

Flexible Work Arrangements:
Conceptualizations and International
Experiences

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forms, there has also been a spread of social pacts and meaningful European-level initiatives, such as European works councils. To see how both centralization and decentralization can be occurring at the same time and in a manner that is not contradictory, you will have to read the book.

Marginson and Sisson also argue that how changes are occurring is as important as the outcomes of change, both because the process of adjustment matters for its own sake and because choices made by the parties regarding process ultimately affect outcomes. One way the authors make room for process in their analysis is by adopting a governance perspective in which industrial relations is viewed as a multi-level system involving mixed motives (that is, shaped by both distributive and integrative interests).

In addition to analyzing various levels of industrial relations, Marginson and Sisson focus on the role of multi-national corporations (MNCs). They see MNCs as a key force promoting diversity in workplace employment practices and corporate industrial relations strategies. Developments at MNCs also matter because it is those firms that are bound by the European Works Council Directive, and that have thus become (in the authors' words) a "focal point for the Europeanization of industrial relations" and (in my words) in some ways also a centralizing force, even though they are simultaneously bringing more variation to industrial relations practices within countries. Here again Marginson and Sisson provide a coherent logic to explain what might at first glance appear to be contradictory and inconsistent tendencies.

While the process of change in labor-management-government interactions matters, Marginson and Sisson are attentive to employment outcomes as well. They focus in particular on wage developments and observe a movement toward "convergence without coordination." While I find their comparative analysis of national wage, price, and productivity trends insightful, here is a rare case in which I have doubts about the accuracy of the data. Specifically, I wonder if aggregated data reported by country truly capture wage or productivity developments. Those national data must be measuring something, but I am not sure they reflect industrial relations outcomes, since bargaining primarily occurs at company and sectoral levels. I would like to know what company or sectoral wage and productivity data show.

I cannot emphasize enough the wealth of

insight provided by Marginson and Sisson. They provide a truly comparative analysis organized around thematic issues rather than the much too common country comparisons. Anyone interested in what is going on in European industrial relations—indeed, anyone who wishes to learn how to study industrial relations anywhere—should read this book.

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Nonstandard Work in Developed Economies: Causes and Consequences. Edited by Susan Houseman and Machiko Osawa. Kalamazoo, Mich.: W. E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research, 2003. 520 pp. ISBN 0-88099-264-6, \$70 (cloth); 0-88099-263-8, \$26 (paper).

Flexible Work Arrangements: Conceptualizations and International Experiences. Edited by Isik Urla Zeytinoglu. New York: Kluwer International, 2002. ix, 298 pp. ISBN 90-411-1947-7, \$150.40 (cloth).

Increases in flexible work arrangements have become a global phenomenon in the past two decades. These two edited volumes successfully describe the features of this growth, its causes, and its labor market implications in developed economies. The editors and contributors focus on core concerns associated with proliferating nonstandard work arrangements, including whether such arrangements spread job insecurity, low pay, lack of various benefits, and reduced career prospects; why some types of arrangement are more widespread than others in a given country; and whether these arrangements affect some groups more than others within a country.

Houseman and Osawa's *Nonstandard Work in Developed Countries: Causes and Consequences* addresses these questions with rich information and rigorous analyses. Through empirical and legal research, the contributors examine the roles of labor market performance (such as the level of unemployment) and institutions (for example, tax and welfare policies and protective provisions for standard and nonstandard workers) in determining both the job quality of nonstandard work and the prevalence of these arrangements.

The paired-country comparisons in the first part of the volume effectively demonstrate that differing labor markets and institutional settings lead to different trends in these arrangements and their level of expansion. At the same time, they challenge macroeconomic arguments such as shift-share analysis (a technique primarily used to decompose employment changes within an economy over a specific period of time into mutually exclusive factors). The authors in this section use an interesting comparative strategy to show that the factors are consistently statistically significant: they focus on pairs of countries in which the relevant conditions are generally similar (Italy and Spain, Chapter 4), dissimilar (the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, Chapter 3), or partly different (Denmark and Germany, Chapter 2). Whereas Germany—struggling with high unemployment, strict employment protections, and limited childcare support—has recently experienced an increase in the numbers of both part-time and fixed-term workers, Denmark's low unemployment, tax advantage for dual earners, and comprehensive childcare system have resulted in a decline in part-timers and a stagnant level of temporary workers. Spain's unemployment rate and strict regulations to protect standard workers (similar to those of Germany) have led to a higher rate of temporary employment than in any other country studied. France, with increasing numbers of nonstandard workers, can be grouped with Germany and Spain. In contrast, the United States has little regulation of dismissal and a smaller proportion of nonstandard workers.

While much of this volume, like most of the literature on nonstandard work, focuses on how deregulation affects growth and workers' outcomes, Chapters 3 and 10 also address the possibility of convergence through a trend of reregulation, particularly by way of EU legislation. Yet, the researchers consistently emphasize that differences in the way the framework is incorporated and articulated at the national level still result in persistent national differences. In the United Kingdom's liberal market economy, for example, reregulation has had a relatively weak impact on income parity between standard and nonstandard workers.

Regarding the commonly assumed relationship between labor market rigidity and the incidence of nonstandard work arrangements, recent developments in Spain have interesting implications. Even after the Spanish government's diagnosis of the rigid labor market as a major cause of excessive use of tempo-

rary workers and its subsequent liberalization of regulations, the use of temporary workers did not decrease (Chapter 4). This indicates that there may be no direct positive relationship between labor market rigidity and nonstandard work and also that once an employment relations system has become established, it develops an institutional inertia.

Japan is the most noteworthy case in this collection (Chapters 6 and 11). Whereas many studies of nonstandard work have looked solely at Western countries, this comparative project includes in its purview a country with strikingly non-Western ways of viewing and using nonstandard workers. Japan's world-famous life-long employment system for standard workers in large firms persists—although it is declining somewhat as a result of a long economic recession—and coexists with a high and increasing incidence of part-time work. It is evident that the feminization of part-time work is primarily underpinned by a gendered labor market. Indeed, 80% of part-time workers are low-paid female workers, many of whom seek tax exemption by reducing their hours of work and keeping their earnings below certain thresholds. With little protective regulation for nonstandard workers, Japanese temporary employees tend to be trapped, with little expectation of mobility into permanent positions.

Disproportionate female representation in the nonstandard work force is not limited to Japan. However, the gender balance varies considerably across countries. Any combination of the following three situations leads to a much higher proportion of female nonstandard workers: a limited childcare system that assumes that the rearing of children is one parent's responsibility; a family-based tax structure that assumes that one spouse is a second, auxiliary earner; and weak antidiscrimination laws (as are found in Japan, Germany, and the Netherlands). Sweden, Denmark, and the United States stand in contrast to such situations.

With regard to one subset of the part-time labor force, Japan again is distinctive. In most countries, many mothers of young children try to balance the demands of work and family by turning to part-time employment options. In Japan, in contrast, only a small fraction of such mothers do so; the majority choose to withdraw from the labor market altogether, probably because wages for part-time work in Japan are substantially lower than those for full-time work (Chapter 9). As the Japanese case shows, weak parity regulations lead to a wider gender wage

gap. Where employers attempt to circumvent parity regulations by keeping jobs for nonstandard workers and standard workers separate (as in Germany and Britain), wage differentials are reinforced by job segregation.

To help readers understand how legal regulations influence the extent of nonstandard work arrangements and their outcomes for workers, two chapters provide the background for laws developed in the EU (Chapter 10) and in Japan and the United States (Chapter 11). One of the striking findings is found in the last chapter, which compares workers' attitudes toward work across the countries: part-time and fixed-term workers with low wages and little job security do not express negative attitudes toward their jobs—except in Sweden (Chapter 12). These findings need to be more closely examined, using a more complex analytical model that takes into account such factors as workers' characteristics and whether participation in nonstandard work is voluntary or involuntary.

The detailed findings and comparisons in this volume are valuable, but the macro analyses with aggregate-level data used in most of the chapters do have some drawbacks. By outlining current trends in nonstandard work arrangements and examining how institutions affect employment relations, such analyses effectively demonstrate cross-country differences. Yet, they do not address the growing heterogeneity among nonstandard work arrangements. Although employer and worker behaviors may be predicted by labor market structure to some extent, individual employers' strategies ultimately result in increasing heterogeneity within each country. Macro analyses may also be unable to show how various flexibility strategies—in particular, functional and numerical flexibilities—are combined. Nonstandard work arrangements are always closely associated with how employers arrange their core sector and how workers' representatives respond to employers' strategies. Thus, more examination at the organization level is required to explain what really gives rise to nonstandard work arrangements.

Flexible Work Arrangements: Conceptualizations and International Experiences, edited by Isik Urla Zeitinoglu, is important in this respect. The fourteen chapters in this volume provide readings complementary to those in *Nonstandard Work*, raising more subtle and micro issues of flexibility in a wide range of countries across the EU and North America. The two books have many subjects in common: the overall growth of nonstandard work; labor market situations

and legal restrictions as major influences on employers' decision-making; the generally negative outcomes of flexible work arrangements for workers; variation in outcomes across different types of flexible work arrangements, across countries, and across jobs and industries; and overrepresentation by women. *Flexible Work Arrangements* widens the analytical scope to cover time and functional flexibility, which are closely associated with the ways in which employers use numerical flexibility measures.

Another unique virtue of this volume is its inclusion of some organization-level research, which shows how the actors—particularly employers—actively attempt to lower costs; match labor to business needs; and loosen, bypass, or adapt institutional constraints related to nonstandard work arrangements. The Dutch case discussed in Chapter 6 clearly illustrates how actors strategically respond to institutional constraints. Consider, for example, the recently legislated implementation of “flexicurity” in the Netherlands. Temporary agencies have responded to this new Act's requirement that employers extend their workers' tenure and increase training opportunities by reassessing and transforming their employment strategies. These agencies, which traditionally have focused on matching the supply of labor to the immediate demand for it, now have a greater economic incentive to bind temporary workers to them, thereby recouping their training investment. As a result, a mimicry of internal labor markets has emerged. Another example is the finding that when employers encourage part-time workers to participate, employee involvement is as effective when those taking part are part-time as when they are full-time (although participation opportunities for part-time and temporary workers are more likely to be marginalized [Chapter 14]).

Although this relatively thin volume is innovative and presents many interesting new issues, it has some weaknesses. Some chapters are stronger in developing interesting research questions that challenge the scope of existing studies than in providing concrete analyses of these questions. Some interesting chapters discuss types of flexibility other than numerical flexibility, but do not effectively relate these types of flexibility to one another. The conceptual framework suggested in the first three chapters could have been used to arrange the articles according to how different types of flexibility are combined and how inconsistent outcomes are interpreted.

Despite a few shortcomings, the two volumes

present excellent comparative research on flexible work across advanced economies and provide valuable insights into both general and local issues. They are particularly worth reading for their cogent analysis of the complex dynamics of recent reregulation and its implications. The foundation they lay is a solid one, on which further research is sure to be erected.

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The Future of Work in Europe. Edited by Paul Littlewood, Ignace Glorieux, and Ingrid Jönsson. Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2004. 262 pp. ISBN 0-7546-3835-5, \$79.95 (cloth).

The Future of Work in Europe is an edited volume on public policies and social issues related to employment. Chapters focus on immigration, welfare, education, gender in the workplace, volunteer work, and the role of technological change. The book is perhaps slightly mistitled, since it is less about work relations proper than about public policy and social change.

The Future of Work contains a good deal of interesting research and analysis. Unfortunately, however, only a few of the chapters really rise to explore the broader implications of the findings they present. The volume also lacks coherence, as the substantive contributions do not match the theoretical chapters at the beginning, nor do they really explore common themes or use common analytical techniques. Still, even if there is no real reason to read the book cover to cover, academics interested in the particular policies or issues it deals with will find worthwhile reading.

In most cases, the authors are fairly critical of existing policies, and of the neo-liberal turn these policies have taken in recent years. The book begins with two broad theoretically oriented contributions, perhaps intended to "set the stage" for the more empirical or policy-oriented chapters that follow. First, Max Koch synthesizes and compares the Regulation School literature on changing post-Fordist labor market policies in five European countries. He concludes that all countries are heading toward flexibility, but some toward "negotiated flexibility" and others toward "capital-oriented flexibility." The countries are grouped in the way one

would expect, with the corporatist economies leaning to negotiation and non-corporatist ones to capital-orientation. In this sense, Koch makes a case for continuing nation-specific development paths in the face of globalization. In the next chapter, Bram Steijn also explores post-Fordist themes. As with the Koch chapter, there are few surprises. Steijn tells us that the "information society" has winners and losers, but that the changes are "evolutionary" rather than "revolutionary." Steijn's piece relies mostly on secondary literature and his own past work. Neither of these chapters helps to create a framework for the rest of the book, since the themes they raise are not really engaged in the substantive chapters, although there is an obvious potential to do so.

The book's better substantive chapters take a critical approach to public policy issues or social change. For instance, two chapters—Georg Vobruba on Germany, Lars Harrysson and Jan Petersson on Sweden—take to task the "workfare" emphasis of recent policy innovations. Vobruba presents empirical evidence suggesting that the influential "unemployment trap" theorem is wrong, and that short-term material incentives to stay unemployed do not actually influence the thinking of the unemployed very much. Likewise, Harrysson and Petersson argue that Sweden's labor market policies aimed at "curing" the unemployed are misdirected. The problem, they assert, lies with the structure of employment, the limited resources of the public employment agencies, and the design of the reemployment programs, rather than with the unemployed themselves. Harrysson and Petersson, as well as Vobruba, make the case that recent policy changes for the worse are motivated by conservative ideology, rather than by a desire to help the unemployed.

Paul Littlewood finds similar ideologically motivated policy influences in education. He criticizes the "commodification" of the U.K. educational system, arguing that pupils are now regarded as "consumers" instead of "learners and future workers." While rejecting the notion of a halcyon past of clean and pure education, he shows that the increasing influence of market-oriented policy is making education more vocational, more of a commodity, and more of a private good.

Barbara Littlewood demonstrates the ongoing importance of class in gender analysis. She reasons that class and gender intersect, as higher-class women are often able to use their status to push off the burden of their gender-related oppression onto lower-class women. In the