



AMSTERDAM INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED LABOUR STUDIES UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

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THE FIRST PART-TIME ECONOMY IN THE WORLD

DOES IT WORK?

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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DUTCH LABOUR MARKET	1
3	A JOB-INTENSIVE GROWTH PATH	6
3.1	Wage moderation.....	6
3.2	The Shift to Services.....	7
3.3	Working-Time Reduction and Job Redistribution	9
4	ATYPICAL EMPLOYMENT, PART-TIME JOBS AND FLEXIBILITY	12
4.1	Temp work.....	15
4.2	Temporary contracts	16
4.3	Employment on call, temporary substitutes and unspecified hours	17
4.4	Internal flexibility	17
4.5	Part-time employment	18
5	POLICIES	22
5.1	From Backwardness to Progress: Women Enter the Labour Force	22
5.2	Trade unions	26
5.3	Employers.....	27
5.4	Governments.....	28
6	EVALUATION.....	29
	References	33

1 INTRODUCTION

In his Adam Smith lecture of the European Association of Labour Economists, Harvard economist Richard Freeman has defined the Netherlands as ‘the only part-time economy of the world, with a finger in the dike of unemployment’ (Freeman 1998: 2). How did it happen? What kind of jobs are these and whose jobs are they? Can a ‘one-and-a-half job’ model work? Is it a solution to Europe’s predicament of unemployment? These are the questions that I will try to answer in this paper.

The paper begins with a brief description of the main changes in the Dutch labour market during the past decades. It shows that there was a major reversal of trends on nearly all performance indicators in the early 1980s. Next, I discuss the role of wage moderation, sectoral change and job redistribution. In section three I shall focus in particular on the role of atypical and part-time employment. Section four concentrates on policies and changes in labour market behaviour and preferences, in particular of (married) women, trade unions, employers and governments. In the concluding part I shall identify some problems associated with the one-and-a-half job model and try to answer the central evaluative questions and title of the paper.

2 THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DUTCH LABOUR MARKET

Fifteen years ago, the Dutch labour market was in a very depressed state. Nearly 600,000 people, more than ten per cent of the labour force (800,000 or thirteen per cent according to the old definition) were unemployed. (The new definition follows ILO-standards and requires the unemployed to be available to take the job within the reference period. About one-third of the unemployed according to the old definition were not available or ill prepared to take a job within short notice. This indicated, if nothing else, a severe problem of ‘inactivity’ in the Dutch labour market). An almost similar proportion had left employment due to illness, disability or early retirement in advance of the legal retirement age of 65. One of every four non-school going youth under the age of 25 was unable to find a job. The employment/population ratio of the Netherlands had dropped under fifty per cent and was one of the lowest in Europe.

The first half of the 1980s was the culmination of a decade of stagnation of employment (see Table 1). It was also a turning point. Looking back from the perspective of today, we observe a reversal of trends in nearly every aspect. Labour participation has increased again, among all age groups, though least among older workers and most among women between 25 and 49 years. The average rate of job growth during the past decade and a half was 1.8 per cent per year, accelerating to 2.2 per cent in 1997 and 1998. This is no less impressive than the American ‘jobs machine’ and many times better than the European average (0.4%) during the same period. Many of these jobs are part-time jobs and the annual working time of full-time workers has fallen by 0.3 per cent per year since 1984 (less than half the rate during the previous period). Hence, if employment is expressed in full-time equivalents or hours worked rather than jobs or persons, employment growth is lower. (Note that full-time equivalents or ‘labour years’ have become shorter with the annual reduction of working hours of full-time workers). If labour input is the variable of interest, than labour volume or hours worked is the appropriate measure (see Table 1).

There was a strong rise in part-time and atypical employment in both periods but especially since 1984. Part-time jobs account for three-quarters of the job growth since 1983. Of the total increase in employment with 1,2 million persons between 1988 and 1997, two thirds were working part-time (defined as jobs of less than 35 hours per week). There was a small growth in full-time jobs as well, in sharp contrast with the period before 1984. Employment growth is driven by strong labour force growth, 1.4 per cent per year between 1982 and 1996, compared with 0.5 per cent in the European Union. This reflects relatively rapid population growth (the birth rate in the Netherlands declined later than in other European countries) and a catching-up of the low female participation rate to European averages. In the period considered here, the Netherlands experienced the fastest rise in the employment rate of women in any OECD country. This is even the case when employment is expressed in full-time equivalent jobs (see Table 2).

TABLE 1: A SUMMARY OF THE DUTCH LABOUR MARKET 1970-1996

	1970	1984	1996	Annual % change 1970-1984	Annual % change 1984-1996
Participation rate (%)					
Total	57,3	54,6	63,5	-0,2	0,7
All 15-24 year	58,9	42,0	45,0	-1,3	0,3
Women 25-49 year	23,5	38,2	61,9	1,1	2,0
Men 25-49 year	96,9	92,2	93,2	-0,4	0,1
All 50-64 year	49,6	37,5	41,6	-0,9	0,3
Employment (>1 hours)					
Jobs	5.469.000	5.718.000	6.982.000	0,3	1,8
Labour years	4.763.000	4.672.000	5.503.000	-0,1	1,5
Labour hours (x1.000)	9.559.000	8.386.000	9.581.000	-0,9	1,2
Employment (>12 hours)					
Industry and agriculture	2.183.000	1.560.000	1.571.000	-2,4	0,1
Private services	1.704.000	1.810.000	2.493.000	0,4	3,0
Public and subsidised services	919.000	1.273.000	1.369.000	2,4	0,7
Full-time jobs	3.742.000	3.497.000	3.648.000	-0,5	0,4
Part-time jobs (>12 hours)	635.000	1.079.000	1.844.000	3,9	4,6
Atypical jobs	219.000	354.000	723.000	3,5	6,1
Low-paid jobs (<2/3 median)	460.000	347.000 / 415.000	524.000	-3,9	2,4
Real wage rate (1970=100)	100	137	147	2,3	0,6
Wage distribution (inter-quartile)	0,454	0,399 / 0,418	0,462	-1,8	1,0
Hours per year (full-time job)	2.007	1795	1.741	-0,8	-0,3
Unemployment	44.000	591.000	440.000	20,4	-2,4
Share long-time unemployed	9%	53%	49%	3,1	-0,3
Vacancies (x 1000)	52.000	31.000	69.000	-4,6	6,9

source: own calculations from CBS 1998, SCP 1998.

TABLE 2: FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT/ POPULATION RATIO'S BY SEX

	MALE						FEMALE					
	full-time		part-time		Fte's		full-time		part-time		fte's	
	1983	1996	1983	1996	1983	1996	1983	1996	1983	1996	1983	1996
Netherlands	64.4	64.3	4.7	12.3	66.8	70.7	17.5	18.6	17.2	36.4	26.1	36.8
Sweden	79.5	67.8	5.2	6.9	82.1	71.3	40.8	43.1	34.7	27.5	58.1	56.9
Finland	74.0	61.9	3.4	3.5	75.7	64.6	61.2	52.5	7.8	6.4	65.1	55.7
Norway	78.0	73.6	10.2	8.3	83.1	77.8	31.6	37.4	38.5	31.5	50.8	47.3
Denmark	73.3	72.6	5.1	8.8	75.9	77.0	37.0	44.4	28.5	23.4	52.8	56.1
Austria	78.2	73.7	1.2	3.2	78.8	75.3	37.7	42.2	9.4	17.0	42.4	50.9
Germany	75.3	70.8	1.3	2.6	75.6	72.1	33.5	35.9	14.3	18.4	40.6	45.1
Belgium	69.0	65.3	1.4	2.0	69.7	66.3	29.4	31.8	7.2	14.0	33.0	38.8
France	72.5	63.6	1.9	3.6	73.4	65.4	39.7	36.7	10.0	15.4	44.7	44.4
Italy	74.8	64.3	1.8	2.1	75.7	65.4	32.2	31.9	4.2	4.6	34.3	34.2
Spain	70.6	61.0	1.1	2.0	71.2	62.0	24.3	27.7	3.3	5.7	26.0	30.5
Portugal	85.1	72.2	3.0	3.9	86.6	74.1	47.4	51.1	4.9	7.6	49.8	54.9
Ireland	71.9	65.4	2.0	3.4	72.9	67.1	28.4	33.9	5.2	9.6	31.0	38.7
United Kingdom	76.1	73.3	2.6	4.4	77.9	75.5	32.5	36.7	22.8	27.4	43.9	50.4
United States	70.4	73.3	8.5	9.0	74.7	78.8	41.5	39.8	16.2	18.3	49.6	46.0
Canada	78.9	68.0	6.6	8.0	82.2	72.0	39.0	44.2	15.2	18.0	46.6	53.2
Australia	72.5	68.3	4.8	9.0	74.9	72.8	29.7	34.1	17.0	25.2	38.2	46.7
New Zealand	76.3	74.2	4.0	8.4	78.3	78.2	29.4	40.1	13.4	23.7	36.1	52.0
Japan	80.5	78.3	6.1	10.2	83.7	83.4	39.4	38.8	16.3	21.9	47.5	52.9

source: OECD, Employment Outlook 1997, own calculations. Full-time equivalent (Fe) employment ratio's are calculated as the sum of the full-time rate and half the part-time rate.

Table 2 confirms the claim of the Netherlands as the first part-time economy in the world. Part-time employment ratio's for women show that the Netherlands has overtaken the leading positions of the Scandinavian countries. At the same time, it becomes clear that in terms of full-time employment of women very little has changed. The full-time employment ratio of women has hardly changed in all these years and still is the lowest of all the countries shown in Table 2. Hence, if one measures the total input of paid labour by women in terms of full-time equivalents (counting part-time jobs as half-time jobs), we do observe that the Netherlands remains at the bottom end of the table, preceding only Spain and Italy. Returning our attention to Table 1, we observe that sectional employment trends in the Netherlands went in almost opposite directions before and after 1984. In the 1970s the subsidised sector (health, education) and government employment witnessed the strongest growth, whereas private sector employment stagnated. Employment levels in industry fell steeply and employment growth in private services (trade and transport, financial and personal services, hotels and restaurants) was faint. After 1984 the picture is different. Job decline in industry and agriculture has stopped. Employment growth is strongest in private services, three per cent per year or four times as much as in the public and subsidised sector. (The public sector absorbs only thirteen per cent of total employment, which is very low in comparison with most European countries. The reason is that in the Netherlands many 'public' services, especially in health and social welfare, are organised by 'voluntary associations' with support from public subsidies. Together with these semi-public activities, the total 'quartary' sector of public and subsidised services accounts for 25 per cent of total employment).

Further contrasts between the two periods under consideration concern wage and equality trends. There was real wage growth but much smaller than in the preceding decades. After 1979 real wage growth came to a standstill and in the early 1980s there was even a small decline. Beginning with the Wassenaar agreement between the central organisations of trade unions and employers at the end of 1982, trade unions have made wage restraint into their official policy. This policy was continued, with a brief interruption around 1990, until today – partly made possible by a reduction of taxes in support of the purchasing power of workers (Visser 1998). As more households have two (or rather one-and-the-half) earners, household incomes and domestic consumption has continuously risen in real terms, but income differences between households (of different composition, with and without two earners) as well as between individuals (both with employment, and between those with and without employment) have increased. Indeed the post-war trend towards greater earnings equality came to a halt in the early 1980s and was reversed. From the early 1980s on earnings have grown more unequal, a trend which is found in most developed industrial countries and not particularly pronounced in the Netherlands, unlike for instance the UK or the US (OECD 1994; OECD 1998). The number of low paid jobs has increased partly as the result of deliberate policies to create more employment opportunities for low-skilled workers with little job experience (partly through additional job programmes, with subsidies to employers). Finally, unemployment has fallen from its very high levels in the mid-1980s. The standardised unemployment rate – based on ILO criteria – dropped to 5.5 per cent in 1997 and 4 per cent in 1998, which is the lowest rate in twenty years and less than half the EU average.

The low open unemployment rate, combined with the appearance of difficult-to-fill vacancies in a number of regions and jobs, suggests that the Dutch economy is presently running close to its 'full-employment rate'. In many sectors employers report problems of recruitment. There are still considerable problems of hidden unemployment, though. Of every two persons between the age of 55 and 65 only one participates in the labour market. The government currently considers the repeal of the executive order of 1984, which exempted older workers (57,5 years and older) from the obligation to engage in job search. With the recent influx of women around the age of 35 or 40 in the system, the current number of people on full- or part-time disability pensions has again risen dangerously close to the one million figure that created such uproar in the early 1990s. And while the number of people who are out of a job during one year or longer is decreasing rapidly, their proportion in total unemployment has remained stable—since the early 1980s—at 50%. This reflects passive welfare and labour market policies of the past, and is a considerable challenge to current policy makers. The same is true for unemployment and disadvantages among the ethnic minorities and the unskilled. Unemployment among unskilled and immigrant workers has also decreased (in about the same degree as the general unemployment rate) but remains at a much higher level (around three times the national average).

3 A JOB-INTENSIVE GROWTH PATH

In several ways we can see the early 1980s as the 'turning point' (Visser and Hemerijck 1997). Job growth started at the end of 1983 when the country recovered from a deep recession, was particularly pronounced in the second half of the 1980s, continued through to 1992, stagnated in 1993-94, rebounded and was remarkably strong after 1995. A comparison with the EU shows that over the full period 1983-1997 GDP growth was only slightly higher in the Netherlands (though every single year since 1992 the Dutch economy has grown faster than the German economy). The real point of difference is that in the Netherlands per point of GDP growth more jobs (or units of labour, if calculated in hours) have been created than elsewhere in Europe. This pattern of what may be called 'job intensive economic growth' reflects in our view three main factors: (1) moderate wage increases, (2) development of labour intensive services and (3) job redistribution. I discuss each factor briefly.

3.1 WAGE MODERATION

Wage moderation contributed to job intensive growth in three ways (Visser and Hemerijck 1997). First it helped investment by restoring the profitability of business and thus created a necessary condition for investment. The share of labour income in net enterprise income dropped from over 90,5 percent in 1980 to 83.5 percent in 1985 and has hovered around 83 or 84 percent since. Second, it contributed to the sale of manufactured goods and tradable services in foreign markets, raising net exports and growth in the open sector of the economy. Third, it helped to keep more people with low productivity on the payroll and eased the entry of inexperienced young people or re-entering women. As a corollary, labour productivity per hour increased less than in neighbouring countries (Kleinknecht 1996; Schmid 1997). On the other hand, it should be noted that productivity per hour in the Netherlands is very high by international standards (lower only than in the US and in

Belgium, but higher than in Germany or France). It goes without saying that productivity per person is much lower as this reflects the low average annual working time and a strong preference for part-time employment in the Netherlands.

According to the Central Planning Bureau (CPB), the government's official economic forecasting office, wage moderation has been 'Holland's single most important weapon in international competition'. CPB estimates that the effect of lower labour costs has dominated the effect of lower aggregate demand. For the second half of the 1980s the Bureau estimates that two-thirds of job growth can be attributed to wage moderation and one-third to the expansion of the world economy. The Dutch Central Bank (DNB) points out that whereas unit labour costs in manufacturing rose with 2 percent in France and 2.6 percent in Germany between 1983 and 1995, the rise was zero in the Netherlands. During this period employment increased with 0.1 percent per year in France, 0.4 percent in Germany, and 1.5 percent in the Netherlands.

3.2 THE SHIFT TO SERVICES

Measured by the size of its industrial sector, the Netherlands has never been a classical industrial country. At its maximum, around 1960, manufacturing industry (including mining and utilities) employed only around one-third of the labour force, much less than in Germany, France, Britain or Belgium. Restructuring, labour shedding and relocation of labour intensive manufacturing industries to low wage countries, combined with divestment and contracting out of activities to services, have reduced the size of the manufacturing sector (including gas and oil mining and utilities) to only 18.2 per cent of total employment in 1996. Employment in services has leaped to 74 per cent. In the past ten years growth has been strongest in commercial services (i.e. commerce and retailing, hotels and restaurants, financial and business services, and communication), from 20 to 30 per cent of total employment between 1960 and 1987 and to 37 per cent in 1996. The share of non-tradable services (i.e., government, social and community services, and personal services) rose from 21 to 30 per cent to 1987 and has since stagnated.

In occupational terms these shifts are even larger. The share of manual and technical occupations in manufacturing, mining, construction and transport nearly halved from 43 per cent of total employment in 1960 to 23 per cent in 1994. The share of servicing, administrative and commercial occupations increased from 30 to 38 per cent; and the share of specialist, scientific and managerial occupations doubled from 12 to 25 per cent. There were strong within-sector shifts as well; for instance, within manufacturing the share of administrative, commercial, professional and managerial jobs increased from 35.5 per cent in 1977 to 46.5 per cent in 1993.

The service sector has attracted large numbers of women into the labour market. Almost half of the women who found a job since 1975 did so in only four sectors: health, education, community and social services, and retailing. The strongest rise occurred among married women. Although the absolute number of married women in the working population at working age (15-64) decreased with around 100,000, the number of married women in the labour force increased with 800,000, and the participation rate of married women jumped from 15 per cent in 1975 to 42 per cent in 1994. Among unmarried women the rise was less pronounced, from 43 percent to 55 per cent, contributing an extra 600,000 to the labour force. The proportion of women who expected their first child and had no paid employment dropped from 33 to 19 per cent between 1980 and 1992. The share of women who did work but stopped fell from 55 to 35 per cent. The share of women who continued working but

switched to part-time jobs rose from 5 to 28 per cent and the share of women who continued with unchanged hours increased from 6 to 19 per cent.

The increase in the labour participation of women with children has enhanced the need and created the extra income for family orientated services, jobs that are mostly jobs taken up by women. Since these services are in the Netherlands historically undeveloped in the public and communal sector, low cost commercial services in these areas have become more important. Increased flexibility, through part-time and temporary employment, has supported this dynamic.

3.3 WORKING-TIME REDUCTION AND JOB REDISTRIBUTION

Trade unions in the Netherlands have from 1978 campaigned in favour of job-sharing. Like other European trade unions they demanded in 1979 a ten per cent reduction of working-time (four hours per week) to be realised before 1985. As part of the Wassenaar agreement of 1982 (in which trade unions conceded that the profitability of Dutch enterprises needed improvement as a condition for a recovery of private sector investment and employment), employers accepted to negotiate over a 'cost-neutral' reduction of working-time. In the years between 1983 and 1985 this resulted in an average reduction of working hours of five per cent, from 40 to 38 hours per week. The reduction took mostly the form of extra days off per year or per month and in most cases the reduction of working time corresponded with a reduction of operating time (Visser 1989).

The 1983-85 round fell in a recession and most firms used working-time reduction to reduce slack and cut the least productive hours. An enterprise survey of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment showed that in 78 percent of all enterprises, with 54 percent of all employees covered by collective agreements, there had been no replacements. Consequently, most workers experienced increased time pressure and work intensity (de Lange 1988).

As Drèze (1984: 34) has predicted: 'firms engaged in labour hoarding will not respond to shorter working hours by new hirings, for the same reason that they do not offset natural attrition of their work force by new hirings'. He adds that for similar reasons 'such firms will show relatively little reluctance to reduce hours, since they have excess labour anyhow' (idem). This may well explain why Dutch employers gave in to union pressure for shorter working hours – a demand which they had doggedly resisted until 1982 and would again resist once the economy moved out of recession. The upshot of this argument is that shorter hours will induce additional recruitment only in those firms that are already hiring, to offset quits or expand employment. There were few such firms in the private sector in the first half of the 1980s. All told, the employment impact of the 5% shorter working week was limited – the maximum effect is estimated at a 25% retention rate for vacated hours, the remainder being captured by employers through more efficient staffing, higher productivity and reduced business hours (Visser 1989). In the public sector the employment effect of the 38 hours week (which was introduced in 1986 and was in part compensating a 3% reduction of nominal wages in 1984 and a standstill in 1985 and 1986) was estimated at 65%. The higher retention rate in the public sector reflects the fact that unions exerted a much more effective control over new recruitment. In the private sector, Dutch unions are weaker and not directly present in the firm or workplace.

Employers successfully resisted the pressure for mandatory new recruitment or a contractual obligation as quid pro quo for wage moderation or shorter working hours with reduced pay. A recession-induced campaign for shorter working hours, like the 1983-84 campaign, has the characteristics of 'public regarding' behaviour of 'insiders' in order to absorb more people in employment who would otherwise be unemployed. Against the background of

rapidly rising unemployment – 10-15,000 people joined the ranks of the unemployed every month in 1981 and 1982 – there was considerable support for job-sharing. Between 1979 and 1983 the percentage of Dutch workers in favour of shorter working hours, without pay compensation, rose from 27.9 per cent in 1979 to 35.5 in 1981 and 37.6 in 1983. After the campaign of 1983-84, possibly as a result of the low impact on employment and the experience of increased work pressure, support dropped to 25 per cent in 1985. A stable 40 per cent was against shorter working hours all along (Visser 1989). The opponents were overwhelmingly lower-paid workers and male heads of family (breadwinners). But they were the card-carrying members of the trade unions, especially in industry. Only in firms where their own jobs were on the line, the unions had the solid support from their members for a further reduction of working time without pay.

To understand this we must consider that the German method of labour hoarding through a temporary shift to shorter working hours ('Kurzarbeit') in case of a demand crisis, partly financed with the help of unemployment funds, is not much used in the Netherlands (Den Broeder 1997). Indeed, there was a simple reason why the centre-right government (1982-89) supported the union demand for shorter working hours and job-sharing in 1982 and 1983, against the initial opposition of employers. The government needed every bit of help to stem the rise in unemployment and the mounting claims on unemployment insurance and public assistance funds (the latter were rapidly expanding due to the claims of young first-time job seekers who remained unemployed). For the same desperate reason the government began to unfold plans to create 25-32 hours jobs for young entrants and for some time these were the only jobs available for young recruits in the public sector. A similar scheme failed in metal engineering, since no youth could be found on these terms. Lowering the financial burden of the public sector and the social security system was one of the main objectives of government policy and formed a major part of the strategy of private sector recovery (Visser and Hemerijck 1997).

In 1984-85, when the economy moved out of the recession, the unions did gear up for another round of working-time reduction in an attempt to create new jobs. But employers declared any general move to less than 38 hours 'off limits'. They were able to uphold their veto till 1993. Between 1986 and 1993 working hours of full-time workers were more or less unchanged; only ten per cent of all full-time workers had gained a 36 hours working week by 1993 (mainly in sectors or firms in which major restructuring and job reduction processes took place). After 1986 Dutch trade unions were unable to maintain their united front in favour of working hours reduction. Some unions wanted only early retirement; public sector unions wanted higher wages; the unions of white-collar employees and senior staff resisted further working time reduction, since their members were unable to compensate increased work pressure and reduced pay through extra overtime payments (as a rule, paid overtime applies only to manual workers and salaried employees up to a limit).

The international economic upswing between 1988 and 1991 took away the solidaristic motive for job-sharing that had convinced many members in 1983. Registered unemployment fell below six per cent in 1990, though long-term and hidden unemployment remained at a high level and more people than ever were dependent on benefits (Visser and Hemerijck 1997). By the end of 1992, the international economic recession began to take its toll on employment, especially in manufacturing, which is very dependent on exports to Germany and the rest of the world. A number of major firms, like electronics producer Philips, aircraft manufacturer Fokker, or Daf Trucks, were soon in deep trouble (Fokker and

DAF had to close). 100,000 jobs in manufacturing, ten per cent of the total, were lost between 1992 and 1994. Trade unions returned to wage moderation and working time reduction as their dominant strategy. The centre-left government coalition, in power since 1989, stepped up its pressure to obtain wage restraint in order to slow down the destruction of jobs and the rise in social insurance costs. Unions complained that the massive job losses occurred in spite of increased profits. At the same time, they talked employers into a new central agreement with the promise of wage restraint if employers concede a new round of working hours reduction. The government offered lower social charges to employers and tax breaks to workers in order to brake the rise in non-wage labour costs and facilitate wage restraint. With additional promises of the unions that they will support, through sectoral and firm-level negotiations, a trade off between reduced working hours and more flexibility in working hours, employers accept a compromise and in December 1993 a new central agreement ('A New Course') was signed. This agreement continues the spirit of the Wassenaar agreement of 1982 (Visser 1998). Wage moderation and improved profits are re-affirmed as the basis for investment and employment creation. New is the focus on flexibility, decentralisation, and a search for pragmatic solutions that support employment growth and the transition to a high-employment dual earners economy.

Learning the lesson of the 1983-85 campaign, union leaders and employers develop a pragmatic understanding of the exchange between shorter working hours, flexible working time arrangements, wage moderation and employment creation. Trade-offs with maximum employment effect are to be worked out in decentralised negotiations, taking account of specific conditions that are bound to vary across sectors and firms. Employers give up their blanket opposition against working-time reduction and unions accept that individual solutions and choices may be more effective than collective measures, even from the point of view of maximising the effect on job creation. A new round of working time reduction is realised between 1994 and 1997. In this campaign working hours are reduced and the average working week of full-time workers is now 37 hours. In fact, half of all full-time employees now have a contractual working week of 36 hours, some work less hours, and around 40 per cent works longer, up to a maximum of 45 hours (such long hours are only found in transport). At the same time working hours are averaged over the week, month or years, and fewer and fewer workers work according to a similar schedule.

The 1994-97 campaign for reduced working hours shows different trade-offs across sectors and firms (Tijdens 1998). Generally, there is an exchange of shorter working hours for increased working time flexibility in department stores, banking, insurance, railways, the dairy and food industry, in chemicals, in printing and in railways. Increasingly working time is annualised and a corridor of 32-40 hours per week is possible. Industrial unions introduce the idea of 'vari-time' or working hours corridors and in services unions have begun to negotiate collective agreements 'à la carte'.

In the public sector the 36 hours week was presented as a means to keep employment levels unchanged despite austerity. Where the employers refused to negotiate shorter hours (Philips, metal-engineering), they have relied on the resistance of salaried staff (without overtime compensation) against shorter hours. They have also conceded much higher pay rises than elsewhere.

Summing up, annual working hours have continued to fall as part of a longer trend. In the second half of the 1980s the reduction of working time of full-time workers came to a halt. In recent years the largest contribution to the decline in average working hours has come from the shift to part-time jobs. This is also true for the contribution to job sharing and job creation. Between 1979 and 1996 the number of part-time jobs doubled and the incidence of

part-time jobs has risen by a staggering 20 percentage points, from 16.6 percent in 1979 to 36.5 percent in 1996. As we saw in Table 2 this is an absolute record in the OECD area. This part-time revolution – if that word may be used – is related to the pressure for collective working time reduction for two reasons. In the early 1980s employers began to feature part-time employment as their alternative to union demands for a collective reduction of working hours. This may have been ideological rather than practical, but soon they were called to task by an increasing number of women who wanted to retain their jobs on a part-time basis (see below). In later years, when due to the particular form of working time reduction in the early 1980s, employers needed workers to fill the gap between (shorter) working time and (longer) operating time needed to respond to increased demand, part-time jobs began to play a role in the optimal staffing policies of employers. This became more important role once unions agreed to working time flexibility in the 1990s. These demand side explanations of the rise in part-time employment are probably secondary. The decisive element in the Dutch part-time revolution is found in changes on the supply side, i.e. the entry of (married) women into the labour market. However, the predicted resistance of employers against part-time jobs (as fixed costs are inevitably higher) was lowered to the collective labour time reduction policies of the unions and the particular form in which the reduction was realised.

4 ATYPICAL EMPLOYMENT, PART-TIME JOBS AND FLEXIBILITY

Having described the main changes in the Dutch labour market, the role of wage moderation, sectoral changes and job-sharing, I will now discuss the issues of atypical employment and flexibility. In the previous section we saw that working-time schedules have become more variable and individualised, but what about atypical employment contracts. How many of the new jobs – part-time or full-time - are in fact ‘contingent’?

Flexibility can have different sources and take different forms. A useful distinction is between internal and external flexibility (de Haan, Vos and de Jong 1994). Only in the second case we speak of ‘contingent’ work in the sense of ‘a lack of attachment between the worker and the employer (Freedman 1985; Polivka and Nardone 1989). The two best-known forms of external flexibility are temp workers employed by temporary work agencies and workers on temporary or fixed duration contracts of less than a year without the prospect of a regular (‘open ended’) employment contract. Specific forms of flexible employment are workers on call, temporary substitutes, and contracts with unspecified but variable hours and earnings (‘zero-hours’ and ‘min-max’ contracts).

Further forms of external numerical flexibility involve ‘home work’, seasonal and vacation jobs, some forms of self-employment and some types of ‘labour pools’. Internal flexibility relates to increased variation in working hours and flexible working-time arrangements of regular workers employed on standard contracts. Compared to external flexibility, worker need be less uncertain about the continuation of employment and earnings, whereas the employer need have less worries about quality of staff.

If the variability of labour input concerns the content of the job, we speak of functional flexibility rather than numerical flexibility. In addition to multi-skilling, job rotation, teamwork, and similar forms, Dutch firms now experiment with different forms of ‘job pools’. These ‘job pools’ are to be distinguished from the traditional ‘labour pools’ based on additional employment programs for the long-term unemployed or unemployed youths. Of the latter there are various examples in the Netherlands - the total market for additional job

programs, based on subsidies, absorbs around 1-1,5% of total employment (van Cruchten and de Vries 1997). Job pools usually involve skilled workers on standard open-ended employment contracts. These workers have no specific job assignments but can be deployed throughout the company or, in rare cases, even beyond the company. In some cases they apply to a sector, as in the docks or in the biscuit industry. There the job pools are a sort of (internal) temp agencies for workers whose jobs are or may soon become redundant. But there are also forms of job pools that are designed to increase the mobility and employability of permanent and skilled staff. In the latter case, typically, workers are assigned to pools on a voluntary basis on the basis of extra pay. Current experiments with job pools are still small but some large firms in metal engineering plan to put up to one-quarter of their staff in a pool.

Another type of flexibility, finally, concerns pay. Variable and effort related pay never constituted a major source of variation in earnings in the Netherlands. Around 80 per cent of Dutch employees have their earnings and working time determined through collective bargaining. Most collective agreements determine fixed pay levels based on task and function levels, some experience and seniority rating, with relatively little scope for individual or group related performance related rewards. Pay systems and assessment methods are governed in consultation with the mandatory (employee only) works councils. In recent years, pay flexibility has increased, though for the great majority of employees it remains rare to vary pay with individual efforts or with the profitability of the firm. Unions and their members are in general very reluctant to accept pay flexibility (van Rij 1995). My hypothesis is that their acceptance of time flexibility exhausts the willingness to endorse pay flexibility as well.

It is impossible to present data on all aspects of flexible employment over a longer time period. There is still little statistical data on for instance the increase in the various forms of functional flexibility, job pools, task rotation, teamwork, etcetera. With respect to external and internal numerical flexibility, however, it is possible to make a comparison over the past eight to ten years. In 1991 the Central Statistical Office, based on the labour force sample survey, estimated that 10 per cent of all employees had a 'flexible employment relations' (7 per cent of males, 16 per cent of females). That estimate included very small jobs (of less than 12 hours per week) (Bierens and Imbens 1992). Without these marginal part-time jobs the estimate would be closer to 8 per cent and can be compared with the 10 per cent found in the most recent sample survey (of 1997), or 12 per cent if the very small (<12 hours) part-time jobs are included.

On the basis of the available data the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment estimates the total volume of atypical employment or 'flex work' (as it is called in the Netherlands) at 919,000 jobs (rather contracts really) in 1996. This equals fifteen per cent of all jobs. That does not include self-employment - if people working on own account who were previously employees are added, as does the Institute for Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises, the percentage rises to 17,5 per cent. Self-employment has not risen as a percentage of total employment but is more or less stable at 12 per cent (women 10%, men 13%). The number of self-employed has risen in the past ten years with 150,000 to 757,000 people in 1997. This includes a growing number of construction workers, hairdressers and beauty specialists who may previously have been in dependent employment, in addition to the usual category of free lance workers among journalists, artists and professionals.

The figures of the Ministry refer to jobs or contracts, not to persons (somebody may have two jobs) or full-time equivalents (on average, flexible contracts involve half the hours of

standard full-time contracts). In volume terms, atypical employment absorbs around ten per cent of total employment, in persons 12 per cent. These estimates refer to formal

employment. Given the low threshold of hours and the rather encompassing regime of social security (every part-time job is covered), there is no reason to believe that informal labour other than in 'do-it-yourself' and neighbour- and family help (including care for children and elderly people) is very widespread in the Netherlands. In fact the high degree of flexibility tends to compress the need and the market for informal employment (Delsen 1988). All told, the various estimates of the size of atypical employment or 'flex work' do not suggest that external numerical flexibility is particularly widespread in the Netherlands, compared with its European neighbours (Delsen 1995; OECD 1996, Table 1.6). But there is no doubt that the phenomenon is on the rise.

4.1 TEMP WORK

Temp work (in Dutch: uitzendwerk) involved in 1996 around three per cent of all employees in employment, or one-quarter of all people employed under atypical or contingent employment contracts. The typical temp job is full-time, and concerns low- or semi-skilled work. Temp work is used both in agriculture and industries in case of seasonal work or uncertain demand, and in commercial services in case of temporary activities. This explains why there are an almost equal number of men and women in temp jobs. Typically, the temp worker is young, has no children; there is in fact a high proportion of two-earning (starting) households involved in this kind of jobs. Temp work has expanded rapidly after a contraction during the 1992-94 recession. In 1996 there were the Ministry counted 214,400 temp contracts, a rise of 100,000 compared to 1992. There is a clear pro-cyclical pattern. Temp workers are the first to lose their jobs (by not being recalled); in the upswing product demand is first met with extra effort of existing employees as hoarding is reduced, followed by the hiring of additional temp workers if future demand remains uncertain. If growth continues, temp work tends to stabilise as some temp workers may be offered regular jobs. Temp agencies specialise in buffering fluctuations, matching product demand changes and labour supply, for instance in the case of seasonal fluctuation, but they are also used by employers to avoid dismissal protection requirements and as a screening device. Over the past fifteen years, the volume of flexible work (measured in labour years) increased from 1,5 per cent of total employment in the 1970s to 2,5 per cent around 1990 and 3.5 per cent in 1996. Temp work is more widespread in the Netherlands than elsewhere in Europe. Gradually, the market for temp work has been liberalised. Until 1965 all private employment agencies were prohibited, but in that year they were allowed in specific occupations and industries, if licensed by the authorities. Licensing terms have gradually been eased and from January 1999 no further license is needed. Some of the larger temp agencies operate now on an international scale and are clearly moving 'up market' by specialising in 'human resource management', training and employability of skilled workers (for instance IT specialists and managers, or artists). They are also active in the market for subsidised or additional employment and have made 'contracts' with local governments in the Netherlands and Germany regarding the placement of the long-term unemployed, usually on the base of lump sum subsidies.

Trade unions have initially tried to ban temp agencies but in the 1980s they became partners in a 'non-profit' temp work agency that co-operated with the official public placement office. Gradually unions have come to terms with temp agencies as they accepted a limited need for temp work in particular (seasonal) industries or as replacement for workers on sickness leave. In 1993 they signed a covenant with the aforementioned non-profit agency and two years later the first collective agreement with General Association of Temp

Agencies was signed. This agreement became the basis for the central agreement of April 1996, called: 'Flexibility and Security', which has since become the basis for the overhaul of Dutch employment protection law and the deregulation of the market for temp work, taking effect in January 1999. The agreement and the resulting legal changes will be discussed at greater length in section four when we deal with policies.

4.2 TEMPORARY CONTRACTS

Temporary or fixed-duration jobs (*tijdelijk werk*) of less than a year and without the prospect of a standard contract involve around 249,600 contracts. This equals 3.5% of the total or around one-quarter of all contingent jobs and is hardly more than in 1991 (246,000). These fixed-duration jobs involve slightly more women than men, typically involve both small part-time jobs (less than 20 hours) and full-time jobs, are usually found at the lowest skill and pay levels, and mostly filled by youth (under 25).

If all persons on temporary contracts, including those who may gain a standard job are included, the numbers increase from 270,000 in 1992 to 396,000 four years later (Hartog 1999). Additionally there were 100,000 workers with a temporary contract of between one and three years, compared to 60,000 in 1992 (Tijdens 1999a). It appears that employers have prolonged the trial period for new staff. As a rule, contracts for regular employment stipulate a two months trial period, which is also the legal maximum. Employers may want more time for screening new employees as a result of growing teamwork requirements, against the background of the increased social and cultural heterogeneity of labour supply. In any case, screening is one of the main reasons mentioned by employers for the growth of temporary contracts (van Bolhuis 1996). Tijdens (1999a) associated the apparent increase of risk-avoidance to employers' attempts to increase long-term (internal, numerical and functional) flexibility under a legal regime that makes it costly to dismiss workers (even after the legal changes of 1999).

The Netherlands has a unique system of preventive dismissal control, inherited from the Germans during the Second World War and continued since. Employers need a permit from the director of the regional employment office before they can give notice to terminate a standard employment contract. This system of 'permits' has been criticised as a burden on business and a source of rigidity. Yet, empirical research hardly supports these charges. Bertola (1990) and Mayes and Soteri (1994) rank the Netherlands not as very inflexible compared to other European countries. In 85 per cent of all dismissal requests, a permit is given, although special clauses for older workers and in case of sickness (during or in anticipation of a dismissal procedure a sick worker cannot be dismissed) may create considerable delays. More and more often the formal permit system is circumvented by filing at the lower district court a request to terminate the employment contract on grounds of 'serious cause'. In that cause the issue is settled with a pay compensation or severance payment, usually one month for every year worked. In 1996 there were 60,436 permits for terminating employment filed at the regional employment office, against 44,426 settlements in court, a ratio of 1.4 to 1. In 1990 the ratio had been 6 (permits) to 1 (court), in 1986 14 to one (Wilthagen 1998).

Changes in social security laws may have made employers more hesitant to start hiring employees on the basis of standard employment contracts. The repeal of the Law on Sickness Absenteeism Benefits (*Ziektewet*) and its replacement by the Law on Extension of the Obligation to Continued Payment in Case of Sickness Absenteeism (*Wet Uitbreiding Doorbetalingsplicht bij Ziekte*, 1996), makes continued wage payment mandatory. This means that the risk is entirely born by the employer, who of course can take an insurance,

but will have to pay a higher premium if absentee rates are higher than average in the industry. Similar experience rating applies to disability insurance as from 1998 and may be introduced with respect to unemployment insurance. Since the law forbids employers to ask questions relating to medical histories during job application interviews (unless it is manifestly related to the job), they tend to be even more risk-adverse than in the past and use temporary contracts as a means of screening through observation.

Three more forms of temporary contracts need mentioning: regular workers on call (oproeparbeid), temporary substitutes (invalkrachten) and contracts with unspecified hours (zero-hours and min-max contracts).

4.3 EMPLOYMENT ON CALL, TEMPORARY SUBSTITUTES AND UNSPECIFIED HOURS

Research of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment shows that 29 per cent of all firms use these forms of external flexibility (Van Bolhuis 1996). In 1996 there were 276,300 'call' contracts (around 30% of all flexible contracts), 77,200 (8%) temporary substitutes and 101,900 contracts (11%) with unspecified hours. Together these add up for 6.5% of all jobs. Seventy per cent of these jobs are held by women, in particular by married and single mothers with children. Employment 'on call' will in 85 per cent of all cases be a job of less than 20 hours per week; unspecified hours contracts will be even smaller, whereas substitutes are found in jobs of all lengths. Unspecified hours contracts are mostly found in retail and in hotels and restaurants; the other two types are much used in the health service, education, in retailing and in hotels and restaurants. Employment 'on call' and employment based on unspecified hours are used to increase the (short-time) flexibility of firms which want to limit the size of the regular staff. Surveys among these workers suggest a problematic 'employment relation' even though in 57 per cent of all cases there is a written contract and in 90 per cent a wage and tax slip is provided (hence, we are not referring to informal employment). Yet, research by the Ministry shows that most workers are poorly informed about their wages, rights, holiday claims, and so forth (Tijdens 1999a).

New legislation, taking effect in 1999, strengthens the rights of these workers by introducing a 'presumption of law' and laying down a minimum requirement of at least three hours payment per call, even if no hours are worked. In a number of collective agreements such norms already exist (restaurants: 3 hours, construction: 6, in the agreements applying to manufacturing industry the minimum is even 18 hours or a half-day week) (Van Bolhuis 1996: 22).

4.4 INTERNAL FLEXIBILITY

We have already discussed the tendency towards labour-time flexibility. This became the main issue in collective bargaining during the 1990s. A survey among firms shows that one of every two firms is confronted with some kind of demand fluctuation. Sixty per cent of the firms that do experience demand fluctuation indicate that they prefer to deal with it through internal (time and job) flexibility; 16 per cent prefer external flexibility and 24 per cent has no preference either way (de Jong and van Bolhuis 1997). This preference of internal over external flexibility is shared by the unions (FNV 1995; Passchier and Sprengers 1996) and has become the basis for the central agreement of 1993 ('New Course') and the subsequent rounds of collective bargaining. This development is supported by the new 'working time act' of 1996, which replaces the old regulations of 1919 and 1945. The new act introduces a dual regime: a legal standard and a more tolerant regime based on consultation. If employers and employee representatives (works councils, union representatives) do reach a written

agreement, the normal (legally defined) length of the maximum working day, the definition of normal daily hours, and so on, may be stretched further than the standard rule up to a legally defined limit on maximum working hours.

According to the 1997 labour force sample survey, excluding very small jobs of less than 12 hours per week, around 43.3 of all employees work irregular hours (alternating evening and night hours, including shift work: 14.4%; evening hours: 14.2%; weekend hours: 15.1%). Around ten per cent of all workers regularly work overtime. Comparison with data of some years ago do not suggest a very strong increase, except for evening hours (due to increased operating hours and increased business in retailing and hotels and restaurants.). A slightly higher proportion of women than men is involved in irregular working patterns, in particular outside industry (until recent women were not allowed to work in night shifts except in nursing). With the exception of those who work only evening hours, there is no strong correlation between irregular working patterns and part-time work, or between irregular hours and type of employment contracts. Young people work significantly more often irregular hours than older workers.

4.5 PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT

Already by 1988 there were 1,886,000 part-time employed people (31.4% of all people in employment). In 1997 their number had risen to 2,656,000 part-time jobs (36.9%). This is an increase of 40.8 per cent in nine years, four times the increase (10.3%) of full-time employment (see Table 3). The strongest contribution comes from women working half-time or more (69.1%), but even among men this is the fastest growing category of employment (27.4%). We learn further from Table 3 that one out of two part-time jobs is half-time or more. In recent years part-time jobs tend to become longer. This reflects the well-documented preference of women who currently work in small part-time jobs (less than half-time) for more hours (and earnings). It also appears to reflect the preference of employers to expand in an increasingly tight labour market the part-time jobs of workers who are already employed rather than going to the trouble of hiring new (part-time) workers. The tendency to 'add more hours' to part-time jobs (mainly of women) has been reinforced through the pressure to reduce working hours of full-time working men during the 1994-97 working time campaign. This may explain why in the past three years the number of employees working between 20 and 35 hours increased twice as fast as total employment.

TABLE 3: EMPLOYED PERSONS 1988-1997, MALE AND FEMALE

	1988		1997		increase 1988-97
	thousands	%	thousands	%	%
total	6,010	100.0	7,194	100.0	19.7
>= 35 hours	4,124	68.6	4,549	63.2	10.3
20-34 hours	892	14.8	1,396	19.4	56.5
12-19 hours	362	6.0	455	6.3	25.6
< 12 hours	632	10.5	794	11.0	25.6
male	3,775	100.0	4,195	100.0	11.1
>= 35 hours	3,225	85.4	3,535	84.3	9.6
20-34 hours	270	7.2	344	8.2	27.4
12-19 hours	69	1.8	72	1.7	4.3
< 12 hours	211	5.6	244	5.8	15.6
female	2,235	100.0	3,000	100.0	34.3
>=35 hours	899	40.2	1,014	33.8	12.8
20-34 hours	622	27.8	1,052	35.1	69.1
12-19 hours	292	13.1	384	12.8	31.5
< 12 hours	421	18.8	550	18.3	30.6

source: own calculation from CBS, Labour accounts

I have not treated part-time jobs as an example of either external or internal flexibility. In the Netherlands most part-time workers are on permanent employment contracts and as a rule the number of hours worked by part-time workers are fixed. Hence, part-time workers do not face the uncertainty of continued or reduced earnings of temporary workers or workers with variable hours contracts. Part-time work is in no way comparable to short-time work or 'Kurzarbeit'. This does not mean that part-time employment does not also introduce an additional element of flexibility. For employers part-time jobs may fit in a strategy of creating secondary workers as a buffer around the core, much the same as atypical employment. The alternative view is to see part-time jobs as part of a strategy of 'optimal staffing', especially in industries where business hours and working hours deviate (Tijdens 1998). For workers part-time work allows an element of combining different priorities and constraints.

There exists a well-established view of part-time jobs as sub-standard jobs (Mückenberger 1985; Rodgers and Rodgers 1989; Hinrichs 1990; Meulders, Plasman and Plasman 1994). Explicitly or implicitly, full-time jobs are taken as the norm by which to assess part-time jobs and the welfare of workers is evaluated only on the basis of occupational status or earnings (Ellingsaeter 1992). Often the conclusion is drawn that part-time jobs are problematic because of inferior rights, entitlements, earnings or status, insufficient social security or pension coverage. In sum, part-time jobs are dismissed as secondary or marginal jobs. Against this view Pahl (1984), Hakim (1991), Blossfeld and Hakim (1997) and Tijdens (1997, 1999b) have developed an alternative approach in which they differentiate between types of part-time jobs, take account of gender roles and position in the household, and allow for different work orientations and preferences of men and women (Hakim 1999). A distinction is made between 'retention' part-time jobs (usually weekly hours of little shorter than normal), 'half time jobs (around 15-29 hours a week), and marginal work which involves very few hours (Hakim 1995; Tilly 1991).

If we apply this division to the Dutch labour market, we find that in 1995 retention part-time jobs (of between 30 and 35 hours) involve seven per cent of all employees (see Table 4). Among men the percentage is four per cent, among women twelve. Marginal part-time jobs of less than twelve hours per week involve 17 per cent of female employees, against six per cent of male employees. It is in this group of small part-time jobs that the overlap with external flexibility is particularly strong (44% has a flexible job). In other words, the term 'marginal' or 'secondary' jobs, seen from the perspective of firms or workers, is entirely appropriate in this case.

Table 4: Distribution of weekly working hours of employees, 1983-1995

	Hours					
	< 12	12-< 20	20-< 25	25-< 30	30-<35	> 35
	%					
total	10	7	7	3	7	65
flexible contract 1995	44	17	10	4	5	20
men (1983)	1.5	0.5	1.6	2.3	2.6	91.5
men (1995)	6	3	2	1	4	84
women (1983)	18	6	14	5	6	49
women (1995)	17	14	15	5	12	37
> 24 year (1983)	5	1	4	1	4	84
> 24 year (1995)	25	8	5	2	9	50

source: CBS, annual survey of employees and wages

These marginal jobs are especially the domain of young people; one in four employed youth aged between 16 and 24 has a marginal part-time job. This is strongly related to the explosion of secondary jobs taken up by students, which in turn is related to the expansion of higher education and a decade of reduction of student grants. The difference with the situation in 1983 when 5 per cent worked in marginal part-time jobs and 84 per cent in full-time jobs is striking. We should add that at the time 25 per cent of the non-student working population under the age of 25 was unemployed, against 7 per cent today.

Part-time work in general is and has remained women's work (see also Table 3). Of the 2,6 million people working part-time hours in 1997, two million (75 per cent) were women. The 4,5 million full-time workers were divided between 3,5 million men (78 per cent) and one million women (22 per cent). One-third of all women in employment work full-time; they tend to be younger, unmarried, or married without children. One-third works half-time jobs (around 20 hours) or full-time jobs with reduced hours (around 30 hours), whereas the remaining one-third works small or very small, in fact marginal, part-time jobs. Three-quarters of these marginal part-time jobs are found in only three sectors: in personal services, in particular cleaning, in hotel, restaurants and catering, and in retail (CBS 1996, 126).

5 POLICIES

In the preceding pages I have documented the dramatic changes in the Dutch labour market and provided background information with regard to the role of union wage and working time policies. In this section I intend to analyse in greater detail the forces and policies that lie behind the 'part-time revolution'. In 'A Dutch Miracle' (Visser and Hemerijck 1997) we call the development from the traditional breadwinner to a dual earner economy, based on one-and-a-half jobs per household model, a fortuitous development. It was not planned, it happened. Behavioural changes, especially of women, led to different labour market outcomes and unsolved problems, which in turn provoked policy adjustments and policy learning of unions, firms and governments. The Dutch development is an illustration of gender relations shaping a national pattern of employment relations and labour market developments. ('O Reilly 1996). The key point is that during the 1980s and 1990s – determined by the massive entry of women into the labour market - part-time employment became a mass phenomenon, lost its marginal status and became attractive in its own right.

5.1 FROM BACKWARDNESS TO PROGRESS: WOMEN ENTER THE LABOUR FORCE

The rapid increase in part-time employment and the entry of women into the labour force are two sides of the same story. Twenty-five years ago, the Netherlands had the lowest labour force participation rate of women within the OECD: 29.2 per cent, lower than in Ireland, Greece, Spain or Italy, each with rates in the low thirties. Within its own region the low female participation rate was an anomaly: Germany and the United Kingdom had each rates of 50 per cent or higher, Belgium of 40 per cent, the Scandinavian countries were already in a class apart. Since 1973, the labour force participation rate of women has surged from 29 to 60 per cent, which is the strongest rise in any OECD country.

The current rate is still lower than in the Nordic countries, the United Kingdom or the United States, but is now level with the rate in Germany and France, and six points ahead of Belgium. Various developments have contributed to increased female participation, foremost among these are the higher level of education of women, declining fertility rates, and emancipation. Combining aggregate labour market trends (Maassen van den Brink, 1995) and Kea Tijdens' (1997) study of staffing policies in the banking sector, we can draw the following picture of alternating pressures of supply and demand explaining the part-time phenomenon.

In the 1960s labour markets were very tight, unemployment for male workers fell in some years below 1 percent and manufacturing firms started to recruit unskilled workers in Mediterranean countries. Women's work, for wages, was girl's work. The overwhelming majority of families consisted of a full-time male breadwinner and a full-time housewife. Women tended to marry in their early twenties and the average age at which they give birth to their first child was 23. According to the census of 1960 only 0.6% of all women with children under the age of four had paid employment (Moree 1991: 102-3). In services and in the public sector employment contracts terminated at the day of marriage. Tax disincentives were considerable; earnings of spouses were added to those of her husband; in 1973 this became optional but the view that women's wages are supplementary was only fully removed in 1990 with the introduction of individual fiscal treatment.

In response to tight labour markets, employers began to see married women as a possible labour reservoir and a way to escape from high wage pressures. In banking, for instance, they set up data-entry pools in which married women, with older children, were recruited in half-day (five days, four hours) jobs under temporary contracts. Married women were encouraged to stay until they had their first child, at reduced hours (five days, six hours; or four full days). Due to longer education, each new cohort of women enters the labour market later, has children later in life and participates in the labour market longer and in greater proportions.

After the mid-1970s labour markets slacken again and from 1976 unemployment rates for women are higher than for men, indicating that the traditional pattern of withdrawal from the labour market is no longer valid in the case of women. In particular, women with higher levels of education decide to stay in the labour market. Withdrawal becomes more costly in terms of income and careers foregone. Unemployment reduced their chances of re-entering and increased the chance of having an unemployed husband or partner. More women decided to continue working whilst raising young children (Hartog and Theeuwes 1983).

The social norm with regard to work outside the home of women with young children changes. In 1982 57 per cent of all women between 18 and 37 years believe that the care for children under the age of six and paid employment cannot be combined; in 1993 only 26 per cent do hold this view (CBS 1995: 39, SCP 1996). In survey after survey part-time work (or reduced hours) is preferred more than either full-time withdrawal or full-time employment (Plantenga 1995). This preference reflects the lack of childcare facilities and a strong caring norm with regard to children. Most child care is still arranged informally, through family relations, neighbours, and friends. Day-care centres for young children were, and still are, in short supply and provision has historically been a matter for Church-related welfare institutions targeted towards the poor (van Rijswijk-Clerkx 1981). This is a characteristic heritage of the 'continental Christian Democratic welfare state' (van Kersbergen 1995) and

is now being recognised as an obstacle to economic growth by the Central Planning Office, which recently has made the case for more public provision of day-care facilities (CPB 1998).

The absence of day-care facilities and a communal or public infrastructure for family-orientated services in the Netherlands has made part-time work the dominant coping strategy for women. This has shaped women's preferences towards a middle position between work and home. A majority of Dutch women does indeed seem to fit the category of 'adaptives' (Hakim 1998) or 'drifters' (Hakim 1991), women that struggle to combine different life interests and are unprepared to sacrifice one for the other.

In the Netherlands one of every six males in employment works part-time, which again is higher than in all other industrial countries (see Table 2). Plantenga (1996) remains unimpressed and shows that part-time work plays a rather different role in the career of men and women. For men, part-time work tends to remain an incidental and temporary phenomenon. It plays a large role, in particular, among young people. For instance, in 1994 45% of the active male population in the 15-19 age group and 16% of those in the 20-24 age group worked part-time. These groups include students who pick up all kinds of jobs (from mail delivery to working as chauffeurs or waiters), especially since student loans and grants allow only a very tight budget. At later age, part-time work among males hardly exists, except for the group over 55, 7-8% of whom work part-time (presumably in combination with early retirement or a partial disablement allowance).

However, some negotiation in professional and better paid double earning families with young children may result in more males shifting to four day working weeks. Our own research in 1990 and a recent survey by the Organisation for Strategic Labour Market Research (Kersten, Saris, van Rij and Visser 1990; OSA 1997) show the possible impact of such intra-household bargaining (see Table 5).

Table 5: Preferences of weekly working hours in 1996

	weekly working hours	0-19 hour	20-34 hour	35 hours and more	total
	%				
Men - all	actual	2	10	89	100
	preferred	1	20	79	100
- with partner	actual	2	9	89	100
	preferred after discussion with partner	4	42	54	100
Women – all	actual	33	38	29	100
	preferred	23	53	24	100
- with partner	actual	40	38	22	100
	preferred after discussion with partner	25	62	14	100

source: OSA 1997

In both surveys male and female adults, single and living together, with and without partners who worked, were asked to indicate working time preferences before and after a discussion with the partner. In both years the preference for a substantial part-time job (a three or four days working week) was intensified after discussion, among women but especially among women. The question remains why so few men act on the preferences (of their partners). The Labour Force Sample Survey of 1996 found that full-time working men wanted to work shorter hours but did not ask their employers since they believed that it would be misunderstood as a sign that they lacked ambition (Boelens 1997).

There is nothing that indicates that part-time employment is a contingent phenomenon among women, except in the very youngest (student) age group. In 1994 51% of the active female population in the 15-19 and 34% in the 20-24 age group worked part-time. However, this proportion rises to 70% and more in the 35+ age group. This clearly indicates that for women part-time work 'is not a temporary phenomenon' but rather a common method 'of combining paid and unpaid work' (Plantenga 1996: 101). As is shown by virtually all surveys in this area, most married women in the Netherlands want to work part-time (around half-time or longer). Since the late 1980s there has been a consistent finding in survey research showing that the number of women wanting longer hours tends to be smaller than those wanting shorter hours (OSA 1998; Plantenga 1995; SCP 1998; Visser and Hemerijck 1997). A survey in 1993, when unemployment was on the rise, showed that 15% of all part-time workers were unable to find full-time jobs, but a similar proportion of full-time workers, hence a much larger number of people, preferred a four-day working week (OSA 1993). The 1996 labour force sample survey showed that ten percent of all employees with a job of twelve hours per week or more wanted to work less, and seven or eight percent more hours. The preference for shorter hours is strongest among older workers and among women who work full-time; the preference for longer hours is found among young people and among women who work less than two days. Most content are women who work between 17 and 25 hours per week.

5.2 TRADE UNIONS

With regard to part-time employment, Dutch trade unions initially shared the sceptical view of other European unions (Casey, 1983; Conrad, 1982; Delsen 1995; Hakim 1997). In 1981, the main union federation (FNV) published a position paper in which the inferiority of employment rights, wages, fringe benefits, and career prospects in part-time jobs and the lack of union membership among part-timers is highlighted (FNV 1981). The federation did not want to help create a secondary job market and wanted first an improvement in statutory protection for part-time workers. At this time, the FNV fully subscribed to the strategy of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) to seek a 10% collective reduction of the working week.

This position was given up in later years under influence of women. This is remarkable, considering the fact that the number of women members in Dutch trade unions is rather small. In the 1960s women made up no more than six or seven per cent of total membership. Women's share has gradually increased to twenty per cent in the mid 1980s, thanks to the expansion of the welfare state and the growth of occupations (teaching and nursing) in which women were disproportionately present (Klandermans and Visser 1995). Today, women represent almost 30 per cent of total union membership, but this is still rather low compared to many other countries in Europe (Visser 1991).

Union density among women is much lower than among males, even in the same industries and occupations. However, by the mid-1980s, provoked by the severe membership crisis of the early 1980s when the trade unions lost scores of members and union density dropped from 35 to 25 per cent in less than ten years, Dutch unions became more outwardly oriented. Rather than sticking to the views of their (ageing) members, they started asking non-members what they expected from the union. Gradually, the unions moved mentally away from the male breadwinner, at the time still the majority among the membership albeit by a rapidly decreasing margin. In 1993 already 44 per cent of all union members came from households with two jobs and earnings (Klandermans and Visser 1995).

In addition there was a very strong and effective lobby of women within unions – in fact, the share of women among union staff is much stronger than in the membership at large. Increasingly, women activists make it to the ranks of executive union officials (although they missed the post of FNV chairperson – it is not yet Scandinavia). One of the effects of the stronger presence of women in union politics was the campaign for improvement of the rights of part-timers, based on the view that part-time employment was the preferred form of employment of women with children. Upgrading of the rights, earnings, security and status of part-time employment should make these jobs more attractive for male workers as well. A right to switch from full-time to part-time jobs, and the removal of all remaining elements of discrimination on the basis of working hours, should contribute to this strategy of ‘normalisation’ of part-time employment.

Recent collective agreements do acknowledge this development and try to improve on facilities and rights. In 1993 the Foundation of Labour – in which Dutch unions co-operate with the central employers’ federations – published an important report titled ‘Considerations and recommendations to promote part-time work and differentiation of working hours’. Employers and unions jointly recommended that a request by an employee to adapt his or her working hours should be granted, unless this could not reasonably be expected on grounds of conflicting business interests (with a burden of proof on employers). This formula is now part of most collective agreements (in 1995: 60 per cent of all agreements contained a clause to this effect). An initiative bill in Parliament to create a legal right to part-time work was defeated, but a new initiative will probably succeed. Unions put also pressure on the removal of disadvantages and in 1996 eighty percent of all collective agreements have established pro rata wages and fringe benefits.

5.3 EMPLOYERS

In the early 1980s, the central employers’ federations present part-time as a possible alternative for collective working time reduction. For employers, part-time employment is preferred because the reduction in hours is a reduction in pay, allows differentiation across groups of workers (depending on their value for the company or scarcity in the market) and brings actual and contractual working hours nearer as part-time workers tend to be sick in their own time. The disadvantage of higher fixed labour costs and co-ordination costs may be recaptured through higher productivity and flexibility (RCO 1980, 1983).

Despite their ideological offensive, employers often refuse a shift to part-time employment when employees want to work less hours. However, to the degree that for instance female employees have higher skill and more years of experience, employers tend to provide either

more care facilities, or money, or they grant a request to work less hours. In many cases, too, part-time employment became a part in their optimal staffing strategy.

In the 1990s part-time became embedded in the flexibility discussion and once unions accepted 'vari-time' employers could not but concede improved rights for part-time workers.

In the 1994-97 bargaining round over working time various pressures came together (Tijdens 1998). In capital intensive industries employers are interested in longer operating hours. Just-in-time production, reduction of stocks and traffic congestion push in the direction of broadening the daily range of normal working hours (beginning earlier or ending later) and a reduction of excess pay rates for evening or weekend hours. The concept of 'weekly average working hours' now makes its full entrance. As a consequence, the likelihood of 'overtime' with its higher pay rate is reduced, saving costs to employers. In exchange, workers gain shorter working weeks, or additional hourly pay. It becomes also easier to respond to shifting workloads. In many services and in retailing employers want a better match of consumer behaviour (few peak hours, often in evenings or weekends, and varying during the year) and working hours. Workers, on their part, seek more freedom in determining when to start or end the working day (and avoid traffic peak hours, or get the kids from school). Married women are interested in part-time jobs and some control over when they work and fathers and mothers want extra time as well as more time control in order to meet emergencies at home. More workers want to vary working time during the year or during the life cycle, with extended breaks or the possibility to save time for early retirement. Union-conducted surveys if their members show that there is a considerable support for increased flexibility in time-arrangements and collective agreements 'à la carte', introducing choice for individual workers from a menu of possibilities in the collective contract (van Rij 1995). In some contracts workers even have the right to 'sell' or 'buy' extra days-off; initially unions don't believe their own surveys (which consistently show that, on balance, more leisure will be bought than sold) and fear that most workers will go for the money. So far, these fears have proved unfounded.

5.4 GOVERNMENTS

The Dutch government has generally supported the move towards the part-time economy by improving rights and quality of part-time jobs. Already in the early 1980s there were experiments based on subsidies to both employers and employees if they introduced and accepted part-time work. But these experiments did have little effect and were deemed too complicated (Leynse 1985). A massive research program in the possibilities and bottlenecks of part-time employment was launched in the mid-1980s. By that time, social security laws are individualised (1987) and some thresholds unfavourable to part-time workers are removed. In comparison to many other countries, the Dutch social security laws were, and are rather friendly to part-time workers (SZW 1995). The main principle of entry into the system was and is the employment contract, regardless of working time. Coverage for health insurance is also relatively easy for part-time workers. Moreover, the National Old Age Pension Act provides every citizen with a flat-rate old age pension by the age of 65, irrespective of previous employment or earnings. Employees can top up their pensions through earnings related company or sectoral pension funds of which there are about 1,000 in the Netherlands. As from 1994 part-time workers with small jobs can no longer be excluded from participation in these pension funds. Since the introduction of the statutory

minimum wage in 1969 jobs of less than one-third of the normal working week had not been covered. In 1985 employers and unions published a joint advice to make the statutory wage applicable to all jobs.

In 1993 the government changed to law accordingly. Finally, the new Labour Time Act of 1996 includes a provision regarding the obligation of the employer to take into consideration the care duties of the employee.

6 EVALUATION

According to some critics structural effects, in particular the replacement of older workers by young people, with higher skills, less rights, lower wages and more flexibility, are the main story behind wage moderation *à la hollandaise*. They argue that with the massive exit of older workers via the social security system (early retirement and disablement) during the 1980s and the creation of flexible, part-time and low paid jobs helped to circumvent the usual 'downward wage rigidity of those in employment' (Kloosterman and Elfring 1990: 115).

Table 6 shows the number and share of workers at and just above the minimum wage in 1994, by type of contract, hours of work, sector, gender and age group. From that information, the disadvantaged position of young people and flex workers (atypical employment) is manifest. But if the assertion of Kloosterman and Elfring were true, we should after ten years wage moderation have observed a much higher share of low paid workers in the 25-34 age group. Two further conclusions are possible. Firstly, part-time employment is hardly a disadvantage; according to Salverda (1997) the difference in hourly wages between full-time and part-time workers is only 5 per cent. Secondly, low pay is concentrated among young people, affects women more than men, and is especially found in private services, in particular in cleaning and retail (Roorda and Vogels 1993). It is in those two sectors that there is a contamination with other aspects of 'bad jobs': few employment rights, and low qualifications. A fairly large proportion of workers improve their employment position, but chances are poor for people without skills, and for ethnic minorities (de Beer, 1996; Salverda, 1997). Unions hardly reach out to these groups (Braum 1994; Visser and van Rij 1999).

TABLE 6: EMPLOYEES (16-64) WITH AND JUST ABOVE THE (LEGAL) MINIMUM WAGE, 1994

	< minimum wage		<minimum wage plus 10%	
	total x 1000	share %	total x 1000	share %
total	201	4	396	7
male	83	3	157	5
female	118	6	238	11
16-24 year	93	11	196	23
25-34 year	45	3	87	5
35-44 year	31	2	58	4
45-54 year	24	2	43	4
55-64 year	8	3	12	5
full-time	64	2	130	4
part-time	68	5	143	10
flexible	69	17	123	30
private sector	173	5	340	9
government	7	1	14	2
subsidised sector	21	3	42	5
agriculture	3	4	6	7
industry	20	2	44	3
private services	150	7	291	13
public and subsidised services	27	2	56	3

source: CBS, annual survey of employment and wages

The comparison with the United States is interesting. Like elsewhere, the halt in wage growth in the 1980s and 1990s reflected the change from a seller's to a buyer's market, especially with respect to unskilled and semi-skilled labour. Unemployment in the early 1980s was high in both countries, and over the 1983-93 period average unemployment is only one percentage higher in the Netherlands (7.7%) than in the U.S. (6.8%). Both countries also shared sustained labour force growth, 1.5% per year on average in the decade between 1983 and 1993, which is nearly three times the influx of new recruits to the labour market in the European Union. In the United States wage restraint appears to have been dictated by the market and has affected mainly, if not exclusively, workers at the lower end of the wage distribution. Real wages of unskilled workers in the U.S. have declined during the past two decades with one percent per year. Wage inequality indicators, such as the D5/D1 ratio or the Gini-index, show a sharp rise in inequality (Freeman and Katz 1994; OECD Employment Outlook 1996, Ch. 3; OECD 1998).

Earnings inequality has increased in the Netherlands in the past decade, as it did in nearly all countries except West Germany and Belgium, but the increase has been fairly modest. The Netherlands is located between the highly unionised Scandinavian countries and Belgium on the one hand, and the United States, the United Kingdom and New Zealand, countries in which the unions are weak or have been weakened in the past decade, on the other. The Dutch employment miracle shows that success can be achieved without a sharp rise in earnings inequality (Visser and Hemerijck 1997). Unlike wage developments in the US, wage moderation in the Netherlands has been part of a concerted policy by the trade unions during the past fifteen years. It is an essential element of that policy that they have put the brakes on the growth of higher earnings as well. Moreover, the statutory minimum wage, although relevant for only a small percentage of the adult workforce, reduces earnings differentials between men and women, between firms and sectors, and reduces exploitation of unskilled workers in the sweat trades (Roorda and Vogels 1997). Steeply declining minimum wage rates for young workers (beginning at 60 per cent of the adult minimum wage which is reached at age 23) imply that this shield is less effective in the case of young people. In the Netherlands the statutory minimum wage for adult workers used to be very high by international standards, since it had to provide for a family with a full-time housewife and two children. The minimum wage has since 1982 been lowered and frozen until 1990 and again between 1993 and 1996, and its current value, expressed as percentage of the average wage has declined to 51.1 percent, compared to 64.4 percent in 1980 and 54.6 percent in 1990. In real terms (purchasing parities), the adult minimum wage in the Netherlands in 1995 was lower than in Belgium but higher than the SMIC in France and almost twice as high as in the United States (Roorda and Vogels 1997: 22).

The Netherlands is moving from a single earner (breadwinner) to a dual or one-and-a-half earner (part-time) economy. In 1975 about 85 percent of all married men between 15-64 were sole breadwinners; in 1994 this proportion has dropped to one half. The one-and-a-half job model is still gaining ground. This is of course no equality. In most cases the one-and-the-half earner model means that the man works full-time, the women part-time. This shows up in different incomes. The available intra-household income statistics suggest that, on average, women earn 30-35 percent of the household income. Time budget data show that there is no equal balance of paid and unpaid work between the sexes either. In two-earning households with young children, men tend to spend on average 10 hours, women 28 hours per week on household chores and child care, whereas men tend to spend 18 hours more on paid work (de Hart 1995: 58).

Given this state of affairs, two radical different policy choices are possible (Plantenga 1996). The first option is to push for reforms which allow more women to participate on the labour market on the same terms as men. According to Plantenga (1996: 104) this means that ‘the same “care-less” participation behaviour enjoyed by men is also advocated for women without a clear answer how to tackle the work and responsibilities normally associated with women’s lives’. In the second option ‘the perspective is turned around. The stress is no longer on women to participate in the labour market in a “male” way, but rather that men should participate in the labour market in a “female” way, ergo, participating in care tasks’ (idem). It would seem that Dutch women – and gradually also Dutch policy makers – are pushing the second option. Hence, our initial question – in the title of this paper – must be rephrased. The first part-time economy in the world. It works, but does it also care?

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