

# Flexibility and Working Conditions: A European Bibliographical Review

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## A European Bibliographical Review

- Study** Allen-Sheila, A., Department of Social & Economic Studies, University of Bradford, 'Restructuring the World?', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 8, 1, March, 1994, pp. 113-126
- Abstract** A review essay on books by Philip Garrahan & Paul Stewart: *The Nissan Enigma* (London, Mansell, 1992); the Organisation for Economic Cooperation & Development (OECD): *Employment Outlook* (Paris, OECD, 1993); Jocelyn Pixley, *Citizenship and Employment* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993); David Sadler, *The Global Region* (Oxford, Pergamon, 1992); and Andrew Sayer & Richard Walker: *The New Social Economy* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992 (see listings in IRPS No. 75). While in the 1980s much was written about restructuring economies, the international division of labour and recession, the review article gives a description of the trends of the nineties. The *OECD Employment Outlook* elaborates on key issues like unemployment, involuntary part-time work, temporary work, etc., and places them in a wider perspective, i.e. the wider relation between labour market policies and social policies to achieve increasing sustainable economic growth and decreasing unemployment, and the detrimental effects of long-term virtually open-ended unemployment benefits. The study also presents some alternatives to wage labour, such as self-employment, small-scale enterprise and rural cooperatives which will improve the economy. Other issues are the further need for policies of human resource development, which should be more targeted and should improve the design of programmes.
- Study** Atkinson, J., Institute of Manpower Studies, University of Sussex, 'Manpower strategies for flexible organisations', in *Personnel Management*, August, 1984.
- Abstract** This article provides key information on the different types of flexibility (functional, numerical, financial) and leads to the establishment of a model to describe the so-called 'flexible firm'. The model firmly distinguishes between a core and a peripheral population. These groups are submitted to different kinds of flexibility strategies: functional flexibility is designed for the core workers, who seem to be rather protected from market fluctuations; whereas numerical flexibility becomes more important when shifting to the periphery. Within the peripheral population, the article makes another distinction between a first peripheral group, including workers who may work full time with a lower level of job security, and which actually means that they are offered a job but not a career; and a second peripheral group, in which part-time work combines with job insecurity. In this group, the observed strategy is to maximise flexibility while minimising the organisation's commitment to the worker's job security and career development.

- Study Benavides, F.G. and Benach, J., European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Precarious Employment and Health-related Outcomes in the European Union*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1999.
- Abstract Full-time workers experience more negative health-related outcomes than part-time workers for all types of employment. Three exceptions were found: workers with part-time temporary contracts were more likely to report dissatisfaction, absenteeism and stress.
- Persons in insecure employment were more likely to report dissatisfaction, but less likely to suffer stress than those in permanent employment. This result persisted when the same analysis was conducted by job category, economic sector and country.
- Permanent employees were less likely to report fatigue, backache and muscular pains, but more likely to report health-related absenteeism in comparison to other types of employees. Associations between types of employment and health outcomes almost always persisted after adjusting for individual working conditions.
- Despite ecological variables across countries, the association between types of employment and health-related outcomes did not change, except for muscular pains.
- Study Berg, A. van den, Furaker, B. and Johansson, L. 'External flexibility in Sweden and Canada: a three-industry comparison', in *Industrial and Labour Relations Review*, 1996.
- Abstract The article deals with the effect of labour market policy on employment relations and labour flexibility. The authors measured the degree of job security and the way three manufacturing industries (pulp and paper, steel and telecommunications) have dealt with fluctuations in their labour needs in Sweden and Canada, based on the two contradictory thrusts in employment relations: labour as a variable cost and labour as a fixed cost (job security). The type of flexibility studied in this article is *external flexibility*. In Sweden the different industries were more homogeneous as to external flexibility, although in both Canada and Sweden there was increased international competition and a recession period. Overall it can be concluded that employment security is finite, because the imperatives of capitalism require that labour be treated as a variable cost from time to time (e.g. recession). In both countries, the management of the three industries preferred attrition as a means of downsizing to permanent lay-offs. In industries of this sort, worker loyalty and skill matter. Another explanation for attrition is that these big industries are often forced into a locally prominent role. Depending on regional vulnerability, employers can sometimes extract concessions from unions on work rules. Because of the relative immobility of capital in steel and in paper, a direct threat to close the plant (in order to achieve better compliance and more cooperative behaviour), is more of an option than is the case in telecommunications. Finally, managers in steel and paper prefer employer stability, but the boundaries of that stability are not fixed. The main reasons for the lack of fixed boundaries are technology or the nature of the manufacturing processes; market pressure on managers; union power (subcontracting was refused for a long time); national labour policies with regard to external flexibility, and employment stability as a whole in the country (legally not allowed to adapt the costs of labour). Recent history tends to demonstrate the difficulty of sustaining the model of fixed and secure labour.
- Study Boyer, R., *The Flexibility of Labour in Europe – A European Comparison in Seven EU Member States between 1973 and 1985*, Paris, Editions La Découverte, 1986.
- Abstract Economic and social flexibility are at the heart of the economic transformations in Europe. The question the authors raise is, *How to benefit the most?* There are two aims: to compare the evolution of economic and social organisation in each country, and to assess Europe's capacity to adapt to new economic considerations. Two options stand out: an 'offensive' approach, combining technological modernisation and social progress, and a 'defensive' one based on regressive measures.
- Study Brewster, C., Centre for European Human Resource Management, Cranfield School of Management, 'Different Styles of Human Resource Management in Europe', in *Personalfuehrung*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 1995, pp. 126-131.
- Abstract Across Europe, different countries tend to organise their human resource management differently. A model of HRM is made up of two dimensions: the level of integration of HRM into corporate strategy, and the level of assignment of HRM to line managers.

This leads to a matrix with four positions.

- 1) A high level of integration and a low level of assignment (*the guarded strategist*): France, Norway, Spain, and the UK.
- 2) A low level of integration and a low level of assignment (*the professional mechanic*): Ireland, West Germany.
- 3) A high level of integration and a high level of assignment (*the pivotal position*): Sweden, Finland.
- 4) A low level of integration and a high level of assignment (*the Wild West*): Netherlands, Denmark, Portugal, Turkey.

The author suggests that there is no one ideal position: what is ideal in one cultural environment may not be in another. However, the data tends to suggest that the 'pivotal' position is linked to success.

Study Bronstein, A.S., 'Temporary work in Western Europe: threat or complement to permanent employment?', in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 130, No. 3, 1991, p. 291.

Abstract This article describes the field of 'temporary work', that is, work involving temporary work agencies (TWA) in Western Europe. There has been a shift in the debate on temporary work, from rejection to regulation. In the absence of an international legal framework specific to the area, a wide range of responses have been found at national level. First there are legal provisions which either ban (in 1991 in Greece, Italy, Spain and Sweden) or authorise temporary work. Second, when authorised, there are rules concerning the conditions for setting up a TWA; for hiring temporary workers and for their protection.

The amount of temporary work has grown, although temporary work still accounts for a small share of total employment. Translated into full-time jobs, temporary work amounts at most to 1% of annual employment (2% in France and the Netherlands). The recourse to temporary work is very sensitive to economic conditions. Companies' main motives for hiring temporary workers are to cover absenteeism; occasional jobs, seasonal or other peaks; but also as a means of recruitment and selection. The characteristics of the temporary workers vary, but in general they are young. In Germany, Belgium and France they are predominantly male; in the Netherlands and Switzerland less so, and in the United Kingdom predominantly female. For about one-third of these workers temporary work is their first choice (the permanent temporary workers). In all countries, TWAs have set up solid professional organisations which come together at international level under the banner of the International Confederation of Temporary Work Organisations.

Study Chen, Q. and Lin, B., 'Global outsourcing and its managerial implications', in *Human Systems Management*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1998, pp. 109-114.

Abstract Outsourcing is defined as the strategic use of outside resources, or contracting business operations to outside suppliers. As a result of the lower costs of outsourcing; the global availability of IT/IS; the easy copy of IT/IS; the loss of the strategic position of IT/IS in organisations; its true business value, and the lack of personnel with technical skills (and the cost of securing them therefore eating into corporate earnings), many organisations have opted to dismantle internal IT/IS departments/units. As flexibility and control should, according to these two authors, be the two major objectives of companies wishing to remain competitive, they suggest the creation of a partnership in which the client and the supplier have complementary shared goals; where short-term contracts are desirable and mutual interests are reflected. The authors help managers to define what to outsource and how to ensure alliances and success on global markets.

Study Cousins, C., Division of Social Sciences, University of Hertfordshire, 'A comparison of the labour market position of women in Spain and the UK, with reference to the 'flexible' labour debate', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 8, 1, March, 1994, pp. 45-67.

- Abstract** This article compares women's employment in Spain and the United Kingdom in the context of very different historical and institutional developments in each country. A number of key variations in women's labour market positions (participation rates, part-time work, temporary work and unemployment rates) are examined. A contribution is made to the debate on the flexible workforce by focusing on the issue of recent changes in labour market deregulation in the two countries, and the importance of the informal economy in Spain. In both countries the State has pursued policies of deregulation of the labour market to produce a more flexible workforce. Employers have drawn on a hidden economy through forms of non-standard work. In the UK this has been part-time work, and in Spain, either temporary work or irregular or illegal forms of work in the informal economy. In both countries, the evidence suggests that although deregulation has led to an increase in non-standard work, overall it is not the registered unemployed who have taken up these new jobs, but the hidden labour supply of married women. It is argued that these developments may have negative consequences for both countries with respect to training, skill and wage levels.
- Study** Creagh, M., Cranfield School of Management and MSF Trade Union, *Labour flexibility research. Research actions of an experimental nature, aimed at promoting the exchange of experience and the generalisation of good practice and know-how in selected priority fields of employment policy*, February, 1997.
- Abstract** Flexibility was in all cases cited as a more cost effective way of working, yet there was little or no hard commercial evidence that companies had any strategy or measurement which could enable them to prove the costs and benefits to the organisation. It was impossible for researchers to establish how much of the commercial success was due to flexible working. In every case the need for flexibility was spoken of as a response to consumer demand and increased competition, but it was implemented at a time of major organisational restructuring. Most of this restructuring was a cost-cutting exercise.
- In all cases employment was lost in the sector. This was not as a result of flexibility, but of changes in the external market and organisational restructuring. However, these job losses were reduced by flexible working practices. The introduction of flexibility created jobs which were associated with new products, often less skilled and at lower wage levels. Flexible employment patterns enhance female and young people's participation in the workplace.
- The introduction of flexible practices seems to work best where it is achieved through consultation with the trade unions and/or staff representatives. Where unions have been consulted there is evidence of lower turnover and sickness rates, and greater job satisfaction.
- Study** Author: De Haan E., Vos P. and de Jong P., 'Flexibilisation of labour', in *Serie Wetenschappelijke Publikaties Nationaal Vakbondsmuseum*, 1995.
- Abstract** This publication gives an overview of theories and discussions on the 'flexibilisation' of labour. It starts by giving a definition of flexibilisation, by making a distinction between active and passive flexibility, and internal versus external flexibility. The authors prefer not to speak of flexibilisation without being specific, since the word is used for so many different concepts. The book discusses the different forms of flexibilisation; different motives for it and external constraints affecting it, such as globalisation, individualisation, mobility.
- It also describes the political debate, and the role of labour market policies and economic theories in relation to flexibilisation.
- The authors give three possible scenarios of flexibilisation of the labour market: a polarised labour market (competition on price, polarisation between workers with high/low levels of qualifications); an integrated labour market (competition on quality of work, individualised conditions of employment) and a pluriform labour market (something of both former scenarios).
- Study** Dhondt, S., The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Time Constraints and Autonomy at Work in the European Union*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1998.
- Abstract** Work intensity is increasing in all Member States. Autonomy at work is also on the increase, but this increase is not sufficient to compensate for the increased intensity of work. This means that more workers are confronted with work situations under great strain.



Jobs are divided into four categories (the *Karasek* 'job demands-job control' model): passive jobs, low-stress jobs, active jobs and high-stress jobs. High-stress jobs – jobs with high intensity and low autonomy – are to be found mainly among skilled blue-collar workers; in the transport sector, catering and metal manufacturing; among young workers; and among male and female workers equally.

High-stress jobs lead to a higher number of health complaints.

Study Dhondt, S. and Houtman, I., European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Indicators for Working Conditions in the European Union*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1997.

Abstract In this report social indicators for the working environment in Europe are constructed. Social indicators contain information on the social situation in a country or an international community. Indicators on the working environment give information about the level of social needs in the area of the working environment. The indicators in the report give information on the current situation in the working environment in the Member States of the European Union.

The report starts from existing working environment statistics. Several sources of data are compared as a means to create the indicators. The authors conclude that these surveys can be compared, the majority of the differences can be explained by differences in definitions. They propose to build a system of databanks on the indicator set, with a central role for the Foundation.

Study Fynes, B., Morrissey, T. and Roche, W.K., 'Working time and employment: a review of the international evidence', in University College Dublin, Working Paper IR-HRM, 1994.

Abstract The emphasis in this review is primarily on the employment impact of the various work-sharing options. The individual's working time is becoming less connected to the actual time during which organisations operate, and hence there is a need for more flexible scheduling to meet the growing needs arising from changes in production, seasonal fluctuations, and preferences of employees and employers. It is noted that unemployment among the under-25s is almost double that of all workers: in Spain for example, it is 37%. In using early retirement schemes as a solution to the unemployment of youngsters, there is a very real possibility of creating another underclass. It is noted that reductions in working hours have been most pronounced in Germany. Such reductions have been gradual, and therefore the hours saved have been mainly absorbed in productivity gains, rather than in changes in employment levels.

Study Hendry, C., 'International comparisons of human resource management: putting the firm in the frame', in *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 2, 3, December, 1991, pp. 415-440.

Abstract A review essay on books by: C. Brewster & S. Tyson (Eds): *International Comparisons in Human Resource Management*, (London, Pitman, 1991); P. J. Dowling & R. S. Schuler: *International Dimensions of Human Resource Management* (Boston, PWS-Kent, 1990); and R. Pieper (Ed): *Human Resource Management: An International Comparison* (Berlin, Walter de Gruyter, 1990 – see listings in IRPS No. 63).

Pieper's publication, resulting from a conference in West Germany in 1989, focuses on human resource management (HRM) systems in nine countries, identifying the distinctive problems of specific countries. The lack of theory guiding comparative research on HRM is criticised. In the UK, for instance, the increasing use of externalisation practices (subcontracting, part-time work, temporary employees) in employer strategies is noted, along with agreements to introduce more varied time-patterns at work; incentivised wage schemes, including profit sharing; individualised career plans and quality circles. The practice of personnel management has been hindered by the prevalence of small and medium-sized firms having no personnel department. Meanwhile in the German system, the personnel manager's freedom of action is highly constrained by formal structures and legal codes

Brewster and Tyson discuss international HRM issues with reference to legal institutions and economic factors as well as cultural differences. With regard to labour relations, attention is given to the difference between the German in-plant works council to deal with legalistic rules at that level, versus the (effective) balance between formality and informality in the British system.

Dowling & Schuler address how international firms manage particular HRM issues, and present a practical guide for the HR manager. They illustrate how the confusion of universal and culture-specific perspectives creates methodological problems in studying HRM. It is concluded that the three texts are important for the study of international HRM because they demonstrate complementary perspectives and expose weaknesses in the research and literature.

- Study ILO, 'Part-time work: Solution or trap, Perspectives', in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 136, No. 4, (Internet), 1997.
- Abstract The paper presents some of the advantages and drawbacks of part-time work, and shows the difficulties in making comparisons as a result of unclear definitions. A part-time worker is an employed person who works less hours than a comparable full-time worker. Regardless of the international character of the definition, part-time is interpreted differently because of different national laws. In general, we see that the majority of part-time jobs are held by women and young people from 15-25 years old.
- Both individual and national levels are described. Part-time work has been promoted lately particularly in countries with high unemployment and because of its benefits for workers, employers and policy-makers. Among its drawbacks are lower wages; fewer social benefits; limited career prospects, less payment for overtime hours; less training, and less participation in trade unions. It is important to distinguish between voluntary and involuntary part-time workers in defining employment policies. Part-time work weakens the individual's situation in the labour market and aggravates initial handicaps.
- Study Jarmon, R., Paulson, A.S. and Rebne, D., 'Contractor performance: how good are contingent workers at the professional level?', in *IEEE Transactions in Engineering Management*, Vol. 45, Issue 1, 1998, pp. 11-19
- Abstract Contractors, sometimes called 'job shoppers', are temporary workers from an agency who do professional work at a client site under the direction of the client's employees. The authors surveyed 96 managers in six high-technology settings on their overall perceptions of contractor performance, finding that respondents perceived it to rival that of comparable employees. Such perceptions of contractor performance were unaffected by the amount of time the contractor spent in the client workgroup. Also, perceived overall contractor performance was unaffected either by aggregated client measures against co-employment risks or by the existence of a forced-departure rule.
- Study Kaisergurber., D., *Negotiating Flexibility – A European Perspective*, Paris, Les Editions d'Organisation, 1997.
- Abstract Faced with the fact of flexibility, which is becoming more and more prevalent in European companies, the author questions how it can be negotiated and with whom. There is an increasing tendency towards decentralisation of negotiations, depending on economic constraints, which may be a risk to employees, creating inequalities depending on the company's financial situation, its size, or even the presence of trade union members.
- Study Kauppinen, K. and Kandolin, I., European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Gender and Working Conditions in the European Union*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1998.
- Abstract Gender segregation at work is strong: women are less likely to be working in senior/managerial positions than men. Female jobs are more open to contact with people outside the workplace than male jobs. Female jobs are also characterised by elements of caring, nurturing and support, while male jobs tend to monopolise technical and managerial tasks. The use of computers is more widespread among women than men.
- Working hours are gender shaped: 26% of women work less than 30 hours a week, as opposed to 5% of men. Female work is responsive to the family situation (working hours shorten when the number of children increase).
- Male workers are much more exposed to traditional risk factors (noise, heat, chemicals, etc).
- While male workers are more exposed to tight time constraints, they also have more control over their time schedule. Female workers are less likely to be involved in decision making and participation in the workplace.



About 3% of women have been subjected to sexual harassment, and 4% to sexual discrimination. Women in precarious employment are more often subjected to sexual harassment. Health disorders are more likely to occur in these situations.

Study Kiely, R., 'Globalisation, post-Fordism and the contemporary context of development' in *International Sociology*, Vol. 13, Issue 1, 1998, pp. 95-115.

Abstract This article examines the claims that we are living in a new, global, post-Fordist era. Both optimistic and pessimistic globalisation theorists share the view that transnational corporations (TNC's) have led to a new global economy in which the nation-state has been undermined. However, they disagree on the implications. A new era of post-Fordism was launched in the 1970s as a result of the slowdown in growth. The key word that characterises industrial experiments in the field of production forms is flexibility. Post-Fordism and globalisation are often not compatible. Post-Fordism has been unevenly implemented, both across and within economic sectors. Both production systems, Fordist and post-Fordist, persist to this day. TNC investment largely concentrates on production for home markets, and investment often focuses on First World countries and selected former Third World countries (the so-called NIC). The context of development is influenced by a mixture of global and local factors.

An alternative approach of analysis is put forward, focusing on the contemporary context for development in the global economy, critically using the notion of global commodity chains (producer-driven and buyer-driven). It is argued that we are currently witnessing a variety of strategies of capital accumulation in the world economy, and insofar as generalisations can be made, we have witnessed the end of the Third World as a homogeneous block. While some formerly peripheral countries are now a constituent part of the world economy, others are marginal to its needs. These countries are not so much exploited as simply left out.

Study Letourneux V., European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *Precarious Employment and Working Conditions in the European Union*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1998.

Abstract The authors conclude that international comparisons are difficult because of the lack of comparable definitions and because of the proportion of self-employed and part-time work.

The proportion of non-permanent jobs differs within the structure of the European labour market. Insecure employment is more widespread in the least skilled occupational groups, economic sectors in which work is very seasonal and small enterprises.

The working conditions of insecure workers are worse than those of permanent workers: physical constraints, noise, repetitive work, monotonous work and less opportunity to acquire new skills. Although less exposed than permanent workers to high-speed work, they have less autonomy over their work and time, and play less part in decision making. Their working conditions are reflected by the health problems they report: more musculoskeletal complaints, but less stress and mental health problems.

The level of absenteeism is highest among workers on permanent contracts.

The overall qualitative differences observed between employees whose status is precarious and permanent employees can be found in every individual occupational group.

Study Lorenz, E.H., Department of Economics, University of Notre Dame, 'Trust and the Flexible Firm: International Comparisons', in *Industrial Relations*, 31, 3, Fall, 1992, pp. 455-472.

Abstract Organisational flexibility is partly determined by a system of joint consultation between labour and management in order to enhance trust and cooperation. Organisational flexibility results in increased labour productivity and innovative capacity, through workers' willing disclosure of their proprietary knowledge. Organisational flexibility implies that work rules, workload, and the allocation of work are established and enforced through substantive work rules that are negotiated. Flexibility requires ongoing discussion. It provides the solution to the ongoing misunderstandings and ambiguities that arise when unanticipated contingencies require management to readjust manpower planning. The institutionalised labour-management joint consultation systems installed in Germany and Japan in the post-war rebuilding period have contributed to trust, unlike the relationships between

management and labour in Britain and France, which are characterised by the unilateral exercise of power and distrust, with a poorly organised workforce at plant level. In Germany, joint consultation traces its conceptual origins to the Weimar Republic, and later to the co-determination programmes instituted after World War II. Jobs are broadly defined, boundaries are fluid. There is a formal co-determination process and an informal process of shop-level consultation among foremen, shift leaders, workers and union representatives. In France, participatory rights are weak; jobs are narrowly defined. Work organisation at plant level is weak. Unanticipated contingencies, combined with market uncertainty, led to defensive action from the workers' side resulting in a rigid power structure characterised by a lack of communication between the vertical groups. The legislation developed to enhance collaboration between management and labour has proven to be ineffective. In France, the organisation of work is characterised by a high degree of centralisation of decision-making.

- Study Marsden, D., Centre for Economic Performance, LSE, 'Deregulation or cooperation? The future of Europe's labour markets', in *Labour*, special issue, S67-S91, 1995.
- Abstract This article examines the case for deregulation of Western European labour markets, using data on the European low, middle, and high occupational income categories. It is argued that the deregulatory approach is most effective in its focus on individual incentives at the low and high extremes of income distribution. However, deregulation over-emphasises the individual, and is unable to develop models for cooperation between the various sectors related to production and administration. Instead, cooperative exchange is said to be the most efficient method of labour development, not only increasing individual motivation, but also increasing informational capacities in the work environment, although safeguards concerning cooperation and the prevention of exploitation are also necessary to ensure a reciprocal work environment. In conclusion, the influences of three factors: competition; under-employment of the low-skilled, and flexibility in the global marketplace, are discussed in relation to competition.
- Study Martinez-Lucio, M., and Blyton, P., University of Cardiff, 'Trade union identity and the politics of flexibility: a comparison of Britain and Spain', in International Sociological Association Paper, 1994.
- Abstract Much debate on labour market flexibility and on management strategies to introduce flexible working practices has tended to treat the union as secondary, assuming that unions will either respond aggressively and assert Fordist-type workplace regulation, or, by adopting a fatalistic reading of change, inscribe themselves within enterprise unionism. Here, data from the UK and Spain show how broad responses to the strategies of flexibility actually relate in part to the historical traditions and identities of the union movement. In the UK, unions have responded by focusing, albeit in different ways, on the defence or extension of the collective bargaining tradition, leading to a constrained debate on flexibility that is unable to articulate broader concerns beyond the workplace environment. In Spain, the lack of evenly developed effective joint workplace regulations, and the broader sociopolitical characteristics of the unions, have meant that the union response has developed within various areas of struggle, such as the State's historic regulation of workplace structures and employment relations, and the social role of the State, which relates to contradictory welfare rights and the social role of the labour movement. Both national case studies show how the nature of the State and the traditional identities of unions inform responses to economic change and its understanding.
- Study Murphy, E., *Flexible Work*, Herfordshire, Director Books, 1996.
- Abstract The substantial increase in labour market flexibility has been used by organisations seeking competitive advantage. Furthermore, jobs in Europe have traditionally had a tendency to be highly circumscribed and closely defined (qualifications). In some countries certain occupational groups (e.g. French/German public sector management) have legally defined job categories. In general, managerial jobs are becoming more flexible in Germany and Ireland, with all jobs becoming 'wider' with looser boundaries in the United Kingdom and Sweden. Technology enables even small companies to compete alongside large companies for public sector contracts. Outsourcing and subcontracting, considered together, are growing, and are perhaps replacing the employment contract. The new working contracts which are developing involve greater personal commitment

from the workforce – greater levels of productivity, more say in how the work is done, more task orientation and emphasis on output, and more individual responsibility.

Study Nätti, J., 'Temporary employment in the Nordic countries: a trap or a bridge', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 7, 3, September, 1993, pp. 451-464.

Abstract Temporary work is often considered a 'trap' in the labour market. The extent to which this holds true in the Nordic countries is analysed, focusing on the relationship between unemployment and temporary work, together with motives (voluntary/involuntary) and mobility in temporary work. Data from national labour force surveys indicate that many temporary jobs can be classified as traps, but not all. The most problematic situation is that of temporary workers who were previously unemployed. Fixed-term contracts are more regulated in the Nordic than in most EC countries and compared with many European Community countries, temporary work in the late 1980s was less involuntary in the Nordic countries. Possible explanations are sought in labour supply patterns, labour market conditions (the growth of the Nordic welfare state) and the role of the public sector: many of the jobs in this sector are skilled, although often temporary. The expanded rights to paid leave have resulted in the temporary replacement of absent workers in skilled jobs also.

It is remarked, however, that in the early 1990s, the situation in the Nordic countries is changing. The termination of public sector expansion and the rapid growth of unemployment will probably lead to an increase in involuntary temporary work.

Study OECD, 'The flexibility of working time', *OECD Review*, 1995.

Abstract This extract tries to consider the different forms of working-time organisation, depending on the particular sector; competition, and all the parties concerned (workers, employees, unions and the public powers). Three sectors are analysed: metallurgy, the retail trade and healthcare, in eight countries (Canada, France, Italy, Japan, Holland, Great Britain, Sweden).

Study Paoli, P., European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, *First European Survey on Working Conditions* and *Second European Survey on Working Conditions*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 1991, 1996.

Abstract The first and second surveys on working conditions are statistical surveys, based on a representative sample of the total active European population, i.e. people who were, at the time of interview, either employed or self-employed in the different EU Member States. The surveys provide key information on a set of variables such as classic exposure to risk, stress at work, pace/duration of work, work organisation, gender and other work environment issues. The third survey was launched in March 2000.

Study Pollert, A., 'The 'flexible' firm: fixation or fact', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 2, 3, September, 1988.

Abstract Pollert critiques the simplistic dualist model of core/periphery employer strategy. The article argues that the different potential dimensions of flexibility, involving legislation, economic policy, production strategy, management control and employment structure, are typically bound together, thus preventing analysis of the interaction of different forms of flexibility. A review of more general evidence than is often cited reveals a complex pattern of flexibility and fragmentation of the workforce. For example, firms may resort to increasing reliance on overtime working among 'core' staff, suggesting that strategies to vary production 'quantitatively' do not have to involve labour market flexibility. Also, evidence for practices of 'functional flexibility' from a more general survey is limited; instead changes involved increased productivity, work intensification and rationalisation. Overall, while the 'neatness' of the dualist model of flexibility has won it popularity, it diverts attention from the range of managerial policies and practices available, and conflates trends in sectoral and occupational shifts in economic activity with government policy and managerial practice. Moreover, the orthodox view is critiqued for blending prescriptive analysis with descriptive research.

- Study Procter, S.J., Rowlinson, M., McArdle, L., Hassard, J. and Forrester, P. , 'Flexibility, politics and strategy: in defence of the model of the flexible firm', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 8, 2, June, 1994, pp. 221-242.
- Abstract Issue is taken with two arguments against J. Atkinson's model of the flexible firm: (1) that the model needs to be understood at a political level, as part of a wider post-industrial vision; and (2) that the observed increase in flexibility offers the model no support because of its non-strategic nature. It is concluded that evidence on the extent of the development of the different forms of flexibility identified in the model offer it strong support. In defence of Atkinson, it is argued that flexibility operates on a different level from flexible specialisation and other varieties of post-industrialism, and that to consider them together confuses rather than illuminates the debate. Also, the criticism relies on an unnecessarily restrictive view of strategy. Rather than being seen as plans, strategies should be regarded as patterns in decision making. On the basis of this alternative conception, ways in which the flexible firm model might be recast are suggested, for example, adopting a more subtle analysis, one in which firms emphasise different types of flexibility at different times, and whereby researchers are wary not to treat flexibility as an attribute which a firm does or does not possess.
- Study Purcell, K. and Purcell, J. 'In-sourcing, outsourcing, and the growth of contingent labour as evidence of flexible employment strategies' in *The European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology*, vol.7, No.1, 1998, p. 39.
- Abstract Evidence from labour force survey data, interviews with managers and case-studies in a contract labour agency supports the contention that segmented labour force strategies among major employers has developed and is tending to increase further. Growing competition and consequent cost reduction increase labour contracting, which reflects a tighter link between HRM policies and the business strategy (model of flexible firm). Results of the labour force survey and the case-studies in different organisations (public and private) show that atypical work forms tend to increase (labour market deregulation) in number. A reconsideration of the core/peripheral model of Atkinson is proposed. Although still a minority of cases, some employees belonging to the core of the organisation have changed their type of contract with the organisation (contingent contracts). More radical forms of contingent contracts are insourcing and outsourcing and these tend to increase. The responsibility is transferred from the employer to the employee. Some practices raise the question as to where the organisation's boundaries are and/or who the employer is. However, the psychological impact of these policies for UK employees is an increasing feeling of insecurity. The impact on the economy and on employment policy will have to emerge at a later stage. It would seem likely that the trend toward a greater number of people in the labour market experiencing insecurity, discrimination and exclusion will continue, even as rates of unemployment fall.
- Study O'Reilly, J., 'Where do you draw the line? Functional flexibility, training and skill in Britain and France, in *Work, Employment and Society*, 6, 3, 1992, pp. 369-396
- Abstract This article argues that the concept of functional flexibility fails to make a clear distinction between a deliberate strategy to enhance skills and training, and a situation where task enlargement has developed in an ad hoc manner, as a result of restructuring. For example, Pollert (1991) argues that this 'new' strategy of flexibility is little more than an old kind of rationalisation to increase productivity. By drawing on detailed research, task integration in France and segmentation in Britain is found. Another observation is that in both countries, working with relief teams was abandoned because of the high costs involved. In Britain by now, a reorganisation of the branch network into a satellite system has taken place and the senior manager at the 'parent' branch is responsible for lending out staff between branches. Locational functional flexibility was a common practice in both countries. Staff were expected to move between different posts as a way of broadening their experience and gaining cooperation. At the same time the banks benefited from this by being able to relocate their staff to meet unpredictable flows of work, in a way which opens to question the distinction between functional and numerical flexibility. It is argued that flexibility needs to be more clearly situated in the specific social and economic context of a given society.
- Study Rees, G. and Fielder, S., School of Social and Administrative Studies, University of Wales, 'The services economy, subcontracting and the new employment relations: contract catering and cleaning, in *Work, Employment and Society*, 6, 3, September, 1992, pp.347-368.

- Abstract Drawing on interviews with regional and local managers (number not specified), and on questionnaire-based interviews with 20 employees of a catering contractor, women's employment in these subcontracting industries in England and Wales is examined. Both industries have had strongly gendered occupational hierarchies, with women concentrated into the highly exploited operative roles, characterised by low pay and poor working conditions. An increasing demand from both the public and private sector for subcontracting has led to contrasting employment practices in catering and cleaning. The growth in these producer services has been associated with the buying-in of non-core activities, as the system of compulsory tendering for ancillary services becomes more widespread. Although both industries are labour-intensive, there is a big organisational difference between them. Increasing market demand has had a different impact on internal work organisation and industrial structure for each industry. Employment relations were reshaped in both. Although increasing subcontracting in different industries has given rise to changing forms of employment relations with regard to women's positions, there has been no uniformity in the effects on labour market opportunities and wider employment relations. In the analysis of restructuring, even the approach of the flexible firm has not been satisfactory to cope with the complexities. It is important to locate patterns of change in employment relations within a context set both by the general trajectories of restructuring, and the specific transformations of the social and the technical division of labour within given industries, which implies major empirical research. The author concludes that this research is needed to develop a sociology of the service industries.
- Study Rosenfeld, R. and Birkelund, Gunn E., 'Women's part-time work: a cross-national comparison', in *European Sociological Review*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1995, pp. 111-134.
- Abstract Since the 1950s, the number of women in part-time work has increased. The main individual reasons for women choosing part-time work are related to conflicts between child-rearing and employment. The national differences in the level of part-time workers are interconnected with family policies, labour and political institutions (an ideological context), and labour demand and the structure of occupations and industries as a whole. There is a relationship between the demand for labour and the intensity of female employment. In countries with greater sex segregation, we tend to find more part-time employment. In the case of typical male jobs, flexibility such as shiftwork will be introduced as an alternative. In these countries female jobs are structured more as part-time jobs. Countries with high levels of employment in service industries and public services tend to have higher rates of part-time female employment. Family, employment and welfare policies influence the number of part-time workers, i.e. the marginal income-tax rate and the tax structure as a whole (earnings taxed separately or jointly); availability of social benefits like holidays, special leave, pensions, health insurance and unemployment insurance; access to childcare (provision of nurseries and pre-schools), and maternity leave. Leftist governments and corporatism are also associated with higher levels of women's employment, i.e. part-time work. The extent of the welfare state (measured by the proportion of women employed in the public sector rather than by social benefits) and corporatism, are the most consistent influences on the proportion of part-time female workers.
- Study Salvanes, K.G., 'Market rigidities and labour market flexibility – an international comparison', in *Scandinavian Journal of Economics*, Vol. 99, Issue 2, 1997, pp. 315-333.
- Abstract The effects of product and labour market rigidities on labour market dynamics are analysed using a panel of two-digit ISIC level data for seven OECD countries. As expected, employment protection was found to slacken labour market flows. Centralised wage bargaining also reduced the degree of job turnover, although *a priori* the effect of centralised wage bargaining on labour market flexibility is not clear. Industry subsidies have a positive impact on job reallocation by increasing job creation. The labour market dynamics are also compared in detail for two economies regarded as extremes in terms of regulation, the U.S. and Norway. Overall the job turnover rate is – especially in manufacturing industry and in establishments with 0-100 employees – (much) higher in the U.S. than in Norway.
- Study Schmid, G., Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin, 'Institutional incentives to prevent unemployment: unemployment insurance and active labour market policy in a comparative perspective, in *Journal of Socioeconomics*, 24, 1, Spring, 1995, pp. 51-103
- Abstract Two institutions have been launched as a response to the failure of the labour market: unemployment insurance and active labour market policy. This article makes a socioeconomic analysis of the overview of the different institutional choices different countries have made as to

unemployment, and suggests ways to evaluate those choices. The evaluation of the choices is related to the question: what are the most effective institutional incentives to prevent unemployment?

The article analyses the performance of the diverse labour market policies on the basis of indicators such as unemployment rate, inflation, social performance and growth performance (GNP). There is no single performance indicator with which to objectively compare the countries in terms of labour market efficiency. One single model or one performance indicator cannot determine the success of a specific labour market policy as a result of different institutional frameworks. One basic criterion that guarantees the success of a labour market policy is the institutional framework which creates the right incentives for the various key actors in the labour market and the employment system to cooperate. A second aspect that is part of the socioeconomic analysis of the institutions is unemployment insurance regulation and its performance. Unemployment benefits' payments include insurance, assistance and minimal income. The performance of the insurance schemes is measured in terms of a transition model of nine directions in labour market flows, based on three principles, i.e. employment, unemployment and inactivity. Both the theoretical socioeconomic analysis and the empirical analysis of the performance of the existing active labour market systems, and the unemployment insurance systems, determine the identification of institutional incentives to prevent unemployment.

- Study Thompson, P., Wallace, T., Terry, F., Flecker J. and Ahlstrand, R., 'It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it: production organisation and skill utilisation in commercial vehicles', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 9, 4, December 1995, pp. 719-742.
- Abstract New paradigms of work organisation espousing a radical break in production systems assert a natural identity between advanced manufacturing and the utilisation of skilled labour. Using case studies from a comparative project on the commercial vehicle industry in Sweden, Austria, and the UK, an attempt is made to unpack the theory and practice of new forms of production. Common tendencies within advanced manufacturing are identified, notably a growth in cognitive and extra-functional abilities, normally within a teamworking context. But this remains distinct from any version of craft or professional labour, and there are marked national differences in managerial preferences of the type of labour perceived to be necessary for more flexible work organisation. The emphasis is on varied routes to the creation of skilled labour, with an extended view of skill formation that focuses on what firms do in the labour process as well as what the State does in education and training.
- Study Treu, T., 'Labour flexibility in Europe, in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 131, No. 4-5, 1992, pp. 533-549
- Abstract If flexibility appeared to be an answer to the economic crisis from the end of the 1970s to the beginning of the 1980s, it has given rise to debate and controversy. Some people believe that European countries' difficulties rest on institutional rigidity; to others they are due to the crisis in Fordism. Today, it seems, the introduction of flexibility might open up acceptable compromises between the different parties. While it offers a solution to competition for employers, it seems to respond to a need for new models of living and working for employees, on condition that it does not threaten job security, which is what everything hinges on, according to the author.
- Study Walsh, J., 'Employment systems in transition – a comparative analysis of Britain and Australia', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 11, 1, 1997, pp.1-25
- Abstract This paper seeks to broaden the scope of internal labour market analysis by investigating changes in the character of company employment systems in a cross-national context. Taking Britain and Australia as the point of reference, the aim is to ascertain whether there are common trends emerging in the character of internal labour markets despite national variations in employment regulation and labour market policy trajectories. Through an analysis of matched organisations in the banking and postal service industries, as well as macro labour market trends, the study finds that comparable forms of employment flexibility, such as part-time working, have developed in both Britain and Australia. At the same time, however, important divergences have emerged in the structure of pay, largely due to the distinctive impact of national regulatory systems. In general, Britain has adopted a neo-liberal, deregulatory approach to labour market reform, whilst Australian State initiatives have been largely neo-corporatist in character. Within this context Green (1992),



following Boyer (1988) is cited, having outlined the key characteristics of two common but divergent labour market responses: offensive flexibility and defensive flexibility.

Study Walwei, U., 'Fixed-term contracts in EC countries', in *Intereconomics: Review of International Trade and Development*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1991, p. 25-31

Abstract Since the beginning of the 1980s, an increase in the number of fixed-term employment contracts has been apparent in a number of free market-oriented economies. This has been accompanied by amendments to the pertinent legislation. From the early to mid-1980s, a number of EC countries initiated legislation with the object of facilitating the conclusion of fixed-term contracts. Further, the author argues that making use of such fixed-term contracts influences the numerical and functional flexibility of a company's personnel policy. If fixed-term contracts are used for testing and selection purposes, this could have positive effects on functional flexibility (e.g. the recruiting of more productive manpower). On the other hand, fixed-term employment relationships can impair functional flexibility because the advantages of stable, long-term employment relationships (e.g. the identification of employees with the business's objectives) are not given.

In general, the few data available point to an above-average percentage of women, young employees, part-time employees, and those with low qualifications among fixed-term employees as a whole in the member countries of the European Community.

Study Wickham, J., 'Part-time work in Ireland and Europe', in *Work, Employment and Society*, 11, 1, 1997, pp. 133-152.

Abstract Labour-use strategies, i.e. which decisions are taken at company level in relation to the employment and deployment of personnel, determine the form of part-time work and the extent to which part-time work appears. Labour-use strategies may consist of a utilisation strategy, on the one hand (where companies are seen as a collection of financial assets), or a facilitation strategy, on the other (where the company facilitates employees to work for less time). A facilitation strategy is used to retain valued employees. In the case of a utilisation strategy, part-time work means cheap labour, and part-time workers are seen as a peripheral workforce (the Atkinson model), easily hired and fired. In this case, they are rarely full-time workers who want to work less. In the U.K, the rate of part-time workers is high, but they are never recruited from the full-time workforce. A change in status from full-time to part-time appears in the case of a facilitation strategy. Where part-time working is introduced for reasons of competitive advantage, employers' needs prevail.