Very preliminary draft
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Does flexibility and individualization improve gender equality? Women and market work in comparative perspective.

by Ingalill Montanari

Paper to be presented at the RC19 conference in Florence, September 6-8, 2007.

Ingalill Montanari
Swedish Institute for Social Research
Stockholm University
Stockholm
Sweden
ingalill.montanari@sofi.su.se

Abstract:

Around 1990, there were significant differences between countries with regard to women's participation in market work specifically as to the *quality* of participation, both in terms of degree of participation and of employment status. In several countries many women undertook paid work which neither lead to work-related social citizenship rights nor anywhere near to economic autonomy.

All over Europe female labour force participation is increasing along the expansion of the service sector, a sector which is the main employment site of women in modern advanced democracies. The European Union promotes the market production of all kinds of goods and services, in order to achieve the political economy goals of the Lisbon Agenda. Both men and women are needed to achieve these goals. The European Union is heralding the "adult worker" model for its citizens of both sexes.

At the same time there are mounting pressures from employers to increase flexibility in working time in order to achieve cost efficiency and enhance competitivity, especially within the service sector. The just-in-time approach is now challenging the traditional labour contract. Flexibility in time may be either positive or negative for women, depending on how this kind of market work is possible to reconcile with family responsibilities.

Against the background of these two dominant labour market trends the present paper is focussed on changes in the extent and composition of women's market work during the last fifteen years, with respect to the identified differences in quality of participation, and given the overall increase in female labour force participation. We will also look at separate parts of the service sectors where European women work. Countries examined are the old EU member states, in various constellations. Data from OECD, European Social Survey, and Luxembourg Income Study are used.

During several decades there has been a steadily increasing total rate of labour force participation by women in most advanced market economies, although cross-national differences are still considerable. It is however an open question how far women's increased participation in market work actually contributes to more gender-equal personal autonomy, economic independence, social citizenship rights, wages, positional status, and decreasing occupational segregation. Around 1990, there were major differences among countries in the European Union with regard to women's participation in market work, specifically as to the *quality* of participation, in terms of degree of participation as well as in terms of employment status. Labour market participation is in itself not a passport to full social citizenship or personal autonomy for women who work a restricted number of hours nor for "family workers" and for many "own-account" workers. In several countries many women undertook paid work which neither lead to work related social citizenship rights nor anywhere near to economic autonomy (Montanari 2004).

The main purpose of the present paper is to examine how the quality of women's labour force participation among OECD countries and especially within the European Union has changed during the last fifteen years, given the overall increase in participation rates and with respect to these earlier identified differences. Has the increase in participation generated a clear developmental trend from a pure male breadwinner model via different dual earner stages towards a dual career or "adult worker" model as outlined by Jane Lewis (2001), or does the pattern of highly unequal degree of participation remain (Montanari 2004, Rubery et al. 1999)?

Jane Lewis' models of the gendered distribution of market work are ideal types, constructed in order to individuate the degree of gender inequality in a society. As the models indicate, existing societies are at different stages of superseding these gendered differences in work tasks. These models are one of the foremost examples of the theoretical perspective which holds the total division of work, production and reproduction, often termed market work and care, as the main determinant of gender inequality in modern advanced market democracies (see for ex. Daly and Lewis 2000; Hobson 1990, 1994, 2003; Korpi 2000; Lewis 1992, 1997, 2001; O'Connor 1993; Orloff 1993; Sainsbury 1996). Since the consolidation of the industrial era, work has become synonymous with market work, i.e. the supply of one's labour on a

labour market against remuneration in the form of wages or salaries.[1] The daily and generational reproduction of the labour force was relegated to the private sphere of the family and was increasingly no longer considered as "work".[2] This is the beginning of the gendered economic inequalities that are characteristic of modern advanced democracies long since women have achieved the same civil and political rights as men.

Within the international community of gender researchers adhering to the theoretical perspective outlined above there is a great degree of consensus that it is the organization of *reproduction* work in a society which is of central importance for understanding the degree of gender inequality in market work.[3] In which institutional arena is the reproduction work carried out, the family, the market or the public sector (state) and where is the financial responsibility situated (Daly and Lewis 1998; Folbre 1994)? Although not always spelled out, the influence of colour of government as well as women's lobbying for policies facilitating female economic agency are normally taken as determinants.

Extending the analysis of the gendered inequalities in work to countries outside Europe, it was shown that the organization of *production* work, i.e. the composition and regulation of the labour market, also was important. Thus, for example, Japanese women were often very far from any social and economic equality with their male counterparts, although working full-time in the labour force (Montanari 2004). In Japan the regulation of the labour market was the main factor behind this situation, although the composition is also relevant, as it is for European women.

Production and reproduction are the two components of work and both are equally necessary, in real life as in scientific analysis. Julie Nelson (1993) coined the term "provisioning", pointing to the multi-faceted work activities that are carried out in every society, work tasks

[1] The demand for such market work may be formulated by single employers, corporations or political authorities at local, regional or national level. Small-medium employers in non incorporated firms are also part of the labour force, although their remuneration is profit instead of wages.

[2] Equating work with market work defined away the social reproduction of the labour force itself also within social science. While Smith, Ricardo and Marx still held on to an economic analysis in which wages were the "natural price of labour", the neo-classical economists from the end of the 19th century onwards treated labour as any other means of production, assuming wages to depend solely on the size of the wage fund (Picchio 1992). How labourers were formed was of no relevance to economic analysis nor to the optimal functioning of the economy.

[3] Social reproduction is here preferred to the more restricted concept of care, which does not include household work.

which have always been gendered and class-bound in the course of history. In their endeavour to reject the gender theoretical version of the old "logic of industrialism," stating that female labour force participation will automatically increase along the economic development path, social scientists dealing with gender issues have tended to underestimate the role of the economy's need of labour. Work tasks disappear and new ones are created and even if analysing a separate segment of the societal web, we should always consider what Miriam Glucksmann (1995, 2006) has termed the Total Social Organization of Labour (TSOL) at a specific point of time. Not only *who* does but who does *what* exactly and *when.* The distribution of differentiated work tasks determines the social structure in terms of class as well as gender in a society, while at the personal level the work you perform informs attitudes, identities and even the sense of time (Glucksmann 1998).

Presently the advanced market democracies are developing their service sectors, both the upper and lower echelons, something entailing increasing demand also for female labour power when more and more services are carried out as market production. In Europe a clear voice has been given to the importance of the economy's role in creating opportunities of market work also for women. With the Lisbon agenda the European Union expresses its aims at achieving a prime position in economic growth, productivity and competitivity (Radaelli 2003). According to this agenda, market production of as many kinds of goods and services as possible will increase efficiency and GNP. Both men and women are needed to achieve these goals. Exact male and female labour force participation figures have been put forward, benchmarks against which member nations have to relate.

The adult worker model has thus been heralded as a common political goal for EU member states. The same objective is the kernel of the welfare-to-work policies aiming at including as many citizens in the labour force as possible, men and women alike. While the intended outcome thus is the same as in the purer political economy objective discussed above, there is a further rationale for the welfare-to-work policies within single national states, namely to decrease social expenditure and promote social inclusion in order to guarantee social stability. Due to the increasing trans-nationalization of real and financial capital, political governance of the national economies has been eroded (Pierre 2000). A main task of national governments has become to create social endowments which may attract national and foreign investors (Montanari et al. 2007). While these social endowments may include low taxes, employer fees and wages, they also consist of social and economic stability, good

infrastructure and a highly educated labour force (Cerny 1999). Thus there is a need to decrease social expenditure not directed towards the improvement of economic performance, such as the creation of human capital and technologically advanced infrastructure.

The idea that the future Europe will be highly competitive on a global scale, especially because of the quality of its human capital embedded in goods and services to be put on the world market, entails policies that ensure the creation of such competences. The coming knowledge society can be realized only by social investment in the children of today (Esping-Andersen 2002, Giddens 1998, Lister 2004). Although not mainly for the reason to increase gender equality on the labour market, in countries where social investment policies directed towards young children in the form of early pre-school care and education are taking form, we can thus see the partial removal of one of the main obstacles to female labour force participation.

Within the European economic and political context sketched above an increasing rate of participation in market work by women has taken place. The role in this development of the economy in general and the political economy of the EU has to be acknowledged. To which degree the rate of participation increases, and especially under which conditions, national political governance remains however responsible. Social policies, especially services, which within the work-oriented gender theoretical perspective here adopted are considered crucial, are still the prerogative of national governments.

European women now work overwhelmingly within the service sector of the economy. In contrast to industrial production of goods, an important dimension in market production of services is the need of flexibility of work, hour- and season-wise. The temporalities of work are changing (Harvey 1999, Rubery et al. 2005). To this inherent need of flexibility in the production of services are added the pressures to continuously increase cost efficiency in order to remain competitive, pressures which often entails the demand for still greater flexibility on part of the employees. Flexibility can be achieved in time, in space, and in type of activity (Felstead and Jewson 1999). With regard to the research question here, it is flexibility in time which is of major interest.[4] Flex-time may have positive as well as negative

[4] Flexibility in time is here intended to denote variation in amount of hours of work per day, as well as the placement of these hours of work in a 24 hours period. The increasing salience of short-term work contracts used

effects for the worker, depending on its form, and whether it is imposed by the employer or some space for negotiation is offered (Crompton 2006; Dore 1986; Perrons 1998; Perrons et al. 2006: Rubery and Grimshaw 2003; Sels et Van Hootegem 2001; Tijdens 2002). For many women it means an opportunity to initiate or increase their presence on the labour market; for others undesired part-time employment or split working shifts may be the result. Extreme forms of flexibility in working time, such as availability on call or indefinite schedules, may also clash with the more traditionally fixed schedules of reproduction work. It has been noted that "children, to a very large degree still run on standard time" (Coyle 2006: 78). Just as in the case of social services the regulation of the labour market remains a national prerogative and varies accordingly between nation states.

The paper is organized in the following way. The following section reviews total and part-time labour force participation rates among women at different time-points as well as differences between men and women for a larger set of OECD countries. It also presents an empirical analysis of women's hours of work in Europe. Data used come from OECD, Luxembourg Income Study, and European Social Survey. Countries examined with LIS data are Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK. The ESS data include Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK. We will also look at female employment status and in which parts of the service sector European women are working. A prominent position of the Health and Social Work sector would indicate that a considerable amount of social reproduction work has been moved out from the family institutional arena to be carried out within a public sector, thus enabling also low educated women to participate in market work to a high degree (Korpi 2000; Montanari 2004). The paper ends with a short discussion.

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by employers in order to achieve flexibility in the size of the work force is another issue and requires different research questions.

Gender stratification in market work

Hours of work

The increase in women's market work is clearly verifiable in OECD statistics of total labour force participation. Slowly the countries with lowest rates are approaching the leaders in the field. The range of variation in total participation rates among women 16-64 years of age was 45 percentage points in 1990 (Montanari 2004), dropped to 35 in 1994 and was in 2005 a mere 25 (*Table 1*). With a median in labour force participation of 66 % among the EU 15 in this list, the goal of 60 % participation of women in market work in all member states in 2010 stated in the Lisbon Agenda might be achieved (Pissarides 2006). Total labour market participation figures are however too crude instruments for measuring gender differences in market work. The range of variation in full-time labour force participation has not decreased in the same way. From 41 percentage points in 1990, it dropped to 35 in 1994 to end at 34 in 2005, thus indicating an increasing share of part-time work among women.[5]

Concomitant with the increase in female labour force participation there has been a decrease in male market work in many OECD countries. Figures for women's market work should therefore not be automatically put in relation to a presumed complete participation among men but rather compared with men's actual participation within the same country. Figures for women's and men's total and full-time labour force participation in 2005, as well as the differences between the two measures are shown in *Table 2*.[6] As expected the cross-national range of variation in percentage points in total labour force participation figures is greater among women than among men (26 as against 15). The gap is still wider when we compare women's and men's full-time market work (35 as against 12). Differences in total labour force participation between men and women within the single countries range between 24 (Greece) and 3 (Finland), while gender differences in full-time participation show a variation of nearly 36 percentage points (43 for Netherlands and 8 for Finland).

[5] Full-time labour market participation figures are here calculated as the percentage of all women 15-64 years of age who are working full-time, not as the percentage of participants in market work.
[6] Full-time participation is also here calculated as described in note 5.

The range of variation in terms of average hours classified as part-time work is great. OECD uses the limit of 35 hours/week between full-time and part-time, while recently the limit of 30 hours/week has been proposed, given the decrease of the traditional 40 hours/week in some countries (Lemaitre et al. 1999). Among all OECD countries part-time work as a percentage of total market work by women varies between 10 (Greece) and 60 (Netherlands) in 2003 (OECD 2005). A legislated option to decrease market work to 75 % until youngest child reaches the age of 8 is often used by mothers in the Nordic countries and accounts for the relatively high percentage of long part-time in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. A part-time form at the other end of the spectrum is the so called short part-time, which if below the 15 hours' limit exonerates the employer as well as the employee from taxes and employer fees. Apart from limited income and career possibilities the worker also loses the social citizenship rights connected to employment, such as pension, unemployment and sickness benefits.

Using data from the Luxembourg Income Study we can delineate a set of time categories of market work of women between 25 and 54 years of age living with a partner (*Table 3*).[7] The time categories are nil, 1-15, 16-25 and 26+ hours. The 1-15 hours category is relevant for establishing access to social citizenship rights tied to market work. The 26+ hours category is chosen to indicate a more consistent participation, which may permit career possibilities and more personal economic autonomy. Data have been collected for Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and the UK for around 1990, 1995 and 2000. LIS data are however not available for these years for all countries.

Following the gender theoretical perspective described in the introduction, in which the extent of reproduction work is a major determinant of the extent of market work for women, one of the first variables to analyse is of course the presence or not of minor children. For six of these countries we can compare changes in weekly hours of labour force participation by women with and without a minor child from the mid-1990s to around 2000 (*Table 3*).[8] Between these two time-points we note a general decrease in the zero hours category except for Italy and Belgium. In 1995 both Belgian and Italian women without a minor child seem to

[7] This age span excludes the cross-national variation in pension age and length of tertiary education. In some countries students often work short hours but not usually for reasons of reproduction work. Both single women and single mothers are excluded; their conditions and obstacles to employment are very different from co-habiting women and mothers and vary to a great extent cross-nationally (Lewis 1997). General figures for hours of participation among women in this category without indication of presence of children in the family are most often an average of the two here given figures.

[8] For France and Sweden there was no information on hours/week of work for the year 2000.

work less than their co-nationals with child. This is presumably a generational question. With regard to France and Sweden the lack of LIS-data precludes an examination of trends. While data for Germany clearly mirrors the reunification of East and West Germany, the sizeable decrease in the Netherlands and the UK has to be interpreted as a developmental trend of respective national labour markets. Levels in the 1-15 hours category are rather stable, except for Germany and Netherlands which show an increase for women without minor child. The increase in the 26+ category is overall greater than in the 16-25 one. Most noteworthy is the increase for Germany, Netherlands and the UK.

Using social citizenship rights tied to labour market activity as a methodological anchorage to gauge the degree of gender inequality, we have combined the two categories of zero and the 1-15 hours participation into a category without employment-based social citizenship rights. In *Table 4* we can follow the development over time for women with and without minor children for this category with data from around 1990, mid-1990s and 2000. There is a decrease in this category for all countries, especially for Germany, Netherlands and the UK, but also for Austria and Belgium. Italy remains at roughly the same level. Especially noteworthy is the decreasing difference in none or very limited participation in market work between women with or without minor child responsibilities, except for Netherlands, where short part-time is a generally common form of labour force participation.

Also for the category 26+ hours we have followed the development during the last decade of the last century for as many countries as possible (*Table 5).* These figures indicate an increasing tendency of long part-time and full-time labour force participation in all countries except Italy. Remarkable increases have taken place especially for women with minor child responsibilities in Belgium, Germany, Netherlands and the UK. While having a minor child made a great difference with regard to a solid participation in the labour force in 1990, the situation is different in 2000 for all these four countries. Italy remains stable also in this case. The decrease from 55 to 44 for the UK between 1990 and 1995 may have to do with a dominance of increase of part-time work shorter than 25 hours during the first half of the 1990s.

The great cross-national variation is confirmed also when figures for 2003 of contracted working hours from another data source with a somewhat different definition of households and working time, i.e. the European Social Survey are examined (*Table 6*). Also here we have

selected the age range 25-54 among women with or without a minor child, although now all women, whether single or partnered, are included. Working time categories are 0-15, 16-25 and 26+ hours. For women with a minor child the 0-15 hours category is the dominant one in all countries except Sweden, Denmark, France, Norway, Belgium and Finland. Italy lies here on the border to 50%.[9] In comparison with the general participation figures presented in Table 1, the high figures of 26+ hours participation for France in this Table are probably due to the different age spans. It also shows that the promotion of part-time work by a 50% discount on employer fees initiated by Jacques Chirac when Prime Minister at the beginning of the 1990s did not succeed very well (Perrons 1998). French women have since long participated in a rather substantive way in the labour force, although general figures are relatively average. Overall the relatively limited importance of the 16-25 hours category seems to indicate a certain polarization between none, or very limited, and a more solid participation in market work. Differences between women with or without minor child are here minimal, except perhaps for the UK. The 26+ hours category is of course a mirror image of the 0-15 one; the highest percentages in the 0-15 category correspond to the lowest in the 26+ hours one. In the latter category the range of variation in participation for women with minor child responsibilities is 69 percentage points (Sweden 86 and Netherlands 17). Without minor child responsibilities the gap decreases to 42 (Denmark and Sweden 85, Netherlands 43).

It is a well known fact that labour force participation for women varies along educational level (Rubery et al. 1999). The extent of this variation does however differ among countries. There is a strong correlation between the general rate of female labour force participation and the extent of participation by lowly educated women (Montanari 2004). OECD figures for labour market participation among women 25-64 years old by educational attainment in 2003 indicate a narrow range of ten percentage points among the highly educated, while differences in participation between the low educated amount to 26 percentage points (Belgium 41 and Sweden 67) (OECD 2005).[10]

[9] Within the 0-15 hours category the for social citizenship rights so obnoxious 1-15 weekly hours of market work are of extremely limited relevance except for Netherlands and the UK.

[10] OECD data includes all women within a given age span, thus not differentiating between single and partnered women or between women with and without family responsibilities. Consideration should be given to the fact that the size of the respective educational categories varies extensively between countries. For example, in Sweden between 75 and 80 % of a cohort completes secondary education, while this percentage is lower in some other countries.

The same pattern of differentiation in level of participation by educational attainment is to be found in the LIS data presented in *Table 7*. Here we have been able to distinguish the quality of participation in terms of hours in the same categories used in previous tables. Looking at absolute differences in participation between high and low educated the 26+ hours category shows remarkably high figures, but the range is contained between 20 and 43 while the zero hours category shows a range of 38 percentage points difference. The differences between high and low educated women are highest in Italy and Belgium and lowest in Germany, Sweden and the UK. Differences in the 1-15 hours category are minor, but here Netherlands has a peak of 15 percentage points in difference.

Occupational status and sector of work

Table 8 lists the employment status of women in EU member states in 2003. As is clearly shown, in all countries the majority of women participating in market work are employees. A rather high proportion of family workers are however still to be found in Greece, Belgium and Italy. In the latter two countries the proportion was more than double in 1990. In the "own-account workers" category, at one end of the spectrum we expect to find independent professionals; at the other small shopkeepers and salesmen as well as homeworkers. There is a difference between working *from* home, which has become a rather appreciated form of spatial flexibility for persons working mainly via their computers, and to supply work *at* home for an employer who has outsourced part of his production. There is evidence that the latter form of mainly female homeworking, especially in the garment industry, not only is still flourishing but is also increasing in Southern Europe (Leonard 1998; Prügl 1999). Whether this kind of home-based piecework is formal or informal is of course an open question depending on the national regulatory system of the formal economy (Mingione 1995: 69).[11] A consideration of employment status cautions us not to consider every person working full-time as someone having achieved full economic autonomy or complete social citizenship rights.

Work within the service sector is the main economic activity for both men and women in Europe.[12] Gender differences within sub-sectors are however rather great, i.e. sectorial, or

[11] Likewise, the amount of informal market work within the household service sector is commonly put forward as one relevant factor behind the low female labour force participation rates especially in Italy and Spain.
[12] Exceptions among the old EU member states are men in Germany, Greece, Portugal and Spain (ILO 2004).

horizontal, segregation. From the gender theoretical perspective which holds that the social reproduction work, especially the care work of both young and old, has to be moved out from the family in order to enable women to participate in a substantive way in market work, the column for the category Health and Social work (N) in *Table 9* is of particular interest. As can be seen there are great cross-national differences and it is also within this category that the greatest differences are to be found. Denmark, Finland and Sweden present figures around 30 percent, while Netherlands and Greece go below ten.[13] As is well documented, female labour force participation in the Nordic countries is at the top of the list. Here even low-educated women participate to a great extent, being able to rely on subsidized care within a collectively financed public sector. In countries where such services have not been implemented, the purchase of external care depends on the financial possibilities of the single family, generating continuing class differences as well as gender inequalities.

Discussion

The changes in European women's market work during the last decades have been both quantitative and qualitative. In most countries the magic 60 % of female labour force participation of the Lisbon Agenda to be achieved in 2010 is already accomplished and quite a few boast levels of more than 70%. Only Italy, Greece and Spain do still have to reach the goal.

Considering the quality of participation in terms of hours of work, we can note that full-time participation has increased in all countries, with more than five percentage points in Greece, Norway, Portugal and Spain. Only for Germany there is a slight decrease.

The analyses based on the Luxembourg Income Study database confirm the picture of an increased quality of participation in all countries for which it has been possible to get information. The zero hours category has diminished and full-time participation increased. Of importance is also that the for employment-based social rights so obnoxious category of 1-15 hours work has slightly decreased in most countries, except in Germany and Netherlands for women without minor child, thus probably a generational effect.

[13] The high figure of 17 for Sweden in the Education (M) category is probably due to the fact that pre-school teachers nowadays are in fact teachers with a Bachelor university degree.

The European Social Survey data which only give a synchronical cross-national present-day picture confirms the rather low prevalence of the 1-15 hours category. As was the case with the LIS data, information on Greece, Portugal and Spain are here lacking. Judging from the OECD data presented in Table 1 and 2, part-time work is however not a well developed alternative in these three Southern European countries. The differences between total participation figures and full-time participation of Greek, Portuguese and Spanish women are slight in comparison with other European countries. Overall women in Europe occupy a continuously increasing proportion of the labour market. The figures in the zero hours category for mothers with young children are however still very high.

The reasons for the differences in employment status among European women where especially Greece, Italy and Portugal show rather high figures of Own-account and Family workers are probably mainly two, namely the relative size of the agricultural sector in the economy and a process of concentration of activities within the service sector relatively slower, or at an earlier stage, than in other European countries. Presumably these differences will diminish over time, although national political intervention may delay the process.

The Lisbon Agenda promotions of labour force participation of all adult citizens, the welfare – to – work policies, as well as the social investment in children policies may very well lead to an increased presence of women on the labour market. The form of this increased female labour force participation is however still an open question. Politicians of all colours claim the need for development of the service sector as the main strategy for economic growth, since large parts of industrial production has been moved to far away low-wage countries. More and more services will be produced as paid work on the labour market. In order to give women the possibility to enter the labour market it is however reproduction services which have to be developed. Judging from the data presented in this paper, it would seem that we still easily discern three models of gender division of work in the societies we have been looking at (Montanari 2000).

In the first model a major part or reproduction work has been moved out to be performed as subsidized public sector work and most married women, also those with low educational level, are able to participate extensively in market work. The Nordic countries are the foremost examples of this model of gender division of work. In the absence of subsidized care the second model is associated with a differentiation of participation in market work along class

lines, where women with low education participate to a much lesser degree than the highly educated ones. It is within the former group that a great deal of very limited participation is still found, something which is in fact compatible with a continuous placing of the responsibility for reproduction work on the family. The Netherlands and the UK represent this market model of gender division of work in spite of the improved figures during the last decade. The third model is characterized by the highest degrees of inequality as to the gender division of work. It is also in this group that this state of affairs is actively promoted and reinforced by a variety of policies, such as lack of substantive pre-school care facilities and home help for elderly persons, short school days and tax allowances, the so called marriage subsidies. Germany is the prototype for this model; Italy, Spain and partly France also belonging here.

For some countries, especially on the European continent and in Southern Europe, there is thus a long way to go to move the reproduction work out of the family to other institutional arenas, giving women the possibility to initiate or increase their presence on the labour market. In the Nordic countries where these types of reproduction services are well developed and where in fact female labour force participation is at the top, there have however been signs of a backlash due to the efforts of overcoming the economic crisis at the beginning of the 1990s. For example, many local government agencies have cut the subsidized home help services for elderly persons, for budgetary reasons. In the case of care services being auctioned out to private firms, it has been shown that there is a limit to a continuing increase in efficiency and productivity if an acceptable standard of human decency is to be upheld. Already trans-national corporate care chains are withdrawing from especially elder care when profits become too restricted. The result is in both cases an increased burden of reproduction work on women’s shoulders, which may once again constitute an obstacle for their full participation on the labour market.

The two kinds of work, production and reproduction, are not yet considered equally necessary neither by politicians nor by social scientists. And all the same, all societies “pay” for the reproduction work, how ever much concealed it is: subsidized day-care and home help for elderly versus tax allowances for dependent spouses, private care services or care allowances. The effects of the two types of policies, just as lack of any clear policy at all, can be measured in terms of gender as well as class inequalities.

Table 1. Total and full-time labour force participation among women 15-64 years old in OECD countries 1994 and 2005 (percent)

	1994 Total	2005 Total	1994 Full-time	2005 Full-time
Australia	**63**	**68**	**38**	**40**
Austria	**61**	**66**		**46**
Belgium	**51**	**60**	**36**	**40**
Canada	**68**	**73**	**48**	**53**
Denmark	**74**	**75**	**55**	**56**
Finland	**69**	**73**	**61**	**62**
France	**59**	**64**	**45**	**49**
Germany	**61**	**67**	**44**	**41**
Greece	**43**	**55**	**38**	**49**
Ireland	**46**	**60**	**34**	**39**
Italy	**42**	**50**	**33**	**36**
Japan	**58**	**61**	**38**	**35**
Netherlands	**57**	**69**	**26**	**27**
New Zealand	**65**	**71**	**42**	**46**
Norway	**71**	**75**	**44**	**51**
Portugal	**60**	**68**	**51**	**58**
Spain	**46**	**59**	**40**	**46**
Sweden	**77**	**77**	**58**	**61**
Switzerland	**68**	**74**	**37**	**40**
UK	**67**	**70**	**40**	**42**
USA	**69**	**69**	**55**	**57**

Source: OECD Employment Outlook 2006 and own calculations

Table 2. Total and full-time labour force participation among men and women 15-64 years of age in 2005 (percent)

	TOTAL			FULL-TIME		
	Men	**Women**	**Diff.**	**Men**	**Women**	**Diff.**
Australia	**83**	***68***	**15**	**70**	***40***	**30**
Austria	**79**	***66***	**13**	**76**	***46***	**30**
Belgium	**73**	***60***	**13**	**69**	***40***	**29**
Canada	**83**	***73***	**10**	**74**	***53***	**21**
Denmark	**84**	***75***	**9**	**74**	***56***	**18**
Finland	**76**	***73***	**3**	**70**	***62***	**8**
France	**75**	***64***	**11**	**71**	***49***	**22**
Germany	**81**	***67***	**14**	**75**	***41***	**34**
Greece	**79**	***55***	**24**	**77**	***49***	**28**
Ireland	**80**	***60***	**20**	**75**	***39***	**36**
Italy	**74**	***50***	**24**	**71**	***36***	**35**
Japan	**84**	***61***	**23**	**72**	***35***	**37**
Netherlands	**83**	***69***	**14**	**70**	***27***	**43**
New Zealand	**84**	***71***	**13**	**76**	***46***	**30**
Norway	**82**	***75***	**7**	**74**	***51***	**23**
Portugal	**79**	***68***	**11**	**74**	***58***	**16**
Spain	**82**	***59***	**23**	**79**	***46***	**33**
Sweden	**81**	***77***	**4**	**74**	***61***	**13**
Switzerland	**87**	***74***	**13**	**80**	***40***	**40**
UK	**83**	***70***	**13**	**75**	***42***	**33**
USA	**82**	***69***	**13**	**75**	***57***	**18**

Source: OECD Employment Outlook 2006 and own calculations

Table 3. Weekly hours of labour force participation by women 25-54 years old living with a partner and with or without a minor child in mid 1990s and around 2000 (percent).

		0		1-15		16-25		26+	
	Child less than 6 years	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000	1995	2000
Austria	Yes	46	30	4	4	12	17	38	50
	No	38	27	4	7	13	24	46	42
Belgium	Yes	22	26	5	1	19	14	53	59
	No	37	23	3	6	16	20	45	51
France	Yes	37		2		10		51	
	No	28		4		11		57	
Germany	Yes	66	37	9	7	9	10	17	47
	No	29	27	6	14	12	16	52	42
Italy	Yes	47	51	3	3	12	9	38	38
	No	53	50	2	2	9	10	36	38
Netherl.	Yes	48	29	17	13	23	23	12	35
	No	37	30	16	22	17	27	30	21
Sweden	Yes	14		10		13		64	
	No	11		6		14		70	
UK	Yes	54	28	11	9	13	15	22	49
	No	33	23	10	11	14	20	44	47

Data: Luxembourg Income Study (Austria 1994, 2000; Belgium 1997, 2000; France 1994; Germany 1994, 2000; Italy 1995, 2000; Netherlands 1994, 1999; Sweden 1995; UK 1995, 2000).

Table 4. 0-15 hours of labour force participation by women 25-54 years old living with a partner and with or without a minor child around 1990, 1995 and 2000 (percent).

	Child less than 6 years old	1990	1995	2000
Austria	**Yes**		**50**	**34**
	No		**41**	**34**
Belgium	**Yes**	**45**	**28**	**27**
	No	**53**	**40**	**29**
France	**Yes**	**38**	**39**	
	No	**32**	**32**	
Germany	**Yes**	**71**	**75**	**44**
	No	**43**	**36**	**41**
Italy	**Yes**	**58**	**50**	**54**
	No	**59**	**55**	**53**
Netherl.	**Yes**	**75**	**65**	**41**
	No	**47**	**53**	**52**
UK	**Yes**	**71**	**66**	**37**
	No	**34**	**43**	**34**

Data: Luxembourg Income Study (Belgium 1992, 1997, 2000; Germany 1989, 1994, 2000; Italy 1995, 2000; Netherlands 1991, 1994, 1999; UK 1991, 1995, 1999).

Table 5. 26 + hours of labour force participation among women 25-54 years old living with a partner with or without minor child around 1990, 1995 and 2000 (percent).

	Child less than 6 years old	1990	1995	2000
Belgium	**Yes**	**38**	**53**	**59**
	No	**39**	**45**	**51**
France	**Yes**		**51**	
	No		**57**	
Germany	**Yes**	**13**	**17**	**47**
	No	**45**	**52**	**42**
Italy	**Yes**		**38**	**38**
	No		**36**	**38**
Netherl.	**Yes**	**10**	**12**	**35**
	No	**39**	**30**	**21**
Sweden	**Yes**	**58**	**64**	
	No	**67**	**70**	
UK	**Yes**	**16**	**22**	**49**
	No	**55**	**44**	**47**

Data: Luxembourg Income Study (Belgium 1992, 1997, 2000; Germany 1989, 1994, 2000; Italy 1995, 2000; Netherlands 1991, 1994, 1999; UK 1991, 1995, 1999).

Table 6. Contracted working hours for women 25-54 years of age with or without minor children in 2004 (percentage)

	Minor child	0 - 15	16-25	26 +
Austria	**Yes**	**61**	**16**	**24**
	No	**27**	**18**	**56**
Belgium	**Yes**	**37**	**20**	**42**
	No	**29**	**17**	**54**
Denmark	**Yes**	**16**	**7**	**77**
	No	**9**	**6**	**85**
Finland	**Yes**	**37**	**3**	**60**
	No	**6**	**2**	**92**
France	**Yes**	**25**	**12**	**64**
	No	**17**	**10**	**73**
Germany	**Yes**	**68**	**13**	**20**
	No	**30**	**13**	**58**
Ireland	**Yes**	**60**	**15**	**25**
	No	**39**	**15**	**46**
Italy	**Yes**	**51**	**14**	**35**
	No	**37**	**15**	**48**
Netherl.	**Yes**	**68**	**16**	**17**
	No	**37**	**19**	**43**
Sweden	**Yes**	**8**	**6**	**86**
	No	**6**	**10**	**85**
UK	**Yes**	**59**	**23**	**19**
	No	**29**	**17**	**55**

Data: European Social Survey 2004.

Table 7. Participation in market work among women aged 25-54 living with a partner, by high and low educational level, around 2000.

	0 hours			1-15 hours/week			26+ hours/week		
Educational level	**High**	**Low**	**Diff.**	**High**	**Low**	**Diff.**	**High**	**Low**	**Diff.**
Austria	**12**	**39**	**-27**	**4**	**6**	**- 2**	**61**	**41**	**20**
Belgium	**9**	**49**	**-40**	**3**	**5**	**- 2**	**73**	**30**	**43**
Germany	**21**	**42**	**-20**	**6**	**14**	**- 8**	**63**	**31**	**32**
Italy	**15**	**67**	**-52**	**5**	**2**	**3**	**56**	**26**	**30**
Netherlands	**13**	**44**	**-32**	**8**	**23**	**-15**	**51**	**15**	**36**
Sweden	**7**	**23**	**- 16**	**6**	**8**	**-2**	**78**	**52**	**26**
UK	**19**	**33**	**-14**	**7**	**10**	**-3**	**64**	**42**	**22**
USA	**17**	**42**	**-27**	**5**	**3**	**2**	**69**	**49**	**20**

Data: Luxembourg Income Study (Austria 2000, Belgium 2000, Germany 2000, Italy 2000, Netherlands 1999, Sweden 1995, UK 1999, USA 2000).

Table 8. Employment status among women in EU member states in 2003 (percent of total labour force)

	I Employees	II Employers	III Own-account workers	IV Family workers
Austria	**89**	**4**	**5**	**3**
Belgium	**84**	**10 (II + III)**		**6**
Denmark	**95**	**4 (II + III)**		**1**
Finland	**91**	**8**	**-**	**-**
Germany	**92**	**3**	**4**	**2**
Greece	**64**	**3**	**19**	**14**
Ireland	**92**	**2**	**4**	**-**
Italy	**79**	**8**	**7**	**6**
Netherl.	**91**	**8 (II + III)**		**1**
Portugal	**75**	**4**	**19**	**2**
Spain	**85**	**3**	**8**	**3**
Sweden	**95**	**5**	**-**	**-**
UK	**92**	**7 (II + III)**		**-**

Data: ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2004 and own calculations

Table 9 Selected economic activity fields among women in EU member states in 2003 (percent of total labour force participation)

	Manuf. D	Trade G	Hotels Rest. H	Educ. M	Health Soc.work N	Other services O
Austria	**11**	**20**	**8**	**10**	**15**	**6**
Belgium	**9**	**15**	**4**	**12**	**18**	**5**
Denmark	**11**	**14**	**3**	**10**	**32**	**5**
Finland	**11**	**12**	**5**	**10**	**27**	**7**
France	**10**	**14**	**4**	**11**	**16**	**2**
Germany	**14**	**17**	**4**	**8**	**19**	**7**
Greece	**10**	**18**	**8**	**10**	**8**	**4**
Ireland	**12**	**16**	**9**	**11**	**18**	**6**
Italy	**18**	**17**	**5**	**13**	**10**	**6**
Netherl.	**19**	**15**	**3**	**5**	**5**	**4**
Portugal	**19**	**14**	**7**	**9**	**11**	**4**
Spain	**12**	**19**	**8**	**10**	**11**	**6**
Sweden	**9**	**11**	**3**	**17**	**28**	**6**
UK	**8**	**17**	**5**	**13**	**20**	**6**

D = Manufacturing G = Wholesale and retail trade H = Hotels and restaurants M = Education N = Health and Social work O = Other service activities

Data: ILO Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2004 and own calculations

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