

OUT OF SIGHT: DIMENSIONS OF WORKING TIME IN GENDERED OCCUPATIONS

Albert Recio, Sara Moreno, Alejandro Godino

Abstract

Working time is a key aspect of the labour relationship and is the issue in which businesses' management of working time centrally shapes workers' job and life quality. The present chapter focuses on working time in two highly feminized sectors: office cleaning and contract catering services. Comparative analysis reveals that part-time work, intensification of the workload, atypical working hours and temporary work are the norm in these two labour-intensive sectors. However, the analysis also identifies the specific time arrangements in both sectors according to their labour process and the differences between countries. It concludes that the different types of working time are mainly driven by companies, which in cleaning and catering services reproduce a triangular pattern of labour relations involving both workers and clients.

Introduction

Working time is a key aspect of the labour relationship and is the issue in which businesses' management of working time centrally shapes workers' job and life quality. The relationship between work and time is gendered, and the present chapter focuses on working time in two highly feminized sectors: office cleaning and contract catering services. These are paradigmatic sectors for the flexible management of working time because they share certain particularities regarding the social content and meaning of work. As a cleaning union representative in Spain pointed out *"Cleaning does not exist as long as it gets done... when everything is clean it doesn't exist; it has no value"*. Cleaning and catering are regarded as complementary to the main functions carried out

in workplaces such as schools, hospitals and offices, and this attitude is mirrored in the term *ancillary services*. Increasingly, these services are provided by specialized subcontractors. Outsourcing them involves a transformation of the traditional relationship between employer and employees: it changes from a bilateral relationship to a triangle that involves employers, employees and clients (Grimshaw *et al.*, 2006; cp. Jaehrling *et al.*, in this volume). This service triangle has a considerable impact on working time in cleaning and catering. In both sectors, the working activities are concentrated at specific times due to the requirements of customers. In the case of cleaning this amounts to the need not to hinder the attainment of the main activity: teaching, office work, sales, etc. In the case of catering it is due to the specific times of meals. As a consequence, atypical working hours are likely to affect the worker's quality of life.

This chapter begins with an outline of the theoretical framework that relates the management of working time to working conditions and quality of life. In the second part of the chapter, we present the results of a comparative study about working time in the two sectors in different countries covered by the *walqing* research project. The study is based on two complementary analyses: one of business practices based on company case studies and one of individual histories based on in-depth interviews with workers. For catering services, we examined 12 case studies from Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Spain and the United Kingdom. For office cleaning services, we examined 9 case studies from Austria, Belgium, Norway and Spain. The chapter concludes with a reflection on specific time arrangements in both sectors according to their labour process and the differences between countries.

1. Time and working conditions

Conflicts over working time constitute one of the major areas of debate regarding workers' lives. Thompson (1979) argued that the birth of capitalism brought a radical change in time use for working people, establishing a clear distinction between working time and free time. Since the origin of factories and the differentiation between work place and the space of private life, debates over time use have remained at the centre of social life (Hobsbawm, 1979). The central academic debate about the relationship between work and time focused originally on the duration of the working day (Bosch, 1999; Boulin, 2001; Recio, 2002). However, in the last 20 years other debates have emerged that, without losing sight of the importance of the length of the working day, have highlighted other aspects of the issue such as flexibility (Sennett, 2000; Arrowsmith and Sisson, 2001; Recio, 2004; Miguélez, 2004).

The cleaning and catering sectors require flexible, customer-driven work in specific ways. We argue that it is companies and management practices that mainly drive particular working time arrangements. They decide and adapt working times in order to achieve their objectives of profitability and the specific time characteristics of their activity. As many service activities are subcontracted, there is a double pressure on time schedules designed both by the firm and its clients. Employees are usually required to adapt to time-specific arrangements and have limited capacity to bargain these conditions. Each branch of activity has its own model of working time and employees consider it as the norm in the sector, though they sometimes aim to adapt their working hours to their own requirements.

Although the organization of working time should require similar arrangements in the same sector, we find considerable differences between countries (and to a lesser extent between companies), especially in the impact of these solutions on individuals.

These differences result from the sets of institutions that build different national employment models (Bosch *et al.*, 2009). Basically, employment models are defined by the combination of four areas: the productive structure, the labour relations system, the welfare system and the gender-family system. In our study, the productive system plays a minor role because our analysis focuses on specific sectors that are somewhat marginal to the productive system at large, dominated by the same type of firms and with similar problems in time management. The other three areas play an important role for the analysis of the impact of specific working time schedules on workers' quality of life.

Due to the incidence of working time arrangements on quality of life, we propose to focus on four dimensions and their effects: the length of the working day (full- or part-time) and its likely impact on income; the relationship of time to workload and its possible intensification with consequences for health; the work schedule (work shifts) and its adaptability in terms of work and life balance; and job stability and its adaptation to the life cycle. We argue that it is important to think about working time not as a circumstantial factor of employment but as the backbone of working conditions. In this regard, there are four effects to take into account.

[Insert Figure 11.1. The incidence of working time arrangement on living conditions]

The first effect is the relation between length of the workday and income because a shorter workday almost always means less income. How important this issue is depends on personal and social policies. Low part-time wages can be complemented by incomes of other family members or by public subsidies, as in countries that provide family aid or other schemes to support low incomes. However, they can create in-work poverty when part-timers (especially single-parent families) provide the only income in the household and public policies are absent.

The second effect is the intensification of the workload (Boisard, 2003). An employment contract establishes a commitment by employees to work for a set number of hours, but the effective productivity or service obtained will depend on the behaviour of employees throughout the workday. In activities with pre-determined objectives, where employees must produce a certain amount of working hours and activity intersect: reducing the workday but maintaining the same production or service objectives can be a means of forcing an increase in labour productivity.

The third effect is the relationship between schedule and work- life-balance. Unusual working hours (nights, evenings or holiday shifts) clearly have a negative impact on workers' social life. However, short-term variations in the workday may have the greatest negative impact on daily life because they are more likely to interfere with the planning and organization of families and daily life (Miguélez and Torns, 2006; Moreno, 2010; Durán, 2012). Clearly, part-time jobs in which individuals can choose the pattern of their workday can be a good option for the organization of daily life. However, part-time jobs are often designed to cover activity peaks in specific hours and employees need to adapt to these requirements, which generate difficulties in their life.

The last effect is job stability and its adaptation to the life cycle (Anxo and Boulin, 2005). Working life coincides in time with other activities of the life cycle, and this impacts both family life (e.g. raising children or taking care of ill and elderly persons) and workers' own health and vitality. In addition, the specific socio-personal situation of an individual at a particular time in the life cycle also determines his or her degree of availability for activities beyond those related to work and family.

2. Working time in catering and cleaning services

Following the analytical approach proposed in the previous section, we analyse how the sector-specific flexibility in the management of time affects the working and living conditions of workers in cleaning and catering. Both sectors share a combination of characteristics that result largely from the auxiliary nature of their activities. They are labour-intensive, highly feminized sectors in which work is associated with the domestic sphere and therefore assumed, from the institutionalized logic of the market, to be low-skilled. The devaluation of skills and the invisible nature of many tasks are linked with the flexible management of the workforce and, as a consequence, poor working conditions. The following table summarizes the main working time findings in both sectors. It introduces the four dimensions of working time and for each one describes features in the sector, causes, country-specific trends and effects on quality of life.

[Insert Table 11.1. Working time findings]

2.1. *Length of workday*

A fundamental gender difference in working conditions is the volume of hours worked (Fagan and Burchell, 2002). In catering and cleaning, part-time work is frequently used but there are differences between the two sectors regarding its causes, country-specific features and effects.

Cleaning sector

Part-time work is more widespread in cleaning than in catering. It is the norm rather than the exception in the cleaning industry where, in Europe, 67 per cent of the workforce is employed in part-time jobs for an average of 23 hours per week (Scandella, 2010). Cleaning is a labour-intensive sector in which labour costs account for 75 per cent of the total operating cost, so the management pressure is on jobs. Reducing working time is one of the business strategies used to cut wage costs (EFCI, 2012). For this reason, part-time work is especially common among the newly hired. It is also possible to use employment as an adjustment variable because cleaning is an invisible activity. Cleaning services in Europe are mostly performed outside the usual periods of occupation of the premises that are cleaned (Holtgrewe and Sardadvar, 2012). The invisibility of cleaning tasks and the isolation of cleaners makes it easy to replace what were once full-time positions with new part-time positions or to incrementally cut (paid) working hours.

For example, in the rector's office a person took early retirement. She wasn't replaced. They divided the work between us. Where you leave off, you start tomorrow. You have to leave things and clean them better the next day. It's cheating but otherwise you can't manage. For example, I used to go up to my place at 5 in the morning and now I go at 5.50. Three quarters of an hour. In that time I have to organize things so my work is done at 9.30, whatever happens. (Female cleaner, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011b: 6)

Case studies show that part-time work in the office cleaning sector is widespread in the majority of countries, although Norway is a notable exception. While in Belgium and Spain 70 per cent of the workforce is employed part-time, usually 20 hours per week, in Norway the majority of workers in the sector have full-time jobs or, alternatively, contracts for six hours per week (Kirov, 2011). Despite this positive aspect in Norway, there is still an unequal distribution of working time between men and women, as 10 per cent of men in this sector work part-time compared with 40 per cent of women, though the gap is lower than in other countries (Torvatn, 2011).

Catering

Part-time work is less frequently used in the catering sector. According to the EWCS (2012), 30 per cent of employment in catering is part-time in the EU27. Part-time work is the norm in places where meals are only served at midday, such as schools and company canteens, whereas full-time work is the norm in places where all meals are served, such as hospitals and residential care homes. While part-time work in cleaning is caused by the cuts established by the client companies, part-time work in catering appears as a feature of the job. With regard to this difference, part-time work in cleaning is often not a voluntary option chosen by employees, whereas part-time work in catering may be an option chosen by women with domestic and care responsibilities in order to improve work and life balance. In this case, the differences between countries are great in relation to the labour regulations and social policy. In contrast to the cleaning sector, the highest rates of part-time work in the catering sector are found in the Nordic countries such as Denmark (55 per cent) and Netherlands (70 per cent), where part-time workers enjoy good labour standards (EWCS, 2012). On the other hand, in countries where there is a lack of public services to facilitate work and life balance, part-time work is an individual strategy to achieve it in spite of bad labour conditions. For

example, in contract catering in Spanish schools, part-time work on a fixed-discontinuous contract is the best solution for combining work and family life. The sector needs workers willing to work intensively for a few hours at midday on a non-continuous basis. Women with small children traditionally work in school dining rooms because the working times and school years help them to achieve work-life balance.

Yes, this job has allowed me to organize everything... and I really appreciate it because I've been able to raise a family without depending on anyone... Because bearing in mind that if I started work an hour earlier or finished an hour later I would have had problems with school times. The school dining room was the one my daughters went to. I didn't have to depend on anyone... And at the school I had a discount for being a worker... I think it was 20 per cent. (Female catering, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011a: 6)

Effect

The main effect of part-time work on quality of life is lower wages. Those who work in catering express more dissatisfaction with their wages. This apparent paradox appears closely related to workers' expectations and the low social status of the cleaning sector.ⁱ

I don't really know [whether the wage is fair], but if it is like this, there's nothing you can do. (Female cleaner, Austria, quoted in Sardadvar, 2012: 15)

Many women who work in the cleaning sector do so to supplement family income, whereas it is more common for men employed in catering to aspire to earn a salary high enough to live on.

The wages are a joke. An unskilled worker gets minimum wage, a skilled worker minimum wage plus 10%. But this is the industry standards, nowhere are the wages better. (Male cook, Hungary, quoted in Tóth and Hosszú, 2012: 29)

The workday has been shortened primarily in workplaces where women are employed, revealing the existence of a 'dual wage scale' based on gender (cf. Sardadvar, Kümmerling and Peycheva, in this volume). Horizontal gender segregation can be

clearly seen in both sectors, with differences between women's and men's occupations. According to a trade union in the cleaning sector, men tend to be the majority of workers in the categories of specialists and specialized labourers (85 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively), who are better paid (FES-UGT, 2011). On the other hand 90 per cent of cleaning jobs are held by women, and part-time contracts are more common than in other occupational categories in the sector.

Well I don't know, but at the meetings of Company B they tell us "if any women want to specialize in windows, let me know and we'll give them a course". And we all say: "We're going to volunteer and earn more," but none of us does. I don't know. I haven't thought much about being a window cleaner. I'm happy with my work, because that's what there is. We were encouraged at first, but then it was left in the air. (Female cleaner, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011b: 12)

2.2. *The workload*

One of the major tendencies in the sectors investigated is work intensification. This tendency is caused by strong pressure of price competition, resulting in a constant increase in workload for each employee and a proliferation of precarious jobs (Eurofound, 2012). When some companies want to cut labour costs and are unable to dismiss workers, they tend to reduce working time and increase work intensity. The availability of part-time work enables this type of work intensification. As a result, the intensification of the workload is a logical consequence of the imposition of part-time work in both sectors.

The down side of it is that the bosses abuse this. "Ah, you only need half an hour and in our system you only need 20 minutes, so you have 10 minutes to do something else. So we get extra tasks. (...) We get paid for our job. So they expect [us] to do something extra. So that is quite smart. It all comes down to the same thing; you are cleaning for half an hour. (Female cleaner, Belgium, quoted in Pauwels and Ramioul et al., 2012a: 15)

Cleaning

In office cleaning, the intensification of workload depends to a great extent on the type of client and the specific workplace where the activity is carried out. The intensity of workloads varies substantially between those cleaners who have to work in different workplaces during the same workday (as found in some of the Spanish case studies, in which cleaners had to clean several bank branches in one workday) and those who work in one workplace.

Now I have more companies and fewer hours. They're going down. From 10 hours to 4. For the moment bank office A is daily, but we now do bank office B three days a week instead of the five we did before. Bank office C too. We go three days instead of five. On 1 June I'll have to change company, I'll no longer be in E.. I'll be in a company called I.... Yeah, of course, in bank office D. Not in bank office E. I have some time there and I have to do cash dispensers, waste bins, toilets, offices and desks. If you go three days a week, you do it by turns the best you can. Now they tell us they're going to cut time in B from the hour we have now. In B they're also going to cut time. (Female cleaner, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011b: 6)

Even those working in a single workplace find their work intensified when, for instance, fewer people are supposed to clean the same areas. As in catering, there is a widespread feeling in the cleaning sector that part-time work has been promoted chiefly as a management strategy to increase labour productivity.

Catering

In contract catering there is a more marked trend than in office cleaning towards increasing work intensity by reducing staffing levels or managing extended services with the same amount of personnel (Holtgrewe and Sardadvar, 2012). In addition to part-time work, the pace of service carried out during the workday influences the pressure on working time. In the case of preparing and serving food, meal times generate work peaks. The concentration of activity is especially intense in those cases in which only one meal is served in a narrow time slot, for example, lunch in school or

company canteens. In contrast, serving food for all meal times, as in the healthcare sector, means that the kitchens are open for many hours a day and the workload is therefore less concentrated at certain peak times. The work peaks of catering, along with the reduction in staff as a business strategy to reduce personnel costs, lead to the intensification of the workload in all countries. Some interviewees claimed that the speed of work, and the effort they put into their job, had increased and also described their current staffing levels as inadequate.

There is an intensification of work. We are less than the necessary staff. And if somebody is missing for whatever reason, we really have to step up our work. Then one really has to do more. And because we have to finish work on time, that is really difficult. Here timing is the key. We do not have until 8PM. At 11AM the meal has to be ready. Here every minute counts. [...] We cannot afford not to be ready. This is when we become nervous and conflicts arise about who does what, who does more, and who does less. (Female cook, Hungary, quoted in Tóth and Hosszú, 2012: 11)

They should employ more people, I mean, cooks, there's a lack of cooks here. There's a lot of work, you basically work until night from seven o'clock in the morning, sometimes – from six. So if at 6 a.m. you are already at work, you need to wake up at five and then you work until twelve. You have no legs. Get really tired. There's few people, lots of work, nobody to do the work, so you get tired, really tired (Male cook, Lithuania, quoted in Kuznecovienė and Daukšas, 2012: 22)

Effect

Because the age composition of the workforce in both sectors tends to be above the average age of the general workforce, it is conceivable that the intensification of the workload has an impact on workers' health in these sectors. The work intensification increases stress and physical and psychological demands.

If you manage 70 rooms in three hours, this can affect blood pressure. You are under the stress: Yes, I have to make it, I want to make it. And it is like this from day to day. (Female cleaner, Austria, quoted in Sardadvar, 2012: 32)

I get tired. I am cooked when I get home. We all feel it when we get to the weekends. (Cleaner, Norway, quoted in Finnestrand, 2012a: 13)

Let's see, I have to get the work done, I have to get the job done, I have to do

it... then they tell me that if I cut myself, this and that... here and there... but if you don't do it they tell you off because you haven't finished the job... then... (Male cook, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011:14)

The workload is closely linked to the length of the working day and may contribute to vicious circles lowering the quality of work. The compulsory reduction of working time may increase the compression of work and health problems. As a consequence of stress and physical problems, workers may reduce working hours on their own initiative and lose income but then do not escape further intensification of work.

Ok the cleaning is better, because I work 6,5 hours a day and I can't say I am broken when I get home. I am tired but I can't say I am broken. But before, I couldn't go on any more. Eventually I started to work part time, because I could not go on any more. (Female cleaner, Belgium, quoted in Pauwels and Ramioul et al., 2012a: 15)

2.3. *The work schedule, split shifts, mornings and evenings*

The question of the work schedule is especially important in the case of auxiliary activities because they are contingent on a primary activity. Unlike the length of the workday and the workload, work schedules are subject to the needs of the client rather than the strategies of flexible management of the companies acting as employers.

Cleaning

Clients can force cleaners to keep non-standard hours by allowing them only staggered or split working hours that can only be worked at antisocial times (Scandella, 2010). For this reason, atypical hours are more frequent among cleaning workers because their services are required before or after the main activity of the workplace. In this sector, only 25 per cent of the hours worked are daytime hours (EFCI, 2007). Carrying out the work outside the usual periods of occupation usually translates into workdays beginning at the earliest hours of the morning (often at 6 a.m.) or late afternoon/evening hours (between 4 and 8 p.m.).

In spite of this general observation, there are notable differences between countries (Holtgrewe and Sardadvar, 2012). In Norway and Sweden, daytime cleaning has become the rule and represents 80 per cent and 70 per cent of the total cleaning time respectively (EFCI, 2010). Many companies, such as those studied in Norway, have over the years implemented daytime cleaning shifts. This, combined with widespread full-time contracts in the sector, explains how employment norms in this sector in Norway have become similar to the average for the overall national labour market. This is a situation that goes beyond the exceptions established by certain employers and is characteristic of a national employment model that tries to guarantee a universalistic pattern. In Belgium, where only 12 per cent of cleaning activities occur during daytime (Pauwels and Ramioul, 2011), campaigns have been promoted in favour of a distribution of working hours that does not force cleaning workers into antisocial hours and therefore invisibility.ⁱⁱ In other countries, daytime cleaning remains extremely limited, despite the fact that sector representatives see it as a desirable improvement of working conditions.

Catering

In contrast, atypical hours are less frequent in the contract catering sector, which has more regular and predictable working times. In many cases, such as school and company canteens, there are standard working hours and employees have free time in the afternoon and at the weekend. Elderly care or hospital services are exceptions because they usually have three shifts (morning, afternoon and night) that involve early morning and evening schedules.

Nevertheless, employees in both sectors assess their possibilities of balancing work and personal life positively in spite or because of their atypical work hours, although the reasons differ depending on the sector and the institutional context.

Obviously, there is some self-selection of workers for whom these hours are suitable. In the case of cleaners, women with responsibilities for school-age children favour part-time work with atypical morning hours that fit in with children's school hours. For the same reason, having weekends off is also highly valued.

It was difficult; it was difficult to find someone who would look after the children on Saturday. And that's why I thought: Well, then I do office cleaning, because that's until Friday. And like that I will have more time with the children on Saturday, Sunday. Because my husband works, too. And he also works Saturdays. And that's why. (Female cleaner, Austria, quoted in Sardadvar, 2012: 9)

I like the working times. At 1 p.m. I'm home. I don't even have to prepare lunch beforehand. I have a little time to rest, to have a siesta as we call it. And then I do my housework ... Well, it's a stone's throw from home. Not because of the pay. The working times are good. (Female cleaner, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011b: 6)

The situation of catering workers in this regard is not as difficult, as caterers' work takes place within the time frame of the main activity of the workplaces in which they work. In addition, their work is more specific and their workload easier to predict. The assessment of the work schedule in the sector compares favourably with the assessment of the typical hours in the restaurant sector.

In the private restaurant, where I was working before this workplace, the hours were endless. You went there in the morning and you did not know when you would finish. Sometimes I worked until midnight. And even on weekends. Here it is more calculable, your working time is between 7AM and 3.30 PM and no extra work. No more. But the salary is low. However, the salary before was low as well. At the end they offered only the minimum wage. But I would not want to work 10-12 hours a day for minimum wage. At least I work only 8 hours. (Female cook, Hungary, quoted in Tóth & Hosszú 2012: 31)

Effect

Mothers in particular find work in school canteens the perfect solution to their need to balance work with their childcare responsibilities: they work while their children are at school. In all of these cases, the part-time work hours appear to be the solution to work

and life balance rather than a problem, as it can be dealt with in an individual manner by linking women's work schedules with school timetables.

I like the timetable. I like what I do. Well, it's not that I'd like to do this all my life, but well... Within what I've got, I like what I'm doing. And the pay is good. There are many places where they earn less than we do. (Female assistant cook, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011a: 21)

However, there are cases of internal flexibility that are more favourable to employees than others, such as that of a canteen in Germany operating in elderly homes and schools. During the school year, employees work more hours than stipulated in their contracts (27.5 hours a week instead of the official 19.5 hours) and during school holidays they are able to enjoy long vacation periods (Jaehrling and Lehndorff, 2012), while monthly income and employment are constant.

2.4. Employment stability, security and flexibility

Fixed-term work is not a gender issue but fixed-term contracts often apply in sectors in which women are overrepresented, such as catering and cleaning (Burri and Aune, 2013). According to the EWCS (2012), temporary contractual arrangements, either fixed-term (12 per cent) or temporary agency contracts (1 per cent), remain low in Europe. In the EU, more than 65 per cent of all fixed-term employment contracts are in the service sector, covering retail, catering, transport, finance and the public sector.

Cleaning

With regard to the contracts, in the cleaning sector again employment is clearly an adjustment variable used to contend with competition, as companies play either on its legality or on its volume, or sometimes both, to win contracts. As a result, there has been an increase in less secure employment contracts, particularly characterized by non-standard contracts, fixed-term contracts and temporary work (Scandella 2010). For instance, in 2012, the Spanish rate of employees with a contract of limited duration in

cleaning sector was 34 per cent while the average rate of all sectors was 23 per cent (INE, 2012).

Catering

By contrast, in the catering sector there are certain particularities, such as the seasonal nature of some employment contracts. This mainly occurs in catering services in places where activity is concentrated in certain periods of the year, primarily in the education sector. Companies make use of internal and external flexibility mechanisms to reduce labour costs during periods of lower activity. In most countries, a high proportion of employees have temporary contracts. At European level (EU27), 22 per cent of all employees are on fixed-term contracts. The high rate of temporary work is an indication of the level of seasonal work in the sector (Eurostat, 2010), particularly in the tourism-related parts of the sector, but also in school and university canteens. Again, this may be practical for some workers who have school-age children and do not depend on a regular income. Some Spanish companies lay off workers temporarily in the summer. These workers then sign up for unemployment or (especially the younger workers) look for other employment in the tourism sector.

I used to have my summer holidays and now I spend two and a half months off work. In summer they bring in a company cook on a permanent contract who has to be available in summer. I've told Eloy several times I want to go onto a permanent contract. (Male cook, Spain, quoted in Moreno Colom, 2011a: 9)

In the United Kingdom, many companies offer 32-week contracts, which also allows them to eliminate the equivalent of approximately four months of labour costs. As pointed out in the previous section, in Germany some companies distribute working hours over the year, concentrating them during the school calendar and reducing them in the summer. With the exception of these latter cases, we find that the seasonal nature of the work has a negative effect both on incomes, if the employee becomes unemployed

during these periods of inactivity, and on the life cycle, if the employee opts for temporary occupational mobility, which may involve geographic mobility.

There are some differences in fixed-term contracts according to the labour legislation in each country. In Spain and Belgium the collective agreements use the concept of subrogation: the right of workers in a company to keep their jobs when a new company is contracted to provide the service.ⁱⁱⁱ

“Ok, so every time a firm gets a contract, it is valuable for five years, everywhere, on all buildings. And then, after five years different cleaning companies can submit their proposals again and again a choice is made who continues. I started in ‘88 with.... Before I became an official CENTIPEDE employee, I worked in a small independent cleaning enterprise that was bought out by CENTIPEDE... Then in a period between, I think 2003-2009, I switched to RUB, they took over the cleaning contract and allowed me to stay at this place. Because I wanted to stay here, I switched companies for a while. And afterwards, the contract went back to CENTIPEDE again. You see?” (Female cleaner, Belgium, quoted in Pauwels, Ramioul and Peteghem, 2011: 8-9)

In Lithuania, contracts of workers in catering have the same duration as the contract signed between the employer and the client. Indeed, it is common that workers are subsequently hired in positions resulting from new contracts. In this case, in the complete absence of collective agreements or regulations it is more like a custom to provide continuity.

Effect

Flexible management of working time also takes its toll on the stability of employment and has direct effects on the life cycle of workers in terms of both career path and contributions to pension systems. The profile of employees reveals that women employed in the cleaning sector have more continuous career trajectories than women employed in catering, who often have discontinuous career trajectories due to care responsibilities within the family. While employment in cleaning is a long-term

employment option for women, employment in catering is more often a strategy for women who rejoin the labour market after an absence.

3. Work and time in gendered occupations

Throughout this chapter we have seen that the flexible management of working time has consequences on the living and working conditions of workers in the contract catering and office cleaning sectors. These consequences have negative effects on wages, health and work and life balance. The main problem is the contradiction between the demands of employer and the needs of workers (Lozares and Miguélez, 2006). The magnitude of this contradiction can be seen through analysis of the different dimensions of working time: the length of the workday, the workload, the work schedule and the employment stability.

Comparative analysis has revealed that part-time work, intensification of the workload, atypical working hours and temporary work are the norm in these two feminized and labour-intensive sectors. However, as hypothesised by the analytical model, there are some variations between sectors and countries. We conclude that the different types of working time are mainly driven by companies, which in cleaning and catering services reproduce a triangular pattern of labour relations. The analysis shows the specific time arrangements in both sectors according to their labour process and the differences between countries.

The comparison between sectors has revealed certain important differences. In the cleaning sector, part-time work and atypical hours are more common. In catering, there is greater intensification of the workload and more temporary work. These factors have to do with the nature of the work done and the place in which it is done. Firms have different objectives related to the flexible management of working time. Firstly,

they seek to obtain an intensive use of labour force, reducing downtimes and concentrating the paid working time in the high-activity hours. They try to cope with problems such as seasonal variations in demand during the year, activity peaks at specific hours of the day (or specific days of the week) and adaptation to changes in the size of the workforce resulting from sick leave and other causes. Secondly, they need to adapt to specific claims of customers according to the triangulation pattern of labour relations. This is especially important in the case of cleaning, which must adapt to avoid interfering with the main activity of the client. Such time pressures are more acute in service sectors, because “production” and “consumption” are simultaneous and many activities, such as hospital or school meals, must be performed at specific times (Beynon *et al.*, 2002; Moreno *et al.*, 2014). These time demands translate into quite different types of adjustments, depending on specific company strategies: shift work, part-time work, variable working time, night work, etc.

The institutional context modulates the characteristics common to both sectors depending on the labour regulations and the public policies that have been developed (Fudge, 2010; Chung and Tijdens, 2013). Taking into consideration the four dimensions analysed in the cleaning sector, the case of Norway stands out, with less part-time work, better salaries, daily schedules and more stability. Gender regime typologies of countries are crucial in order to understand the relation of working time and gender. Anxo *et al.* (2012) combines gender equity and the level of labour standards to differentiate four types of country: high equity and high labour standards (the Nordic countries), medium equity and high labour standards (the Continental model, include Belgium, Austria, Germany, Italy and Spain), medium equity with low labour standards (the Liberal model of the United Kingdom) and low equity and low labour standards (the Central Eastern model, including Lithuania and Hungary). From this approach, the

time arrangements of the Nordic case are explained by a gender model characterized by high equity and high labour standards. By contrast, in Belgium and Spain there is contract stability due to the high labour standard regulation (subrogation) but the medium level of gender equity explains the high proportion of part-time work and atypical schedules of women. Gender emerges as an inescapable factor in marking the difference between supplementary income (linked to part-time work) and family income, and explains the extent to which finding a balance between work and time in gendered occupations remains a concession and trade-off for women. By contrast, the intensification of work is not controlled by labour standards and remains a pivot of company management.

In the catering sector, no country comes out positively, although there are differences in employment ranging from mini-jobs in Germany to fixed-discontinuous contracts in Spain and consistently low labour standards in the United Kingdom, Hungary and Lithuania.

In summary, the differences between sectors and countries reveal that working time and its impact on quality of life depend on the business strategies of each sector. Despite the national employment models and gender-family regimes, labour standards can soften the impact of flexible time arrangements on the working and living conditions of female workers.

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ⁱ See Markova et al. in this volume.

ⁱⁱ See www.walqing.eu/webresource.

ⁱⁱⁱ The subrogation right is related to the Transfers of Undertakings Directive (2001/23/EC). It is the European Union Law that protects workers when the company is transferred between owners. This

mechanism protects the workers from job instability caused by the periodic shifting of contracts between companies by guaranteeing continuity in employment when the contracting company changes.