social protection, as well as the literature on policy responses in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Concluding remarks

This special issue started from the observation that although multiple jobholding seems to be on the rise in various advanced economies, knowledge about contemporary forms of multiple jobholding is still rather limited. Taken together, the contributions in this special issue advance our knowledge of the occurrence, variation and implications of contemporary forms of multiple jobholding. Labour market flexibility, technological developments and work fragmentation are brought into the debate on multiple jobholders' motives and mobility. The special issue encourages a reconsideration of multiple jobholding, encompassing the context of a changing labour market and society, and highlighting social protection challenges.

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