Lost in transition? Social uses of women’s part-time work hanging in between old and new logics

Valeria Insarauto

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LOST IN TRANSITION?

SOCIAL USES OF WOMEN’S PART-TIME WORK
HANGING IN BETWEEN OLD AND NEW LOGICS

International co-directed PhD Thesis in Sociology of Work (SPS/09)
Submitted by: Valeria INSARAUTO

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INTRODUCTION

During the last fifty years part-time employment has considerably increased in the majority of the European countries, affecting nowadays mainly the female labour force. Essentially, all European countries share nowadays a common aspect: the salience of female part-time work, and particularly the relevance of part-time work to the work-life balance strategies of many European women. Most governments have declared themselves in favour of the development of part-time work and the gender dimension seems to play an important role in such a context. In fact, although they do so for many and different official reasons, it is worth to underline that part-time is seen in all European countries as an important and strategic instrument to encourage and promote the incorporation of women into the labour force. Basically, part-time employment has been publicly praised as a tool that may offer the chance of a better balance between working life and other activities since, usually, part-time allows a more flexible working week than full-time jobs and, accordingly, it potentially helps a better reconciliation of work and family-care responsibilities. Evidence suggests that in a number of countries a large percentage of women work part-time because of family responsibilities, and in some of these countries the possibility to find a part-time job may be crucial for labour market participation under such circumstances (Jaumotte 2003).

Nonetheless, the evolution of this form of employment cannot be simply considered a quantitative evolution; it is also a qualitative one. Likewise, as “women’s affair”, part-time work cannot be considered as a univocal affair. Actually, signals of qualitative changes are identified in the growing diversification of part-time work social uses and of the groups of workers concerned by this employment form (Naegele et al. 2003; Riedmann et al. 2006; Anxo et al. 2007). In particular, according to some commentators it is possible to observe the emergence of a new form of part-time work that widens its functionalities by going beyond the satisfaction of what is usually considered an exclusive women’s need, i.e. balancing work and family responsibilities, and becoming progressively more respondent to everybody’s necessity of arranging a broader articulation between work and extra-work activities over the life-course (Nicole-Drancourt 2009; Anxo, Boulin and Fagan 2006; Courbier 2004; O’Reilly 2003). However, despite these facts, the use of part-time work as a work-life balance facility remains the most widespread and it continues to represent a crucial element to the determination of gender dynamics in the labour market, in particular to the segregation that characterizes the occupational trajectories of women as compared to those of men. As a result,
part-time employment has actually reached a point of great ambivalence in its process of development.

In this research we propose to investigate the relationship between part-time work and women’s employment as the main indicator of the ambivalence that characterizes at present time part-time work in order to gain some understanding about the direction of the future developments of this employment form and the significance of their potential effects in the more general part-time employment scenario. In this sense, part-time work having become a ‘women’s affair’, further investigation on this form of employment should try to provide with new arguments and explanations about three fundamental points: what is the actual relation between women and part-time employment? In what direction is it going? To what extent is the nature of such a relation relevant to the future development of part-time work?

The general idea behind this proposal is to call attention to the new arguments, both practical and theoretical, that are gaining consideration in the sociological debate about part-time work. These arguments claim the emergence of a new phase in the evolution of part-time work that particularly concerns the 2000’s, and open innovative perspectives on the analysis of the potentialities of part-time work as an integrative employment form. In view of that, in this work the relationship between women and part-time work is considered the indicator through which it is possible to understand whether there is a transition currently undergoing in the development of part-time work with respect to the social uses of this form of employment. In particular, the transition consists in a gradual shift from gendered uses of part-time work to the gender-neutral use of this latter for the management of multi-activity periods over individuals’ life-course. Accordingly, the studying of the relationship between women and part-time work shall provide with information about whether such a transition can be considered a reliable option for the future scenarios of part-time work. In this sense, the question of the title “lost in transition?” is relevant to the twofold necessity of taking into account such arguments and relating them to current realities in society and in the labour market. It means that if on one hand we recognize the idea that one of the possible future developments of part-time work may be its social use as gender-neutral instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity over individuals’ life-course thanks to a transition to new logics of part-time work uses, on the other the ambivalence that characterizes part-time work asks for further investigation of the logics behind the high feminization of this employment form and its uses in order to understand to what extent such a possible development is actually close or not to current reality. The investigation of such issues is relevant for three main reasons.

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The first one deals with the quantitative dimension of part-time employment. Actually, even if differences persist among counties in the dynamics behind the growing incidence of part-time work in quantitative terms, it is possible to see that such dynamics converge at the European level in permanently increasing rates of female part-time work. Between 2000 and 2005, the increase in female part-time employment levels in the EU was more than twice the increase in female full-time employment (respectively 43% and 20%), as well as in male part-time employment (15%) (European Commission 2006). Likewise, considering the whole decade, the proportion of women working part-time increased from 28.5% to 32%, while for men it increased from 6.4% to 8.3%, and on average the rate of part-time work for women kept being four times higher than the rate of part-time work for men (Eurofound 2011).

The second reason concerns the normative dimension of part-time employment. In the context of the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 specific objectives and targets have been set in line with the need for rising female employment rates and, accordingly, policy makers are facing many thorny questions for what concerns the measures to implement in order to accomplish with such objectives and targets. In this context, part-time employment has been publicly praised as a tool that may offer the chance of a better reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. By the way, the process of normative recalibration that is undergoing in many welfare states in Europe for what concerns the diffusion and promotion of new values, symbols and speeches related to the promotion of female participation into the labour force (Ferrera & Hemerijck 2003), is imposing to carefully rethink the logics and the paradigms of reference on the basis of which women’s access to employment should be granted.

These two first reasons concern mainly the problems that part-time work concretely poses in terms of a social phenomenon that affects women’s labour force participation. The third reason refers to the sociological debate on part-time work as a privileged space for the investigation of these problems.

During the last two decades, there has been a considerable number of researches dealing with the relation between women employment and part-time work that have been carried out, but nowadays the sociological explanation of this relation seems in need for a refreshment in line with the power of the social change that it is ongoing in our societies. In fact, as we will see later on, many analytical perspectives still rely on the classical sociological argument about the juxtaposition between action and structure, while mutations in individuals’ lifestyles and in socio-institutional frameworks ask for a new stream of researches attempting to produce innovative empirical categories as well as original theoretical arguments in order to widen the
spaces of comprehension of the future developments of part-time work and its relation to
depictions of future developments of part-time work and its relation to women’s labour force participation.
The purpose of this study is to develop a comparative, explanatory and secondary data
analysis aimed at depicting changes in women’s part-time work profiles and uses over the
2000s in two different national contexts. Specifically, it addresses the examination of if and
how the logics behind the high feminization of part-time work and the social uses of this latter
have changed over the period under review, as well as the patterns of elaboration and
realization of such logics. A micro-perspective is adopted, meaning that changing patterns and
practices are primarily investigated at the individual level, with particular reference to socio-
demographic and work-related characteristics. However, the macro level is also taken into
account, and space is given to the analysis of societal contexts and of the specific
characterization and importance that social phenomena assume within them.
In view of that, a cross-national comparative approach is particularly appropriate for detecting
micro-macro intersections. At this regard, it is important to remark that the choice to adopt an
international comparative perspective it is not related to any aspiration to realize a term-for-
term contrast on the objects of analysis. Actually, with international comparison we mean a
real heuristic research strategy that allows for the elaboration of dynamic perspectives on the
individuation of tensions and modes of articulation of social forces and changes, and that
hence goes further the systemic highlighting of coherencies within each national reality and
divergences between national realities. It means that, on one hand, we will be giving attention
to the particularities of each specific country involved in the analysis trying to understand
how certain social institutions and other related aspects of the social structure affect women
employment and their relation to part-time work. On the other hand, we will be trying to
understand how the social process of part-time work transition concretely develops and varies
systematically within certain characteristics of each national context according to the
dynamics that we will illustrate in our conceptual scheme. In view of that, this research
focuses on only two specific countries, which are France and Italy.
Comparing France and Italy is interesting because they differ greatly in their socio-economic,
normative and institutional configurations. They have similar levels of part-time work, but
this latter has developed with different intensity and according to different dynamics in the
two countries. Moreover, the approval of new roles for women has followed a different
timing. In Italy a cultural shift has not yet completely come about, while in France women
enjoy a much more consolidated employment position that they have gained through their
assimilation to the model of full-time male employment. Likewise, childcare is still perceived
and largely practiced as a women’s issue in the two countries, but in France a large set of childcare services and measures have developed over time, which is not the case in Italy. Accordingly, levels and patterns of women labour force participation consistently diverge in the two countries. Overall, this implies that the relationship between women and part-time work is declined differently in the French and Italian contexts.

The comparative dimension of this work does not concern exclusively comparison across space, but also comparison across time. In view of that, the investigation conducted in the framework of the secondary data analysis part of this research will draw on the national Labour Force Survey of the two countries (Enquête Emploi for France, and Rilevazione sulle Forze di Lavoro for Italy), dated between 2003 and 2010. We will realize both descriptive and analytical statistics mainly in a pseudo-panel perspective according to the necessities posed by the issues under investigation.

In view of that, this thesis is structured in three parts, each one composed by three chapters. The first part, titled “The research framework”, serves to contextualize the scope of the research with respect to its cross-national comparative dimension, the current debate on part-time work, and the conceptualization of the research outline elaborated on the building of such elements. Chapter one treats the thorny issue of the international comparability of part-time work, the difficulties of finding a common definition of this employment form between legal and statistical standards, and presents different theoretical and methodological approaches to cross-national research. In the end, the chapter explores the values and the limitations of developing an international comparison about part-time work and exposes the main points of the comparative procedure built up in this thesis, which refers mainly to the societal approach. Chapter two focuses on the centrality of the gender dimension of part-time work, especially with respect to female employment patterns, through a critical analysis of the current sociological debate on part-time work. In particular, the main contributions and the key findings available in the sociological literature about the factors underlying the development of women’s part-time work at the socio-institutional and individual level are examined. Essentially, the different dimensions considered capable of affecting women’s labour force participation on a part-time basis that emerge from the various theories are reviewed in order to point out the necessity of developing new kinds of sociological investigation of this employment form in order to overcome the dualistic and incomplete perspective that has been constructed so far. Chapter three illustrates the main theoretical arguments that are at basis of the research and their elaboration in the conceptual scheme of the “process of transition of part-time work” within which research questions and general
expectations are formulated. These latter concern mainly the evolution, the realization and the elaboration of innovative logics of part-time work uses and what accounts for the differences between the French and Italian context at this regard, especially with respect to the role of contrasting cultural and structural effects. In its final section, the chapter presents the main analytical and methodological steps through which the research outline will be developed in the following parts of the thesis.

The second part, titled “Case-studies”, consists in the speculative examination of the paths of development that have affected institutional and social practices concerning part-time work and women’s employment in the countries under study. The aim of this part is to settle the comparative analysis of each country-specific societal context, and to depict the characterization of social phenomena that have to be compared in order to relate them to the diverse societal contexts and to the different importance that they assume in each different society. Preliminary attention is given in chapter four to the analysis of the European Union context, since the formation of a European unified market and the development of a European social and policy framework demand to situate each societal context also in relation to the influences that it may come from the European space. In this chapter trends over time in the development of part-time work and basic facts and figures at this regard are first presented paying particular attention to employment levels, feminization levels and diversification patterns. Then, the development of part-time work is analyzed in the light of the EU policy approach, employers’ practices and women’s practices and their possible interrelations.

Chapters five and six present respectively the French and Italian case. The structure of these chapters is similar to chapter four, with the exception that more attention is paid to those aspects that are considered peculiar of each national context, such as for example a more or less extensive role played by social partners, or the specificity of the socio-institutional debate on part-time work as it is the case in France. This second part of the thesis concludes with a section that addresses in a more direct way the cross-national comparison between France and Italy on the basis of the most interesting patterns that will have been depicted through the drawing of the two case-studies with respect to different approaches to part-time work promoted by each social actor (i.e. institutions, employers, social partners, workers), the dimensions of part-time work they endorse and the favoured types of part-time work use.

The third part, titled “Empirical results” presents and discusses the empirical findings of the secondary data analyses. Chapter seven outlines the data, hypotheses and methods on which the empirical analyses set out in the rest of the thesis are based. The chapter begins with the operationalization of the conceptual framework presented in chapter three and presents the
pseudo-panel design of the analyses. It continues with the description of the datasets, the variables and the sample used in the empirical analyses. On the buildings of the theoretical accounts discussed in chapter three, and facts and trends outlined in chapter five and six, hypotheses are reformulated in terms of changes in correlates and relationships between these latter, paying particular attention to what factors and dimensions may account for differences in part-time work uses and their effects between French and Italian women. The chapter then illustrates the methods used to estimate the statistical models on which the analyses are based, namely logistic and multinomial regression, and discusses the methodological issues of unobserved heterogeneity, sample selection and endogeneity, and the extent these problems exist in the models estimated and how they could eventually be tackled. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the question about the evolution of women’s part-time work profiles and uses over the 2000s. First, typical part-time work profiles of women presenting different individual and work-related characteristics are delineated, examining if and how these profiles have changed in the two countries and over the period under review. Then, the focus is on patterns of part-time work uses and their specific characterization in France and Italy, trying to identify what types of uses are the most frequent and representative and in correspondence of what factors different types of part-time work use show significant dynamics of change over time. After this first descriptive section, the analyses focus on the changing relationships between the correlates that represent the individual and work-related characteristics considered relevant in the context of our study and on how they are related to women’s part-time work patterns and type of uses. The analyses presented in chapter nine assess the role of part-time work with respect to its uses in the realization and elaboration of different logics concerning women’s articulation of time between work and extra-work activities. The first section of the chapter illustrates the descriptive results about both the realization of working time preferences in the context of the individuals’ actual employment situation and elaboration of preferences for part-time work in the context of a wish for an adjustment in individual working time arrangements, particularly with respect to types of part-time work uses. The second section presents the results of the logistic regression models. The conclusive part of the thesis summarizes the main analytical and empirical findings and answers the main question posed in the title: “lost in transition?” In particular, it closes the argumentation by trying to outline the strong points and shortcomings of this research, as well future research perspectives on this theme in order to foster the sociological debate on part-time work, without eventually forgetting to draw implications for part-time employment policies.
PART I
THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK
CHAPTER 1

WHAT CONSTITUTES INTERNATIONALLY COMPARABLE PART-TIME WORK?

1.1 THE PROBLEM OF FINDING A STANDARD DEFINITION

1.1.1 In search for a definition between legal and statistical standards

The first difficulty encountered in any research about part-time work is to define it. In fact, there is not a universally agreed definition of part-time work. Hence, a preliminary step is required in order to start an analysis about part-time employment patterns in Europe: to clarify what part-time work means. Then, given the lack of international standards of this form of employment, the situation becomes far more complicated when the point is the international comparability of part-time work and data on part-time work.

Broadly speaking part-time work involves a reduction in the official full-time working week, i.e. working time arrangements with a usually shorter working time than the full-time volume of hours. By the way, the precise meaning of such a statement involves significant variation between the European Union countries, since specific characteristics apply in Member States. Nevertheless, defining what has to be considered as part-time work is important both from a legal and socio-economical point of view: in the first case to make it possible to define and protect the rights of part-time workers; in the second case to assess the relative importance of part-time employment in countries’ overall economy and its influence on societies, households and individuals (Gomez, Pons and Martí 2002).

International organisations, such as the European Union (EU) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), provide with legal definitions that in principle serve to identify a particular category of workers enjoying certain rights, like the right not to be discriminated against in relation to other categories of worker, and to determine whether a particular worker, or group of workers, is covered by the legislation governing part-time work.

The Framework Agreement on Part-Time Work concluded in 1997 among the European social partners gives the following definition of part-time work: “the term part-time worker refers to an employee whose normal hours of work, calculated on a weekly basis or on average over a period of employment up to one year, are less than the normal hours of work of a comparable full time worker” (European Communities 1998, p.13).
Likewise, the ILO Convention No. 175 states that “the term part-time worker means an employed person whose normal hours of work are less than those of comparable full-time workers”. The reference to “comparable full-time worker” is explained by the fact that “the number of hours of work per week or per month that are regarded as being normal for full-time employees vary considerably according to the profession or activity concerned” (ILO 1992, p.5). Accordingly, the number of hours may be calculated weekly or on average over a given period of employment.

In both cases the image of a “comparable full-time worker” complicates the situation when the aim is to compare the incidence and the characteristics of part-time work in international perspective. Actually, what is defined as part-time work in light of the fact that the amount of hours of work is less than the number of hours worked by comparable full-time workers is interpreted differently according to each country’s national law. Moreover, full-time work duration is likely to noticeably vary between EU countries. As a general tendency, it can be said that part-time work is considered as an employment characteristic and it is defined in relation to full-time work, with reference to the number of hours worked for the type of job in a certain industry or occupation. Then, administrative definitions may be drawn on the basis of statutory hours, normal hours, contract working hours or the description of the job at the place of work (Van Blaster, Lemaitre and Marianna 1997).

Definitions based on statutory and normal hours exist in very few Member countries and are strictly connected with the institutional context in the countries concerned. France, for example, has a statutory definition of part-time work according to which to be a part-time worker an employee must work monthly an amount of hours which is less than four-fifths of statutory or normal hours. In case some collective agreements exist, part-time work is defined as being at least a half-day of work per week less than the number of days worked full-time, that is that in a standard five-days week part-time work must be less than nine-tenths of the hours worked full-time. In Spain, collective agreements or working practices in the firm concerned must be taken into account when applying the part-time division to workers whose working hours do not exceed two-thirds of those worked in an equivalent full-time job.

Basically, despite these common legal definitions given by EU and ILO, each country must use its own judgment in defining the concept of part-time work (Gomez, Pons and Marti 2002) and, since there is no internationally accepted definition of the minimum number of hours per week that must be worked for a job to be considered part-time, the dividing line is generally drawn on the basis of the rules laid down by each country. The range of legal definitions currently in use is hence quite broad. As a result, it is important to underline that
part-time work may encompass working time close to the full-time standards and others that are much lower, so the range of average working times within and between the countries is to some extent wider than in the case of full-time (Fagan and Burchell 2002). The problem remains also when considering the elaboration of a statistical definition. In fact, the definition of part-time employment used in statistical surveys may often appear at a first sight somewhat arbitrary. For example, in the OECD statistics, part-time employment refers to persons who usually works less than 30 hours per week in main job, while in the EU statistics it is left to individuals to classify themselves as full-time or part-time workers on the basis of the self-perception of their contract status and no attempt is made to provide an objective definition based on the length of working hours (Koopmans and Schippers 2003; Zhou 2007). Generally statisticians rely on three possible criteria to define whether, in household employment surveys, an individual is considered a part-time worker.

According to the first criteria, it is the employee himself who makes its own assessment of his work. Among the countries that apply this method there are France, Italy and Czech Republic. In this case, what matters is the respondent’s judgement, which can reflect either the legal nature of the work contract, or the designation of the job by the employer, or the employee’s perception of the intensity of work. The use of this first criteria allows to achieve results that are likely to come close to those that would be obtained by using the legal definition of part-time work, but such results have a main limit: they may be affected by the subjective perception of the respondent.

The second criteria is based on a threshold, identified by a cut-off on the hours usually worked. This method is used in countries like Austria, Finland, Hungary, Norway and Sweden. In this case, the respondent is directly asked how many hours a week he/she works, and people who declare to work less than e.g. 30 hours are classified as part-time workers. The main problem related with the use of this criteria is that it does not take into account differences between hours worked in various sectors of activities and occupations.

The third criteria consists in combining the previous two criteria. In principle, such a strategy should allow corrections to be made for what concerns the main limitations encountered by the methods applied by the first two criteria\(^1\). Countries like Germany, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom make use of this criteria. In Spain, for example, respondent who say

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\(^1\) This is what it is done by some member states in the European Union in order to adjust replies from the Labour Force Survey (LFS) respondents on their contract status, according to the fact that the Statistical Office of the European Communities (Eurostat) suggested in the “Methods and Definitions” LFS’ guide it is indicated that part-time work should rarely exceed 35 hours, and that full-time work usually starts at about 30 hours (Zhou 2007).
that they work part-time and usually work more than 35 hours are reclassified as full-timers, while those who say that they hold a full-time job and work less than 30 hours are reclassified as part-timers. In the Netherlands adjustments are made on the basis of a 35 hours worked threshold, according to which full-time work which falls below such a threshold is reclassified as part-time and job requiring to work 35 hours or more is reclassified as full-time. Finally, Germany and United Kingdom make use of a threshold as well: a self-defined part-time job cannot longer be considered a part-time job if the usual amount of working hours exceed respectively 36 and 40 hours a week.

A study from the OECD (Van Bastelaer, Lemaitre and Marianna 1997) found out that there is generally a coincidence between the incidence of part-time work and the nature of the definition used to define it. Accordingly, in countries where part-time work defined on the basis of national definition is common, there is a significant number of jobs of more than 30 hours per week that are classified as part-time. These countries tend to use a definition based on a 35 hours threshold. On the contrary, in countries where part-time work is less common according to national definitions, there is a high incidence of jobs of less than 35 hours per week that are classified as full-time. In these countries part-time jobs are generally identified on the basis of the self-assessment criteria. Moreover, such a study pointed out another interesting fact: using a definition of part-time work based on a threshold (30 or 35 weekly working hours) reduces the variability among countries in the incidence of part-time work compared to when national definitions are used. Moreover, the use of an uniform threshold does not substantially change the relative position of countries regarding the frequency of part-time work. In principle, this should solve the problem of finding a definition of part-time work suitable for cross-national comparative research. In point of fact, finding a ‘technical’ cross-national comparable definition of part-time work represents just a part of the issue.

1.1.2 Cross-national comparative research on part-time work: is it just a matter of definitions?

Beyond various definitions of part-time work, there is also question of whether part-time work can be treated as an homogeneous category. Its variety is an empirical question depending only in part on the statistical norm of a full-time job. Whatever the “technical” definition chosen to identify and compare part-time work in international perspective (e.g. defining a threshold or relying on employees self-definition) it remains as a fact that part-
time workers are increasingly recognized as an heterogeneous group of employees who work less than full-time for a variety of reasons (Blossfeld and Hakim 1997; Zhou 2007), and that there is a considerable variation in the actual patterns of part-time work between countries. This is especially true if we consider that part-time work may cover different form of employment (Ville and Walthery 2003), and it may be organized around marginal or substantial working schedules and tasks (O’Reilly and Fagan, 1998). Likewise, there are also universal trends in part-time employment that can be observed across countries, like the fact that it is mainly performed by women. Hence, differences and similarities in the extent and form of part-time work suggest that the elaboration of a ‘technical’ internationally comparable definition is just the first step towards the development of a comparative analysis about this employment form.

Surely, the comparability of statistical data represents a frequent problem that researches encounter when developing a comparative research, and to have a common definition of the objects and the facts that have to be measured and then compared is fundamental in this sense. As we have seen, the elaboration of such definitions is quite often very tricky, and in the end many researchers have to accept to draw upon rough definitions that imply many limitations and extreme caution when comparing and interpreting the results of their analysis. Yet, differences in classification system and changes over time are frequently presented as an obstacle to research (Desrosières 1996).

Such a problem is particularly acute in the field of working time research. Actually, not just working time regulations and standards largely differ between countries, but working time models are encountering great transformations all around Europe under the pressure of increasing flexibilisation and the emergence of new forms of individualisation and modulation of employees’ working time arrangements. Accordingly, traditional indicators on working time are losing their convenience in terms of making working time patterns and dynamics comparable between countries (Lallement 2001).

The case of part-time employment is especially representative. As we have already mentioned, definitions of part-time work vary considerably between countries, and this great variability it is not simply related to the absence of statistical harmonization, but to the reality of part-time work itself, which is intrinsically diversified as well as ambiguous. Actually, the term “part-time work” encompasses a wide range of employment situations and conditions (part-time work adopted as a repairing measure against unemployment, part-time work to adapt the labour force to the need of flexibilisation in the production process, working time reduction in response to
employees’ needs and requests, multiple job holding, etc.) that can be intended as completely different social phenomena, even when a common term it is used to identify all of them. Moreover, in a number of industrialized countries certain forms of part-time work have not been considered for a long time as “gainful employment”, especially in cases where weekly working hours were inferior than standard “half-time” work (Pfau-Effinger 2004). As a result, even if nowadays Europeans and international organizations as OECD have tried to standardize the definition and collection of data and statistics on employment, the way the so called form of “marginal employment” have to be recorded still represents a problem and differences between countries about this aspect persist. Overall, the main concern in the definition of part-time employment has been the search of a threshold based on the number of working hours, but actually it seems very reductive to think that such a threshold could give uniqueness to the category of part-time work, since the main feature of part-time work which is shared by part-time work in every country it is the fact that this employment form is considered a deviation from what it is perceived to be the normal full-time working pattern. Accordingly, it has been suggested that in the development of an international comparison about part-time work the main concern should be no more the definition of a common threshold, rather the reference to such a character of deviation (Michon 2003). In fact, if we go beyond the search for a “technical” definition, we can see that the term “part-time work” serves to express also a social phenomenon and a social process. At the same time it does not represent only certain social facts, but also cultural constructs. In this sense, it becomes clear how the definition of part-time employment is derived from the concept of what it is socially defined as gainful employment, which in general corresponds to the standard full-time work (Pfau-Effinger 2004), since different society provides with different interpretation of the employment status of certain groups of workers. Then, those differences contribute to the determination of the public perception of part-time work, which in turn influences the types of jobs open to part-time employees (Stier, Lewin-Epstein e Braun 2001).

As a result, we see that in order to define and to study part-time work in a cross-national comparative perspective, it is really important to take into account the institutional and societal contexts in which part-time work is situated, since there are several variables that play a role in the configuration of such a context as well as in the identification of what constitutes internationally comparable part-time work. For this reason, a preliminary genuine sociological viewpoint on comparative research is necessary in order both to frame a meaningful theoretical blueprint for the comparability of different social contexts in which
part-time work is situated, and to underline the relevance of the use of a comparative perspective in the studying of the evolution of part-time work.

1.2 **BEYOND LEGAL AND STATISTICAL CONCERNS: ASSESSING THE INTERNATIONAL COMPARABILITY OF PART-TIME WORK IN A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE**

1.2.1 **Historical background to the debate on comparative analysis in sociology**

Since the earlier phases of its evolution, sociology has been strongly associated with making comparative analyses on societies in order to investigate individual issues. Actually, leading writers like Marx, Durkheim, Weber were concerned with comparative research in a very extended way. The work of these authors was mainly influenced by classical evolution research, whose main concepts suggest that, when it comes to social development, countries pass through a similar sequence of historical stages as they become more ‘civilized’. In such a framework, the main aim of comparative research used to be not the explanation of differences but the discovery of universal trends and patterns of specific phenomena in the societies compared (Pfau-Effinger 2004). Accordingly, a stream of universalist theories sharing a similar set of basic assumptions about the trajectory of social development from the “traditional” to the “modern” society has been gaining more and more importance as a reference point in comparative sociological research.

Later on, functional analyses on single societies started to develop with the explicit scope of concentrate on differences between societies in order to show the relationship and the process of evolution between different aspects of the same society (O’Reilly 1996). In particular, this new branch of researches, that found its origins in the work of Malinowski, emphasized the consideration of societies as unique coherent entities and the need for a more holistic approach when analyzing and comparing them.

In recent times, international comparison has starting to gain increasingly attention from the 1960’s, especially in the context of the cold war, then it has continued to acquire greater importance during the process of decolonization and emergence of the third world, till the moment when the process of construction of an unique economic and social European space has began (Vigour 2005).
During the last thirty years various researches streaming has contributed to affirm the importance of comparative analysis in sociology. One concerns the increase in the use of quantitative methods, which has favoured the diffusion of analyses based on internationally comparable data (Desrosières 1996), especially for the investigation of political behaviour, social classes dynamics in terms of cultural and social practices, as well as social and professional mobility. Then, the diffusion of large-scale international comparative projects aimed at data collection and collation through descriptive or survey methods such as those carried out by the European Co-ordination Centre for Research and Documentation in Social Sciences and the Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living conditions have contributed as well (Hantrais and Mangen 1996).

Nowadays, comparative researches are widely diffused in the domain of sociology of work, educational sociology, social policy, and gender studies. In any case, conflicting traditions run deep and persist. Basically, the search for either universal or particular trends in social developments has continued to represent the two main approaches that underpin contemporary debates about the scope for making comparative analyses. In other words, one of the main concerns of comparative cross-national research is still the juxtaposition between the focus on laws of convergence and similarities in social developments, and the emphasis on variation and divergences when analyzing social dynamics settled in different economic and institutional settings.

In the specific case of comparative analysis of part-time employment, universal trends have been identified for example in the ways part-time work has appeared to be emerging as a universal modification to the existing sexual division of labour, while differences in working conditions related to a wide range of aspects have been claimed for instance in order to give salience to the diversity of part-time employment developments in different countries.

As we have already mentioned, such a twofold perspective reflects the main analytical and methodological tenets that have been developed in the comparative cross-national research tradition. Nevertheless, at the same time it is important to mention that significant contributions to the field of cross-national research have tried to overcome the problems and the limitations posed by such a perspective both at a theoretical and empirical level (O’Reilly 1996). In fact, a range of theoretical approaches to cross-national employment research have been developed with the attempt to contribute in the elaboration of an appropriate comparative theory and the construction of a dialectical framework able to synthesize the universal/particular dichotomy.
Since the aim of this thesis is to be a comparative one, in the next paragraph we will review the most important of the existing theoretical comparative frameworks that have been elaborated in the research on work and welfare, in order to draw on their most significant contributions in the construction of our cross-national investigation on part-time work.

1.2.2 Theoretical approaches to cross-national employment research

The identification and classification of different comparative approaches are not easy tasks to be accomplished. It has been argued that the classifications that have been proposed so far cannot be considered satisfactory, since they are not able to encompass all the studies that have been addressed in comparative perspective (Vigour 2005). Nevertheless, such classifications have at least an undeniable heuristic utility since they contribute in orientating the researcher among the various streams of comparative research.

Roughly speaking, in the field of international comparison on work and employment systems it is possible to find two dominant paradigms: the first one refers to universal theories of convergence, the second one to the cultural approach (O’Reilly 1996; Létablier 1998; Lallement 2003; Pfau-Effinger 2004). Basically, this distinction corresponds in some way to the emphasis that these different approaches put either on the influence of institutional regulation or on attitudes and capacity of actors to bring about change. Then, it can be additionally related to whether these approaches adopt a gender blind standpoint or try to include a gendered perspective.

The first paradigm encompasses three kinds of theories: Marxism, which attempt to interpret the dynamics of social change in industrial societies on the basis of the class struggle; Industrialism, which sees in technologies and technical innovations the force of development and unification of society; Contingency theories, which are mainly interested in the articulation between business structures and social environments in order to build up a scale of social progress. As we have already mentioned, the main assumption shared by these theories is that generalisations can be made on the universal level, and that they are applicable to all countries. Accordingly, such theories have been acknowledged of the merit of having argued that there are shared, universally identifiable, pressures and trends working across industrialized societies. Nonetheless, in practices they have been criticized of being inadequate because it has been claimed that the fact that organisations or societies experience similar challenge does not necessarily
imply the adoption of identical strategies to deal with these challenges, since national institutions, actors and values mediate the social change process. Then, another important criticism refers to the fact that the gender issue is rarely taken into account and, hence, the increasing participation of women in paid work is a fact that is almost completely ignored.

The second paradigm refers to approaches that have tried to give more attention to the role of culture. It encompasses three main research streams as well: the ideational approach, where culture, intended as practices, beliefs, and values of individuals within a given system, represents the main concern when evaluating differences between societies; the institutional approach, where culture receives a more materialist connotation, since it is considered as differences in values which are embedded in the social and economic institutions and that support the continuation or traditional values and practices; the intermediary approach, that claims to combine the advantages of the two previous approaches without inherit their limitations by trying to show the relationship between societal structures, institutions and the attitudes of the actors involved in these spheres towards their working environment (O’Reilly 1996). The ideational approach has been recognized of the merit of capturing the values and beliefs of social actors, but it has been argued that the attempt to explain societal differences simply in terms of cultural differences provides little insights into the material and historical origins of cultural variation and changes. Consequently the ideational approach has been criticized as tautological. In particular, suggestions have been addressed by institutional societal approaches when they affirm that cultural domination or hegemonic power is at least partly embodied in social and economic institutions and that these institutions may create different material and ideological constraints and resources for social action (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). The intermediary approach has been considered more fruitful in this respect, since it manages to identify both historical constraints and social actors’ perceptions in their accounts for societal differences (O’Reilly 1996).

In general, it can be said that universalists basically ignore the concept of culture, or they consider it just as a marginal phenomenon or an additional variable, while culturalist really try to integrate culture at several levels of their analyses, the socio-economic, the institutional, as well as the psychological level of the individuals. Moreover, culturalist approaches not just take more account of both the role of individuals and social values, as well as institutional effects, but they allow also incorporating a gendered perspective on
the role of actors within the institutions of the state, the sphere of economic production and social reproduction.

For these reasons, we are going to focus on these latter and to further illustrate their contributions and their developments in the debate on comparative research. In particular we are interested in the stream of institutional approaches to the cross-national analysis. These approaches encompass the societal employment system approach and the gender system approach.

1.2.2.1 Employment system approach

The societal employment system approach is rooted in industrial sociology and in economic theories of labour market segmentation. It encompasses mainly structuralistic and institutional theories that generally assume that social structures and influences of institutions are the main factors that influence the variations of phenomena in the comparison of societies (Pfau-Effinger 2004).

The most well known theory elaborated in the framework of this approach is the societal effect approach (Maurice 1989; Maurice 1994; Maurice et al. 1979; Maurice et al. 1982; Maurice et al. 1992). Its main characteristic is to be a holistic approach that focus on the distinctiveness of a given employment system. Basically, it interprets and explain cross-national differences by situating them within the constellation of particular institutional developments where each country it is always seen as a distinctive entity.

The societal effect approach refuses to do “term-for-term” comparisons between countries. Instead, it argues that it is not possible to examine separate aspects of a given system without locating it in its specific societal context (O’Reilly 1996). Accordingly, it proposes to analyze institutions as they are located within a specific societal configuration and to compare countries as holistic societal units in order to search for societal coherencies within every single country involved in the analysis (Vigour 2005).

Each institutional system is argued to have a degree of autonomy within an interdependent macro structure, and in such a context social behaviour is conceived as institutionally embedded, as well as institutions are supposed to be modifiable through social action (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). As a result, in the societal effect approach the studying of the broader social and economic context in which institutions and actors’ behaviour are situated represents a fundamental element to the understanding of the features of a given phenomenon in society, as well as to the depiction of the general
connotations of a specific societal system. Each country is considered as a unique that emerges from the complex articulation between micro and macro phenomena that takes place in the specificity of every single national reality, where it is possible to depict a strong relationship between organization of work at the micro level of the firm and national institutions at the macro level. It means that the societal approach has the advantage to combine at the same time the micro and the macro level, and to highlight in this way the different types of constraints and opportunities that are presented to a particular set of actors in a given societal system (O’Reilly 2006).

Comparability in the societal approach refers, hence, to the significance of social forms that differs with the societal context and can be evaluated in a proper way only when such a context is included in the frame of the comparative analysis (Pfau-Effinger 2004). Therefore, making comparison become a process characterized by both discontinuity to the extent that a “term-for-term” comparison is excluded, and continuity based on the comparison of each societal system taken as an unique whole (Maurice 1989).

Such an approach has been widely used in sociology, as well as in economics and political sciences, mainly in researches on labour market, training and educational systems, and social policy (Vigour 2005). Nevertheless, it has received many critiques. The main criticism concerns the choice of key institutional features for analytical focus (Marry 1993; Rubery 1994). In particular, especially in its first version, the societal effect approach did not pay any attention to the whole set of institutions that play a role in the process of socialization related to the sphere of social reproduction. That is to say that it was effectively blind to the possibilities offered by a gendered perspective, since within those institutions there are many which are able to affect the availability of female labour and the ideology of gender roles (O’Reilly 2000; O’Reilly 2003; Marry 2003). Mainly, it was ignoring the effect coming from the sphere of labour regulation and welfare provision, and their action in differently shaping the characteristics of the available male and female labour force, as well as the quality of the jobs available.

Another critique concerns the neglect of the cultural dimension to favour a perspective that focuses just on institutions and organizations (Iribarne 1991). In fact, it has been argued that the societal approach does not try to explain the historical paths and the tenure of the relationship between processes of socialization and actions of organizations in each country. Accordingly, social structures act as an organizational crystallisations of social relations as the result of a specific national historical path.
A more general critique refers to the emphasis that this approach puts on a path dependency perspective, favouring in this way a static and functionalistic view of society (Lane 1993). Actually, it has been argued that in this way not much room has left to the power of social change, since this latter would be constrained by pre-existing institutions and actor’s policy agenda. As a consequence, it has been questioned whether the societal effect approach remains a useful and actual perspective with the emergence of the European Union and the consecutive construction of a European social space (Lallement 2003). In view of that, it has been proposed to combine historical analysis and societal effect analysis in order to frame internationally comparative research, since through such a combination it would be possible to avoid any form of static and relative interpretations of the dynamics underlying the functioning of a specific societal system. In this case, the main point would be the elaboration of theoretical and conceptual models able to take into account complex processes and structures acting in the societal system according to different temporalities and linking each other multiple phenomena (Lallement 2003). Finally, others (Sainsbury 1996) argues that the holistic feature of the societal effect approach make it difficult to apply findings to other countries and at the same time it does not take into account the possibility that some particular characteristics may be also found in other systems.

In general, what it is more interesting in the frame of our argumentation is that by placing social phenomena in their societal context, the societal effect approach provides important starting points for cross-national comparison of labour market practices (Pfau-Effinger 2004). Anyway, even if there are theorists who have elaborated this approach to integrate gender divisions, gender-blind analyses somehow predominate when women are not the self-evident focus on the research. The gender system approach covers such a deficit since it refers to feminist theories and it is explicitly aimed to describe differences in gender relations. Moreover, given that one of the central premises of the institutional approach is that actors are both affected by the structural relations in which they live and they have a capacity to act to change these relations, theories developed under the gender system approach try to identify the way in which social action can bring about change in gender relations (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998).
1.2.2.2 Gender system approach

The gender system approach to cross-national analysis of women’s labour force participation has developed into several strands of literature. The various conceptual frameworks generated by these studies aim at identifying divergent and convergent patterns of development across societies, but at the same time they retain a holistic perspective on how these trends are implemented within nation state societies (O’Reilly 1996).

In general, the structural dimension remains a central element in the theories developed under such an approach, and it is either put before the dimension of cultural values, or culture and institutions are treated as a coherent unit (Pfau-Effinger 2004). Moreover, these studies allow to develop an analysis of gender that includes the role of actors within the institutions of the state, the sphere of economic production and social reproduction. Accordingly, two types of theories, both structuralistic or institutional, can be distinguished: the first one focuses on welfare state policy as the crucial factor to the explanation of cross-national differences in the behaviour of individuals, mainly referring to the concept of “welfare regime”; the second one concerns the relations of the various institutions and structures and the way the gendered division of labour is produced and reproduced on this basis.

For what concerns country differences variations in welfare state policy on the basis of gender structure category, Lewis and Ostner (1994) developed a concept for the classification of welfare state regimes from a gendered perspective on the basis of the feminist critique of the Esping-Andersen’s typification of welfare states. Basically, women’s position between family and employment system represents the main point to get a classification of the extent to which the family model of the male breadwinner marriage is developed. Thus, the result is a typology of “strong”, “moderate” and “weak” breadwinner states according to whether state policies reinforce or begin to dismantle the traditional breadwinner model of family, influencing in this way female’s employment patterns. The main difference between the various types of welfare states is about how far women are treated not only as mothers, but also as gainfully employed persons. In this sense, the relation between the public sphere of paid work and the private sphere of unpaid caring determines the different assignment of women and men to these two spheres, which in turn is influenced by the role of the welfare state in assuming tasks of social care. In the end, variations in the degree to which policies are oriented towards the male breadwinner model determine differences in the welfare states’ gender policies.
One of the merits of such an approach is to show how the supply of women’s labour is structured by welfare state policies, given in this way space to an element which has been often neglected by studies which have concentrated mainly on the economic sphere of production. Accordingly, this approach provides important starting points for the development of theoretical explanation of the differences in the institutional frameworks of female paid work. Anyway, it has received some critiques because its scope is actually limited to welfare state policy, while the role of family and labour market structures is not taken into account. In fact, women’s patterns of behaviour are considered mainly the result of welfare state policy, and so room is left to the influence of both other institutions and cultural values, as well as it is not clear what the conditions under which social and cultural changes take place are (Pfau-Effinger 2004). In other words, this approach does not suffice to explain cross-national differences in women’s labour force participation. Accordingly, we turn to other approaches that allow developing cross-national comparisons about women’s labour force participation patterns in the context of the interrelations of social structures and institutions.

There is a vast literature on women’s employment which has been applied in comparative perspective, and depending on the perspective adopted it ranges from the concept of patriarchal structures, to the characteristics of female labour supply, till the specificities of a national employment system (O’Reilly 1996). For the sake of conciseness, we are going to focus on an approach which comes from the latter stream of such a literature: the gender order approach.

This approach outlined a dynamic framework that can be applied to understanding of gender relations across societies and over time, since actually it considers both an essential recognition of gender relations in different social spheres and the importance of varying cultural and cross-national dimensions. A first contribution to the elaboration of the gender order approach was made by Connell (1987) and his theory is based on Gidden’s (1984) theory of duality and structure which claims that there are close links between the behaviour of social actors and the reproduction and change of social structures (Pfau-Effinger 2004). Accordingly, one of the main arguments of this approach is that actors are both influenced by the structural relations in which they are embedded, and at the same time they have a capacity to act and transform these relations. In particular, the author differentiates between three structures (division of labour, power, and cathexis, i.e. emotionally charged, sexual relations) that interact in the domain of individual institutions (hence through the social practices of the actors, such as workplace practices, within the family, or on the street) determining in this way a certain regime of gender relations, which in turn indentifies the way power relations
between gender and gender identities are shaped in specific practices at the institutional level (such as in the labour market, or in forms of state regulations).

The term “gender order” abridges thus the connection between all these elements (social structures, individual institutions and deriving social practices, institutional patterns), each of which both can have either independent or conflicting effects, and provides at the same time a unity in which gender relations are realised. Accordingly, this term portrays the relationship in the sphere of state social policy and labour demands, in the emotional relationship experienced by individuals, as well the dynamics of change arising from any of these social spheres. Likewise, there is not a functional fit between practices in different institutional spheres, and conflict for change in the existing regime may arise when actors’ interests push them to challenge cyclical or already routinized practices. A good example refers to the increasing proportion of women entering the labour market with higher qualification and career aspirations as a consequence of expanding educational opportunities (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). On the whole, this approach identifies the arena through which change comes about, in particular the way in which social action can bring about change in gender relations, and it also allows comparing the gender order in different societies.

Pfau-Effinger (1993, 1998a, 1998b) empirically applied and adapted the gender order approach to her historical analysis of national differences in women’s integration into full-time and part-time employment. Essentially, she added the concept of “gender culture” to Cornell’s “gender order”. By “gender culture” she means the nationally specific, dominant norms about gender relations, which are institutionalised and so relatively constant over time, although variations by region or position in the social strata can occur. Her thesis is that “gender culture” influences individual and collective practices in different social settings and institutional sites. Moreover, from the results of her cross-sectional analysis she deduced that national differences in the ‘gender culture’ are rooted in the different processes of transformation from agrarian to industrial society, and in the relative power that different social groups have gained during this transition. In such a framework the employment system, the Welfare State and the family household system are specified as the key institutional settings which affect the particular form of women’s economic integration. This allowed to her to examine the varying role that part-time employment has played in the modernization of family models in different societies (Pfau-Effinger 1998b). Moreover, her thesis is corroborated by other historical analyses about women’s employment which stress on the lasting impact of national differences in the transition to industrial society and of later periods of rapid economic change on the contemporary employment position of women. Summing up,
according to Pfau-Effinger’s thesis in explaining cross-national differences in women’s practices of employment it is necessary to examine differences in the complex interrelation of institutions, social actors and culture, especially when exploring the relationship between motherhood and women’s involvement into the labour force (Pfau-Effinger 1999).

In general, the gender order approach has been awarded of several merits. First of all, it underlines the necessity of analysis dynamics of change. Second, by doing so it proposes a system approach that does not imply implicit functionalism since it admits that the speed of change may be more rapid/slow according to different institutional arrangements and their correspondence with contemporary social values. Third, it bring attention to actors’ capacity to change the existing order through a variety of actions. Finally, on the basis of these premises it provides with many starting points for international comparative research.

1.2.2.3 Employment system and the gender system approaches: limitations and contributions to cross-national research

It is important to underline that the employment system and the gender system approaches can be both very useful in order to identify differences between countries for what concerns the main institutional arrangements and the interactive process between them that shape women’s employment patterns. In particular, these two types of approaches can be both very useful when looking at how different structures create and re-create sexual division of labour in society (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Actually, both in the employment system and in the gender system approaches, gender has been increasingly conceptualized as a process which permeates institutions and social relations throughout the employment system. In fact, if on one hand gender relations have progressively become an important component of the societal employment systems perspective, particularly when its theoretical approaches are applied to analyse women’s labour market situations, on the other the gender system approach takes as its starting point the examination of relations between men and women, and how these are structured through a variety of social institutions, being work just one of them.

In view of that, it has been argued that the employment system approach coupled with the gender system approach can provide an useful framework of analysis (O’Reilly 1996). In fact, the contribution that these approaches bring to the comparative research can be identified in three main aspects (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). First, the recognition of how a range of universal components structure gender arrangements related to paid and unpaid work. Second, the understanding of how these institutional configurations vary both between societies and
over time. Third, the identification of processes and actors of change within different institutional settings.

In the end, the combination of an employment system perspective (particularly referring to the benefits of the societal effect approach) and of a gender system perspective (particularly referring to the merits of the gender order approach) enables to identify how comparable pressures for change have generated specific interest coalitions and different set of institutions in each national reality, and how interaction between these coalitions and institution generate conflicts which get solved in a specific way in each country according to differences in actors’ capacity to bring about social change and to establish a new order based on a particular gender compromise.

Eventually, this combination requires giving more attention to the role of cultural values and ideals and the question of their significance for women’s behaviour in different contexts (Pfau-Effinger 2004). That is to say that the theoretical framework provided by the combination of the employment system and gender system perspectives should include women’s orientations and the role of cultural models, in order to fully account for the role of women as competent actors who orient themselves in different contexts of complex and often conflicting interrelations between culture institutions and social structures. In particular, such a framework should try to include more systematically the relationship between general cultural models of the family, the gendered division of labour at the macro level and the way women refer to those models. In fact, in this way it would be easier to detect those conflicts, contradictions and discrepancies that has been identified as the trigger elements of social change, making the theoretical framework even more dynamic and more capable of explaining how social change with respect to the forms of social integration take places and what its causes are (Pfau-Effinger 2004).

In the end, in order to explain cross-national differences in the gendered division of labour expressed in women’s employment patterns, the most appropriate strategy seems to be the studying of the interrelation of institutional, structural, and cultural influences and the agency of social actors, where the final aim should be to give theoretical reasons for the change that may be caused by the interaction of these conditions. That is the reason why other kind of approaches or perspectives to cross-national research that attempt to classify society referring to gender relations could result rather inappropriate if the classification process is not accurately open for differing development paths. By the way, this has to do with the technical and methodological issues one has to deal with once having identified the theoretical
framework in which settle the scope of comparative research. Accordingly, we are going to present these issues in the next paragraph.

1.2.3 Framing sites for cross-national comparative analysis: different strategies, common problems

There are several research designs in the field of cross-national research that can be applied to address questions about employment patterns in different institutional settings. In this section we are going to discuss a selection of competitive methodological frameworks used mainly in cross-national comparative research on work and welfare, but before doing so it is really important to claim attention on some crucial issues that are common to all such frameworks. Actually, this is a fundamental step that need to be accomplished in order both to underpin a valid critical examination of the rich plurality of methodological traditions that has been developed in this research field, and to understand how complex the problems of the choices made in the process of framing sites for comparative research are.

Comparative research is widely diffused among social sciences, and the various disciplines share some features for what concerns the main steps that constitute the building up of the comparative process (Grawitz 1996). First, it is not possible to state that, as a research method, making comparison is a process made up by some specific technical procedures, since it is widely recognized that the research methods adopted in cross-national analyses or for other fields of research in sociology are not different from the ones used for single-country studies (Hantrais and Mangen 1996). Second, it represents an holistic research strategy, since it can be equally employed at every stage of the research process. Third, it is equally useful to the various scope of the research process like developing description, making classification and elaborating explications. Moreover, making comparative analysis does not imply specific methodological problems, but it encounters the same limits and troubles posed by any other type of investigation carried out in the field of social sciences (Smelser 1976). Therefore, comparative research can be considered a real research method as all the other methods applied in social science according to the general problems it shares with all other scientific research procedures, but in the same way it can be seen as an unique research strategy for the fact that it permeates the whole research process, from the definition of the research problem, to the choice of the case studies, passing through the construction
and the analysis of the empirical material, till the phase of interpretation and explication of the research findings.

Anyway, even if as argued above many of the problems that arise in cross-national comparison are by no means peculiar to international research, additional difficulties which may be absent from single-nation studies arise when carrying out international comparative analysis (Hantrais and Mangen 1996). That is the reason why cross-national comparative research continues to represent a controversial practice in the sociological debate. Even authors that concretely contributed to the development and the diffusion of comparative analysis sentenced that it represents a practice which is destined in some way to “compare the incomparable” (Maurice 1989). Actually, on one hand, developing comparisons is seen as the only method capable of producing a genuine sociological knowledge and intelligence. On the other hand, it is denounced to be a blind procedure that grows in the illusion to affirm an obsolete and universalistic view on society and systems (Lallement 2003).

As we have just mentioned, to develop a comparison involve always a series of delicate choices concerning some methodological as well as theoretical aspects. The first element to be considered is about the choice and the construction of the object that one wants to compare. When applying comparative perspective it is really important to think about the social determinants that influence the choice of the object to be compared and of the categories to be applied in the comparative process, as well as it is fundamental to think about the effects that such choices may have on the production of new knowledge. The introduction of a gendered perspective in comparative research represents a good example in this sense. In particular, researches on the societal effects showed how researchers may have some preconceived ideas about the use of the “gender” category that may produce misleading interpretations of the social dynamics that represent the object of an investigation (Marry 1993; Marry et al. 1998).

Another problem is represented by the tendency to reify the categories of the analysis. Actually, it is not possible to say that there are unique and universal definitions able to identify all the dimensions and the objects that can be found in a social system, since such objects and dimensions are socially constructed and vary over the time and the space. As an example, it is enough to think about things like unemployment rates, or part-time employment indicators, or working time patterns in general, which are elements that are constantly compared in the sociological practice, even if it is well known that those elements are not
intrinsically and directly comparable from one country to another, or between sectors, or among different social systems.

Accordingly, in order to overcome such limitations, it is fundamental to make clear what the conditions under which the researcher proceeds with the construction of the objects to be compared are. Additionally, it is important to develop a reasoned articulation between the typology of facts that one wants to compare and the type of evidence and data that one chooses to use in order to do so (Lallement 2003).

Some commentators, referring to the work of Durkheim, have identified some rules that could be followed when structuring a comparative research design (Lallement 2003). In particular, if the object to be analyzed is a social pattern that varies within a given society, then the comparison should involve statistical series that allow showing the co-variation of such an object according to aspects like the country, the historical period, the age of the population involved, the gender distribution and so on. Then, when institutions, intended as normative and legal systems, represent the main concern of an analysis that is focused on the mechanism of reproduction of such institutions within a certain social system, then the research strategy should stress on the parallel variations of the same phenomenon within different societies of the same type. Finally, when the main focus is on some fundamental social institutions like the family, the educational system or the division of work, the main objective should be the analysis of the different forms that such institutions have assumed along different social spheres within a given society. These rules are interesting for the fact that they essentially suggest to relate the comparative method with the specificity of the object of study.

Scheuch (1990) suggested a fourfold classification of strategies for internationally comparative research on the basis of the methodological choices available to researches for what concerns the different kinds of objectives of the comparative analysis and the different ways to characterize the social contexts under investigation. Respectively, the kinds of objectives taken into account are to find identical phenomena and to focus on differences, while possible characterizations of the social contexts considered are to treat such a context as “real thing” and to treat it as a set of variables.

The first strategy is aimed at the research of universal patterns. This strategy is adopted when the final aim is to try to explain the reason why a certain social fact can be considered as universal and to show how each culture absorb such a fact according to a specific process of adaption, where the social fact itself it is not violated in its intrinsic
nature and consequently it can be found in each type of society as a determinant of social behaviours and relationships.

The second strategy aims at specifying the unique characteristics and features of a given society. In this case the research procedure focus on the investigation of differences between different cultures (the work of Bordieu is a main example).

The third strategy wants to call attention on the universality of a given phenomenon. The main concern is to show the transnational character of a phenomenon, trying at the same time to take into account the variations that is encompasses once the combination of some variables with multiple categories (like religion, family structures, etc) is under investigation.

The fourth and last strategy focuses on the specification of the temporal and spatial process of articulation of a specific phenomenon. In this case the research of differences through the combination of a small number of variable is of primary importance.

Such a classification has been criticized because it contrasts in a quite reductive way the approaches that focus on similarities and those who are on the contrary mainly interested in differences (Vigour 2005). In any case, the merit of these classifications is to show the variety of techniques and methodological devices that it is possible to chose and apply in the analysis of a single problem or phenomena and at every stage of the research process, from the scope for classification to the selection of the case studies till the establishment of causal relationships (Smelser 1976).

Table 1.2.3-1 Typology of comparative strategies in the domain of cross-national research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim of the comparison</th>
<th>Context considered as a real “social object”</th>
<th>Context treated as a set of variables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To identify identical phenomena</td>
<td>1.Detection of universal trends</td>
<td>3.Showing the universal character of a phenomenon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasize differences</td>
<td>2.Specifying the unique features of a social system</td>
<td>4.Investigating the articulation between spatial and temporal mechanisms of a phenomenon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Scheuch (1990)
Nevertheless, it must be bear in mind that such choices are not just matter of researchers’ methodological preferences and capabilities (O’Reilly 2006). Considering the fact that mainly the underlying analytical templates in which comparative researches have been situated refer to the area of institutional analysis (as we have seen in the previous paragraph), recent comparative research have highlighted that crucial questions like what should be the key components of an institutional analysis, how the identification of such components can be adjusted to social change, and why some components were ignored in the past, need to be taken into account.

O’Reilly (2006) clearly showed the complexity of such a process and the variety of results that the choice of one approach and its implicit assumptions can produce with specific reference to the exam of cross-national gender differences. She distinguishes between four main types of approach with a threefold aim: showing the different possibilities of incorporating, or ignoring, a gendered dimension to the analysis offered by each intellectual template; pointing out how the choice of the key institutional features to compare has an impact on both the importance given to gender and the interpretation of the results; claiming caution to the choice of comparative indicators for what concerns their meaning and their consistency over time and space. Basically, her work showed how making cross-national comparison implies a high level of sensitivity to societal specificities, and how these latter can be analyzed and understood in different ways according to how the chosen key concepts and indicators are interpreted in different environments and under different comparative approaches.

Accordingly, in the next paragraphs we are going to illustrate the main characteristics that comparative cross-national research assume under three different groups of approaches that have been used by researchers who have carried out this kind of analysis: the case study approach, the macro-variable approach, the typology approach.

1.2.3.1 The case study approach

The case study approach consists in a in-depth investigation of a single country, where the basic purpose is to elaborate a detailed description of the country-specific institutional setting in which actors act within, in order to provide interpretations of the relationship of interest. According to some commentators (Barbier 2005; Lewin-Epstein 2006) it does not represent an intrinsically comparative approach, since it does not allow immediate explicit comparison between countries. Anyway, the comparative value of the studies conducted under the case
study approach relies in the possibilities of drawing implicit conclusions referring to the way institutional and cultural nationally specific features affect individuals’ patterns of behaviour and life-course trajectories in different countries. In fact, each case study provide a comprehensive study of a given topic in a particular national context, but the at the same time the observation of the patterns and the outcomes peculiar to each context allows to gain some understanding about the role that different systemic national factors may play in determining the observed variations at the micro-level.

Researches strategies to incorporate such an approach are either to compare a country’s unique characteristics with a group of countries like OECD countries or EU’s Member States countries, or to present separately several single-country analyses and to proceed with the identification or the modelling of differences and similarities.

Compared to other kinds of analysis that may involve many countries, researches carried out following a case study approach provides a in-depth examination of national contexts allowing in this way to take in cross-national variations. In particular, to pertinently design a comparison between a small number of countries is considered the best strategy for the analysis of the effects of institutional contexts on individual behaviour. Such a strategy provides detailed information about institutional arrangements and their historical developments, and by doing so it provides at the same time the framework for detailed individual level analysis and the investigation of relationships between relevant characteristics within each country. Moreover, this strategy is particularly pertinent when using national data sets. In fact, one of the advantages of comparing only a few countries is the possibility of generating identical indicators and similar variables.

The case study approach has been criticized for two main reasons. First, it has been argued that it does not allow a direct investigation of structural effects on individual behaviour since it makes it difficult to isolate the specific influence of one institutional arrangement or another. Actually, the application of such an approach brings to the explanation of individual behaviour as determined not by one single systematic characteristic, but by a variety of institutions that characterize the country under investigation and that involve the interdependence of specific history, culture and organisation. Second, it has been pointed out the in-depth case analyses produce outcomes that cannot be generalized easily.

Some researchers have tried to overcome these problems by comparing similar countries which differ on a single dimension: Nati (1995) compared women’s part-time employment in Scandinavian countries; Briton, Lee and Parish (2001) compared women’s employment in South Korea and Taiwan; Cooke (2003) made a comparison on female’s working patterns in
East and West Germany; Math and Meilland (2007) compared family allowances in twelve European countries. Basically, in order to manage the limitations posed by an internationally comparative research based on the case study approach, it is really important to keep it clear that the main assumption of this approach consists in considering each country as an unique context, and that differences or peculiarities for what concerns individual behaviour and outcomes must be attributed to the characteristics of that particular country. Accordingly, given the fact that the use of such an approach provide basically with a rich and comprehensive description of the national contexts rather than with hints to depict the effect of each institutional arrangements, it is crucial for the researcher to structure the comparison around some crucial specific dimension of theoretical or practical interest (like women’s part-time employment in a limited number of countries) in order to make it easier the isolation of the effects of specific macro-level characteristics on the dimension of individual behaviour that is under investigation.

1.2.3.2 The macro-variable approach

Contrary to the case study approach, the macro-variable approach is based on the analysis of a large number of countries, and it is specifically aimed at examining through quantitative methods the influence of various institutional arrangements (such as policies, family structures, labour markets regulations, etc.) on country variations in social and economics outcomes. In this case countries, considered as the social units of interest, are replaced by scores on particular macro-level variables that are theoretically relevant to the issue under investigation. The scores reported by each country is what allows to characterize each single country profiles and variations between countries’ profiles as the result of country-specific institutional arrangements. The research carried out by Gornick et al. (1997) represents a good example of the application of this approach. Here, a subset of public family policies capable to affect maternal employment have been empirically tested and compared in order to explain and compare countries variations in the effect of the presence on your children on their mothers’ employment. In order to do so, the authors collected data on a number of policy measures and used it to construct a variety of indicators through which they finally elaborate a composite index of family policies, that they used to allocate countries to draw countries profiles and eventually to assign them to types. More generally, several
studies have analyzed the effect of policies, countries characteristics, and other macro-level variables on the household’s division of labour.

The interesting thing that it has been pointed out about researches carried out under this approach is that some measures, i.e. different components of the same index, can produce different assessments with respect to within-country dynamics, indicating a problem of sensitivity of composite measures.

This brings us to notice that the macro-variable approach has some disadvantages that concerns mainly technical and methodological issues. A first issue is represented by the estimation of measures about the extent to which country level institutional arrangements influence the outcome variable. In fact, first the measurement of institutional arrangements is tricky to operationalize in a precise way, second most of the times it is quite difficult to elaborate comparable indicators for a large number of countries. As a result, if through a case study approach it is much easier to collect and analyze individual level data for different institutional settings, when using a macro-variable approach for comparing a large number of countries it becomes not really straightforward to obtain and deal with this kind of individual-level information.

On the other hand, the main advantages of this approach refer mainly to the fact that it allows to directly assess the influence of country-level characteristics on outcomes through the estimation of quantitative measure of such an influence. Nevertheless, lots of technical cautions are always demanded when drawing inferences from estimations which stability is strictly related to complex country indicators.

1.2.3.3 The typology approach

The ideal type approach finds its roots in the methodology of the ideal type proposed by Weber (Weber 1949). The ideal type does not represent any real concrete case, but it is rather meant to be an analytical construct elaborate from an operation of abstraction of some elements of a given phenomenon. The common strategy in comparative studies is to use the theoretical construct of the ideal type as a reference for positioning the countries under investigation in relation to it. The main point of this approach is the search for generalizable systemic regularities that justify the grouping and the contrasting of certain social systems, refusing at the same time to treat countries as a reduced finite set of variables and hence it try to looking at them as holistic social entities.
The advantage of the typology approach is the possibility to focus on specific societal characteristics and to group together a number of countries that share those characteristics, without being obliged to carry out an in-depth and separate analysis for each of the countries involved in the analysis.

The work of Esping-Andersen (1990) represents the most popular example of clustering countries research according to the use of the typology approach. Here Esping-Andersen use different institutional and cultural characteristics of countries to sort them into three clusters of welfare state regimes. The most common criticisms moved to this work have highlighted how countries are sorted into categories without accounting for differences within the clusters, as well as the problems posed by the conceptualization of the classification where it is not clear whether clusters have to be treated as ideal-type, or whether they leave space to hybrid categories. Actually, one of the most recognized limitations of the typology approach is that different institutions and arrangements are assigned to a single category of a typology, without making it possible to conceptualize conflicting influences or atypical outcomes. Accordingly, the problem is that the typology approach requires exclusivity, so that countries are classified in the best fitting categories even if they share some features of other types.

In the end, even if the typology approach allows to highlight similar institutional patterns across societies and to relate them to societal or individual level outcomes, it must be kept in mind that each typology relies on different theoretical basis and institutional characteristics and the pertinence of each typology may depends from time to time on the specific outcome in question.

**1.2.4 Value and limitations of building up a comparative research framework**

In the previous paragraphs we have discussed several theoretical approaches as well as methodological strategies that have been developed in the field of cross-national comparative analysis. At the moment of evaluating the value and the limitations of building up a comparative research, one thing that has to be highlighted is that, no matter what the approaches or the strategies chosen are the complexity of contemporary society does not allow for a definitive, all encompassing model. Moreover, it must be kept in mind that there are not pre-set solutions that can be readily adopted to solve the theoretical and methodological problems posed by the peculiarity of a given society of interest at a given historical point (O’Reilly 2006). In fact, comparative analysis does not necessarily imply the
application of single and unique technical and methodological devices (Lallement 2003).

There are several disciplines that make use of comparative analysis and that are confronted to common questions and problems, but this does not necessarily implies that they all provide with similar answers and solutions (Smelser 1976; Lallement 2003): from one discipline to another, there could be common issues under investigation, but methods and outcomes of the comparative process are generally characterized by great differences.

For these reasons, it seems reasonable to affirm that cross-national comparative analysis has to be considered not just as a research method, but rather as a heuristic research strategy. Actually, comparative research encompasses a number of issues that are both methodological and epistemological, as well as ethic.

As for methodological issues, we have already mentioned the fact that there are several methodological approaches that can be applied when carrying out a comparative research, and the same goes for the application of different techniques (quantitative secondary data analysis, comparisons of monographs, historical analysis, etc.). It can be said that comparative research is made up by a ‘methodological bricolage’ (Lallement 2003), which is fundamental to the comprehension of the significance of comparative analysis as a research strategy. For what concerns epistemological issues, making comparison involves a dialectical approach according to which otherness and constant confrontation with alterity is the privileged mean to acquire knowledge on phenomenon that is the same for ours and others realities. Then, comparative analysis has constantly to try to avoid the risk of relativism, keeping focused on the process of casting light upon social facts for what concerns their uniqueness and their multiple determinations in order to address, when possible, their transformations.

Overall, the problems that may arise in framing sites for comparative research with respect to the both theoretical and methodological issues should not considered as just obstacles to research, but as opportunities in their own right to undertake a process of category construction that can provide with useful information about the underlying structures of the societies that are under study. Accordingly, cross-national comparative research is much more than a methodological device because it forces researchers to continuously questioning the practical as well as theoretical choices and instruments that contributes to the building up of their research practices and work. In the end, that is how international comparison can provide with fresh, exciting insights and a deeper understanding of interactions and interdependence of a great number of factors and issues that are of central concern in different countries.
1.3 Framing the Studying of Female Part-Time Employment in a Cross-National Comparative Perspective

The purpose of this thesis is to develop a comparative analysis on the evolution of part-time work during the 2000’s in three European countries, where with comparative we mean an analysis that aims at recognising diversity and isolating major process in order to understand what the phenomenon of part-time employment means and how it is developing in countries with different socio-institutional settings.

Part-time work is a particularly thorny issue for cross-national comparison since it highlights many of the controversies in comparative research with respect to theoretical, methodological and technical aspects. A common argument on the comparability of part-time work has been represented for instance by the legitimacy of the search for universal law of convergence in social developments. Accordingly, as we will see later on in the thesis, comparative research on part-time work has underlined the presence of universal trends in part-time employment across countries on one hand, but also differences between countries for what concerns part-time work distribution and role between social groups and over the life cycle on the other hand.

In particular, evidence of cross-national variations in women’s labour force participation, in their employment patterns over their life-course and in their market achievements have stimulated a stream of research that focuses on the societal mechanism that can positively or negatively affect women’s activity. In this framework the studying of the institutional context within which individuals make their work and family decisions is considered fundamental and on this basis various studies have been carried in the recent years with the aim of constructing various typologies that group countries with respect to similarities and differences in the institutional context and in the way the work-family nexus is defined within this latter.

Nevertheless, typologies and classifications have to be treated with caution because in general, as we have seen above when we have described the typology approach to cross-national research, they do not leave a real space for taking into account the influence of factors that derive from differing development paths and as a result they imply the risks of assuming uniform types of part-time work patterns. In other words, the elaboration of typologies is not the best research strategy to be adopted when the aim is to develop an approach which is not static and that allows to frame and explain social change through the interrelation of multiple factors. Actually, detecting social change and its dynamics in the
employment sphere depends much more on the analysis of the way social and labour market policies have been developed in the past, of the type of compromises they have instigated and on the understanding of the type of conflicts that are likely to emerge from them. Especially important in this sense is the search for the lack of fit and contradictions, since it can help in identifying where future change will occur and how they will stimulate new social developments (O’Reilly 2006).

In view of that, the societal effect approach at the analytical level and its combination with the case study approach at the technical level seems to us the best research strategy that we can adopt given the scope of our research. As we have already seen, one of the main tenets of the societal approach is to identify the specificity of social forms and institutional structures in different societies in order to look for explanations of differences by referring to the wider social context (Hantrais and Mangen 1996). Thus, through the adoption of such an approach and the reference to the social context a wide range of aspects can be taken into account: social and welfare system dynamics and the way they tackle the notion of the male breadwinner; differences in labour market regulation and how they modify or reinforce gender differences in working time; types of models of industrial organisation and the extent to which they promote or reduce tendencies towards gender segregation; differences in value and social norms that may favour moves towards gender equality (Rubery 1996). Overall, the societal approach provides a valid analytical support to the investigation of the persistence of specific gendered patterns of labour force participation and to the analysis of how differences between different societal contexts may arise and evolve with respect to such patterns.

The societal approach it is interesting as well because it allows taking into account not just the broad framework, but also the ramifications on the overall societal system. Actually, the point here is not to draw universal laws or any rule of coherence or harmony within societal systems, neither to focus only on differences between women’s part-time work patterns from once country to another, but to pay attention to the complexity of the within nation contexts and show their peculiarity when examining between-countries differences. In this sense, when it comes to frame the analysis of part-time work in a cross-national comparative perspective, the main challenge is to balance the two processes of the explanation of differences between countries by reference to different societal systems on one hand, and of the evaluation of the extent to which each societal system can be considered as a specific entity with respect to the main dimensions under investigation on the other hand.

The adoption of this kind of approach and procedure and the perspective on cross-national comparative research that we have developed through all the previous paragraphs should now
make it clear why the question that it posed in the title of this chapter (‘What constitutes internationally comparable part-time work?’) cannot be answered through the elaboration of an unique and unilateral definition of part-time work. Part-time work it does not exist in a unique form and it can be better understood if it is seen as a multi-faceted reality with respect to various dimensions like gender, time, employment status, social perception, etc. At the same time, the universality of some part-time work characteristics cannot be denied and have to be taken into account in a cross-national comparative analysis, especially in the process of exploration of between countries differences. In the end, what matters is no more to find a definition in technical terms of what constitute internationally comparable part-time work, but it is the understanding and the exploration of part-time work as a social construct that is contextually defined and that hence need to be contextualized in order to be analyzed in comparative perspective. For that reason, we think that the main point of our research can be seen also as consisting in the investigation of the process of social conception of such a construct, the way it has been evolving and the directions of its future developments.
CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUALISING DEVELOPMENTS OF AND INFLUENCES ON PART-TIME WORK:
FROM THE ANALYSIS OF A SOCIAL PHENOMENON
TO THE ELABORATION OF A SOCIOLOGICAL CONSTRUCT

2.1 HOW HAS PART-TIME WORK DEVELOPED?

2.1.1 Phases and trends of a process of evolution

Since the mid-twentieth century, part-time employment has increased more than full-time employment in most advanced industrialized countries (O’Reilly & Fagan 1998). Generally speaking, there has been a persistent raise of this form of employment, but its growing incidence in the European labour market it is not simply underlined by an important development in quantitative terms, but also by the multiplication of laws and regulations at both the national (especially from the 80’s) and the European level (especially during the 90’s with the EU Directive on part-time work 97/81/EC). Moreover, part-time employment evolution has not simply been a quantitative evolution, but also a qualitative one: over the years part-time work has been growing as well as it has been changing.

Such a process of changing has to be understood in all its complexity and by the light of the great ambivalence that characterizes part-time work nowadays. Hence, when talking about the evolution of part-time employment it is interesting not only to compare different levels of part-time work, but also to look at the development over time of this form of employment and the reasons behind its dynamics. In view of that, it is firstly really important to look at the phases that have distinguished such a development. It particular, the promotion of part-time work and its diffusion have passed through three main phases (identified in the work by O’Reilly and Fagan 1998) corresponding to the general use that it has been made of this form of employment (Reyneri 2002).

2.1.1.1 Phase 1: encouraging married women to take jobs in the expanding service sector

Initially, the growth of part-time jobs occurred in Northern European countries as a mean of encouraging married women to take jobs in the expanding service sector in a period of labour shortages (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Such a development was premised upon women being
second income earners within a male-breadwinner model of family life, in the context of which they were supposed to combine employment with their primary responsibility for unpaid domestic labour in the household (Maier 1994). Hence, we can say that during this phase part-time employment emerges in its more traditional use, that is as an instrument for women’s work-life balance between the market and the family, where in any case the sphere of the family maintains its priority over the sphere of the market.

In this sense, preferences and normative values, in particular gender norms that prescribe the male and female roles in the household and in the labour market, have played an important role. Actually, feminists have pointed out how attitudes are at least partly dependent on environmental factors, but also how they develop over time in an adaptive process, responding to opportunities and experiences (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). That has been confirmed by evidence on the fact that the type of gender relations endorsed by the welfare state regimes seems to be associated with broad differences in women’s employment patterns, despite differences in the national policy context (Tam 1997). In view of that, Orloff (1993) finds that women’s part-time work relays on the inter-connections among the family, the state and the market, which vary across societies depending on their historical, cultural and political tradition. Accordingly, such an interconnection has contributed in favouring women’s participation into the labour force through part-time in this first phase.

2.1.1.2 Phase 2: a method of reducing mass unemployment

More recently, part-time work has been suggested as a method of reducing mass unemployment across Europe and increasing the overall employment rate (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). However, evidence suggests that part-time employment has served mainly to increase the overall size of the labour force rather than reduce unemployment (Walwei 1998). Actually, it seems that part-time employment has been particularly useful in increasing the labour supply of some special groups of workers, especially women. Therefore, most of the new part-time employees of this phase are constituted by women who come from the inactive segment of labour force, rather than specific groups of people from the pool of unemployed. Additionally, very often the category of inactive encompasses people who are not officially registered as unemployed or job seekers. Consequently, it is not on the declared unemployment levels that part-time would have been produced some significant effect during this second phase, but instead it is on the hidden unemployment levels and, thus, on the official activity rates (Cappellini 1999).
Explanations for such a pattern have come from feminists, who have pointed out that part-time work as a policy prescription to tackle unemployment neglects the gendered nature of part-time employment. In fact, the only people who can usually work for a part-time wage are those with recourse to other income source, for example from a partner or other household member employed full-time, or other financial transfer such as students grant of pension. In this second phase part-time work could not be, therefore, a viable option for many of unemployed within the existing structure of social protection systems in most countries (Doudeijns 1998).

Other explanations have come from secondary labour market theory which has highlighted that part-time work and unemployment are closely associated with each other, but in another sense: part-timers would be more likely than core full-time employees to experience job insecurity and unemployment (Tam 1997). In fact, workers on part-time jobs are employed to enhance the labour use flexibility of the firms and, consequently, they would not be regarded as assets to the organization, but instead they are treated as “residual” factors of production. It means that they are recruited and dismissed according to the needs of the employer: when a firm has to cut down its manpower, part-timers would be more likely to be laid off while core full-time employees are retained.

2.1.1.3 Phase 3: promoting labour market flexibility and reorganizing working time

In the recent years part-time employment has become an instrument to promote labour market flexibility and reorganize working time. In particular, during the nineties part-time work has changed to an activity that mainly accommodates the needs of the workforce for shorter hours to one that meets employers’ needs and preferences for such things as lower costs and more flexible staffing (Tilly 1996). Kallebergg (2000) explains that employers have been motivated by cost-containment to use part-timers, since typically they cost less in wages, and in particular in fringe benefits, and by the flexibility of part-time employment since it can be relatively easily decreased or increased and can be moved to a different time during the day.

Essentially, the main issue of debate in explanations for firms’ use of part-time focuses on whether it is a marginalisation or integration strategy (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998): are part-timers mainly concentrated in secondary forms of employment, or is part-time a strategy to integrate or retain certain groups of workers? Accordingly, most studies have argued that this tendency in using part-time in order to promote labour market flexibility has contributed to the raise of the so called “dualism of part-time work”. Kahne (1992), for example, argues that
part-time work is both a “hope and a peril”, encompassing both good jobs and bad ones that have low wages and few benefits. Looking at the European context it seems that part-time is often associated with marginal employment in low-paid and low status job, but anyway European countries differ in whether the use of part-time represents a marginalization strategy that provides employers with a source of cheap labour or an integration strategy used to retain workers (Kalleberg 2000).

In the frame of the flexibility debate the analysis of such a phase has been characterized by a relative neglect of the possibility of part-time work being used as an integration strategy or a transition stage (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Accordingly, that has been translated into a focus on static cross-sectional pictures of occupants of particular labour market segments. Only recently further researches on labour market transitions (Anxo 2007; O’Reilly 2002; O’Reilly, Cebrian and Lallement 2000) have pointed to the different role that part-time work plays over the life cycle. Moreover, it has been argue that in order to truly assess the effects and the dynamics of such a phase, it would be particularly important to develop other kinds of approach where employees’ characteristics are taken into account in order to develop more comprehensive analyses. In particular, the aim of such analyses should be the comprehension of why women are prepared to take up part-time employment, even when it is a disadvantaged form of employment, and that should be done by broadening segmentation theories and the flexibility debate beyond the focus on the production sphere.

2.1.1.4 Trends and dynamics of the growth of part-time employment

The scope for comprehensive analyses about the availability of female workers to fill part-time jobs is confirmed by evidence about some macro-trends in part-time employment dynamics. In particular, Walwei (1998), referring to Delsen (1995)², has suggested that structural shifts and changes in the preferences of the players in the labour market are to be considered as the two factors which may explain the growth of part-time employment. The first factor, structural shifts, refers for example to the sectoral distribution or the gender-specific composition of employment. The second factor concerns changes in the preferences of the players in the labour market as for the choice of part-time work either as a recruiting alternative or an employment alternative. In view of that, he carried out an interesting shift-share analysis to explore whether structural or behavioural aspects are the most important.

Looking at sectoral structural change, the analysis questions whether the development of part-time employment is due more to sectoral changes in employment between agriculture, manufacturing and services (structural effect) or to the penetration of part-time work into some or all sectors (diffusion effect). The results show that the major driving force behind the rise in the rate of part-time work is the diffusion effect: independent of sectoral shifts, companies are using part-time work more frequently. It means that although a positive structural effect can be noted, it is relatively minor compared to the effect derived from the change towards part-time among employers and unions.

The results of such an analysis allow determining also the effect of changes in the gender composition of employment on the increase in rates of part-time employment. The question in this context is whether the growth in part-time work results more from changes in the female proportion of the total labour force (structural effect) or more from the changing rates of part-time work for both sexes (diffusion effect). The results indicate, once more, that it is the diffusion effect the main responsible for the growth of part-time rates. This means that, even if the female proportion of employment has remained unchanged over time, part-time work would have developed as it did to almost the same extent. Thus, a changing propensity to work part-time explains most of the increase in part-time work in the majority of countries as well as the decline of part-time employment in some others.

Summing up, part-time employment has developed largely independently of sectorial shifts and changes in gender-specific shares of employment: even without the increase in jobs in services, and without the increase in women’s participation in employment, the trend of part-time employment would have evolved roughly as it did. Accordingly, the dynamics of part-time employment seem to be determined by behavioural aspects to a much greater extent than structural ones. Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that the reasons underlying the growth in part-time work are diverse and inter-related. If the aim is to develop a comprehensive analysis of the developments of part-time work, then factors both at the structural (macro) and individual (micro) levels which combine to influence the patterns of part-time employment observed in across Europeans labour market have to be taken into account (Zhou 2007).
2.2 FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT PATTERNS

2.2.1 The macro perspective

It is not possible to state the existence of an unique European model of part-time work (Samek-Lodovici & Semenza 2004). In fact, European Member States differ about both the incidence and the extent of the share between full-time and part-time work, or female part-time employment rate and working conditions associated to part-time, even when referring to similar sectors or professional groups (Fagan & Rubery 1996). Anyway, even if different models of part-time employment have developed around Europe, it is possible to identify three broad order of factors that have historically shaped such a development: the institutional and normative framework; the labour demand of part-time work; the labour supply of part-time work (Samek-Lodovici & Semenza 2004).

The institutional and normative framework refers to labour regulation (encompassing both working time system and wage and social protection system) and government and union activity; the production system and competitive conditions in the labour market concerns with the labour demand of part-time work; preferences, choices and availability to work part-time are related with the labour supply of part-time work (Smith, Fagan & Rubery 1998).

As for the labour demand of part-time work, we have already mentioned the fact that previous research have illustrated how part-time work has been mainly expanding because of changes in employers’ labour use strategies – albeit mainly in a limited range of service sector jobs – rather than simply because of the service sector expansion. Moreover, employers’ decisions about whether to organize employment on a full-time or part-time basis depends on legal, economic and social environments and circumstances which influence the scope for manoeuvring and managerial prerogative (Maier 1994; Fagan et al. 1995; McRae 2003). That’s the reason why if it is true that certain sectors and occupations have greater requirements than other for flexible working time practices to meet the variable demands of the production system, there is a variety of ways in which employers can achieve such a flexibility. Then, a supply of people who are prepared to work less than full-time, their individual preferences and real possibilities of choice are fundamental to the realization of employers’ strategies.

Hence, all the factors we have mentioned before play a key role in producing both national and sectoral variations in the extent and type of part-time work patterns.
### Table 2.2.1.1 Factors addressing the development of different part-time models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Institutional and normative factors</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labour regulation and working time system:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- regulations related to the use of part-time work</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wage and social protection system:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- regulations concerning working time premia for shifts overtime or antisocial hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>- the structure of non-wage costs for employers, such as hours or earning thresholds for social insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>- contributions or other conditions of employment</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Government and trade unions activity:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- work sharing policies to reduce unemployment</td>
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<tr>
<td>- policies to enable parents to reconcile work and family life</td>
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<tr>
<td>- governments personnel policies in the public sector</td>
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<tr>
<td>- welfare state policies as able to influence labour supply according to the promotion of specific relations of gender or generation</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Labour demand of part-time work</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Production systems:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- use of flexible working hours to extent operating hours beyond the standard week</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use of flexible working hours to schedule hours to meet regular, period peaks in production on a daily, weekly or annual basis</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use of flexible working hours to cover irregular or temporary changes in labour demands</td>
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<tr>
<td>- use of flexible working hours to extract more effort per hour in jobs where productivity is increased through short and intense work periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Competitive conditions in the product market:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- the extent of competitive pressures to adopt flexible practices in order to compete on product price or extent service hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- variations in the volume of labour hours required in times of economic boom versus recessions</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Labour supply of part-time work</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td>- the type of flexibility practices implemented by employers are gendered because they are contingent on the sex of the current or desired workforce, so part-time schedules are more usually available in feminised areas than in male dominated job</td>
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<tr>
<td>- employment shortages encourage people who want full-time work to accept part-time</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Source: adapted from Smith, Rubery and Fagan 1998*

### 2.2.1.1 Institutional and normative factors

When referred to working time and wages, labour regulation has a strong effect on the extent and type of part-time developments (Maier 1994). There is a variety of system of national
working-time regulations across the EU (Smith, Colette & Fagan 1998). In some countries there are normative and bargaining models which are characterized by either high level of flexibility or wide social guarantees\(^3\), and where the individual right to opt for part-time employment is considered fundamental. On the contrary, in other countries a very flexible legislation is associated with a scarce level of labour protection\(^4\). Finally, there are countries where the rigid and strictly binding labour regulation\(^5\) represents an obstacle either to the expansion of employers’ demand of part-time employment or to the improvement of working conditions offered to part-time workers.

From a comparative point of view it is obvious that in countries where the standard full-time week is highly protected and there are many restrictions on the flexibility of full-timers, employers may make a greater effort to create non-standard jobs compared to countries with few regulations on working time. However, it should be considered that there is also an influence from social norms and expectations, so that in these societies atypical employment may be less acceptable than in more deregulate environments (Stier, Lewin-Epstein & Braun 2001).

The thrust of EU policy has sorted the effect of stimulating reforms about working time regulations specifically concerned with part-time work in many countries\(^6\). The triggering factor has been represented by the directive on part-time workers (97/81/EC)\(^7\), which aimed to extend full-time standard employment conditions to part-timers on a pro-rata basis. Actually, this directive represents an important step towards the realization of the objectives set in the framework of the European Employment Strategy, where it has been recognized that part-time employment have had important effects on the occupational situation in the EU. Without denying the diversity of Member States situations and underling the different features that constitute part-time regarding to certain sectors and activities, the directive aimed to state

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\(^3\) This is the case of Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands.
\(^4\) In this case the UK represents a typical example.
\(^5\) In Germany and France, for example, there are strict limits on daily and weekly hours set by legislation or collective bargaining.
\(^6\) For example, in France and Belgium statutory limits on the variability of part-time hours have been revoked. The deregulation of the laws affecting part-timers in Spain has led to an expansion of part-time work. The United Kingdom’s new law grants part-time workers the same right as full time workers in terms of pay, holidays, training, parental leave and benefits, and a right to equal treatment. Germany grants the right to work part-time to employees in enterprises with fifteen or more workers, while Netherlands has established a similar right for employees in enterprises of ten or more workers.
\(^7\) Its aim was to provide for the removal of discrimination against part-time workers, to improve the quality of part-time work, to facilitate the development of part-time work on a voluntary basis and to contribute to the flexible organization of working time in a manner that takes into account the needs of employers and workers. The Directive provides that Member States and social partners should identify and review obstacles which may limit the opportunities for part-time work and where appropriate, eliminate them. It also seeks to ensure that the equal treatment of part-time workers in terms of pay (pro-rata) and working conditions is applied, unless there are “objective reasons” for differential treatment.
some general principle and minimum regulation criteria about part-time and policies related to this latter. Anyway, it should be noticed that in such a directive there is not any reference to gender matters and to the critical gendered dimension of part-time employment (Samek-Lodovici & Semenza 2004). Actually, the task of promoting equal treatment and opportunities in the employment field between men and women has been left to the competence of Member States national legislations, which implies important consequences for the conceptualization of different models of part-time work and their influence on the evolution of different models of female labour market participation.

Labour costs are strictly related to working time regulation (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). In fact, it is not a case that the EU intervention, mainly through a combination of ruling established using the European sex discrimination legislation combined with collective bargaining, has sorted important effects also in the field of the national wage and social insurance systems. Essentially, in some countries those systems have been used to provide inferior entitlements for part-timers, making such workers a cheap labour source relative to full-timers. Anyway, as for what concerns the field of working time regulation, even relative to labour costs there has been a gradual extension of employment rights to part-timers (Maier 1994).

Finally, in conjunction with legislation, collective agreements play a key regulatory role on working-time. Obviously, the promotion or discouragement of part-time work is driven by the activity of social partners (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). The nature and the influence of collective agreements on working time vary markedly between countries in terms of contents, coverage and relations between collective agreements and legislation on working time (Fagan 2001). Generally speaking, trade unions have often tried to restrict the spread of part-time jobs, fearing that this latter would have been undermining full-time standards. However, it seems that such an attitude have had the effect of favouring the expansion of part-time work without protection and, even more, part-time work has been further marginalized in all the cases where unions have viewed part-time work negatively (Maier 1994). More recently, the policy developments within the European Trade Union Confederation demonstrate that unions

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8 For example, minimum wage protection in the Netherlands has been extended to part-timers. Nevertheless, hours or earning threshold still operate for the entry into social insurance system in Germany and THE UK. In particular, since employers do not have to pay social insurance contributions for employees who fall below these thresholds, this differential treatment in regulations has constituted a strong financial incentives (and has stimulated) the creation of short or marginal part-time jobs is some countries, most notably THE UK (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998).
attitude and policy towards part-time work are changing over the time, and there is a growing awareness of the need to protect part-timers’ interests.\(^9\) (Smith, Fagan & Rubery 1998).

\subsection*{2.2.1.2 Factors related to the demand of part-time work}

Looking at the labour demand of part-time work, first of all it is important to notice that the production system and the competitive conditions in the product market affect the need for non-standard or flexible working hours and the adoption of part-time practices by firms. In this case, economists talk about ‘optimal staffing model’: firms adopt part-time work in order to better match labour to a changing workload (OECD 2003). Actually, part-time work is one way of providing solution to this kind of need. Firstly, part-time can be a valid option for employers when they have to face the necessity of work schedules that require to be organised to meet regular and irregular peaks in labour demand and to cover extended operating hours. Moreover, through part-time work it is possible to increase the intensity of work to improve productivity where the work is tiring or intense or where productivity is increased through short and intense work periods.\(^10\) Finally, it could be used to cover irregular and temporary changes in labour demands, for example, to substitute for absent employees or to meet unexpected orders (Smith, Fagan & Rubery 1998).

Anyway, it is important not to forget that the organization of the production system in a particular sector or market and the competitive conditions within which the firms operate are not two independent factors, but they are strictly correlated. In fact, in highly competitive product markets firms may face particularly strong pressures to increase the flexibility of working time practices accordingly to changing consumption patterns or behaviours of rival firms (Smith, Fagan, Rubery 1998). For example, in certain product markets, significant competitive advantages can be gained by firms through the extension of opening hours, which is a relevant case for some segments of the service sector, where demand peaks at certain times of the day (OECD 2003), or operating times in order to improve utilisation of

\(^9\) For example, collective bargain in France has limited the scope and spread of very short part-time job in retail, while the weaker union presence in the UK has enabled employers to create very short jobs in which avoid the costs of providing employees with breaks. In Germany, although part-timers working less than 8 hours are excluded from social protection, many part-timers, particularly those working at least 15 hours, are entitled to the same collectively negotiated conditions as full-timers on a pro-rata basis. Finally, in the Netherlands, many trade unions has begun to look more favourably upon part-time jobs which offer long rather than short hours, such as 20 or more hours a week (O'Reilly and Fagan 1998).

\(^{10}\) A survey of establishment in eight EU countries found that managers consistently ranked making the firm more competitive and covering peak workloads as either the first or second most important factors for employing part-timers (Bielenski 1994).
machinery in capital-intensive production systems, which may involve working time reforms or innovations.\textsuperscript{11}

Then, another reason that may encourage firms to create part-time work is the opportunity to get cheap and flexible labour. In the economical debate, this case is known as ‘secondary labour market model’ and it is more likely to happen when earnings and benefits are lower for part-time and when full-time contracts benefit from high employment protection legislation (OECD 2003). Generally speaking, attempts to explain the use of part-time employment from a demand side perspective has largely been found in the literature on dual and segmented labour market, which heavily rely on the main tenets of secondary labour market model. These theories have developed as a critique to neo-liberal economic theories of labour market inequalities, such as those associated with the school of household economics (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Initially, these theory identified the firm size as the main factor determining the division between primary and secondary labour market in such a way that large firms offered primary employment and smaller firms used disadvantages secondary forms of labour. Further developments aimed at showing that employers segmented the workforce within the firm through the creation of internal and external labour markets. This implies different working conditions for employees according to the type of labour market in which they are involved: in internal labour markets, employees have access to relatively superior employment conditions, including training and career ladders; jobs in secondary labour market are inferior, lower paid and more precarious. Therefore, this approach accounted for labour market divisions in terms of employers’ behaviour, in contrast to the neo-classical emphasis on the differential effects created by individual workers with different human capital, and part-time work is essentially conceptualised as a secondary form of employment (Rubery 1998). Accordingly, one of the main reasons why part-time work would represent a marginalised, secondary form of employment is because it provides employers with a source of cheap labour. Moreover, one of the key assumption in segmentation theory is that there is little mobility from the secondary into the primary labour market.

In the end, segmentation theory is considered helpful in highlighting labour market inequalities according to the internal and external labour markets approach, but the conceptualisations of part-time work as a secondary form of employment is stated without any attempt to explain why some forms of part-time work may integrate some employees and marginalise others (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). From a gendered perspective point of view, it

\textsuperscript{11} The extension of Sunday opening hours in the UK retail sector has resulted in increased requirements for weekend cover, and part-timers are often employed specifically for Sunday work (Rubery 1994).
has been argued that segmentation tends to be patterned by gender because women represent
an attractive source of labour for flexible jobs like part-time ones (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998).
Evidence have actually shown that where the labour force is predominantly female, employers
are more likely to introduce part-time work, in contrast to the use of other means of acquiring
flexibility from men, such as overtime and shift-work. Castells (2000:20) has described new
social relationships of production as translating into “a good fit between the flexible woman
and the network enterprises, where women are forced to flexibility to cope with their multiple
roles”. Accordingly, this means that flexibility is essentially gendered. However, feminists
have pointed out that the flexibility debates have not specified this sufficiently clearly, so in
the end the neutral conceptualisation of part-time work as “non standard” or “atypical” is held
up in contrast to the implicit gender-blind norm of male full-time employment patterns
(O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Actually, it is really well-known that in many countries part-time
work is a typical women’s employment pattern and the fact that in some service sectors it
approaches the standard employment form may indicate the substitution of cheaper part-time
labour in place of full-time workers within the female workforce in some societal contexts
(Rubery 1998). In view of that, feminists argue that standard labour segmentation theory fails
in explaining the gendered labour force divide that affects in this case part-time employment
because no room is given to the influence of the process of social reproduction of gender roles
and gender culture (Bettio 2008). In particular, in contexts where women are supposed to
assume the bulk of unpaid domestic and family care work, they are more likely to be
considered as an attractive cheap source of labour and to be employed in less demanding and
deskilling jobs (Solera 2009). Other commentators have rather pointed out that the extent to
which part-time work represents a marginalisation or an integration strategy varies both
between and within countries, across sectors, occupations, geographical areas, cohorts and
human capital profiles (Blossfeld and Hakim 1997; O’Reilly et al. 2000; Stier and Lewin-
Epstein 2001; Barbieri and Sherer 2008). In this sense, it is important to pay attention to the
extent to which the process of labour market flexibilisation has affected the dimensions that
constitutes employment status and to how this latter is structured around the differentiation
between standard and non standard employment, favouring those who have a standard paid
work (especially in all the systems where having this kind of job is a main condition to get
access to social protection), and disfavoring all the others types of workers (Negrelli 2007).
Then, it should also be considered that in some case firms create part-time jobs in order to
meet the needs of their labour force, like in the case where employers wish to retain female
workers who are temporarily facing family responsibilities. This case is known as ‘responsive
The firm model, and it is more likely to occur when the female labour supply is low relative to the demand from firms and hence firms are pushed to offer better working conditions for women in order to attract or retain more qualified and productive female workers (OECD 2003). Overall, it has been observed that employers reasons for introducing part-time can determine the variety of employee’s part-time work experiences. Broadly speaking, there are three main “heuristic” reasons for the initial introduction of part-time employment have been identified in the sociological debate (McRae 2003; Anxo et al. 2007): a ‘corporate strategy’, that is use of part-time work arrangements in response to economic or organizational need (in this case the need of the company represents the main priority and employees adapt their labour supply to employers’ labour demand); an ‘individual strategy’, that is introduction of part-time in response to the employees wishes for reduced working hours (in this case employers adapt their working practices to fit individual labour supply choices); a combination of the two strategies. The incidence of one reason compared to the others varies among countries, while within countries it is affected by company size and sector of activity (Anxo et al. 2007). Moreover, it clearly has a great influence on differences in the ways part-time develops in establishments according to the adopted strategy. This means that differences in part-time labour use strategies affects the extent to which companies’ use of part-time work is more or less universally focused on one or more groups of employees (Anxo et al. 2007), as well as the way part-timers are differently integrated into organizations with differing strategies (McRae 2000).

2.2.1.3 Factors related to the supply of part-time work

A supply of people who are prepared to work less than full-time and are judged suitable for the available part-time jobs represents another factor that affect the use and the development of part-time work (Smith, Fagan & Rubery 1998). Membership of this pool of labour is determined by balancing processes between individual preferences and real possibilities of choice. In fact, a variety of needs and wants may be at the basis of the interest in part-time work from a labour supply perspective. For instance, workers may wish to work shorter hours in order to avoid withdrawing from other life-spheres (such as childcare, housework, education, leisure), while having at the same time the possibility to invest their skills and knowledge in paid employment. In other cases, a part-time job may represent a source of additional temporary income in phases of life where other roles (e.g. education) predominate.
Then, part-time work may accommodate older workers’ wish to leave the work force gradually rather than abruptly (Maier 1994).

In principle part-time work could represent an extension of choice that in point of fact may be voluntaristic or not and, as we are going to illustrate later on, it is strictly related with educational attainment, compromises between individual and household projects, presence of children in the household, collective societal and cultural attitudes towards paid work, the societal division of work between genders and, finally, with the general degree of female emancipation reached in each national context (Samek-Lodovici & Semenza 2004).

On the whole, married women are usually considered as a primary “reserve army” of part-time work (Zhou 2007). The Netherlands is a country that is often seen as an emblematic case in this sense, since there the rapid diffusion of part-time work is argued to be the result of a spontaneous process driven by the late entry of married women in the labour force (Visser 2002). As can be expected, for many women part-time work helps in solving the problem of combining family-life and employment. Such a problem is often related to ‘overtime’ in the private sphere, and working part-time can alleviate this burden through a temporary or permanent reduced-level integration into the labour market (Maier 1994).

Availability for part-time work is heavily influenced as well by the interaction between the organization of family responsibilities within the households and the Welfare States systems (Smith, Fagan & Rubery 1998). Actually, women are an important source of part-time work in societal contexts where the typical family model is based on a male breadwinner pattern. As already mentioned in the previous paragraph, what happen in some countries it is that the diffusion of part-time work has been premised on an available supply of married women with children who were unable or unwilling to work full-time because of limited childcare services and a tradition of labour market withdrawal around childbirth. Moreover, in such a framework the prevalence of the full-time male breadwinner may be also related to gender relations within the workplace which can clearly have a strong impact on the use of part-time employment that, in this case, may be more entrenched than explicit policies and regulatory regimes (Smith, Fagan & Rubery 1998).

Nevertheless, it is important to adopt also the opposite perspective, that is how national policies and firms’ working time practices grant the right to work part-time and how this influence the supply of part-time work. First of all, it must be underlined that in some European countries the granting of the right to work part-time operates in tandem with complementary family leave policies. In fact, a number of countries allow parents to collect prorated parental leave benefits while working part-time. However, although the family leave
policies are helpful to parents who do work part-time, they cannot secure parents the right to do so. Therefore, measures aimed to strengthen workers’ rights to work part-time have to be considered as a crucial complement\textsuperscript{12} (Gornick and Meyer 2003).

Overall, researches have shown that there have been important changes in female labour supply in the post-war period. These changes have increased both the opportunities cost of staying at home and women’s career aspirations, encouraging in this way the raise in the level of women’s labour supply, which can be reversed both in full-time and part-time employment (Zhou 2007). Anyway, as far as labour supply is concerned, we will come back to this topic later on in the chapter.

2.2.1.4 Different models of part-time employment

As we have previously mentioned, it is not possible to state the existence of an unique European model of part-time work (Samek-Lodovici & Semenza 2004). In fact, European Member States differ about either the extent of the share between full-time and part-time work, or female part-time employment rate (Fagan & Rubery 1996). Anyway, according to Stier, Lewin-Epstein e Braun (2001), by looking at how the three main welfare regimes differ referring to the type of jobs open to part-time employees, the working conditions associated to part-time, and in the public perception of part-time employment, it is possible to identify three different models of part-time employment.

Within the liberal welfare regime, the choice to work part-time is perceived as a signal of low commitment to work compared to full-time employment. It is concentrated in a limited number of occupations and in temporary jobs, implying precarious working conditions. Hence, part-time represents a form of employment which constraints women’s ability to gain access to better jobs that might potentially improve their earnings and opportunities for career advancement.

Within the social-democratic welfare regime, part-time is perceived as a transitional stage in the working life of a woman in coincidence with childbearing and early motherhood. Actually, the aim of part-time work is considered to promote women's labour force

\textsuperscript{12} It is especially the case in national situations of limited childcare services and a tradition of labour market withdrawal around childbirth such as Ireland and the UK, where the available family policies and employment opportunities in marginal part-time jobs don’t contribute in positively influencing the extent and quality of part-time work. The Netherlands, with the promulgation of the 2001 Work and Care Act, probably represents the most comprehensive state effort to increase high quality part-time work. In fact, this Dutch provisions on part-time was folded with a series of integrated reforms strengthening family leave legislation, child care provisions and after-schools programs (Gornick and Meyer 2003).
participation and, hence, part-time employment is offered as a way to maintain the continuous involvement of women in the labour force over all their life course, including the delicate stage of childrearing. Therefore, employment conditions in part-time jobs are similar to those in full-time employment.

Then, within the conservative welfare regime part-time is perceived as a way to incorporate women in the labour force, but without altering the gendered division of labour. It means that women are expected to give priority to their parental role and, consequently, part-time has a more permanent nature and it is concentrated in female-type and secondary sectors of employment. Anyway, thanks to the dominance of social principles and to the role of social partners, this form of employment is it likely to offer working conditions similar to full-time employment in terms of employment benefit and union protection.

Such a classification is obviously based on the fact that working part-time has historically been the way through which women in Western Europe have combined informal care for their children with employment. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the development of labour markets in European Member States is a very important determinant of demand for different kinds of reconciliation measures. In this sense, where part-time jobs are relatively rare, mothers may be less likely to perceive their options as including shorter hours of employment.

Furthermore, the classification of gender arrangements models proposed by Pfau-Effinger (1998), points to the fact that female participation in the labour market through part-time employment assumes different meanings in countries with different gender arrangements. In view of that, another important factor to consider is that the various welfare state regimes are differently structured by the gender dimension and around the gender dimension. At this regards, countries referring to different welfare regimes are likely to establish different kinds of state-market nexus in the provisions of services and facilities, to favour different relationships between paid work and welfare, as well as to influence in certain different ways the division between paid and unpaid work (Meulders and O’Dorchai, 2007; Fagnani and Math, 2008). Then, it must be noticed that where there may be an overarching trend towards care leaving the private sphere of the family, it is entering the public sphere in different ways in different countries (Lewis 2006).

All these elements have to be considered and integrated all together when the issue is the identification of models of part-time employment, especially when assumptions about the role of part-time work as a work-life balance facility are made. In view of that, the configuration of four broad patterns of household labour market integration and working time arrangements over the life course identified by Anxo and Boulin (2006a:328-329) seems to some extent
more complete. In this configuration part-time work is showed to assume different functions as well as different meanings according to different contexts. The four patterns are:

- **The Nordic “universal breadwinner model”**, where there are high and continuous participation levels over the life course involving long part-time or full-time hours, high employment rates, high employment continuity (sustainability) over the life course, the highest incidence of dual-earner households and relatively low gender disparities in labour market segregation. Sweden refers to such a model, and actually in this country it is possible to observe that neither marriage/cohabitation nor family formation impacts on women’s employment rates. Essentially, women incur in a temporary reduction of working hours to long part-time hours while children are young but, in any case, there is a relatively low gender polarisation of working time and a low incidence of couples with female marginal part-time work.

- **The “modified breadwinner model”**, where some women, mainly low qualified, exit the labour market when they have young children while the majority work full-time or long part-time hours. Hence, in contrast to the situation in the Nordic countries, family formation and motherhood are still associated with withdrawal from the labour market for some groups of women. This is for example the case of France, where most mothers who are employed work full-time or part-time hours in “reduced hour” arrangements. This life course pattern for French mothers is supported by the high coverage rate and low cost of public childcare, but still low-qualified women are less able to follow this route.

- **The Mediterranean “exit or full-time” model**, where women’s employment rates are low but largely involve full-time work. Family formation and the presence of children have a clearly negative impact on female labour market integration, but essentially in terms of lower employment rates. Italy for instance refers to this model, and in this country we observe that the high incidence of the traditional breadwinner model and the relatively low public provision of childcare facilities for young pre-school children still constitute a barrier to women’s labour market integration.

- **The models of “maternal part-time work”**, where the onset of motherhood is associated with a reduction in the employment rate that is less than that found in France and the Mediterranean countries, but where part-time hours are the norm for mothers and generally remain the norm even when children are older. This norm of part-time work is due to normative sense of what the majority of the population thinks is appropriate about motherhood and childrearing. This is for example the case of Germany, where the hours worked by part-timers are typically shorter than the more substantial part-time hours that
prevail in Sweden. Moreover, in this country part-time models are underwritten in the welfare state regime, even if it is possible to find differences according to the characterization of these models within the specific German working time regime. In fact, there are in Germany a part-time model that constitutes in some way a form of “integrated” part-time work, a model characterized by the predominance of very poor quality part-time work, and a model that falls between these two poles and that is the most widespread.

In the end, even if some models may be identifies at least at the theoretical level, these models confirm that it is important to bear in mind that patterns and developments of part-time work reflects the interrelated impact of state policies and labour market institutions, employers’ strategies, as well as changes in the characteristics and preferences of women’s labour supply. In the next paragraph we will go deeper in the analysis of this latter aspect by assuming a micro perspective.

2.1.2 The micro perspective

The separation between the sphere of economic market production and domestic reproduction has formed the analytic basis underlying explanations of women’s availability for part-time work (Rubery and Fagan 1998). In such a framework waged work and market production have been traditionally considered as sites related mainly with men’s participation into the labour force, while women remained responsible for combining household work with any paid employment which they undertake. This perspective implies that not only distinct tasks are located between men and women referring to wage work and domestic life, but also that the principles orientating and justifying women and men behaviours vary between the two sexes. Therefore, we are going to review how different positions in the debate have argued about those principles and factors, their evolutions and changes, and their role in addressing women’s preferences and decisions about part-time work.

2.2.2.1 Gender roles and economic rationality: functionalist and household economics theories

The debate about how the gender division of responsibilities within the home makes women available for part-time work more than men have developed according to different kinds of
positions. One type of explanation for women’s involvement in part-time work is that this is universally functional or efficient for the household and society. Actually, functionalist theory distinguishes between men’s instrumental role as wage-earners and women’s expressive role where waged work takes second place compared to the responsibilities for caring children and providing men with emotional support and respite from the pressures of public life (Parsons and Bales 1956). As a result, work allocation within the family is the result of women’s tendency to look after the internal family needs and men’s orientation towards the external world. This theory argues that this gender division was found in most societies, and this allows considering it as an universal pattern and as a functional arrangement for the maintenance of social order. In other words, according to the functionalist view this gendered division of roles is a fundamental factor to the maintenance of the stability within the family and society.

New household economics theory uses to study labour market participation by relating this latter to the situation of the household and, in particular, to the division of labour between husbands and wife (Tam 1997). This theory assumes that households seek the highest level of well-being and in doing this they have to face a maximization process in which they are subject to time constraints and financial resources available to them. Therefore, every household has to design a routine pattern of time allocation between wage work and domestic work and this implies a decision that involves two related questions: how much time will be allocated and whose time will be. This theory explains the allocation of time to wage work and to domestic work in terms of the comparative advantages of different household members, so that one household member will specialize in wage work and the other will bear the primary responsibility of housework. In principle, this does not dictate whether husbands or wives will eventually specialize in wage work. Anyway, the participation of women in various form of wage work involves a process of calculative choices. In choosing the amount of time to be allocated to wage work, a woman balances the time which housework demands her against the income brought into the household by other family members, typically by her husband. In some case, even if housework and childcare take priority over wage work, a woman may still be driven by the financial needs of her family to take up wage employment. Then, the form of wage work which a woman takes up would still be subject to the time requirements of her domestic duties. This has obviously implications on the choice of working hours: the number of working hours supplied by married women are negatively associated with heavy domestic duties and positively related to the financial needs of their households which cannot be met by their husbands. Overall, the household economics theory
is based on the argument that at the point of setting up home together, men and women find that it is economically rational for men to specialise in waged work, and for women to do most of the child-raising and other unpaid household tasks. Consequently, women’s tendency to gravitate towards part-time work allows for a compromise which does not disrupt this division of labour within the household. That’s why women anticipate future labour market interruptions associated with raising children and running a home by making particular choices in terms of investment in education and training, while men prepare for a more continuous and intense labour market involvement in their role as household breadwinners (Becker 1981).

In the end, while functionalist theory distinguishes between instrumental and expressive roles, household economics theory attempts to differentiate between economic rationality in relation to the market and altruistic motives for resource allocation within the household (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). In this sense, the two theories share a common feature: the theoretical explanations they suggest converge on the point that women’s part-time employment is an optimal arrangement for families, at least when the two parents are present. Nevertheless, both of them have been criticized. First, the sexual division of labour is argued to be a functional or efficient arrangement on the basis that it would not continue otherwise. Second, both approaches are largely premised on the fact that household decision-making processes are characterized by a consensual understanding, thus neglecting conflicts and unequal power relations that exist between household members (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Then, both the approaches take preferences and normative values as given. In particular, gender norms which prescribe the male and female roles in the household and in the labour market are not considered (Tam 1997).

2.2.2.2 The importance of women’s preferences

In her approach of ‘preference theory’, Hakim (1996, 1998, 2000, 2002) has moved the emphasis of the debate upon women’s aspirations and decisions rather than upon what is beneficial to the family division of labour. She has argued that women’s employment patterns, as manifest in preferences for part-time or full-time work, reflect the outcome of women’s varying choices. In particular, different groups of women present differences in attitudes towards part-time work because of different cultural orientations for what concerns family and occupational career. Women’s choices derive hence from the fact that there are three qualitatively different groups of women who differ in their type of orientation towards waged
work: the “home-centred”, the “career-oriented”, and the “adaptive” (Hakim 2000, 2002). Home centred women give priority to their domestic responsibilities and use to work part-time; career-oriented women give priority to their employment career and use to work full-time; adaptive are probably the largest women category (Hakim 2000), they have “chaotically unplanned” careers that they use to develop more by accident than by design. Consequently, working part-time is argued to be a proxy indicator for this qualitatively different labour market involvement of women, being the main assumption of such an argument the fact that women are primarily considered as competent actors who pursue their own life plans with respect to the way they combine waged work and motherhood. Moreover, according to Hakim, the existence of these different types of women and the different employment choices that derive from that finds support in both the rational choice and human capital theories. In fact, home-centred women make a rational decision to economize on the efforts invested in employment, as this not their main priority. On the contrary, career-oriented women, in line with the prescription of human-capital theory, will choose to invest in their employment careers.

On the whole, the main point of preference theory is that individual lifestyle attitudes explain women’s economic and social outcomes. In particular, the theory relies on modernisation and individuation accounts and claims that women are active agents that organize their own life apart from constrained posed by external circumstances, so that self-classification as a primary earner or secondary earner and subsequent employment behaviour are determined by chosen identities. At this regard, the theory assume that institutional structure such as national policies on employment and working-life reconciliation as well as labour market rigidities, have little or no influence compared to individual agency. Hence, preferences are considered either as autonomous of institutions and market structures, or as a competing explanatory factor of outcomes (Gash 2008). Such an idea is supported by claims about the fact that attitudes and preferences are formed early on in life, mainly through childhood socialisation, so that they remain persistent and dominant over the time, unyielding to structural context (Fordin 2005; Hakim 2002). Alternatively, work-lifestyle preferences have been argued to be an explicative factor of the persistence of the gender gap in pay and in forms of female participation (Fortin 2005), as well as of traditional division of labour within households through time (Rarely et al., 2006).

One of the main challenges of preference theory is to dismantle be the dominant feminist view on women’s employment patterns. As far as part-time work is concerned, this theory rejects hence the frequent idea that female part-time work represent a choice forced on women
against their will because of their domestic responsibilities and the insufficient provision of childcare services. Instead, differences in work orientation are argued to be the cause of women’s disadvantaged position in the labour market. In the end, compared to the vast feminist literature on structural and institutional constraints, preference theory has the merit of taking into account the role of gender-role preferences and work orientations, and in doing so it provides with an important contribution to the acknowledgment of the heterogeneity of women in regard to these preferences and choices (Solera 2009).

2.2.2.3 Critiques to preference theory: the role of structural constraints

If Hakim’s theory has been recognized of the merit of taking into account the heterogeneity of women’s work orientations, this has been not enough to save it from a wide wave of criticisms. Crompton and Harris (1998) question the stability of the preferences categories that Hakim identifies, as well as the utility of preferences as an explanatory factor of work orientation and choices. Himmelweit and Sigala (2003) argue that it is not possible to consider neither identities nor behaviours in respect of women’s employment as fixed, since they adapt to each other in a process of positive feedback. Other studies have confirmed these points. For example, with a study on female part-time workers in low-level jobs in Britain Walter (2005) have demonstrated that women’s orientations depend more on their age, their stage in the family life-course and the availability of jobs in their living area. Kan (2007) have analyzed data from the BHPS and have reported that there is a reciprocal relationship between gender-role attitudes and women’s labour market behaviour, concluding that preferences have rather to be considered as endogenous factors. Basically, the main point shared by this kind of criticisms is that preferences cannot be considered as the main determinant of employment outcomes, as well as they cannot be considered as stable over the life-course since they change according to changing experiences, opportunities and constraints, as well as according to new perceptions of the costs and rewards associated with different outcomes (Duncan 2005; McDonald et al. 2006; Solera 2009).

Another criticism have been identified in the fact that preference theory is more a classification of female work-family attitudes based on observed participation patterns rather than a proper theoretical paradigm. Actually, information on labour market behaviour are used as a proxy for inferences about preferences (Fagan and O’Reilly 1998; Crompton and
Harris 1998), but what is more is that no explanation is given about where preferences come from or reason why women fall into a particular preference group (Solera 2009).

However, one major criticism of Hakim's work is that choices are constrained, so that there would not necessarily be a correspondence between attitudes and behaviour. Actually, one of the main points of Hakim’s theory is that social scientists overemphasize structural constraints in explanation of women’s employment patterns and, in contrast, she prioritises differences in work orientations as the primary explanatory factor for the diverging women’s labour market behaviours, even though she acknowledges that preferences do not determine outcome (Hakim 1998, 2000, 2002). In view of that, scholars have argued that even if it seems that women act in ways that produce the three patterns of behaviour identified by Hakim’s theory, it does not follow that these three patterns of behaviour are unconstrained. Using other words: voluntary action and genuine or unconstrained choice should be not considered as the same thing (McRae 2003a). As a result, feminist argue that part-time work cannot be presumed to correspond to women’s working preferences in any simple way (O’Reilly & Fagan 1998) since several constraints, both endogenous and exogenous, are very often posed to women’s employment realities and options. In this sense some have argued that part-time work has much more to do with a constraint of an accommodated choice given the absence of alternatives (Fagan 2001; Himmelweit and Sigala 2005; McRae 2003a).

Under these circumstances, French scholars have pointed out for instance that it is possible to identify two different types of part-time work (Maruani 2002; Bué 2002; Guillame 2005; Ulrich 2009). The first type is defined as ‘travail à temps réduit’ (reduced-time job) and it corresponds with an individual voluntary choice made by the employee. In this case the employee decides herself to reduce her working time during a period in order to invest her time in other spheres of her life (in any case, most of the times women are involved in this type of part-time work mainly because of family reasons). The second type is defined as ‘emploi partiel’ and concerns the introduction of part-time work imposed by the employers in response of a need for flexibility in the management of his labour force. This type of part-time work is usually imposed to employees who often have to accept it because they have no alternatives, since they do not have the possibility to make any other kind of unconstrained choice (Ulrich 2007).

Generally speaking, when defining preference theory as a voluntaristic account of women’s behaviour, feminists’ main disapproval of such a theory concerns hence the fact it ignores the role of the structural constrains which women act within (Devine 1994, Crompton and Le Feuvre 1996, Gin et al. 1996). Basically, all critiques have included the classical sociological
argument that choices are socially constructed, and that social structures remain dominant, primary determinant of behaviours, especially when these behaviours refer to labour market outcomes (Hakim 2007). McRae (2003) underlines that the constraints faced by women in choosing how to balance market work and family work, or to forgo one in favour of the other, tend to fall into two categories: normative and structural. Into the normative category come women’s own identities, gender relations in the family and husband/partner’s attitudes, while the most important immediate structural constraints affecting mothers’ choices are jobs availability and the cost and availability of childcare. Anyway, the outcomes of different social origins also curtail choices more sharply for some women than for others, acting either through poor educational attainment, early pregnancy, poor health or culture (McRae 1993). Actually, McRae (2003) argues that it is very important to recognize that, even if all women face constraints in making decision about their working and family life, some women have better chances than others of overcoming those constraints and, hence, of living as if they faced no constraints.

Other arguments about the role of constraints claim that is the difficulty of combining the demands of childcare with the demands of a full-time job that pushes women to sacrifice their careers to bring up their children and to turn to part-time work (Gash 2008). In this sense, women’s with family responsibilities are constrained in the choice of the form of employment through which participate in the labour market because of the limitations posed by the institutional structure of the market itself, the incompatibility of working life with family life, and the form of gendered divisions of paid and unpaid work within families. In particular, according to this perspective, even in cases when part-time work is chosen by some workers as a mean of achieving work-life balance it is not possible to talk about women’s preferences for part-time jobs, since such a choice has to be rather considered as the result of the absence of alternatives to paid work given family responsibilities (Gash 2008a).

Attention has been drawn also to the constraints posed by demand-side factors. The main point here is that even when it can be supposed that some women seek part-time work and genuinely prefer it, the constrained character of such a choice is represented by the fact that in order to find part-time work women have to shift towards less remunerative (and generally less desirable) sectors. In other words, admitted that women may chose to have reduced working hours, the same women have to sustain the range of costs that often come with their choice since the decision to work par-time cannot be “unbundled” from its disadvantageous consequences (Bardasi and Gornick 2000), like underemployment in undemanding and low paid job. With respect to that, it has been argued that it would be more appropriate to talk
about trade-off rather than choice (whether constrained or genuine). Framed in this terms, part-time work becomes for some an opportunity to obtain more flexibility in their working arrangements at the cost of some lost remuneration, while for others it represents a compromise between full-time homemaking and full-time employment when there is no other possibility to combine the two of them. Moreover, according to feminists such a trade-off can produce short-term and full-term consequences. In the short-term part-time work provide with the possibility to develop a limited labour market attachment to women who might otherwise not have any attachment at all, but in the long-term this can reinforce women’s disproportionate participation in part-time work that in turn contributes to cement sexual divisions of labour in both paid and unpaid work (Bardasi and Gornick 2000).

Still on criticisms that refer to the influence of structural constraints on women’s preferences and decisions, O’Reilly and Fagan (1998) argue that assuming that attitudes are at least partly dependent on environmental factors and develop over time in an adaptive process, the understanding of how such attitudes are shaped by a particular context of welfare states’ policies should deserve more attention in Hakim’s approach. Accordingly, it has been pointed out that since differences in welfare systems is an important factor which structure women’s labour supply, variations in social policies have to be considered as a determinant factor of women’s part-time preferences and decisions. At this regard, pointing once more at how women’s choices are socially embedded, feminists have claimed that the genuine character of choices in respect of the balance of paid and unpaid work depends on a complicated balancing of unpaid work between the state, market and individuals (Lewis and Giullari, 2005). Therefore, if the classical debate on the comparative analysis of welfare state regimes have addressed the issue of women’s individualization of choice and preferences on the basis of issues like the need for a de-familiarization and commodification strategy of care work, more innovative perspective pay more attentions at how care work is shared within a certain structural context (Daly and Lewis, 2000; Meulders and O’Dorchai, 2007; Fagnani and Math, 2008).

Summing up, the main criticism moved to preference theory and work orientations theories in general is that, even if these theories have the merit of drawing attention to the effect of differences in women’s market resources and plans on their labour supply, it is critically important that this large attention given to behaviours and preferences is located and interpreted within the incentive structure created by state policies, labour market and family contexts.
2.2.2.4 Cultural beliefs, national cultural variations and gender role attitudes

Other approaches have focused on the role of cultural beliefs about gender. Accordingly, the approaches that relate to cultural constraints on career choices recognize that the culture in which individuals are embedded limits what these individuals deem possible or appropriate, thereby shaping the preferences and aspirations that individuals develop for activities leading to various careers, often starting early in the life course (Correl 2004).

Pfau-Effinger (1998) is one of the scholars who points out that even if it is accepted that there are national differences in women work’s orientations, it is important to take into account cultural variations among countries. Her thesis is that ‘gender culture’ influences individual and collective practices in different social settings and institutional sites. By ‘gender culture’ she means the nationally specific, dominant norms about gender relations, which are institutionalised and so relatively constant over time although variations by region or position in the social strata can occur. Moreover, from the results of her cross-sectional analysis she deduced that national differences in the gender culture are rooted in the different processes of transformation from agrarian to industrial society, and in the relative power that different social groups have gained during this transition. In such a framework the employment system, the Welfare State and the family household system are specified as the key institutional settings which affect the particular form of women’s economic integration. This allowed to her to examine the varying role that part-time employment has played in the modernisation of family models in different societies (Pfau-Effinger 1998). Moreover, her thesis is corroborated by other historical analyses about women’s employment which stress on the lasting impact of national differences in the transition to industrial society and of later periods of rapid economic change on the contemporary employment position of women. Summing up, according to Pfau-Effinger’s thesis in explaining cross-national differences in women’s practices of employment and employment orientations it is necessary to examine differences in the complex interrelation of institutions, social actors and culture, especially with regard to cultural ideas about gender, the family and motherhood at the macro level of society (Pfau-Effinger 1999; 2004).

Examples of comprehensive approaches on the cross-national comparison of women’s employment orientations and decisions have been developed on the basis of the idea that the interplay between cultural and structural factors at the macro level of society represents a main concern. The work of Leira (1992) focuses on the significance of culture and its relation to institutions for explaining cross-national differences in women employment patterns. She
presents the concept of ‘models of motherhood’, that is cultural ideas about the way a working mother has to organize her roles between family and employment. According to her these models are at the basis of the actions of social institutions and at the same time government’s measures such as policy programs and interventions support the respective model on which they are based. The work of Duncan (Duncan 2003, 2005; Duncan and Irwin, 2004; Duncan et al., 2003) have elaborated the concept of ‘gendered moral rationalities’, that is women’s moral judgments about childcare and work or, in other words, another way to talk about cultural ideas about what is considered a proper behaviour in doing a good mother. Also in this case cultural ideas are found to have a stronger influence than institutional or economic factors. What is more, according to their findings differences in ethnicity and social class are related to differences in the type of ‘gendered moral rationalities’ that mothers retain as a paradigm to orientate their way to combine paid work and family responsibilities, even if living within the same national policy regime. (Pfau-Effinger 2004).

Then, there are more unilateral perspectives that have been developed on the topic of cultural influences on women’s employment patterns and orientations and that focus more on one unique determinant factor over others.

For what concerns national social policies, it has been argued that they shape the opportunity structure of women, but in different ways. On one hand, the way family policy institutions frame the issue of reconciling work in the home with work in the paid labour force can determine cross-national differences in gender roles attitudes. Hence, family policies can create or reinforce a given collection of norms regarding what has to be considered the ‘proper’ role of women in society and as a result can have an influence on gender-role attitudes by affecting what is seen as normatively appropriate behaviour for women (Sjoberg 2004). For instance, some options like part-time work can be perceived as more or less morally appropriate according to the extent to which the institutional context provide with family policies that support dual-earner families. On the other hand, the nature of national social policies may itself be influenced by dominant national ideologies about work, family and gender equality, and given that social policy often arise in conjunction with other goals (Gornick and Mayers 2003) this can produce indirect influences on the elaboration of individuals’ gender-role attitudes. The existence of a relationship between gender-roles values and national policy has been confirmed also by other studies. Uunk et al. (2005) have shown that gender-role values affect women’s labour supply behaviour, but this effect is explained by the intermediating effect of institutions. Accordingly, egalitarian gender-role values have a positive influence on mothers’ labour supply and moderate the so-called ‘child effect’, but
they do not have any mediating power with respect to the impact of publicly supported childcare on mothers’ employment behaviour. That is: the effect of gender-role values disappears if the effect of institutional support for females’ labour supply is taken into account.

The importance of the institutional context for women’s employment patterns and orientations is recalled also by studies that have focused on the influence of individual related factors on cultural beliefs and gender-role attitudes. This is particularly the case of studies that have shown the existence of a relationship between class and specific cultural and normative practices. These studies have in general agreed on the fact that class can be considered as a culturally and socially mediated identity in relation to work orientations (Duncan 2005; James 2008) and that in this terms it has the power to shape habitus, form identities and influences choices (Savage 2000; Lareau 2002). Anyway, if on one hand class culture is seen as the product of everyday practices within families and social network rather than of collective agency, choices and practices related to a certain class culture are recognized as being primarily connected with structural and institutional constraints, especially with the resources and the opportunities made available by state policies (Ball 2003). In particular, specific habitudes and identities created within the family and the social networks contribute to perpetuate cultural and material class inequalities through their influence on building preferences especially in context where policies in support of dual-earner families are weaker (Crompton 2006).

Membership of a certain class may affect women’s gender-role values in a indirect way as well through the effect of the educational attainment. Since a high educational attainment is associated with better potential access to psychologically and economically rewarding jobs, it might be expected that women with higher formal education would hold more positive attitudes towards women’s involvement labour force. On the contrary, less well-educated women might attach a higher value to household and childcare activities and also hold more negative attitudes towards female labour force participation given the fact that they are more often employed in poorly paid or relative routine jobs (Solera 2009). However, while education can be seen as one of the factors influencing the fact of being in lower occupational status and holding more traditional gender-roles attitudes, such a pattern is argued to represents once more the reflect of material and cultural class dimensions in interaction with the alternatives provided by institutional context (Sjoberg 2004; Crompton 2006).

For what concerns the direct relationship between current gender-role attitudes and current employment behaviour, multivariate micro-level analyses of gender role attitudes have found
consistency between the two aspects. That is: women who work are more in favour of modern
gender-roles for women compared to women who do not work, as well as men whose wives
have paid jobs are more supportive for women working. Other results have shown that women
who work full-time are more likely to support women’s full-time work even in presence of
young children, contrary to what happen in the case of women who have a part-time job
(Scott 1999). Moreover, it has been concluded that in family context where men are supposed
to consider work as their primary time priority whereas women are expected to make the
family their first priority, this kind of gender-roles attitudes —women’s position as secondary
earners and holders of prime responsibility for family related activities—are an important
explanatory factors of women’s part-time work (Tijdens, 2002; Stier and Lewin-Epstein
2003). Actually, the performance of care work and obligations to care are experienced
differently by men and women, and that the definition of women’s ‘time to care’ is what
implicitly define women’s ‘time to work’. Furthermore, this kind of definitions can be
considered the reflection of the cultural context in which they are embedded, which may be a
context that contributes to a more or less guilt-inducing climate for mothers who wish to work
(Fagnani, 2007). This is proved by the fact that national cultural variations in both models of
motherhood and the sexual division of labour have resulted in variations in outcomes in
respect of both women’s employment and work-life articulation. In particular, such variations
are argued to be influenced by the importance accorded to the ‘sanctity of the motherhood’,
reflected in policy differences in which the status of motherhood is seen as a justification for
protection from the ‘sanctity of the market’ (Crompton, 2006). That is to some extent what
allows to talk about the existence of a ‘political motherhood’, which refers to all the care work
mothers do in connection with children which content is defined politically and socially by
prevailing practices and ideas (Ellingsaeter, 1999).

By the way, attention has also been paid to the process of profound reorganization that
concerns contemporary work and family life of all advanced capitalist societies (Ellingsaeter,
1999). In particular, it has been shown that although it still implicitly underlies many
institutional arrangements, the male breadwinner family model in which men took primary
responsibility for earning and women for the unpaid work of care is no longer up to date
(Crompton 1999; Lewis 2001). Accordingly, it has been argued that the actual patterns of
family formation and dissolution and labour market participation have changed, favouring a
shift in normative ideas about the contribution that women especially should make to family
(Lewis and Giulari, 2005), and about the kind of access it should be assured to them to the
model of continuous and dependent full-time employment.
2.2.2.5 Family responsibilities and motherhood

Despite changes in normative ideas, the frame of relative stable full-time working careers for women still seems to be an option quite difficult to achieve in concrete terms, and this is due to what it is usually known as ‘motherhood effect’ or ‘child penalty’ (Fagan and Rubery, 1996; Gornick et al., 1997; Maron and Meulders, 2008a; De Henau, Maron, Meulders and O’Dorchai, 2008), two terms chosen to indicate that the time mothers have to dedicate to their childcare duties still affects their labour market opportunities. In fact, it has been demonstrated that in the majority of the European countries, having a child implies a more or less important revision in the extent to which women are involved in the labour market (Maruani, 2000; De Henau, et al., 2004; Maron and Meulders, 2008). The clear gendered character of such a pattern is easily demonstrated by the fact that there is a high percentage of women working part-time in presence of family child-related responsibilities (Fagan, 2003; OECD 2003; Maron and Meulders, 2008) compared to the sensibly low percentage of men doing so (Delsen, 1998; De Henau and Puech, 2008).

Concerning this latter aspect, many researchers have pointed out how part-time work can be view as a solution to reconcile employment and family responsibilities, especially in the case of childrearing. That would be the main raison why many women move into part-time work (Fagan 2003; Naldini 2006), as well as why many females part-time workers do not want full-time jobs (Rosenfeld & Birkelund 1995). Rosenfeld (1993) shows that marriage (or cohabitation) and parenthood have basically the same negative effect on the likelihood of women’s holding full-time jobs. Gwartney-Gibbs (1988) argues that part-time employment allows a woman to “keep her hand in” while raising children, perhaps making it easier to return later to full-time job. Finally, Fagan and Rubery (1996) show that the ‘motherhood effect’ (i.e. the presence of children) has usually the strongest depressing effect on female employment, and this effect may potentially manifest itself through a reduction of working hours. Anyway, they find that even if the feminization of part-time employment is generally associated with women’s role as wives and mothers in many countries (Fagan and Rubery 1996), it doesn’t follow that between countries there are systematic patterns for women with domestic responsibilities concerning their participation to the labour market. Therefore, considering level of education acquired as another important supply side characteristic which might have some influence on the way through which mothers engage in employment, they proceed by exploring the relationship between such a characteristic and patterns of maternal involvement in part-time work.
Actually, in the current debate educational level is considered another powerful predictor of women’s labour market behaviour. It has been showed that a part-time job is usually preferred over a full-time one by married women, mothers of young children, and wealthy women (husband’s high income), but tends to be less preferred by more educated women (OECD 2003). Evidence suggests also that, compared to women with a lower level of educational attainment, highly qualified women maintain a higher attachment to labour market in terms of a more continuous participation into the labour force during motherhood (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). This is explained by the fact that education increases women’s aspirations and opportunities to gain access to the better-paid professional jobs. Moreover, education may favour adjustments to the unequal gender division of the housework (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Actually, high qualification levels are also associated with an attitudinal shift in favour of more egalitarian gender roles among younger generations of both sexes, since couples’ working arrangements appear to be affected by women’s level of education (Crompton and Lyonette 2005). Thus, education positively affects the type of compromises that women have to make about the gender division of labour, by reducing the constraints which motherhood makes on women’s labour market involvement.

Anyway, even when mothers’ qualification levels are taken into account, Rubery and Fagan (1996) finds that marked national differences persist in mothers involvement in full-time and part-time employment. The results of their analysis show that in many countries more educated mothers are also more likely to work part-time as just as less educated mothers, even if the difference is not as great as that for rates of full-time work. Consequently, they suggest that country-specific factors, apart of individual characteristics, affect the extent to which choices between working or not working and, in particular, between working full-time or part-time, are taken.

Other studies (Dex & Walters 1989; Joshi & Davies 1992; Rubery et al. 1995) have reached the same conclusion even when adopting a life-cycle perspective: the impact of motherhood on the way in which women engage in full-time work, part-time work, or economic inactivity over the life-cycle, tends to be different between countries. Actually, as we have already mentioned, it has been argued that state policies and other institutions have a strong influence on both the conditions under which women supply their labour and the organization of labour demand, and such an influence has the power to mediate the effect of supply-side characteristics (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). On this basis, it has been claimed that three models of mothers’ labour force participation can be found in Europe (Rubery et al. 1995). In countries like Denmark, the former Eastern Germany, France, Belgium and Portugal,
motherhood appears to have little effect on participation and women tend to pursue continuous and often full-time careers. In a further set of countries, mainly Northern countries, mothers tend to take breaks from the labour market and to return to work often on a part-time basis. For what concerns the Southern countries, it is here that mothers are most likely to curtail their participation into the labour force, adopting an “opt in-opt out” participation pattern. Anyway, despite these national differences, also Fagan (2003) confirms that, in general when a woman has dependent children she is more likely to work part-time.

2.2.2.6 Household characteristics: composition, economic situation and division of labour within it

The composition and the economic situation of the household also affect the individual decision of working part-time (Bielenski, Bosch and Wagner 2002). Actually, the decision on the hours that may be worked are not usually taken by individuals in isolation, but rather in the context of household as a whole, where the division of roles among the members of the household plays a crucial role. Moreover, as it has been already pointed out, the presence of children in the household (especially of young children) increases the probability of a woman to working part-time. This is found to be due largely to the fact that in nearly all EU countries women still shoulder the main burden of unpaid work in the household and family work in general (Périvier 2004; Aliaga 2005). At this regard, feminist have concluded that persistent gender inequality in the labour market is both cause and consequences of women’s disproportionate assumption of unpaid work at home (Gornick and Mayers 2004).

Concerning the economic situation of the household, family resources also represents a determinant of women’s employment behaviour. Couples who are ‘well-off’ tend to prefer less time in paid work, whereas couples experiencing financial difficulties would prefer to spend more time in paid work, either on a part-time basis (for those who are not working) or on a full-time basis (for those working part-time). Anyway, shifting to an individual perspective, part-time work is not always a financially feasible option (Gasparini, 2000). Siltanen (1994), underlines that policies that promote part-time employment often do not consider that most of these jobs can only provide a ‘component wage’, so the only people who can afford to work part-time are those with another source of household income, from either family members or state transfers. In this sense, there is either an ‘added worker effect’ or a ‘discouraged worker effect’ that can influence women’s labour supply (Solera 2009). This is especially true when the scarcity of the partner’s income or to the unemployment status of this
latter come into play. For example, in case a woman has a unemployed partner, the structure of the unemployment system benefit may discourage her from working if these benefits are means tested on the basis of family income (Del Boca et al 2000, McGinnity 2002). Likewise, it has been shown that women in part-time employment are more likely to be married to lower status men and experience considerably lower household incomes and greater financial difficulty.

The choice between part-time or full-time job is determined also (and at the same time contributes in determining) by the role of individuals within the household as primary or secondary earner. The secondary earner is someone who relies on another person as the main breadwinner and contributes with a partial or secondary income to the collective pot. Usually, second earners can be identified between women and part-time workers (Hakim 1998), whether this two characteristics cannot be found on the same individual. This seems plausible since, as already remembered, Maier (1994) finds that initially, in many Northern countries, the growth of part-time jobs occurred upon such women being second income earners within a male-breadwinner model of family, in which women combine employment with their primary responsibility for unpaid domestic labour in the household. By the way, more recently Luck (2006) have shown that in economically weak countries like those of Southern and Eastern Europe it can happen that in some cases the economic pressure for women to furnish an additional household income shapes gender attitudes.

The ideology of the male breadwinner model was and is a powerful one, and most cross-national attitudinal evidence continues to indicate that a substantial minority of people still support it. Actually, the proportion of men and women who favour a traditional male breadwinner arrangement where the man is employed and the woman is not, has fallen over time across all Europe (Crompton et al. 2003). Anyway, it is clear that such a trend has been translated in a general employment pattern that sees women more than men as the workers who tend to take part-time work. This is because gender assumptions about the sexual division of labour, particularly referring to the division of labour within the domestic sphere, persist in all societies (Compton & Lyonette 2006). In fact, the bulk of domestic and childcare work tend to burden much more on women than on men even in those couples where women have earnings equal to or higher than those of their partners (Bittman et all 2001; Hallerod 2005). According to the ‘doing gender’ perspective this is the outcome of attitudes and identities expressed and created in everyday practices by both men and women, since both men and women are doing gender when they allocate their time. In this sense, husbands who are not the main breadwinners tend to comply the norm of masculinity by not
doing ‘feminine’ housework, while higher income wives tend to fulfil the division of gender roles by doing most of domestic and childcare work (Solera 2009).

Hence, the situation is quite complex. On one hand the increase in women’s claim to equality, especially in the level of women’s (particularly mothers) employment, has been associated with an increase in the proportion of dual-earner households. This is also confirmed by a study carried out on the issue of working time options over the life course (Anxo et al. 2006), which shows that within European families there is a widespread preference for dual-earner arrangement, where the woman works in substantial part-time jobs. Nevertheless, on the other hand, such a trend brings some problematic aspects which link together the question of women’s claim to equality and women’s work-life conflict. This is because the variable persistence of embedded and gendered norms and state policies are crucial factors that shape the division of labour between men and women (Compton & Lyonette 2006). Geist (2005), for example, have concluded that welfare regimes differ with respect to the division of domestic labour: equal sharing of housework is rare in conservative countries, while it is more widespread in Scandinavian and liberal countries, no matter the level of individual relative resources, time availability and the type of gender ideology. Broadly speaking, both cultural and institutional dimensions contribute in explaining such patterns. Actually, in societies where traditional gender roles are promoted and legitimated in social policies and where attitudes tend to be less equalitarian, it is more difficult to find women as well as men who are in support of women’s employment and of a more balanced share of housework.

O’Reilly and Fagan (1998), suggest that the examination of the effect of the division of labour within the household and its economic situation on women’s decision to work part-time should be related to Welfare State regimes and labour market conditions, since in this way it would be possible to identify the circumstances that contribute to the growth of part-time work in some countries. Essentially a part-time wage is insufficient to provide an acceptable standard of living in all but the most highly paid occupations (Rubery 1998). So part-time work for either sex results in economic hardship unless there is recourse to additional income transfers through family relationships or Welfare State entitlements.

Actually, looking at men who are part-time employees we would find that most of them are students, other young labour market entrants, other older men approaching retirement (Delsen 1998; Riedmann et al. 2006; Anxo et al. 2007). Consequently, their wages are probably supplemented by students grants or pensions, plus some inter-generational transfers within the family. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that the growth of men part-time work in some countries is due to the compositional effect of an expansion of education and Welfare State
restructuring (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Such a restructuring process may make men more available for part-time work, but on the other hand it may cause a process of impoverishment through which basic income standards guaranteed by the state risks to be driven down without a parallel process of flexible reform aimed to social security systems able to accommodate rather than penalise part-time work for both sexes (Doudeijns 1998).

2.2.2.7 Working conditions and labour market regulations

As Rubery (1998:137) reports “part-time work not only involves fewer hours and a lower weekly remuneration than full-time work, but it can also constitute a different employment form, organized on different principles, and on different terms and conditions to full-time jobs”. At this regards, researches carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (2002, 2003, 2006, 2007) have pointed out how part-time employment incurs in a number of labour market penalties. Likewise, a considerable amount of literature has widely recognized that part-time is often associated with bad working conditions, especially in terms of salary and opportunities for career promotion (Corral and Isusi 2006), and that sometimes it represents a marginalization strategy that provides employers with a source of cheap labour (Kalleberg 2000). In fact, part-time work represents very often the result of organization principles that aim at combining low-skill jobs and fewer hours, underscoring the need that measures intended to promote working time flexibility and/or work-life balance do not so at the expense of reinforcing gender inequalities in the labour market (Hurley 2006).

Therefore, it sounds natural to expect that such working conditions may have a negative influence on the decision of individuals to work full-time or part-time. Anyway, the available empirical evidence shows that part-time workers, especially female, report higher level of general satisfaction with their working conditions than full-time workers (Hakim 1996; Fagan and Burchell 2002). Corral and Isusi (2006) argue that this positive result is probably due to high satisfaction levels with working hours specifically, whereas part-timers are also conscious of their inferior working conditions in a number of issues such as payment rates or access to training or promotion opportunities. Warren (2004) seems to confirm this idea arguing that women in part-time jobs, specifically those in lower occupations, might be achieving a more positive balance between their home and working lives than women in higher part-time occupational position and/or in full-time jobs. Actually, lower part-time employment jobs usually imply fewer responsibilities, and this aspect has the effect to reduce
the stress of balancing too many roles. Moreover, shorter hours are likely to be less physically demanding and in this way the double workload deriving from home caring responsibilities and paid work becomes manageable, sorting again the effect of reducing stress. According to Hakim (2002), it is the existence of different orientations towards employment that explains the apparently contradictory finding for which part-time workers express themselves as satisfied with their employment, even if this latter implies low-level working conditions.

In any case, the impact of labour market regulation on women’s employment behaviour and patterns has not been outlined yet in any specific theoretical framework. Accordingly, it is rather the link between labour market performance and the strictness of a country’s employment regulation that have caught the attention of the scholars participating in the debate on such a subject. In this sense, concerns about the relationship between flexible labour and women’s employment situation have been the object of several empirical studies that aimed at identifying the dimensions of labour market regulation with more direct impact on women’s labour supply behaviour. These studies have reported that flexibility does not equally affect men and women, since women and men are exposed to it in different ways. That is: women are concerned with flexibility through their involvement mainly in atypical jobs which usually pay less and may involve less predictable schedules, while overtime and shift work are the means through which employers acquire flexibility from men. In addition, flexible work covers different periods of women’s and men’s lifecourse, since women are usually involved in atypical employment during the core years of their working career, which is usually are those where they experience motherhood and family responsibilities, while men are usually interested by these forms of employment at the point of their labour market entry or exit (Delsen 1998; Anxo et al. 2007).

On the whole, it has been observed that statutory and collectively bargained regulations on temporary and part-time work play some role in reducing the unbalanced consequences that flexible and atypical work implies for men and women, as well as the gap between full-time and part-time workers in general. Important results are achieved where labour law or collective agreements provide with rules for equal treatment in job security and social security entitlements and payments, and where there existence a minimum wage system reduces (Solera 2009). Other important measures are policies aimed at adapting flexibility to the changing exigencies of employees over the life-cycle. Actually, needs and preferences of women and men with respect to work change over the life-course, since care requirements as well as preferences about leisure and education may vary according to different phases of life.
These policies may be pursued either at the firm level or the national level and consist mainly in: leave arrangements (maternity and parental leave, leave for other family reasons, career break schemes); the possibilities to reduce hours within an existing job when children are young; employee-chosen flexibility of working time schedule and types of contract.

The role of labour market policy has become only recently the object of explicit attention by feminists, who have been then insisting on the explicit inclusion of working-time regulations in the reconciliation policy packages (Crompton 2006; Gornick and Meyers 2003). They claim that the important role of statutory working-time regulations relies in increasing the time available to women and men for domestic and childcare work through two mechanisms: first, by setting a limit to normal weekly working hours for all, enabling in this way men to contribute more to housework and women to avoid the ‘mummy truck’ of part-time or flexible work; second, by granting vacation times, which can be used to alleviate childcare stress.

Company provisions in support of employees with family responsibilities have been gaining increasing attention as well, especially for what concerns how they integrate with statutory provisions (OECD 2001; Naldini 2006; Ponzellini 2006). In particular, within work-family arrangements provided by firms some important type have been identified, like flexible working hours and leaves, extra-statutory childcare arrangements (workplace nurseries, childminding, childcare financial allowance, holidays schemes and summer camps) and parenthood support schemes (work-family management training, employee counselling, work-family coordinators research on employees needs) (Den Dulk 2001; Naldini 2006).

By the way, it is generally agreed that the success of employee-friendly flexibility and labour market policies depends on the nature of other types of policies, especially on overall packages of statutory state-provide policies.

### 2.2.2.8 The policy context

Jaumotte (2003) underlines the role that the policy context plays in shaping decisions related to part-time or full time involvement into the labour force. She points out how, even if there is high evidence that high preferences for part-time work in some countries may reflect genuine preferences of parents to spend time with their children, these preferences may also be shaped by current policies. For example, a low supply of affordable child care or short paid parental leave makes full-time work difficult and part-time a more attractive option. Moreover, such a
situation may lead to an excessive supply of part-time work by women due to a negative signalling effect liked to part-time jobs. As we have previously mentioned, referring to this last point Smith, Fagan and Rubery (1998), confirm this idea by arguing that a supply of people who are prepared to work less than full-time hours and are judged suitable for the available jobs is a determinant factor that affect the use and the development of female’s part-time work, and that membership of this pool of labour is heavily influenced by the organizations of family responsibility within the households and the Welfare States systems. In general, countries that provides with policies which are supportive of maternal employment tend to have lower proportion of women engaged in part-time employment (Gash 2008). Actually, it has been demonstrated that the availability of affordable childcare and parental leave can affect both the choice between inactivity and activity, and the choice between part-time and full-time participation (OECD 2003). Especially for what concerns childcare services, wide evidence has been provided about the fact that they are determinant in order to support the employment of mothers as well as the reconciliation between parenthood and employment (Solera 2009), of which part-time work represents an important aspect. Where there is a furniture of childcare services that are cheap, widely available, with long hours coverage and of good quality, women labour supply is more likely to increase (Fagnani 1996; Gornick and Meyers 2003; Del Boca and Wetzels 2007), stimulating full-time employment much more than part-time. Moreover, in contexts where there is a more generous public childcare the reduction in working hours after the childbirth is contained compared to contexts public childcare is less generous (Uunk et al 2005). Under these circumstances, in a large number of countries the impact of young children on women’s labour supply depends mainly on differences in public arrangements in favour of employed mothers, especially in public childcare (Uunk et al 2005). In other words, cross-national variations in the effect of children can be explained by variations in the generosity of public policies like short-term maternity leave and publicly-supported child care (Gornick, Meyers and Ross 1998; Bardasi and Gornick 2000).

It has been shown that there are other policies capable to affect female labour supply than policies that explicitly support maternal employment. These include: income-tested transfers, marginal tax rate and tax treatment of the spouse. Income-tested transfers may have discouraging effects with respect to paid work since they are connected with benefit reductions that can generate poverty traps (Christofides 2000; Saraceno 2002). Tax incentives reflect mainly the type of household taxation (joint or individual), as well as the dependent spouse allowance and the degree of progressivity in the tax schedule, and may discourage the
sharing of market work between spouses, impacting hence on the female supply of part-time work (OECD 2003). In particular, individual taxation favours a secondary earner (hence a part-time worker) in the household, while joint taxation penalises one of the spouse’s earnings at the joint higher marginal tax rate (Gustafsson 1995).

Overall, it can be said that, as argued by many feminist scholars and as shown by many studies on differences across welfare regimes, what really matters are not single policies but packages of policies (Solera 2009).

2.2.2.9 Working time preferences, working time options and working time arrangements

Working hours preferences, the match between current and preferred working hours, and changes in the preferred volume of working hours are others relevant elements that can influence women employment’s behaviour in relation to part-time work.

Various studies (Fagan, Warren and McAllister 1998; Fagan 2003; Bielenski, Bosch and Wagner 1998, 2002) have underlined that all these elements are connected with the different age and domestic profile of the large pool of women working part-time. As for domestic profiles, it has been actually shown that the probability of having a close alignment between current and preferred working hours varies according to parental or other care responsibilities, but in a scarce way. Fagan, Warren and McAllister (1998) find that, even if they would like, part-timers are less likely to increase their hours if they have young children compared to those without children, and hence they are more likely not to reach the preferred volume of working hours. Anyway, such a pattern tends to reduce as the youngest child becomes older, and in this case there are no significant differences between part-timers with either young children, or older children living at home, or without children. Moreover, surprisingly, once the exact amount of hours is taken into account, findings show that for women working part-time there is no significant difference at all: many would have been reducing their hours to combine employment with raising children, but they are no more no less likely to have achieved the preferred amount of working hours than women without children. In any case, the compatibility with schedules of family life is an important factor that affects satisfaction with working hour. In particular, a large proportion of women employed part-time, especially those who have decided to work part-time in order to manage employment with the time demanding task of being a mother, report that they are satisfied by the fact that their working time is compatible with their family life (Fagan 2003).
Preferences vary also according to the employment situation of the partner. Actually, part-timers are more likely to want a substantial increase in their hours if they have a non-employed partner compared to those with a partner income support. On the contrary, having an employed partner reduces the probability that part-timers want to have a substantial increase in their hours compared to those without a partner, particularly if their partner works very long hours (50 or more) (Fagan, Warren and McAllister 2001). Additionally, the household financial situation affects the realization of the match between actual and preferred working hours (Bielenski, Bosch and Wagner 2002). Actually, women in financially well-off household are most likely to be working their preferred hours, while if their household is in financial difficulties they are more likely to desire to increase their working hours. Stier and Lewin-Epstein (2003) confirm that individuals whose standards of living are better secured (persons with higher level of education, those residing in households with high level of income, and the older) would prefer to reduce their workload, and opposite is true for the less educated with low family earnings.

Anyway, the working time preferences of part-time workers are shaped by both their domestic situations and life-course phase, as well as by their labour market opportunities, and change as these circumstances change (Fagan, Warren and McAllister 1998). Accordingly, women’s working time preferences may change over the life-course, and such changes may trigger transitions between different working-time options as well as between different employment status that are related to the working time options that are made available to women in the context of the labour market and the welfare state structures in which they are embedded. In other words, the distribution of working hours and working hours preferences over the life-course is related to the extent to which institutional frameworks are evolving and patterns of biographical behaviour are becoming more flexible (Naegele et al. 2003).

Actually, important trends of the flexibilisation of working time arrangements have been observed in the current labour market reality. On one hand, these latter seems to be increasingly related to a process of individualization and diversification of working time patterns. In the specific case of part-time work, it has been argued that this latter is concerned with such a process since it is possible to observe growing diversification of social uses of part-time work and of the groups of employees involved in this form of employment (Nicole-Drancourt 2009). That is that we observe a part-time work that does not respond anymore to the exclusive women’s necessity of balancing work and family responsibilities, rather a part-time work that widens in some way its functionalities by responding to a general necessity of arranging a broader articulation between work and extra-work during the working life, as it
could be required by groups like young people, students and pupils, disabled people or workers with poor health, elderly workers. On the other hand, it has been pointed out that the process of individualization and diversification of working time patterns is constrained by the working time options that are made available to individuals, which are the formal options recognized in society to participate in the labour market and that are designed through the interaction between the actual boundaries of working life and the actual boundaries of normal full-time work. The main point when evaluating the role played by working time preferences is, hence, to consider what time options are available and how they can be implemented by individual and combined into arrangements (Naegele et al. 2003).

At this regard, it is important to notice that there is a clear gendered dimension in both the availability and the use of the different working time options (Fagan and Lallement 2000). In fact, it has been shown that females have a higher variations and flexibility of working-time, as well as employment status transitions in general (Anxo an O’Reilly 2000). On the whole, we have already mentioned the fact that children is one of the most important motives for women for preferring part-time work, but evidence have shown that even if part-time arrangements may be an important work-life balance facility in the short run, it may become counterproductive in the long run. In fact, women who switch to part-time work experience downward occupational mobility and entails disadvantages in terms of career prospects, employment conditions, social security, poverty in old age, and difficulties in re-entering the full-time employment system (Fagan and Lallement 2000; Naegele et al. 2003).

Consequently, this has been related to the fact that there are time options that are not available yet to women as the result of their working histories (Naegele et al. 2003). In other words, once preferences for part-time working arrangements change, the eventual impossibility that women face in changing what was the eventual once-chosen arrangements is basically the outcome of the institutional context connected to a full-time worker model. Likewise, it can be connected to practices that have been institutionalized by the agents acting within such a model and to their willingness to accept to deviate from full-time, continuous profiles of employment in order to participate in periods of transitional employment through different working time options (Fagan and Lallement 2000). In particular, it has been shown that even if male full-time workers express a preference for part-time work, they do little to fulfill this wish (Naegele et al. 2003).

As a result, it has been claimed that in such a context institutional reforms are needed in order to address all these issues. As argued by Fagan (2003:3): “firstly, working time reforms that provide a better match with working time preferences would enable women to maintain
higher rates of labour market participation across their working life; secondly, working time reforms that make it easier for employment to be combined with the time demands of care responsibilities would have a key role in redressing gender equality in employment and unpaid work; thirdly, an improved match between actual and preferred working arrangements will contribute to the broader goal of improving living and working conditions in Europe”.

2.3 The elaboration of the ‘part-time work construct’ in the sociological debate: is there room for new kinds of investigation?

2.3.1 A dualistic and incomplete perspective

So far we have seen that there is a considerable body of research on the determinants and material outcomes of part-time work. For some commentators, part-time work is considered to be an ‘employee-oriented’ form of employment, especially for women because it offers the ‘best of both worlds’ enabling them to participate in employment while still affording time to spend with their families (Hakim, 2007). Others have argued about the role of the structural constrains which women act within, and have pointed out how this form of employment cannot be presumed to correspond to women’s working preferences in any simple way (O’Reilly & Fagan 1998). Despite the diversity that characterized those positions, all of them have some communality. First, they have reached a general agreement about part-time work as a ‘universally gendered’ form of employment, especially referring to the considerable evidence of segmentation, mainly ‘dualism’, among the part-time work force (Walsh, 1999). Nevertheless, this has resulted in a relative neglect of the studying of the possibility of part-time work being used as an integration strategy or a transition stage (O’Reilly and Fagan 1998). Secondly, researches have always showed a tendency to give primacy to institutional, social or structural analysis of part-time work, and they have given in this way little space to the understanding of the day-to-day problems and practices experienced by female part-time workers (Walsh, 2007).

In this sense, we believe that the arguments that we have presented at the beginning of this chapter about the fact that the dynamics of part-time employment seemed to be determined by behavioural aspects to a much greater extent than structural ones are fundamental, and should contribute in framing new perspectives for the investigation of actual part-time employment
patterns and their future developments. Actually, the relevance of behavioural aspects suggests that, part-time work having become a ‘women’s affair’, further investigation on this form of employment should try to provide with new arguments and explanations about three fundamental points: what is the actual relation between women and part-time employment? In what direction is it going? To what extent is the nature of such a relation relevant to the future development of part-time work?

These questions are essential for three main reasons. The first one deals with the quantitative dimension of part-time employment. Actually, even if we have seen that differences persist among counties referring to the phases that have triggered the growing incidence of part-time work in quantitative terms, we can see that all the national evolutionary paths converge at the European level in the permanently increasing rates of female part-time work. Few data can be evidence for that: the increase in part-time work for women between 2000 and 2005 was more than twice the increase in female full-time employment (respectively 43% and 20%) , as well as in male part-time employment (15%); in 2005, 32.3% of women in employment in EU had a part-time job compared to only 7.4% for men; in 2005 for all Member States the part-time work share was higher for women than for men (European Commission 2006).

The second reason concerns the normative dimension of part-time employment. In the context of the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020, specific objectives and targets have been set in line with the need for rising female employment rates and, accordingly, policy makers are facing many thorny questions for what concerns the measures to implement in order to accomplish with such objectives and targets. Most governments have declared themselves in favour of the development of part-time work and, although they have done so for many and different official reasons, part-time employment has been publicly praised as a tool that may offer the chance of a better reconciliation of work and family-care responsibilities. By the way, the process of normative recalibration, that is undergoing in many welfare states in Europe (Ferrera & Hemerijck 2003) for what concerns the diffusion and promotion of new values, symbols and speeches related to the promotion of female participation into the labour force, is imposing to carefully rethink the logics and the paradigms of reference on the basis of which women’s access to employment should be granted.

These two first reasons concern mainly the problems that part-time work concretely poses in terms of a social phenomenon that affects women’s labour force participation. The third reason refers to the sociological debate on part-time work as a privileges space for the investigation of those problems. As we have seen in this literature review section, during the last two decades a considerable number of researches dealing with the relation between
women employment and part-time work have been carried out, but nowadays the sociological explanation of this relation seems in need for a refreshment in line with the power of the social change that it is ongoing in our societies. In fact, many analytical perspectives still rely on the classical sociological argument about the juxtaposition between action and structure, where the separation between the sphere of domestic reproduction and economic market production has formed the analytic basis underlying explanations of women’s availability for part-time work. Different arguments have been pointed out about the allocation of tasks and duties between men and women with respect to paid work and family responsibilities, as well as about the principles that orient and give explanation for differences in behaviour and outcomes of the two genders in these spheres. In this sense, it is possible to say that the studying of women’s relationship to labour force participation have been approached either by arguing the character of homogeneity of such a relationship if the main aim was to support the idea of a social order underlying gender differences, or by defending the character of heterogeneity of such a relationship if the aim was to define and detect the main features of a social category in order to give it voice with regard to its values, rights and power. It is hence interesting to notice how all the arguments and the issues that have been elaborated and discussed in such a framework have being criticized more in terms of ‘practical evaluations’\(^\text{13}\) rather than proper theories that come from the ascertainment of empirical facts. For example, functionalist theory has been criticized as gender-blind, preference theory has been criticized as a voluntaristic account of women’s employment patterns, theories pointing at the role of cultural gender arrangements have been criticized as tautological. The point here is not to discuss the legitimacy of those criticisms, but it is rather to show that actually the debate on women’s employment patterns, in particular for what concerns women’s overrepresentation in part-time work, has developed on the basis of a dualistic schema that has mainly brought to the elaboration of an incomplete perspective on this topic which has somehow confounded the process of ascertainment of empirical facts and its organisation in a theoretical framework with the activity of practical evaluation of those facts. As a result, the debate on female part-time work has produced a construct that it nowadays characterized by a high level of ambiguity and theoretical uncertainty and need to be reoriented in order to respond to the concrete reality of the problems that it has been trying to study and explain. That is, social changes currently undergoing in our societies such as mutations in individuals’ lifestyles and biographies as well as in socio-institutional frameworks ask for a new stream of researches.

\(^{13}\) We refer here to the definition of practical evaluation given by Weber (1949) in *The methods of social sciences*. 
attempting to produce innovative empirical categories and theoretical arguments in order to widen the spaces of comprehension of the future developments of part-time work and its relation to women’s labour force participation.
CHAPTER 3
THE RESEARCH OUTLINE

3.1 ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1.1 New perspectives in the study of part-time work dynamics and evolution

The relevance of behavioral aspects in determining the dynamics of part-time work becomes very interesting if we consider that the debate around its future developments is actually animated by arguments about the possible emergence of a new phase in the evolution of this form of employment, a phase that would be at present time in progress (Nicole-Drancourt 2009; Courbier 2004; O’Reilly 2003). According to those arguments, the current realities of the labour market and labour market policy could be interpreted as a ‘laboratory’ where some signals of such a phase would be distinguishable.

First of all, signals are identified in the growing diversification of social uses of part-time work and of the groups of employees involved in this form of employment. Accordingly, we would observe a part-time work that does not respond anymore to the exclusive women’s necessity of balancing work and family responsibilities, rather a part-time work that widens in some way its functionalities by responding to everybody’s necessity of arrange a broader articulation between work and extra-work during the working-life, where extra-work represents a sphere that encompasses a variety of ambits and activities (not simply the family) in which individuals may chose to invest themselves at various periods of their life-course.

In this sense, researches carried out by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Fagan et al. 2001; Bielenski et al. 2002) have reported that 19% of men and 23% of employed women working full-time would prefer to work part-time hours, typically for a finite period (between 1 and 4 years) at particular stages in their life-course. Furthermore, other studies from the same institution (Riedmann et al. 2006; Anxo et al. 2007) have shown that the pool of part-time labour supply is becoming more and more diversified on the basis of the fact that establishment’s experience regarding part-time workers relates no more to just one specific group of employees such as mothers, but rather to a broader range of people that make use of this working arrangement. Then, it is firstly interesting to notice that even if the most common group of part-time workers remain mothers with pre-school or school-age children (64% of European establishments in average
employing them in 2004), there is some 21% of fathers working part-time in European companies. Evidently, the need to care for children is still one of the most immediate and common reason to work part-time. By the way, other groups of employees are increasingly contributing to the part-time work force including young people (20%), students and pupils (18%), disabled people or workers with poor health (17%) and others who care for elderly people (9%)\textsuperscript{14}. These evidences are supported by the fact that demand for part-time work is relatively widespread around Europe: as we have previously mentioned caring for children is still the main reason for preferring part-time work, but it is not the only one since there are other popular reasons like the desire to have more time for oneself and one’s activities, reducing the strains of a full-time job, and finally training and education reasons (Naegele et al. 2003). Additionally, it is interesting to notice that the gender divide patterns that have traditionally characterized part-time work are changing. In fact, even if rates of male part-time employment remains remarkably low compared to female ones, the proportion of establishments practicing part-time work and having men among part-time workers is becoming progressively consistent (45% have men working part-time and within them 24% have less than 20% of men working part-time, 16% have 20% or more, 5% have all men working part-time)\textsuperscript{15} (Anxo et al 2007). Finally, the diversification in social uses of part-time work and part-time workers is confirmed also by evidence on the fact that the variety in the pool of part-time labour permits employers to use multiple forms of part-time work, as well as the greater use of part-time work in a company is linked to the variety of labour supply groups employed (Anxo et al. 2007).

For what concerns the institutional level, signals can be found in the incorporation of part-time work in some policy measures (like the Hartz Reform in Germany, or Paje in France) dedicated to the management of multi-activity over individuals occupational trajectories. In particular, other research from the European Foundation (Anxo and Boulin 2005) have identified a clear trend in institutional developments of time policies that goes towards the emerge of life-course oriented working time options, where the development of part-time work is seen as one of the main form of negotiated flexibility. This trend refers to the introduction of more life-course-oriented working time options which allow individual to

\textsuperscript{14} In view of that, it is interesting to notice that some 12% of European companies’ part-time staff represents “others” groups of worker than the ones we have cited. It is uncertain who these employees are, but their employment status as part-timers demonstrates the variety of part-time labour supply across countries.

\textsuperscript{15} Anyway, such a proportion seems to be strictly related with the age structure of the labour force employed in the establishments, since the incidence of men working part-time is higher where there is a higher number of employees either under 30 years old or above 50 years of age. That can be considered an additional indicator on the diversification of social usages of part-time work, with specific regard to a gender perspective.
entail working biographies linked to their differentiated needs and lifestyles during different life-phases (Anxo, Boulin and Fagan 2006). Accordingly, at the institutional level, part-time work is perceived as an important working time option that allow individuals to manage their time allocation over the life-course, mostly at some specific life-phases, by giving them the chance of opting for reversible working time reduction (from full-time to part-time and, at least theoretically, conversely). Other type of evidence has shown that also firms’ and managements’ strategies are playing a role in this sense, since they are implementing working time arrangements that try to reconcile both employers’ and employees needs and that leave more room for individuals to organize their life-course profiles in a more flexible way (Anxo and Boulin 2006).

Broadly speaking, all these signals have to be framed in the wider context of the transition from the Fordist to the post-Fordist paradigm. In fact, part-time work represents one of the main indicators of such a transition for what concerns both changes in the organization of work and changes pertaining to the meaning and the place of work in individuals’ employment trajectories, as well as changes related to the social and normative arrangements about the temporality of those trajectories (Anxo 2007; Nicole-Drancourt 2009). That is the reason why, according to these new analytical perspectives on part-time work, the main indicator of those changes in the context of the breaking down of the Fordist paradigm consists most of all in the transformation of the logics that sub tend the social uses of part-time work. As for these logics, the main aspect that represents their transformation is the shift from traditional logics to innovative logics. It is a shift from opting for part-time work because of women’s necessity to manage the timing their everyday family responsibilities, to opting for part-time work as a way to manage the complexity of the timing of life according to a project of self-investment in different spheres of activities all over the life-course (Nicole-Drancourt 2009). Accordingly, the new emerging phase in the evolution of part-time work consists in the development of part-time work as an instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity over individuals’ life course.

These arguments are supported by the tenets of some analytical approach like the life-course approach (Anxo and Erhel 2006; Naegele et al. 2003). In particular, the life-course approach provides an important research perspective for examining the frameworks and conditions for individual or group specific patterns of reorganization of working time throughout the life-course. It is defined as a new analytical and political perspective that aims at paying attention not just to the institutional factors influencing the life-course, but also to individual opportunities to make choices (Naegele 2003). In this framework, evolving institutional
contexts (in the sense of the time options available in those contexts, as in the case of a growing incidence of part-time work) are analyzed through the lens of increasingly de-standardized patterns of biographical behaviour, looking at how these two elements may influence the distribution of working hours over the life-course and, hence, the development of new time arrangements as a sign of social change. The concepts of time arrangement and time option assumes a great importance in the analytical structure of the life-course approach. Time arrangements design particular combinations of elements related to paid work and non-work at relevant stages of the working life-course and/or throughout the whole working life-course (Naegele at al. 2003). In particular, when institutionalized, time arrangements can be seen as patterns of action, where time options such as part-time work represent the bounds within which such action take place. Then, since time options are the result of the institutional environment, time arrangements may become institutionalized as the outcome of the interaction between individual preferences and institutional options. In this sense, social uses of certain time options such as part-time work may represent an indicator both of what kind of time arrangements are in the background of some societal contexts, and of new emerging social patterns of time arrangements. At the same time, time options can change and evolve, also as the result of specific policy demands that derive from particular preferences for particular time arrangements. Accordingly, the gradual alignment of standardized males’ life-course patterns to the females’ de-standardized ones is read as a sign of the emergence of new time arrangements where gender differences are assumed as progressively disappearing, to such a point that in the next future part-time work shall become a time option equally available to women and men on the basis of gender-neutral assumption by an institutional, societal and cultural point of view.

Overall, these new analytical perspectives and approaches are really interesting because they leave room for the possibility of studying part-time work used as an integration strategy or a transition stage, overcoming in this way the neglect that has been traditionally affecting such a research topic. Furthermore, they can contribute in disrupting the typical negative association that characterize women and part-time work for what concerns the nature of both women’s relation to employment and part-time work itself. Finally, from a social and labour market policy point of view, they can help in elaborating suggestions about how the evolution of part-time work should be addressed in order to contribute to the solution of actual welfare state and labour market problems for what concerns female labour force participation and gender equality. Those are the reasons why we want to go further in the investigation of these arguments and their analytical as well as empirical implications.
3.2 **AIM OF THE RESEARCH**

3.2.1 *Is part-time work lost in transition?*

Even if they are really interesting, the adoption of the perspectives that we have illustrated in the previous paragraph demands some caution, especially for what concerns females’ labour force participation patterns and the significance of part-time employment to these latter. In fact, even if it is possible to talk about a process of diversification that affects social uses of part-time work, it stays also true that its more traditional use (part-time work as a work-life balance facility) remains the most widespread, and that it continues to represent a crucial element to the determination of gender dynamics in the labour market, in particular to the segregation that characterizes the occupational trajectories of women compared to those of men. Even more, the gender divide that typify part-time work hold on despite the fact that the relation between productive and reproductive spheres is nowadays interested by enormous changes: we observe a shift in normative ideas about the contribution that men and especially women should make to family (Lewis and Giullari 2005); there is a growing importance attached to work and employment as a value in women’s life-course; public debates about the kind of access and integration to labour market that should be assured to women are becoming more and more intense.

For these reasons, it is important to notice that even if it is possible to recognize an ongoing process of transformation that concerns part-time work and that may open in the next future the way to a widespread integrative and potentially gender-neutral form of part-time, there are old and new contradictions that go hand in hand with such a process and that have to be taken into account. In particular, these contradictions emerge from the fact that the transformations we are observing invest simultaneously part-time work and the relation of women to labour force participation, as well as the interlinkage between these two elements. Essentially, as for part-time work we see on one hand that it is still a concrete indicator of a certain sexual division of labour (in line with the Fordist paradigm), while on the other hand it is gradually becoming an employment form that serves an emergent ‘right to time’ in the context of a general redefinition of employment trajectories over the life-course of both women and men (in line with the post-Fordist paradigm). As for the changing conception of women’s employment in our society, we notice that it is moving from the idea of paid work being a secondary aspect in women’s life in order to maintain the sake of the family as the primary sphere of their personal engagement (in line with the Fordist paradigm), to the recognition of
the importance of gainful employment as part of a path of individual self-investment between different spheres of activities during the various phases of women’s life-course (in line with post-Fordist regime). As a result, if we try to imagine what the interlinkage (interconnection, intersection) between these twofold dimensions looks like, it appears clear how it represents an element of great ambivalence. To some extent, we can say that such an interlinkage and its ambivalence are the main emblems of this phase of transition, and that it is the reason why their dynamics need to be further investigated. Actually, it is not clear yet where and to what this phase of transition will end up, and we believe that research should try to cast light upon that by focusing on such elements.

In this sense, we believe that there are two main priorities. The first is to look at the articulation of the phases of part-time evolution in specific national contexts, giving space to the analysis of those phases, their dynamics of development and characterization. The second one, but not less important, is to asses and to understand to what extent part-time work can become the core of a process of individuation of the spheres of self-investment for women. In fact, innovative logics of social uses are at a first sight related to the capacity of part-time employment to represent an instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity above all in women’s life-course. Accordingly, I would like to understand the directions of the evolution of part-time work, i.e. is there really an ongoing transition towards a part-time work to be intended as a gender-neutral instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity over the life-course? In order to answer such a question, it would first of all be necessary to carry out an in-depth analysis of the relationship between part-time work and women’s employment, paying particular attention to the relation between the evolution of part-time work and the evolution of the process of individuation of the spheres of self-investment for women. In other word, in order to detect the patterns of the transition, we need to look at the relationship between respectively logics of development of part-time work and logics of social uses of women’s part-time work.

We have already briefly mentioned in the previous section what “logics of social uses of part-time work” means, so now we will try to define the concept of “logics of development”. When talking about logics of development we refer to the patterns and the dynamics of part-time work evolution and to the subsequent functionalities that this form of employment assumes in the labour market and in society, where these latter is intended as a whole societal system. Accordingly, all legal, economic and social environments and circumstances which influence the scope and the room for part-time work developments are fundamental. In this sense, social and labour market policy contribute in determining the type of jobs open to part-
time employees, the working conditions associated to part-time work, and the public perception of part-time employment. Another first decisive element is represented by employers’ reasons for introducing part-time, since they can determine the variety of employee’s part-time work experiences. Then, the nature and the influence of collective agreements as well as unions attitudes towards policy developments on part-time work and working-time contribute in affecting the spread of part-time work and the characteristics concretely and ideologically associated with this form of employment, as well as the position of part-time workers in the labour market and in the employment and production system.

Going back to the relationship between logics of social uses and logics of development, we think that the analysis of such a relationship should be framed in a labour supply perspective with a twofold aim: to understand whether and where part-time work can be considered an instrument (or a stage) of the individual process of individuation of the areas of personal self-investment for women; to investigate whether and where the peculiarity of the evolution of part-time work implies the possibility to successfully accomplish with such a process (or to increase the possibilities offered by such a process).

In other words, we want to study this relationship by the light of two possible interpretations about females labour force participation patterns through part-time work. The first interpretation is based on the idea of the transition moving along a cultural dimension, that is a possible evolution in the logics of social uses of females part-time work that might be related to a growing attachment of women to the labour market, hence to a more general social emancipation process of women. In this case we would interpret a change in the logics of social uses as part of the widening of the females’ process of individuation of personal areas of self-investment (this latter interpreted as part of a social emancipation process of women). The second interpretation is based on the idea of the transition moving along a structural dimension, given by changes in part-time work according to social and working contexts in evolution, and that could affect either the elaboration of certain logics of social uses, or to the possibilities of the concrete realization of these latter. In this sense, different logics of development could either open or close spaces to women for the realization of the process of individuation of the areas of personal self-investment as long as they favor or constrain the realization of certain logics of social uses.

Summing up, so far we have argued that the relationship between women and part-time work has to be considered the indicator through which it is possible to understand whether there is a real transition currently undergoing in the process of evolution of part-time work capable to address the social uses of this form of employment towards the gender-neutral use of it for the
management of multi-activity periods over individuals’ life-course. Or else, we expect that the study of such a relationship can provide with information about whether such a transition can be considered a reliable option for the future scenarios of part-time work. Then, we have accounted for two possible interpretations in order to try to identify the intrinsic dynamics that may be at the basis of such a transition: is that a transition that takes place in the context of a growing process of individuation of the personal areas of self-investment for women (so, can we say that there is an ongoing process of change in the logics of social uses of part-time work that is related to a cultural dimension?)? Or is that a transition that is encompassed by a more general process of evolution of part-time work (is there an ongoing process of change of the logics of development of part-time work related to a structural dimension)?

At this stage of our reasoning, we must consider an additional interpretation and put the question also in the following terms: is that a transition whose dynamics are determined by the discrepancies between the processes of evolution of the logics of social uses and the processes of evolution of the logics of development (hence, does the transition move along the dynamic interplay between the cultural and the structural dimension)?

The relevance of the question asked in these terms emerges when we consider the possibility that such an eventual discrepancy stays at the basis of the great ambivalence that seems to characterize nowadays the relationship between women’s employment and part-time work. In this sense, it is possible that the current reality of part-time employment is characterized by a phase not completely addressed at the structural level for what concerns the salience of its gender divide (i.e. logics of development do not completely address the negative externalities related to such a divide), where behavioural effects play an important role in contexts differently characterized by constraints and opportunities that determine the extent to which these effects can have an influence on the elaboration of certain logics of part-time work social uses.

Accordingly, in our opinion a transition to part-time work as an instrument for the management of multi-activity periods should not be taken for granted. That is the reason behind the question of the title “lost in transition?”.

It is a question that tries to bring attention to the matters of a transition that needs to be investigated with respect to both the peculiarity of the relationship between women’s employment and part-time work, and a more general idea of a new phase in the evolution of part-time work that particularly concerns the 2000’s. Assuming that, to different extents according to the various national contexts, the main characteristic of part-time employment is a consistent discrepancy between the logics of its development and the logics of its social uses, in the end we question whether it is exactly the
reduction of such a discrepancy the crucial element that can make possible a transition to part-
time work as a gender-neutral instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity over
individuals’ life-course, that is a transition from traditional to innovative logics of social uses.
Overall, our research aims at investigating the ambivalence that characterizes at present time
(women’s) part-time work in order to gain some understanding about the direction of its
future developments and the significance of their potential effects in the more general part-
time employment scenario. In particular, “lost in transition?” is a question that aims at calling
attention to the new arguments, both practical and theoretical, that are gaining consideration
in the sociological debate about part-time work according to the fact that they open a new
perspective of analysis on the potentialities of part-time work as an integrative employment
form. As a result, our question is relevant to the twofold necessity to take into account such a
perspective and to relate it to current realities in society and in the labour market. It means
that if on one hand we recognize the idea that one of the possible future developments of part-
time work may be its social use as gender-neutral instrument for the management of periods
of multi-activity over individuals’ life-course thanks to a transition to innovative logics, on
the other we insist on the necessity to further investigate the high feminization of this
employment form in order to understand to what extent such a possible development is
actually close or not to current reality.

3.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

3.3.1 The interplay of the cultural and the structural dimensions in determining the
patterns of the transition

We shall now try to elaborate a more structured conceptual framework in order to better show
and summarize the main ideas we have proposed so far. In order to do so, we will first specify
the theoretical assumptions on the basis of which we are going to elaborate such a scheme.
They mainly come from the life-course approach. First of all, we assume that individual
behaviour systematically interrelate with the relevant institutional influence, that is: institutions
have an influence on individual behaviour as manifested in working biographical patterns, where these latter represent the background determining individual scopes of
decisions and choices. In other words, we assume that institutional factors influence the
working life-course as well as individuals possibilities to make choices matter, so that choices and constraints stay in a relationship that is characterized by both complexity and reflexivity. Hence, according to this perspective the focus should be on individual and/or group-specific patterns of working hours in different phases of the life-course, as well as on the conditions that influence the structuring of such patterns and allow their reorganization. In particular, the social uses of time (or time arrangements, according to the definition given in the life-course approach that we have seen in the previous paragraph) are assumed as depending on the participation of different age groups and the two sexes in employment, where gender and age groups (cohort) are hence considered as relevant social indicators of structural social change. That is the reason why we shall map women-specific part-time uses against the background of generational change. In fact, empirical and theoretical arguments claim that particular time uses that are experienced at certain point in life by different cohorts may be carried by these latter on their progression all over the life-course, so that specific patterns of time use chosen early in life may become the model for the choice of other types of time use later on the life-course.

The conceptualization of these dynamics can be seen from a twofold perspective. The first is the horizontal perspective and it takes into account the interrelation of various life spheres at the same time through a holistic approach that look at people who combine work with other activities during their working life-course. The second is the vertical perspective and it examines, both prospectively and retrospectively, life phases within the context of precedent and subsequent phases looking at the consequences that certain time uses may have later on over the life-course. Since the aim of this project is to analyze the relationship between part-time evolution and women’s part-time employment patterns during the 2000’s and not part-time’s role in women’s life-course per-se, we will rely mainly on the horizontal perspective, but there is a concept from the vertical perspective that is particularly meaningful for the scope of our analysis. It is the concept of path dependency which refers to the unintended consequences that may emerge from the interlinkage of the various life stage. In order words social uses of time, or time arrangements, adopted at a certain phase of life may turn into difficulties of impossibilities of switching to other types of uses or arrangements at some later phase. In this sense, path dependency can be the result of both institutional context and group-specific choices and behaviour that fossilize into particular patterns of time uses or arrangements.

On the basis of these assumptions, we can now proceed with the specification of the conceptual model. In particular, we are going to specify how we conceptualize in practical
terms: the path through which the relation between women’s employment patterns and part-time work move forward along both the cultural and structural dimensions; the dynamics of interaction between these two dimensions; the direct and indirect outcomes through which such an interaction take an explicit form; the concrete direction of the transition and the way it proceed along its evolutionary path between the cultural and the structural dimensions. A visual representation of such a scheme is given in Figure n 3.1.1.

According to us, the relation between part-time work and women’s employment patterns may be conceptualized through a series of effects that the experience of part-time work may have on women labour force participation. The first effect is called period effect that is that women’s part-time work may be simply related to the fact there are different age-groups of women who are at different stages of their life-course where the recourse to part-time work may be more or less important. The second effect is called emancipation effect, and refers to the fact that part-time work may be fundamental to the increase of female labour force participation under certain circumstances, especially where women can profit mainly of part-time work opportunities in order to enter the labour market. The third effect is called integrative effect, according to the fact that part-time work may encourage women to keep themselves active on the labour market instead of shifting outside the labour force, especially during those life-phases when they need to reconcile work with other activities (e.g. family responsibilities). The fourth effect is called scar effect and indicates the fact that part-time work experiences may produce unintended negative consequences on the subsequent stages of women’s working life, such as difficulties to shift to full-time work or to move to other time arrangements in general.

In our scheme, the first two effects (e.g. period effect and emancipation effect) deal with what we have defined in the previous paragraph as the cultural dimension, while the other two effects (e.g. integrative effect and scar effect) refer to the structural dimension. In fact, we see

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16 This term come from the vast stream of researches that have been carried out during the last two decades on the possible negative effect that unemployment may have on future employment prospects (Arulampalam et al. 2000, Arulampalam et al. 2001, Gangl 2006). In particular, such studies have looked at whether the experience of unemployment damages future working paths in the form of higher unemployment chances, that is looking at whether experiencing spells of unemployment increases the propensity of becoming unemployed in the future (Luijkx and Wolbers 2009). Such a process is commonly known as scarring, or structural state dependence. It refers to the situation where there is a causal link between current and future unemployment, in the sense that an individual who currently experiences unemployment will have a higher chance of unemployment in the future than an otherwise equal individual without experiencing unemployment now. In our work we will draw on such a concept in absolute terms, that correspond to the identification of a situation of structural state dependence. Hence, we will set it free from its exclusive reference to the studying of unemployment and we will define it simply as the negative effect that a certain employment experience (in this case part-time work) may have on subsequent employment paths.
that the two first effects as more related to what we can define as *options of participation*, that is they are more related to women’s decisions and choices for what concerns their labour market participation. Indeed, the last two effects are more related to what can be seen as *options of reconciliation*, that is options that deal with the opportunities and the constraints posed to women in the management of the articulation of their involvement in paid work with other spheres of activity. Accordingly, the relation between women’s employment patterns and part-time work and the way it moves along the cultural and the structural dimensions is determined by the relationship between all these four effects.

Essentially, the four effects can be seen as the rings of a chain that are all linked by a *two-tailed relationship*. We call the relationship two-tailed because it can move both in a positive and in a negative direction. The positive direction is given by the fact that the period effect can strengthen women’s labour market attachment and flows into the emancipation effect, which in turn can be reinforced and transformed into an integrative effect. The negative direction is given by the fact that the presence of the scar effect can block the integrative effect, limit the emancipation effect and reinforce the period effect. As a result, the link between the period effect and the emancipation effect within the cultural dimension and the subsequent link with the integrative effect is what determine the interplay of the cultural and the structural dimensions in shaping the relation between women’s employment patterns and part-time work. In this case such an interplay move along a positive path that goes from the cultural to the structural dimension. On the contrary, the presence of the scar effect is what trigger a movement in the other way around, that is a negative path that goes from the structural to the cultural dimension. In this case, it is the link between the scar effect and the integrative effect within the structural dimension that determine the interplay of the structural and the cultural dimensions by negatively affecting the action of the other two effects that operate within this latter. In turn, that is translated in a negative influence on the relation between women’s employment patterns and part-time work. Hence, these are the dynamics of interaction between the cultural and the structural dimensions and the direct outcomes they produce.

In any case, such an interaction can take an explicit from also through the production of some indirect outcome. This latter, very important in our scheme, is represented by what we have previously introduced as the concept of path dependency. In fact, the presence of the scar effect can be matched with the difficulties or impossibilities that women can encounter in switching to other types of time uses or arrangements and that are at the basis of creation of the dynamics of the path dependency mechanism. By triggering a series of negative
influences on the other effects that we have identified, we have seen that in the end the scar effect can reinforce the period effect and in this way it can increase the risk that women-specific choices and behaviour about part-time work fossilize into particular patterns of time uses or arrangements of this employment form. In this sense, the path dependency emerges from the influence of the institutional context on individual behaviour and hence as a negative indirect outcome of the path that goes from the structural to the cultural dimension. Besides, the path dependency mechanism plays also a very important role in the general path of the transition as we are going to explain soon.

Overall, the entire process of transition gradually moves along a path that it is structured around the interplay of the cultural and structural dimensions and the direct as well as indirect effects that such an interplay produces. In the previous paragraph we have argued that the current reality of part-time employment is characterized by a phase not completely addressed at the structural level especially for what concerns the negative externalities related to the gender-specific uses of part-time work, where at the same time behavioural factors still play a great role in influencing part-time work social uses, all that in contexts differently determined by constraints and opportunities. Now we are going to see how this argument is translated in our conceptual scheme. First, what we mean with behavioural factors is related with the presence of the period effect and the emancipation effect that, as we have seen, are both related with the cultural dimension since they deal with women’s choices decisions to participate in employment. Their role as factors of influence on part-time social uses is given by the interaction with the structural dimension, that take an explicit form through the link with the integrative effect. Where we are in presence of such a link and of the interaction that it makes possible, we are in presence of the first step of the transition. When talking about a phase not addressed at the structural level we refers to the presence of the scar effect that, by blocking the integrative effect, blocks the entire dynamic of the transition at the structural level. In this sense, the negative externalities that are produced refer to the series of negative influences on the other effects (period and emancipation effect) as direct outcome of the interplay between structural and cultural dimensions, as well as the triggering of a mechanism of path dependency as an indirect outcome of such an interplay and as a direct outcome of the movement of the transition along the cultural and structural dimensions.
In this framework, the process of transition is hence incomplete and characterized by discontinuity between the cultural and structural dimensions, where these latter remain in a controversial and problematic relationship. Basically, if cultural dimension related factors are necessary in order to trigger the transition, they are not enough and need to be complemented by structural dimension related factors. In fact, the negative externalities that we have illustrated above have to be addressed in order to allow the process of transition to move on in its dynamic process of evolution. In other words, the presence of the scar effect can be seen as related to traditional logics of development of part-time work, and where this effect is in action traditional as well as innovative logics of social uses of part-time work are equally possible (possible in the sense of conceivable within the sphere of the cultural dimension and drivable through the first step of the transition, where this latter is achievable), but not equally practicable. As a result, innovative logics can be discouraged or weakened, traditional logics can be reinforced, and these dynamics risk to be crystallized in both institutional and individual paths through mechanisms of path dependency. These mechanisms can cause
negative returns from the structural to the cultural dimension and increase the discrepancy between logics of social uses and logics of development, leaving the dynamic of the transition in a state of deep uncertainty.

**Figure 3.3.1-2 The accomplished process of transition of part-time work**

![Diagram of transition process]

Ideally, an accomplished process of transition would be characterized by a circular process of continuity between the cultural and the structural dimensions, where the scar effect is absent and no space is left to the triggering of negative externalities such as path dependency. In this situation different logics of part-time social used would be not just equally possible, but also equally realizable and we would observe no discrepancy between the logics of social uses and the logic of development.

### 3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

#### 3.4.1 A three-steps process for the analysis of the “lost transition” and the countries “lost in transition”

Given that for us the relationship between women employment and part-time work represents a major indicator of the patterns that characterize the transition to a new form of part-time
work, the main objective we want to achieve is to understand to what extent the realization of such a transition really constitutes a potential development of the actual process of evolution of part-time work. In any case, answering the question “lost in transition?” represents just the arrival point of our research. In fact, to get there we will structure our analysis on the basis of the theoretical arguments and the conceptual framework that we have previously presented, especially for what concerns the idea of a transition process that is based on a discrepancy between logics of social uses and logics of development of part-time work, and that can be interpreted as the result of the interplay between two possible dimensions, the cultural and the structural ones.

In view of that, we will try to answer three main sub-questions, bearing in mind that the main level of our analysis is the micro level, represented by females’ labour supply.

The first question concerns the evolution of logics of social uses of part-time work, that is: to what extent do we observe an evolution in these logics? The point of this question is to check whether innovative logics of social uses are a real option for the various social uses of part-time work. Accordingly to the conceptual framework we have elaborated, the main issue here will be to investigate the presence of the scar effect and its link with the other effects in determining the interplay between the cultural and the structural dimension within which the relationship between women’s employment patterns and part-time work is shaped. The presence of the scar effect is actually interpreted as the outcome of certain logics of development that constraint the evolution of the logics of social uses and, on the basis of the presence of other effects, as a sign of discrepancy between the logics of development and logics of social uses.

The second question concerns the realization of the logics of social uses of part-time work, which is what logics have higher possibilities to be realized in actual fact? In this case we check whether different types of social uses imply different possibilities to realize different kinds of logics of social uses. That is, we want to analyze if the eventual presence of the scar effect is more persistent for some kinds of social uses rather than for others and, as a result, if innovative logics are more likely to be realized for those social uses of part-time work that allow the presence of the integrative effect. In the frame of the conceptual scheme that we have elaborated, this means to verify once more how aspects related to the cultural dimension like choices and decisions about part-time work, which can take an explicit form in the period and the emancipation effects, interact with the aspects related to the structural dimension intended as the space that is left to realization of the logics that underline those choices and decisions, which can take an explicit form in the integrative and the scar effects. Accordingly,
where social uses are less affected by the scar effect and more related with the integrative effect, then part-time work can be seen as actually functioning as an instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity over the life-course, and hence innovative logics have some space of realization. The opposite case has to be intended again as a sign of discrepancy between the logics of development and logics of social uses.

The third question refers to the elaboration of logics of social uses of part-time work, which is what are the factors that influence the elaboration of these logics? This question aims at verifying whether eventual differences in logics of social uses are possibly linked to differences in the profiles of women with regard to aspects that concern either the cultural dimension (hence, aspects that can influence the presence of the period effect – i.e. choices and decisions related to a particular stage of the life-course –, or the emancipation effect – i.e. attachment to the labour market), or the structural dimension (hence, aspects that are related to the employment status and the working conditions associated with it and that can potentially influence the presence of the integrative and the scar effect).

This three-step process should allow us to progressively defining and identifying the levels of discrepancy between logics of development and logics of social uses through the concrete investigation of the interplay between the cultural and the structural dimensions in order to recognize the direction and the patterns of the (lost) transition.

As our analysis is a cross-national comparative one, we will look at the specificity of the national contexts we are interested in, which have been characterized by different paths of expansion of this employment form, and we will verify the position of each national context involved in the analysis with respect to patterns of realization of the process of transition of part-time work. That is, we will verify how each country is “lost in transition”.

As general expectations, we suppose that in contexts where issues related to the growth of part-time work have previously been addressed with attention to the salience of this employment form to female labour force participation, then two possible outcomes are expected to be occurring. The possible first outcome is a positive one: social uses of part-time work as a gender-neutral instrument for the management of periods of multi-activity over individuals’ life-course are becoming increasingly possible, according to the fact that part-time work as a time use option has been invested by a relatively low level of gender polarization. The second possible outcome is more problematic as compared to the first one: a high level of gender polarization of part-time work as a time use option has been endorsed by the general institutional context and by social norms, so that the transition of part-time to a gender-neutral time use option represents a highly thorny concern and negative externalities
are very likely to arise. On the contrary, in contexts where the expansion of par-time work has not been faced by taking into account its relevance in terms of feminization patterns, we suppose that there is a third possible outcome, according to which in general that such an expansion is more likely of being producing negative externalities, like growing inequalities within the labour force for what concerns the articulation of employment trajectories over the life-course and the logics behind it.

In our opinion, none of the countries involved in our analysis is nowadays characterized by the first outcome we have described. On the contrary, we think that the situations of France and Italy are represented by the third one, but according to different patterns. Figure 4.1.1 shows how the two countries are placed in the conceptual scheme of the ‘lost transition’ that we have presented in the previous paragraph.

**Figure 3.4.1-1 The countries ‘lost in transition’**

![Diagram showing the countries 'lost in transition'](image)

In France, despite the growth of part-time work, the norm for female activities has remained full-time work (Anxo et al. 2000) since the integration of women into the labour force has
been based on women assimilation of the male occupational model, and the growth of part-time work itself has been favoured mainly in periods of high unemployment as a work sharing strategy, becoming also part of the process of casualization of work (Kieffer et al. 1997; Bue 2002; Anxo et al. 2000). In such a context it seems reasonable not to expect a general process of evolution of the logics of social uses of part-time work very much linked to a cultural dimension, since part-time work in France has not served a general social process of emancipation for women. In other words women’s emancipation in France has followed other ways (i.e. full-time work) that could be enjoyed only by some groups of women, while others still lag well behind. Accordingly, period and emancipation effects may play some role in France, but determining factors seem to come rather from the structural dimension. In fact, the structural dimension may be more powerful in affecting the logics of social uses and determining cleavages between different groups of women that can have access to different level of social resources, and that consequently have different possibilities to develop logics of social uses that produce negative effect (i.e. scar effect) rather than logics that favour the integrative effect (these latter are probably a real option only for a small group of women who are better fitted out). In this case we hypothesize a quite wide discrepancy between logics of social uses and logics of development, which can be seen as an indicator of imbalances and contradictions at the basis of growing forms of inequalities within the part-time labour force, which could be in turn related to a progressive worsening of part-time job quality. According to such a perspective, France represents a country which is ‘lost in transition’ especially for what concerns the structural dimension of part-time work, and it is exactly at the level of the structural dimension that the transition is blocked (i.e. the logics of development need to be addressed in order to create new and more egalitarian spaces of evolution and realization for the logics of social uses).

Italy remains a ‘strange case’. Being female labour force participation well below the European average, and part-time work scarcely diffused, we are quite doubtful about if it is appropriate to talk about a transition in the relation between women employment and part-time work. In any case, there are some stylized facts that have to be underlined. First of all, during the last decades part-time work has significantly increased, but this growth has not been matched with any attention to its gender dimension (despite also in Italy part-time work has become mainly a “women’s affair”), and it has mainly represented the answer to a flexibilisation process that have interested just some segments of the labour market (‘injections of controlled flexibility’, according to Regini 2003). Then, women who have come up with part-time work to balance employment and family responsibilities are quite
satisfied with such an arrangement, while on the other hand we observe a very high rate of involuntarily between females part-timers. In addition, some researches (Boeri et al. 2005; Cnel 2003; Bardasi e Gornick 2000) have shown that child related factors do not play almost any role in determining gender differences in the share of part-time work. Finally, at the institutional and societal level the male breadwinner model still represents the standard of the traditional Italian familialistic model, to such a point that it is possible to talk about an “extended male breadwinner family model” (Naldini 2002), where the large network of relatives with strong socio-economic links among members lays upon gender relations based on the male breadwinner. Accordingly, women’s part-time work dynamics in Italy seems to be blocked within the level of the cultural dimension, where the period and the emancipation effects find in any case quite controversial space of action, while at the structural level the action of the integrative effect seems problematic as well. Therefore, in this country the structural dimension may represent the major element in the determination of the evolutionary paths of part-time work and in the transition to the development and realization of certain logics of social uses. In this sense, a diversification in the logics of development adopted so far may be crucial to the initiation of a transition towards new scenarios of part-time work that at the same time it could represent the trigger factor for the development of a social process of emancipation for women labour force participation, since the cultural dimension would have in this way a wider space of action and influence in its interaction with the structural level. Hence, in this case we suppose that there is a very large discrepancy between logics of social uses and logics of development that, as for the French case, takes the form of growing inequalities within the part-time labour force. Finally, in our conceptual framework Italy represents a country “lost in transition” where part-time work still has to find its own way to develop new forms of integrative part-time work, and where a quantitative growth addressed in a more aware manner at the structural level would probably lead to some progress in its qualitative evolution for what concerns both social uses and forms of development that would probably produce more equitable and equilibrated effects.

3.5 THE DESIGN OF THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

3.5.1 Methodological procedure for a cross-national comparative study

In this paragraph we are going to expose the methodological procedure we intend to adopt in order to develop an international comparative analysis for investigation of the conceptual
framework we have proposed above and the research questions that we have elaborated within it. It means that we are not going to discuss in details the methodological issues and technical aspects related to the methods of empirical social research that we have chosen to apply. It will be done, when necessary, in the sections where the application of those methods is a main concern. Here, we are simply interested in showing what the empirical design of the analysis is, that is what kind of methodological procedure intended in more general sense we are going to build up for the scope of our analysis.

The methodological purpose of our study is to develop a comparative, explanatory and secondary data analysis.

As for the cross-national comparative character of the analysis, we have largely discussed the basis of our comparative approach to the studying of part-time work in the first chapter. At this regard what it is important to remind is that our choice to adopt an international comparative perspective it is not related to any aspiration to realize a term-for-term contrast on the objects of our analysis. Actually, with international comparison we mean a real heuristic research strategy that allows for the elaboration of dynamic perspectives on the individuation of tensions and mode of articulation of social forces and changes, and that hence goes further the systemic highlighting of coherencies within each national reality and divergences between national realities (Dupré et al. 2003). As a result, according to the adoption of the societal approach at the theoretical level combined with the case-study approach at the technical level, in our study countries will be studied as context and will be treated as the unit of study. It means that on one hand we will be giving attention to the particularities of each specific country in trying to understand how certain social institutions and other related aspects of the social structure affect women employment and their relation to part-time work. On the other hand, we will be trying to understand how the social process of part-time work transition concretely develops and varies systematically within certain characteristics of the societies involved in our analysis according to the dynamics that we have identified in our conceptual scheme.

Usually quantitative methods are essential for international comparative analysis since they are very useful in identifying general trends and dynamics, or patterns of development in general. Anyway, quantitative methods are not sensitive enough for the analysis of societal contexts, since they make it more difficult to consider the characterization of social phenomena that have to be compared as related to the societal context and to the different importance that they assume in every different society. That is the reason why for this kind of studies quantitative methods need to be complemented by other research techniques.
In view of that, before proceeding with the secondary data analysis part of our study, great space will be given to the speculative examination in social perspective of the paths of development that have affected institutional and social practices concerning part-time work and women’s employment in the countries we have chosen to study. Moreover, preliminary attention will be given to the analysis of the European context, since we have seen in chapter one that actually the formation of an European unified market and the development of an European policy structure question the societal approach and demand to situate each societal context also in relation to the influences that it may be given from the European space. The dimensions and the empirical indicators on the basis of which the speculative examination will be carried out will be presented in the next chapter, which will actually open the section of this thesis dedicated to such an examination. Here we present the techniques that we are going to use in order to develop this part of the analysis.

First of all, we will rely on the analysis of secondary literature. Being the main aim grasping the societal contexts with respect to a large variety of aspects, country-specific scientific studies as well as other cross-national researches on labour market, employment, family, gender relations, economic and social history issues will be reviewed, and the most significant findings with respect to our topic will be retained. Second, official statistics on the country and European level will be analyzed with respect to historical changes and patterns of development. Then, results of representative surveys on employment patterns, family dynamics, cultural orientations, as well as on institutional changes and policy developments (when available) conducted on a national and international level will be analyzed in order to structure an overview of the distribution of certain attitudes, patterns of behaviour, and orientation for what concerns individual and institutional developments. Finally, legal sources both at the national and the European level will be analyzed in order to understand how statutory and collective regulations, as well as the industrial relation system, have affected the development of part-time work in the countries under examination.

This speculative examination part of the analysis will serve as a preliminary contextualization for the secondary data analysis part, as well as a framework within which interpret the results of this latter. The secondary data analysis part will rely on statistical techniques which will be applied at the micro level on the LFS (Labour Force Survey) data. We will realize both descriptive and analytical techniques mainly in a pseudo-panel perspective according to the necessities posed by the issues under investigation.

In the end, the combination of these two approaches, the speculative one and the quantitative one, should allow us to answer to the research questions we have posed accounting for a
variety of factors and dimensions that refers both to the depiction of the specificity of the societal contexts of the countries involved in our analysis and to the identification of general trends in the development of part-time work.
This part of the thesis is dedicated to the speculative analysis of the paths of development that have affected institutional and social practices concerning part-time work in the European Union context and in the countries under review in this thesis.

In chapter three we have several times insisted on the fact that part-time work is nowadays characterized by ambivalence, as well as by old and new tensions. We have also pointed out that these aspects of part-time work are related with the fact that the phase of transition of this employment form has to be framed in the wider process of transition from the Fordist to the post-Fordist society (cfr. Chapter 3, paragraph 1 and 2). These concepts represent the starting point for the elaboration of the dimensions and the indicators which will be at the basis of the studying of the European part-time employment context. Actually, the European context encompasses a wide range of countries and heterogeneous realities which can be very difficult to grasp in a unique and at the same time comprehensive framework. The dimensions and indicators we propose are meant to facilitate such a task while preserving meaningful theoretical roots to the scope of our investigation. Of course, analysing part-time work patterns in Europe implies some methodological limits and problems in comparative terms, which will be presented and discussed in the introduction of the chapter dedicated to such analysis.

For what concerns the analysis in comparative perspective of the countries involved in this thesis, this will be carried out according to the principles of the societal approach, which has been presented in the first chapter of this thesis. In line with such principles, we do not aim at developing a term-for-term comparison, but to give relevance to the particular societal mechanisms, dynamics and patterns proper of each country. Likewise, while the chapters concerning France and Italy will be developed on the basis of a common argumentative structure, space will be given each time to the description of the elements that are considered peculiar to each national context. Accordingly, as a general rule each chapter begin with a section describing trends, facts and figures of part-time work over the 2000s, continue with the illustration of the national institutional and policy framework, and analyse then social actors’ practices, but the type of contents developed over these macro-sections may vary.
according to the exigencies of giving account of the specificity of each country. The conclusive section of this second part of the thesis links the two chapters by addressing the cross-national comparison between France and Italy on the basis of the most interesting patterns that will be depicted through the analyses of the two case-studies.
CHAPTER 4

PART-TIME WORK IN EUROPE

Introduction

How has part-time work developed in the European Union during the 2000s? To what extent has it been involved in a process of transition within such a context? This chapter tries to answer this kind of questions, but in order to do so it is crucial to underline few points about the level of analysis and the problems it brings along.

It has already been mentioned several times along the thesis: the incidence of part-time work varies widely across European countries. These variations may result from either a ‘country’ or a ‘industrial structure’ effect. The former refers to national variations in policies and other societal differences, the latter concerns compositional differences in the industrial structures across various countries which are differences in economic sectors, company size, level of female presence in the workforce. Various analyses carried out in the frame of different researches have shown that the country effect prevails in explaining the incidence of part-time work in different countries. This is due to the strongest influence of country differences in the legal and institutional framework, as well as various employment policies. Despite these differences, however, some underlying trends and relationships exist in all countries for what concerns the relative importance of part-time employment and changes in its working patterns.

In this chapter, the focus of analysis is on part-time work trends across a wide range of countries in Western Europe (mainly EU15), rather than on individual trajectories in single countries. The limit of this choice is that it implies a risk of decontextualization. In fact, once more, there are significant economic and socio-institutional differences between countries for what concerns various aspects of working time patterns and structure. By the way, such a choice has the advantage of allowing the identification of some general tendencies that are embodied in current patterns and dynamics of part-time work. This is very crucial in a time of change, especially given the fact that the EU context encompasses a wide range of realities which tend to evolve quite rapidly.

Even so, the emphasis on the analysis of some underlying common, rather than on individual country differences, does not have to be intended neither as the search nor the statement of the
existence of any law of convergence among countries. That is the reason why it is avoided to
group countries on the basis of any sort of conceptual notion or \textit{a priori} categorisation. In
view of that, individual countries differences will be addressed however in a limited way by
listing from times to times countries where certain trends are more present compared to
others, just to remind that in practical terms the European scenario cannot be considered as
homogeneous.

On the whole, this analysis has to be conceived as an exercise that aims at outlining in an
explorative way the characteristics of a new part-time model that is likely to emerge from the
process of transition. Taking into account the practical difficulties of analysing data for a large
number of countries, the limited nature of the exercise cannot be denied. Nonetheless, such an
exercise still permits the elaboration of common categories of analysis and indicators that can
be applied to in-depth country studies and comparisons, where of course the relative
background of each country, with more detailed data and experiences concerning its
component elements, must be taken into account in order to meaningfully interpret such
categories and indicators. Actually, this is what will be done in the following chapters when
analysing the countries patterns under review in this thesis. As a result, the framework that is
going to be elaborated in this chapter remains a useful way of beginning a comparative
analysis.

Using the concept of tensions as an indicator of social change, as it will be illustrated and
developed in the first paragraph following this introduction, and relying mainly on the
analysis of several reports, this chapter explores part-time employment dynamics in Europe
during the first decade of the 2000s in three steps. First, it examines trends over time in the
evolution of part-time work for what concerns employment and feminization levels,
diversification patterns, and working conditions. Second, the evolution of part-time work is
analyzed by adopting a tripartite view on part-time work, which consists in looking at how
part-time work has changed in relation to institutional policy approach, employers’ practices,
and part-time workers’ practices. These first two steps allow for identifying patterns of
tensions that currently characterize part-time work. Thus, the third and last step consists in
identifying the outcomes that the process of transition is likely to produce, and in delineating
some possible implications for the part-time employment scenario with respect to the thorny
question of gender equality in the labour market.
4.1 A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDYING OF THE DIVERSITY OF PART-TIME WORK IN EUROPE

Nowadays, European societies face a significant self-transforming process which is driving considerable changes in their basic institutions. As part of the process of transition from a Fordist to a post-Fordist society, these changes affect various spheres of individual and social life, like labour organization, cultural arrangements and family models.

As for labour organization, during the years 2000, wide dynamics of transformation have involved work and employment. In particular, the main paradigm of the new labour market structure that has arisen in this period consists in more flexible work arrangements. The flexibilization of the labour market has increasingly favoured the creation of new employment opportunities for those groups of workers who used to be considered marginal, particularly women. Conversely, such a process has produced a general de-standardization of work and labour standards.

Nevertheless, flexible working patterns are advocated as an optimal answer to the diversification of behaviours and attitudes that characterize new and individualized models of working lives. Individual life-courses have become increasingly fluid as a consequence of the growing level of individualism and individuality that characterizes the cultural bonds of our societies. Essentially, in line with a trend that moves towards an individualization of biographies and life-style related choices, people seem to be sharing an increasing degree of economic individualization in the orientation of their employment trajectories.

Obviously, there are consequences on family structure and functioning. In fact, economic individualization has led to “a greater recognition of female agency as well, and women have become actors with some choices in a context where the “free choice” rhetoric between family and work has widely extended” (Daly 2011:17). Accordingly, the massive entrance of women in the labour market constituted both a breakdown point in the tradition of the male-breadwinner model and patriarchal family, and the starting point of an intensive process of blurring gender boundaries. In particular, it is possible to observe a shift in normative ideas about the contribution that men and especially women should make to family (Lewis and Giullari 2005) and the emergence of a new, more complex form of breadwinning (Lewis 2001; Crompton 2006). At the same time, this increasingly challenges the dual role of women in the family and in the labour market, and under such circumstances more flexible working
conditions have appeared to be a necessary condition for juggling family life and labour force participation successfully (Jaumotte 2003).

The result produced by these fundamental changes is a new social environment characterized by mutability which has to face new challenges simultaneously. For this reason, and given the social patterns that these transformations have triggered, part-time work can be considered as a main indicator of the process of transition from the Fordist to the post-Fordist society. On the whole, the trends and patterns of part-time work dynamics observed during the 2000s seem to indicate that this form of employment is to some extent stuck in between two paradigms. and this suggests that part-time work is a crucial indicator of the transition from the Fordist to the post-Fordist society since it is facing a process of transition itself.

How is part-time work involved in the process of transition? And why is it stuck in between two paradigms? There are old and new tensions that characterize the part-time work. Essentially, on one hand part-time work is still a concrete indicator of a certain sexual division of labour (Aliaga 2005; Eurofound 2006; Compton & Lyonette 2006), in line with the main tenets of the Fordist paradigm. First, deriving from this concept, it fulfils the standard labour model that was typical of the Fordist society, which used to be based on full-time, life-long, male employees. In fact, women, who traditionally have not been able to conform to such a model, still tend to gravitate around part-time work in order to gain access to the labour market. Then, part-time work complies with the familiarization logic: the social unit of reference in the Fordist society is the family and its functioning, since all individuals acquire a role in the economic and social system according to the role they are expected to hold within the sphere of the family. Of course, this implies certain gender arrangements and a certain division of labour between the two sexes both inside and outside the family. Therefore, part-time work conforms to the male breadwinner/female carer family model representative of this kind of society, where women are assumed to take the role of secondary earner by working part-time, as they are expected to give priority to their family duties.

On the other hand, part-time work it is gradually becoming an employment form that serves an emergent ‘right to time and choice’ in the context of a general redefinition of employment trajectories over the individuals’ (employment oriented) life-course (O’Reilly 2003; Courbier 2004; Nicole-Drancourt 2009). In this sense, part-time work is in line with the main tenets of the post-Fordist paradigm. In fact, part-time work represents a crucial element in the de-standardized labour model that characterize the post-Fordist society, a model which is based on the activation of the ‘non-core workers’ – those workers that used to be legitimately out of the labour market in the Fordist society because they were considered not sufficiently
productive (Annesley 2007) – mainly through a process of flexibilization of work. Next, part-time work complies more and more with a rising individualization logic which favours the affirmation of individual agency and functioning as the social unit of reference. This logic depicts an individual worker who is not gendered and who autonomously determines its own role in the economic and social system. Actually, in this kind of society gendered assumptions about the division of labour tend to become, at least in principle, more and more blurred and new forms of arrangements emerge. As a result, part-time work meets the terms of the adult worker model, where all adults are equally required to take formal employment to secure economic independence (Annesley 2007). However, at the same time, they are all enabled to “move in and out the workforce for socially and politically acceptable reasons – whether educational, care-related, or in pursuit of leisure – at different points in their working lives” (Lewis et al. 2008:278).

How to interpret such contrasting developments? The basic idea is that the dimensions which are more likely to capture the key movements of this tricky process of transition are exactly the tensions that arise from the latter. In fact, the current situation of part-time work can be seen as characterized by a set of tensions between a series of dimensions that refer either to the Fordist or the post-Fordist society, but that seem to cohabitate in the same reality at the same time. In particular, three main tensions can be identified.

The first refers to the fact that in the transition to the post-Fordist society, part-time work is expected to become a gender neutral form of employment while, in fact, one can still observe a high persistence of various forms of inequalities between the two sexes, related to the fact that women and men are not equally concerned by part-time work. Hence, the first tension can be defined as an opposition between the dimensions of gender inequality and gender neutrality.

The second tension deals with the wide, largely favoured, diffusion of part-time work during the 2000s that has brought it to the central area of the labour market, making it one of the forms of flexible employment which are advocated as fundamental to the functioning of the post-Fordist society. Nevertheless, part-time work is still treated as an atypical form of employment and its labour standards still lag behind other forms of typical employment that are equally situated in the central area of the labour market. Therefore, even if in the post-Fordist society part-time work is assumed to be invested by a process of normalization, this latter concerns its quantitative facet only, while the qualitative facet is still involved in a

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17 ‘Gender inequality’ has to be understood as a broad concept that encompasses all the dimensions along which the gender divide in the labour market is structured.
process of marginalization. Hence, the second tension refers to an opposition between the dimensions of marginalization and normalization.

The third tension refers to the assumption according to which in the post-Fordist society part-time work contributes to a process of transformation of individuals’ employment-oriented, rational and malleable life-courses, by allowing all employees to reduce temporarily their involvement in the labour market for a variety of reasons related to work-life balance choices. By the way, all individuals do not share life-courses that respond to such characteristics, especially those who are not concerned by atypical forms of employment for a simple “take-a-break” reason. Accordingly, if on one hand the transition to the post-Fordist society assumes a process of transformation of individual life-courses, it risks triggering a parallel process of erosion for those who do not have standard employment-oriented life-courses. Thus, the third tension is represented by an opposition between the dimensions of transformation and erosion. As these tensions are used as dimensions of variations in order to capture the main movements of social changes in the part-time work scenario, they have to be understood in terms of heuristic concepts rather than as concrete and defined social patterns. In particular, each tension has to be seen as an indicator that develops along a continuum of situations, where extremes represent theoretical constructions, while the concrete social reality tends to be situated in between the extremes, since it is of course much more varied. Therefore, the patterns of development of these tensions in the part-time work reality of different contexts (EU context first and national contexts then) are going to be examined in the next chapters, as an indicator of social changes. The final aim is to understand to what extent the development of these tensions in the process of transition may pave the way to a new potentially gender-neutral form of part-time work.

**4.2 Trends over time in part-time work’s development: basic facts and figures**

**4.2.1 Employment situation**

**4.2.1.1 Employment levels**

Since the 1970s there has been a rapid expansion of part-time employment in most industrialized countries. In Europe, part-time employment has been increasing for the last two
decades, and the last decade has especially seen a steady increase in the part-time employment rate (European Foundation 2011). Anyway, the succession of economic crisis and periods of growth that have involved the EU during the last 20 years has triggered considering turbulences on the labour market that have affected part-time work dynamics.

At the beginning of the 2000s the EU was experiencing a job recovery phase as a consequence of a period of slowdown which started in the mid-1990s and where the employment rate fell to little more than 60% and unemployment rose above 11% (European Commission 2002). Flexible form of employment, and part-time work in particular, gave a significant contribution to such a phase. Actually, since the mid-1990s till the beginning of 2000s part-time work accounted for nearly 64% of net job creation, and many of the people entering in employment during this period went to part-time jobs. By the way, the beginning of the 2000s represents a period during which the contribution of full-time jobs to employment growth was greater than that of part-time jobs, and in the following years part-time work continued to expand, but at a slower rate than before. In particular, from 2000 to 2003 most of the growth in employment rates has been due to an increase in full-time jobs, since the creation of new part-time jobs slowed significantly. In this period marked increases in the share of part-time work were registered only in Germany, although in 2002 part-time accounted for as much as 44% of total employment in the Netherlands.

The increase in the share of part-time work began to accelerate again between 2003 and 2005, levelling in three years that followed (European Commission 2004). In particular, in 2004 the level of part-time employment in Europe started to increase again with a certain consistence, marking a continuation in the rising trend observed over the 1990s in the prevalence of this type of employment. In fact, in 2004 the share of people in part-time work in the EU relative to total employment amounted to 18%, registering an increase of 0,75% compared to the year before, which was much higher than increases in other recent years. The stronger rise in the share of part-time work was a notable development in 2005 as well. In 2005, 18,5% of workers were in part-time employment, and once more this reflected a significant increase on the previous year and it indicated a continuous trend in the prevalence of this flexible form of employment. The increase at the EU level was mainly driven by Germany and Spain, where the share of people in part-time employment relative to total employment rose 1,7% and 3,7% respectively.

Moreover, in 2005 it became clear that part-time employment was a major factor in employment expansion, accounting for almost two third of the rise in overall employment.
between 2000 and 2005, revealing that on the whole the relative growth in part-time work since 2000 has been substantial.

**Figure 4.2.1.1-1 Change in EU employment levels between 2000 and 2005 by age, gender and type of employment**

Actually, part-time has accounted for a large contribution (almost 60%) to employment creation post-2000 than full-time employment: for the EU as a whole, the total share of pt has risen of 2% between 2000 and 2005. This reflects underlying strong increases in countries like Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden.
Between 2006 and 2008 the relative growth in part-time continued to be substantial compared to the first years of the decade, but the incidence of part-time employment continued to vary significantly across European Member States.

During the last years of the 2000s, the relative growth of part-time employment was similar to that for full-time jobs: part-time employment made a significant contribution to employment expansion, accounting for 37% of the net rise in employment, although full-time jobs still accounted for the majority of the expansion (63%). Overall, until the beginning of 2008 the changes in the percentage of part-time work seems to indicate a constant long-term upward trend, but share of part-time work has remained more or less stable in recent years.

Actually, part-time employment has also moderated in response to economic conditions. In the autumn 2008 the EU experienced the worst economic downtown and severe recession since World War II that brought economic growth and job creation to an abrupt halt (European Commission 2009). In general, growth of both part-time and full-time employment adjusted to the economic crisis, with a relative shift away from full-time towards part-time work. Essentially, the previous strong year-on-year growth of part-time employment in the EU (especially over to 2006-2007, in response to increased economic activity in that period) weakened from the second quarter of 2008 onwards. Anyway, it remained positive.
throughout the crisis and even picked up again over the course of 2009 and 2010, while the growth in full-time employment turned negative from the first quarter of 2009 on and has remained so since.

**Figure 4.2.1.1-3 Employment growth by type of employment in the EU, 2006-2010**

In particular, between 2008 and 2009 the part-time rate suddenly increased again, suggesting the economic recession of 2009 had an impact on the number of people working part-time in Europe. This trend suggests as well that the decline in full-time employment has been partially offset by a continuous increase in part-time employment, demonstrating the potential role of part-time work as a ‘shock absorber’ in the economic downturn (European Commission 2009). In 2009, 18.8% of employees in Europe were working part-time, representing an increase of nearly three percentage points in ten years. This expansion marks a continuation of the rising trend in the prevalence of this working time patterns. In the EU, the Netherlands has emerged as the Member State with the highest incidence of part-time employment. At the end of the decade, part-time levels were also extensive (i.e. above EU
average) in the UK, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Belgium and Austria. On the contrary, the incidence of part-time work was lower in southern and eastern European countries.

**Figure 4.2.1-4 Part-time work growth in the EU, 2000-2009**

![Part-time work growth in the EU, 2000-2009](image)

*Source: Eurostat, EU LFS.*

In general, it can be said that in a long term perspective part-time employment has accounted for a significant part of overall expansion in employment in EU since 2000, even though full-time jobs still accounted for the majority of employment creation in the period under review. The expansion of part-time work during the first decade of the 2000s was favoured by changes in the macro-economic environment and exogenous changes in the labour supply composition, in interaction with labour market reforms that promoted atypical forms of employment contract and contributed in making labour market more flexible (European Commission 2004). Essentially, increases in the share of part-time work result from long term developments in terms of structural improvements which have occurred since 1997 at the EU level, and which are reflected in a number of features like an increase of atypical labour contracts based on part-time work (European Commission 2005; European Foundation 2011).
4.2.1.2 Labour market characteristics associated with part-time work

Specific characteristics related to the industrial structure across various countries can be associated with the incidence of part-time work. These characteristics refer mainly to economic sector and company size, and patterns concerning these characteristics have remained relatively stable over the first decade of the 2000s.

First, in this period there appear to be clear sector differences. In fact, part-time work is particularly widespread in the service sector than in other sectors. According to a survey from the Foundation for the Improvement of Working and Living Conditions, the ESWT (Establishment Survey on Working Time, EUROFOUND 2007a), nearly one-third of companies in the service sector have a workforce where at least one-fifth of employees work part-time compared with the average 24% for all sectors. The service sector relies on a high proportion of establishments with a high level of experience (20% or more) of part-time workers especially for what concerns education, health and social work, trade, other community and social services, hotels and restaurants. In contrast, the pattern in the industrial sector reveals little or no experience of part-time workers: only about 3% of establishments with a high proportion of part-time workers are to be found in industry, while nearly half of establishment do not have any part-time employees, and over a third have a low incidence of part-time work. The widest gap between services and industry can be found in the Denmark, while in the Netherlands such a gap is very small. The lowest difference between services and industries can be observed in the southern European countries, but this is mainly due to the fact that in those countries part-time work is not widely used.

Then, the size of the establishment also plays a crucial role in influencing the incidence and the share of part-time work: the bigger the size the higher the probability to have pt work. Accordingly, establishments with a high incidence of part-time work correspond mainly to large establishments in the service sector. The size effect appears to be more pronounced in some countries like France and Italy.

Finally, the ESWT confirmed that the incidence of part-time work is high in public sectors establishments, especially for the proportion of establishments with a high number of part-time workers in their workforce. In 38% of public sectors establishments, part-time workers account for at least one fifth of the workforce, compared with 20% of the private sector

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18 Interestingly, an increase in the incidence of part-time work could be observed over the last years of the decade in market-oriented services sectors, especially in financial intermediation and real estate companies. Nevertheless, the overall proportion of part-time workers in these sectors tended to be lower than average (Eurofound 2011).
establishments (the average is 24% for all establishments). Conversely, 40% of private sector establishments have no part-time employees, compared with 25% of establishments in the public sector (the overall average is 36%). Moreover, the greater propensity for public sector establishments to employ part-time workers still applies when establishments are compared according to the number of women in their workforce (Eurofound 2007a). France, Luxembourg, Denmark, Finland, Slovenia and Sweden are the countries where the gap between public and private sector is especially large. On the contrary, in Mediterranean countries such as Italy, part-time work is slightly more widespread in the private sector than in the public sector.

All these elements, as part of the compositional differences in the industrial structure across countries, are related to and have some effect on to the composition of the part-time work force. Nevertheless, given the importance of this latter aspect, especially in terms of gender gaps, it will be analysed in a more detailed way in the following paragraphs of this chapter.

4.2.1.3 Voluntary and involuntary part-time work

When considering total part-time employment levels, an important distinction has to be made between involuntary and voluntary part-time workers. In fact, while the proportion of part-time workers has been increasing in most EU countries over the last decade, the proportion of involuntary part-timers has also increased (Eurofound 2007a).

This is what happened in particular between 2000 and 2005: beside a growing share of part-time employment there was an increasing proportion of involuntary part-time work, reflecting a strong increase especially in France and Germany. Rises in the share of involuntary part-time have been registered for both sexes (European Commission 2005). Nevertheless, the rate of involuntary part-time work tended to be higher for male part-time workers, even if female accounted for the majority of involuntary part-time workers (Eurofound 2007a). In a few countries such as Germany, the United Kingdom and Italy, the involuntary part-time rate

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19 This may be due to the proportion of public sector enterprises in the economy, which is particularly pronounced for example in countries like Sweden and Denmark.

20 According to Eurostat, persons are involuntarily part-timers when they are working part-time because they are unable to find a full-time job. Of course such a definition should be treated with caution because it provides with a rather limited interpretation of part-time working patterns on voluntarily/involuntarily basis. For a wider reflexion on this topic, the reader is addressed to chapter 2, where the distinction of choice/constraint in part-time work decision is discussed with reference to the state of the literature on this topic. For practical reasons, in this paragraph we will rely on the definition given by Eurostat in order to be able to present data elaborated within the European framework.
tended to be clearly higher among men. On the contrary, in Norway and Portugal the rate tended to remain relatively higher for women (Plantega and Remery 2010). In the following years, part-time work was found to be largely voluntary, and involuntary part-time to be also low especially in countries where there were low levels of average hours worked per week (European Commission 2007).

4.2.2 Feminization levels

The expansion of part-time work during the 2000s has not involved men and women in the same way. Despite some important differences among countries in the rates of part-time, a clear gender pattern has persisted in all European Member States. In fact, all around the EU the expansion of part-time employment has largely been a female phenomenon and, as a result, the incidence of part-time work has tended to be higher for women than for men in virtually all European countries\(^{21}\).

A period of strong increase was the one between 2000 and 2005, a period during which the increase in part-time work for women was more than twice the increase in female full-time employment, as well as in male part-time employment (European Commission 2006). In 2005, 32.3% of women in employment in EU had a part-time job compared to only 7.4% for men (European Commission 2006). The surge of part-time rate during the recession that started in last quarter of 2008 was similar for both genders (European Commission 2010), and globally the incidence of part-time work continued to be higher for women than for men.

On the whole, two main trends can be identified in the feminization levels of part-time work during the first decade of 2000s. First, part-time work has increased at a similar rate for both men and women. In fact, during this period the proportion of women working part-time increased from 28.5% to 32%, while the male part-time rate increased from 6.4% to 8.3% (Eurofound 2011). Second, a strong gender division in part-time employment across all EU Member States: on average the rate of part-time work for women kept being four times higher than the rate of part-time work for men.

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\(^{21}\) It is important to insist on the fact that even if such gender pattern is common to virtually all European Member States, it does not mean that female part-time work assumes the same social significance and relevance across European countries. There are national variations that contribute in determining differences in this sense, and they stem from a combination of institutional differences which shape working time arrangements, including working time policy and regulations, economic conditions and labour demand (Eurofound 2007).
Looking at country variations over the decade, at least 30% of employed women worked part-time in countries like Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the United Kingdom, reaching a peak as high as 75% in the Netherlands. In contrast, part-time remained comparatively rare among employed women in central and eastern European Member States, while it was somewhat more common in Finland and southern European countries, except Greece. Meanwhile, part-time employment rates were lower for men and more homogeneous across countries. Nevertheless, it has been shown that, in general, the more people work part-time in a country, the larger the difference between male and female part-time rate. Accordingly, such a gap was highest in the Netherlands, followed by Germany and Austria (Plantega and Remery 2010).
By the way, women and men tended to differ not only with regard to the share of part-time. At the beginning of the decade, women’s transition rates from non-working states into part-time work were relatively high in all EU countries compared to women’s and men’s transition rates from unemployment. Moreover, the majority of women entering into employment through a part-time job was doing so because they did not want a full-time job (European Commission 2002). In the following years, further increases in women labour force participation were related to availability of part-time work, and this was seen as a consequence of the fact that part-time work allows a better balance between work and family life. By the way, a high share of part-time employment appeared not to be a necessary condition for a high female employment rate. This is clearly shown by the cases of Portugal and Finland, two countries that have high female employment rates and low levels of part-time work.

A clear gender distinction in the occurrence of part-time work by age emerged: part-time for men was more common for the youngest and the oldest age group, with the share of part-time work decreasing from youth to prime age; for women the share of part-time work tended either to remain roughly the same across these ages categories or to increase with age (European Commission 2004; Plantega and Remery 2010; Eurofound 2011a). In Nordic countries such as Norway and Denmark, female part-time rates were higher in the younger
age category, suggesting that a large proportion of this group were women who used to combine studying with a part-time job. In Belgium, Germany and Austria, female part-time rates tended to increase with age, especially between the youngest and the prime age category. In fact, in these countries part-time work represents a facility to reconcile work and family responsibilities. In the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, differences between age categories were rather small, given the fact that in these countries part-time work have become very widespread (Plantega and Remery 2010). Country differences for what concerns male part-time work rates across age categories were much less marked.

**Figure 4.2.2-3 Part-time work distribution (%)**, by age and sex, 2005

Then, in all countries high feminization levels of part-time work were found to be related with certain patterns of occupational segregation and concentration, which tended to remain relatively stable over time. In fact, during the period under review women are more heavily concentrated in female-dominated jobs if they work part-time. These jobs are mainly concentrated unskilled manual jobs and in services and sales. Interestingly, the occupational profile of the small group of men who work part-time broadly tended to follow that of female part-timers. Essentially, the minority of men who work part-time are also more likely to work in female-dominated jobs than full-time employed men (Eurofound 2007).
In general, over the decade labour market participation patterns on a part-time basis evolved in a dissimilar way for the two sexes, reflecting mainly differences in the transition between different employment status, particularly from part-time to full-time work and trends in occupational segregation and concentration. In the end, trends in feminization levels of part-time work show that, from a part-time/full-time employment status divide perspective, part-time work evolution in the 2000s was based upon the reinforcement of gender differences, resulting in women and men being not equally situated in the labour market in respect to access to this flexible form of employment.

4.2.3 Diversification patterns

Even if analyses suggest that part-time work have provided with an opportunity for parents, and especially for women, to reconcile work and family demands, parents or mothers with small children are not the only people who have been concerned by the expansion of work part-time work during the first decade of the 2000s. During those years, part-time work increased also for young people. In particular, there was an increase in the proportion of those who not leaving education earlier chose to combine studying with some kind of part-time work. Accordingly, the incidence of part-time work for youth has been rising in a very pronounced way, to such a point that on average around a quarter of youth was working in part-time jobs (about 23%) compared to prime age workers (about 15%) (European Commission 2004; European Commission 2007). This pattern of combining part-time work with further education appeared to be a common feature across most of the Member States, particularly the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal. France, Finland and Sweden are an exception, since in these countries the share of young people in part-time work seemed to have fallen over the period under review. On the contrary, part-time work among young people started to become increasingly important in countries like Italy. Overall, in some countries young people appeared to be more inclined to combine education with part-time work than in others, and gender differences tended to persist, since young women were likely to be employed part-time almost twice than young men (European Commission 2007). Part-time work increased among older workers as well. Over the mid-2000s older people were already overrepresented in part-time work, and Member States with greatest share of older people in part-time work tended to have higher overall employment rates for the 55-64 age group, although the relationship was not particularly strong. Moreover, the proportion of
involuntary part-time work among the older worker tended to remain low (12% compared to 20% for the working age population as a whole), indicating that part-time work corresponded to the wishes of the large majority of older workers in such employment (European Commission 2007). Nevertheless, take up rates of progressive retirement among older workers has remained still quite low in European countries, as a consequence of the fact that part-time employment tended to be seen as unusual or of lower status. Countries like Italy, Spain and Germany, are the countries were a negative association between the presence of older employees and part-time workers in establishments was found (Eurofound 2007a).

In the end, over the 2000s part-time employment was facing a process of diversification first of all along the various age groups of workers. In particular, it appeared to be more common in some age groups than in others, since at the EU25 level there was on average a higher proportion of part-time workers among youth (23%) and older people (around 21%) than for prime-age workers (15%). Part-time work appeared to be more common at the beginning and at the end of people’s working lives, while full-time work tended to be more concentrated in the middle years. By the way, it should not be forgotten that a gender gap persisted among age categories. Particularly in countries with a high part-time rate, during the period under examination the gender gap among part-time employees is rather small in the youngest age group and considerably higher in the older age groups. In the Netherlands, for example, the difference in the gender gap over the life-course tended to be large, while in the Nordic countries it tended to be smaller due to comparable working time patterns of men and women over the age groups (Plantega and Remery 2010).

Broadly speaking, the progressive diversification in the use of part-time work on a life-course basis has built up along a strong gendered dimension, as it can be observed by looking at the working hours trends that have characterized the first ten years of the 2000s. In fact, even if new life-course oriented options started to emerge in some countries, there was still a high persistence in full-time jobs and few people reducing working hours from full-time to part-time at the EU level. Likewise, the ‘five-day week’ of 40 hours from Monday to Friday has remained the main arrangements (Eurofound 2011a), even if countries continued showing large differences in the actual distribution of working hours. Conversely, if some degree of variation in working time arrangements and working time flexibility could be observed, this was mainly the case among part-time workers. Essentially, women working part-time showed to have more variation in the number of hours worked each day, in their start and finishing time, compared with women employed full-time (Eurofound 2007). Yet, a declining trend in working hours could be observed over the decade. Particularly over the 2000-2006,
average weekly working hours are estimated by the EU Labour Force Survey to have fallen by 1.6%, implying a slight decline of about one day in the average number of days worked a year (Eurofound 2010). Nevertheless, the reduction in weekly working hours was estimated not to be so much related with a switch of workers from full-time to part-time work, but with the fact that a substantial proportion of net additional number of people entering employment, the majority of whom were women, took on part-time jobs (Eurofound - EWCO 2010; Eurofound 2011). In fact, the LFS data show that some 41% of the increase in employment achieved between 2000 and 2006 was accounted for by people taking part-time jobs. Then, the crisis that began in the autumn 2008 may have added up to some extent to such a compositional phenomenon and contributed in declining working hours. In fact, during the recession there was a significant fall in the average number of hours worked each week by people in employment as the result of a tendency of reducing working time on actual hours worked by those workers remaining in employment rather than reducing level of employment (European Commission 2010).

The declining trends in the number of hours worked per week and the long running trend towards a diversification of working time arrangements, through which part-time work have become more common, were also associated with an increase in multiple jobs holders (Eurofound 2007). Even if reductions in working hours were more significant for full-timers than for part-timers, especially during the recession period, increases in multiple jobs holding were more common among part-timers for both men and women. Nonetheless, women holding multiple jobs were more likely than men to be part-timers in their main job.

Trends in diversification patterns of part-time work show in point of fact a process of diversification of the groups concerned by this employment form, but they point out also that gender differences tended sometimes to persist within such groups, probably as a consequence of the gender divide that kept characterizing the general part-time work scenario. Moreover, if on one hand such a diversification has favoured the emergence of new life-course options, these latter concerned mainly some groups of workers, mainly those who were previously considered non-core workers, as demonstrated by the high persistence in full-time jobs and by the high level of flexibility that characterized the working arrangements of part-time workers, especially women. In this sense, trends in diversification patterns cannot be necessarily intended neither as favouring a process of transformation of life-course options for a wide encompassing range of adults, nor as undermining the gender is divide along which part-time

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22 In any case, this trend concerns especially some EU15 Member States.
work structured. On the contrary, such trends may intensify the risk of erosion of the life-course patterns of some groups of workers who may be already more vulnerable with respect to their capability of securing themselves economic independence.

### 4.2.4 Working conditions

Over the 2000s part-time work developed as a form of flexible employment which quality was mixed and evolved in a controversial way. Generally, part-time job quality is defined with references to the criterion that a good quality part-time job should provide the same (pro-rata) terms and conditions as a comparable full-time job (Lyonette 2010; Eurofound 2011). Accordingly, an important concern refers to the fact that job quality among part-time workers in the 2000s tended to be on average of lower quality compared to full-time workers, since part-time work was characterized by a number of labour market penalties for a range of aspects like career and employment security, development opportunities, training possibilities (Eurofound 2006a; Eurofound 2002, 2007, 2011).

For example, as for work employment security, on one hand part-time workers were more likely than full-time workers of been involved in employment contracts with a short job tenure, i.e. one year or less, but such a patterns concerned much more men employed part-time than women employed part-time (Eurofound 2007). On the other hand, female part-time employment relationships were relatively stable over the time (almost two thirds of part-time workers remaining part-timers in two consecutive years at the beginning of the decade) (European Commission 2001; Eurofound 2006b), but on the other hand they showed a higher risk of transition into unemployment and inactivity compared to full-time workers. In general, part-time workers showed to have reduced career prospects compared to full-time workers, especially in countries like Belgium, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy and Luxembourg (Eurofound 2006).

The nature of tasks and the responsibilities on the job of part-time workers were usually more routinized and standardized that those of full-time workers and this had of course a significant impact on their career development. In fact, part-time workers were less likely to be in jobs with supervisory or intermediate functions (European Commission 2002; Eurofound 2007). For instance, in most sectors it was relatively unusual that a part-time worker could get access to a highly skilled occupation or for a management role (Eurofound 2011). Thus, these jobs consisted mainly in low-skilled jobs and offered inferior training opportunities compared to full-timers even within similar workplaces. In particular, part-time workers were less likely to
receive training paid for by their employer especially if they were employed on a marginal amount of hours (less than 20 hours per week), and the in case of young workers less than one in three could enjoy training on the job (Eurofound 2011).

Despite these general trends, the situation of part-time job quality over the years 2000s was very heterogeneous across EU countries. Although the increased occurrence of part-time work arrangements was constantly advocated as allowing for a better synchronization of employees’ and employers’ working requirements and a better balancing of work and private life, that was based upon the risk of driving employees involuntarily into such arrangements (European Commission 2008). That raises concerns also for part-time job quality. In fact, voluntarily part-timers showed to be more likely to be in jobs of “reasonable quality” compared to those in involuntary part-time jobs (and those working less than 15 hours per week) who were mainly in poor quality jobs (European Commission 2002; Eurofound 2006b; Eurofound 2011). Moreover, the economic crisis that interested the EU during the last three years of the decade reinforced some of the negative characteristics associated with the low quality of some part-time jobs, like sectoral and occupational segregation, and higher risk of unemployment (European Commission 2010; Eurofound 2011), mainly as a consequence of downsizing, outsourcing, increased use of temporary work, and skill-biased technological progress (Eurofound 2011).

It should not be forgotten that differences in the regulatory approach of each country has played an important role in influencing the quality of part-time work. In particular, this latter varies between countries in terms of implementation of equal treatment provisions, career prospects and the range of occupational levels where part-time work has become established as a genuine option for employees. For example, differences in approaches to flexibility pursued by the governments and the social partners in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom, have favoured a form of part-time work of a better quality and more integrated in the employment structure in the former country compared to the latter (Eurofound 2007a).

On the whole, it can be said that as for the substantial dimensions of part-time job quality the overall picture remained essentially stable over the decade. Even if at the beginning of the 2000s the EU’s perspectives were quite optimistic supposing that increases in the incidence of part-time jobs, where these were intended to be voluntary part-time jobs, would have led to higher job quality of part-time jobs (European Commission 2001), trends in quality improvements of part-time work remained quite controversial. Basically, neither improvements in the condition of some groups of part-time workers compared to other, nor the effect of economic shocks seem to have affected the relative disadvantage in terms of
quality standards of part-timers compared to full-timers, and part-time workers continue to have worse working conditions and worse career prospects (Zeytinoglu & Cooke 2008; McDonald et al. 2009; Lyonette et al. 2010; Eurofound 2011). That can be seen as a risk to the reinforcement of its marginal character as an atypical employment form.

4.2.5 Part-time employment in Europe: a general outline

One of the main features that emerged in Europe during the first decade of the 2000s is the confirmation of a growth in the share of part-time employment. Moreover, during this period part-time working has contributed in increasing flexibility in the labour market. Relevant facts about part-time work that emerges from the evidences that it has been illustrated so far by data are:
- the strong gender dimension of part-time work (one in three women have a part-time job);
- the above average proportion of young people and older workers in part-time employment (25% of people aged 15-24; 22% of people aged 55-64);
- the higher proportion of part-time work in the service sector;
- the significant incidence of involuntary part-time levels.

Beyond these common trends, there are diversities in national part-time rates and patterns which are determined by the specificity of the legislation and policy context, as well as by the socio-economic infrastructure of different countries (Eurofound 2011). In fact, differences in legislation and policy influence the way companies use part-time work: some tailor it to their own needs, some to the needs of workers, and some to both. Then, there are differences in working hours culture, since societies in Europe have different attitudes towards working time, with average weekly working hours for full-time workers ranging from 39 to 44 hours a week (Eurofound 2011). If part-time workers are included, average weekly working hours range from around 30 hours of the Netherlands to around 42 hours of Greece. In some MS, such as the UK, it is socially accepted and desirable to work longer hours, while in other countries as France, Sweden and the Netherlands a more welfare-oriented social model is in place, characterized by shorter than average working hours. Yet, the share of the service sector in the economy and the proportion of young people in tertiary education of a country have been found to be positively correlated with the part-time employment rate (European Commission 2005). Nevertheless, the high share on part-time work in the service sector may influence the quality of available part-time jobs, since in most labour markets there are few higher level jobs available on a part-time basis in such a sector, and this may result in some
well qualified workers in lower level jobs and it may also discourage some workers from engaging in a part-time job. Broadly speaking, there are countries in which part-time work is prevalent and popular. In these countries, such as the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Denmark, part-time work has historically been supported by employers and employees and is actively promoted by the government and political parties. In these countries there is a high part-time rate, and usually a large difference between the proportion of men and women working part-time, but also a relatively high employment rate for women as well as a high overall employment rate. The Netherlands has an exceptionally high female part-time rate of 76%. Sweden and the United Kingdom have a high part-time rate, but also a high proportion of involuntary part-timers, mostly women. Then, there are other countries in which part-time work is relatively uncommon, like southern European countries. In these countries, some efforts have been made by governments to remove barriers to part-time work, but both workers and employers seem to prefer full-time work, which is perceived as the standard employment model. By the way, differences between male and female part-time employment remain relatively important. Countries such Finland and Portugal represent another case. In these countries there is a culture of longer weekly hours for both men and women, and a high employment rate for both sexes. Here the difference between male and female part-time employment rate is low.

4.3 How has part-time work developed in Europe? A tripartite view on part-time work evolution

4.3.1 The EU policy approach

At the beginning of the 2000s, the increased participation of women in the labour market and trends in the diversification of working schedules gave a new impetus to policies promoting flexible working arrangements to suit both the needs of workers and the needs of firms (European Commission 2000; Eurofound 2003). Especially during the first half of the decade, the EU put quite a lot of emphasis on policies aimed at supporting new forms of working organization, equal opportunities for women and men, and the introduction of measures associated with the reconciliation of work and family life and the wish to work shorter hours.
The type of arrangements that have been advocated to accommodate the needs and preferences of workers include more opportunities for part-time work.

In particular, in the EU policy context part-time work is covered by measures that have been set in the wider framework of the European Employment Strategy, where it has been recognized that part-time employment have had important effects on the occupational situation in the EU. Some of these measures are considered soft-law measures, as for example the EU Guidelines (Employment Guidelines, Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, Integrated Guidelines), while in other case such measures are specific part of the European employment law, like the European Directive on part-time work (97/81/EC). Through the provisions included in the EU guidelines, the European Directives and other policy measures, the European Employment Strategy has required the government to promote working time flexibility in conjunction with equal opportunities.

Principally, three common developments in the regulation and promotion of part-time work can be identified. First, the development of specific measure to guarantee equal treatment for part-time and other atypical worker, sometimes together with policies targeted at the promotion of this form of employment. Second, the modernization the organisation of work, through the development of part-time work as a flexible working arrangement. Third, the need to improve the work-life balance, which reflects a policy concern to raise the employment and to demise of the male breadwinner model of the family life for the ascendancy of both dual-earner and single parent family.

The difficulties encountered in balancing these three types of development has contributed in making the role of part-time work in the EU policy approach as an ambiguous one.

Starting with the Part-time directive, their objective is stated as to lay down general principles and minimum requirements relating to part-time work (Council Directive 97/81/EC). In particular, it set down a framework for the removal of discrimination against part-time workers, the improvement of the quality of part-time work, the favouring of the development of part-time work to contribute to the flexible organization of working time on a basis acceptable to workers and employers (Eurofound - EIRO 2007). At the same time, the Directive assimilates the idea of a positive connection between the increase of jobs and the introduction of non-standard forms of employment such as part-time work. In fact, the Recital no.5 of the Preamble refers to the objective of increasing the employment-intensiveness of growth by a more flexible organization of work, leaving room in this way to a body of norms characterized by a minimalist approach that seems giving emphasis on demand-size flexibility while setting apart quality job concerns (Sciarrra 2004).
The Employment Guidelines, which constituted an individual set of guidelines before being integrated with those in growth and jobs as decided in the 2005 Lisbon mid-term process, used to promote part-time work as an essential instrument to encourage active aging, to help reconcile work and family life, and to promote modernization of work organization more generally. Essentially, such guidelines put some emphasis on the need for improving the quality in work and balancing it with gender equality in order to provide an attractive, safe and adaptable working environment throughout working life, considering the provision of part-time jobs that facilitate the reconciliation between work and family life without harming career prospects as one of the main instrument useful to reach such an objective (European Commission 2007; European Commission 2008). Nevertheless, the Employment Guidelines used to promote part-time work also as a means of increasing the level of employment and improve competitiveness, in line with the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines, being stated in the EES framework that the former must comply with the latter. Basically, the Broad Economic Policy Guidelines elaborated over the decade under review stressed the role of part-time work in enhancing labour market efficiency and promoting employment, as well as supporting job creation through the improvement of labour supply mainly through the removal of disincentives to participation from tax and benefit systems (Ashiagbor 2004).

Overall, it seems that a sort of controversial emphasis is put simultaneously on the use of part-time work as a tool of job creation and the recognized necessity of improving the conditions of the labour supply of part-time work.

This pattern is largely reflected in the different approaches to the regulation of part-time work that have been pursued by the various European Member States. Some countries have actively sought to encourage part-time work as a part of a policy drive to promote labour market flexibility. Others have been more passive in part-time work promotion, and others have been more reluctant to its expansion. Similarly, in some countries more efforts have been put into equal treatment legislation and related measure to try to ensure equal level of quality of work of part-time and full-time workers in terms of wages, other in terms of working conditions and career prospects. For example, in the Netherlands, part-time work has been promoted with attention to both the need for enhancing the quality of part-time work and the emergence of flex-security. On the contrary, in the United Kingdom, the expansion of part-time work have been pursued with emphasis on deregulated labour market flexibility issues and in general few measures have been put in place to regulate the conditions of part-time work. In Italy, there has been little development of part-time work due to the opposition and trade unions and various prohibitions and disincentives created by the formulation of labour law.
and social security eligibility conditions. In some other countries, like Germany and France, there have been significant policy drives focusing on the promotion of part-time work as a flexible working time arrangement in order to increase employment levels. In Germany this has been done through the creation of « mini-jobs », short part-time arrangements which are low paid and not covered by social protection. In France, substantial financial incentives to alleviate social contribution have been offered to employers who hire part-time workers. (Eurofound 2007a).

The way the gender dimension of part-time work is treated in the EU policy approach can be considered controversial as well. The Lisbon agenda encapsulates an activating policy approach which built on an emerging EU-wide Adult worker model (AWM), where measures are supposed to be taken in order to encourage and facilitate the activation of a broad and inclusive range of adults on the labour market (Annesley 2007) on the basis of a multiplicity of new and more flexible work contracts (Pfister 2008). Accordingly, the Employment Guidelines first, and the Integrated Guidelines then, called for promoting a lifecycle approach to work and expanding and improving investment in human capital (Jenson 2008; Burri 2010). Nevertheless, when additional reference to flexible working arrangements such as part-time work was made as for attracting and retaining more people in employment, as well as promoting a better reconciliation of work and private life, the emphasis was mostly on women/mother wishing to re-enter the labour market (Annesley 2007). Consequently, it can be supposed that the promotion of a life-cycle approach to work consists mainly in pursuing the policy objective of a better reconciliation of work and private life, which is actually supposed to be achieved primarily by improving childcare provision. In this sense, the gender impact of certain working time arrangements and working hours (these latter intended also as a mean to modulate working careers through leaves, breaks, etc) is ignored (Leon 2008).

Accordingly, within the same guidelines part-time work is promoted as a main route to flexibility, since it is advocated in the context of the full-employment and flexibility issues as part of the diversity of contractual and working time arrangements which is necessary in order to increase employment rates and promote innovative and adaptable forms of work organisation and working time.

All this can be seen as the consequence of a process through which some policy goals are undermined by shifting the meanings of their original proposals to fit into economic priorities, like increasing employment levels. Some scholars have suggested talking about a process of cooptation of gender concepts in EU policies (Stratigaki 2004), when this is done with specific reference to some core gender issues. Others have argued that embracing the AWM
required a renovated discourse of gender equality in the EU, stepping forward from the previously dominant Equal Opportunities discourse to address issues of work/family conflict. In fact, policy on these issues allows also addressing the needs of flexibility of European labour markets which are more and characterized by growing dependency ratio (Leon 2008). This would be confirmed by policy measures adopted outside the scope of the European Employment Strategy, like the Green Paper “Confronting demographic changes: a new solidarity between generations” (European Commission 2005), and the “Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010” (which then led to the “European pact for gender equality”). In the former document, two policy issues are signalled as especially important: better reconciliation of work and family life and the provision of childcare facilities and care for dependants. In the latter, the importance of increasing and improving care provision for elderly and children is underlined, together with the necessity of articulating flexible working time arrangements in order to enhance work-life balance.

As for the gender issues on the country level, the situation is of course very heterogeneous, since countries are at different points in the renovation of the gender contract that underlies their concrete policy proposals and measures.

Overall, the role of part-time work in the EU policy approach is an ambiguous one mainly because it is developed along the conflicting dimensions of flexibility and quality. Emphasis is put at the same time on the use of part-time work as a tool for job creation and on the quality of part-time work, mainly through the removal of discrimination against part-time workers. It seems that some measures and provisions favour one dimension over the other, while some try to keep them together. Nevertheless, flexible employment patterns still largely conflict with some of the main dimensions of job quality, and this arises concerns about an eventual process of normalization of part-time work.

Then, although other kind of interventions have been elaborated within the EU framework to guarantee equality between men and women in the labour market, that cannot cover up for the fact that in the specific part of the EU policy approach that has been analyzed in this paragraph gender issues tend to remain relatively unspecified. In some cases this can be seen as favouring the reinforcement of ongoing gender inequalities.

Yet, it has been argued that the success of policy measures or incentives to promote part-time work appears to depend much more on the concrete patterns of behaviour in the labour market (managers, actual and potential part-time work employees) rather than the quality of policy measures itself (Eurofound – EWCO 2010). In the next two paragraphs such patterns are investigated.
4.3.2 Employers’ practices

During the first decade of the 2000s part-time work has become a widespread work arrangement in European establishments. According to the Establishment Survey on Working time 2004-2005 (Eurofound 2007a), almost the two-third of the establishments surveyed have been opening to this form of employment, although not necessarily in all jobs position within the establishment. The European Company Survey 2009 (Eurofound 2011) confirmed a slight increase in the number of companies using part-time staff, from 64% in 2004/2005 to 69% in 2009.

This increasing trend could be observed in almost all countries, but the incidence of part-time work in establishments varies widely across European countries. For example, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries, particularly Denmark and Sweden, have a higher proportion of establishments with part-time work employees than southern European countries. Nevertheless, increases in such proportion during the decade were strongest in the southern European countries. It has been shown that on the whole countries with high incidence of part-time work have also a larger proportion of companies which can be defined as ‘high incidence’ companies’ (20% or more of their workforce consist of part-time workers). This is especially the case of the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, and the United Kingdom.

Figure 4.3.2-1 Proportion of establishments using part-time work, by country
As a general picture, European surveys have revealed that on average, among those establishments that do employ workers on a part-time basis, 62% indicate that under 20% of the workforce work part-time, in a further 26% of establishments, the share of part-time workers ranges between 20% and 60%, and in a significant minority of 5% of all establishments with part-time workers, 80% or more of active workforce work part-time. Thus, it is in this latter type of workplace that part-time work is the most common working time arrangements (Eurofound 2006; Eurofound 2007; Eurofound 2011).

The influence of the national institutional framework does conceal wide differences between establishments according to a range of factors such as size, sector of activity, workforce composition in establishments. Accordingly, the organization, role and quality of part-time employment can be expected to vary across European establishments, as well as within establishments according to different occupational levels or functional units. Nonetheless, specific characteristics can be identified among those establishments with a high proportion of part-time workers.

Some of these characteristics concern the type of part-time workers. The pool of part-time labour supply from which European employers draw their workforce has become more and more diversified over the first decade of the 2000s. During this period, establishment’s experience regarding part-time workers related no more to just one specific group of employees such as mothers, but rather to a broader range of people that make use of this working arrangement (like young people, students and pupils, disabled people or workers with poor health and others who care for elderly people) (Eurofound 2003a; Eurofound 2006b; Eurofound 2007a). Nevertheless, evidence confirms that part-time employees tended to be drawn from particular groups of the labour force first of all along of a gender divide.

Essentially, it has been found that in establishments where part-time work was the prevalent form of work, the workforce was predominantly female. That is: incidence of part-time work was higher in establishments where there was a higher female share in the workforce (60% or more of employees are women) (Eurofound 2011). This is confirmed by the fact that a broad majority of female-dominated companies was found to have at least one part-time worker, while three quarters of companies with no female employees and half of those with less than 20% female workforce had no part-timers (Eurofound 2007b; Eurofound 2011).

By the way, there are variations among countries for what concerns the threshold for this gender effect. In most of the west European countries, Nordic countries, and also Italy, the incidence of part-time work in establishments increases markedly where at least 20% of the establishment’s workforce is women. In contrast, in most of the southern and eastern
European countries, there is a pronounced increase in the incidence of part-time work for establishments with female-dominated workforce (i.e. workforce that comprises at least 60% women).

Then, age plays some role as well: establishments were more likely to have part-time workers if they employ young (>30) or older (50<) people. On the whole, it has been registered a stronger association occurring for the presence of older people. By the way, this is not the case for countries such as Germany and Italy. In these countries, the proportion of establishments with part-time work decreases when the presence of older people increase.

By the way, age seems to have an impact mainly on the incidence of men working part-time. In fact, establishments with higher numbers of employees aged under 30 years old or older than 50 years old of age were more likely to have men working part-time (Eurofound 2007b). However, the incidence of men working part-time in establishments with part-time work remains low in countries like France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg and Austria. In particular, Italy is the southern European country where there is the higher proportion of establishments with no men working in part-time positions.

On the whole, the different types of part-time workers can be divided in two main groups: one group relates to those with family responsibilities and other obligations, and the other group relates to the age of the employees and either entry to (mainly) or exit from the labour market. The reconciliation of work and family responsibilities is the main reason identified by managers for workers taking up part-time work in all countries. Anyway, in southern Europe, compared to western European and Scandinavian countries, part-time is less often related to family reasons. This is not surprisingly since in Southern Europe the main reason given by managers for introducing part-time work was the need of the need of establishment, while in Western European and Nordic countries, the main reason reported was to meet the need of employees (Eurofound 2007a).

The part-time workforce composition patterns in European establishments determines the different ways through which part-time work is organized within these latter (i.e. fixed hours, fixed cycle, flexible working hours). In organizational terms, for employers part-time work may be firstly simply used to carry out roles that only require shorter hours while other aspects of scheduling remain constant. Such jobs may focus more closely on working hours and demand for services or products, but at the same times such jobs carry out a predictable number and timing of hours each week. Accordingly, those jobs are usually organized around some fixed hours every day. This kind of part-time work organisation is the most used across all European countries. Then, part-time work may be used more flexibly by employers so that
scheduling and duration of work may vary from week to week. In this case, part-time jobs are likely to be organized around either fixed cycles (e.g. some fixed days of the week with full-time hours and the other days off), or flexible working hours which are fixed a few days or hours in advance according to the establishment’s needs. These more flexible forms of part-time work organisation are more frequent in countries where part-time work is more prevalent. For example, in Nordic countries, in Belgium, France and the Netherlands fixed cycle are is widely used. Nonetheless in Southern European countries, where part-time work is scarcely diffused, the organisation of part-time work in establishment is close to that for flexible forms of part-time work. While these different organizational forms do not preclude each other, they offer different kind of flexibility for employers and create different kinds of jobs for employees (Eurofound 2007a). It can be said that some part-time work is primarily designed for securing flexibility for operational purposes (such as extended or variable operating hours), while other forms of part-time work are mainly used as a human resource (HR) tool to enhance work-life balance for employees (such as recruitment and retention or equal opportunities) (Eurofound 2007). Overall, it has been found that larger variety in the pool of part-time labour permit employers to use multiple forms of part-time work.

For what concerns the period under review, when the proportion of female employees was higher, the proportion of companies using fixed daily hours was higher as well. Likewise, the incidence in establishments practicing flexible part-time work also tended to increase with the proportion of female employees. Accordingly, the number of female employees was found to be positively correlated with the use of multiple forms of part-time work. The use of multiple forms of part-time work was more frequent also in those establishments where there was a high concentration of older employees, while a rising proportion of young employees was found to have a negative effect on the chance of practicing multiple forms of pt work organization. Interestingly, the number of companies using very flexible part-time work tended to decrease with increasing the level of skills of the workforce. Finally, the use of flexible forms of part-time work was lower where part-time work has been introduced to meet the wish of employees, and the use of multiple forms of part-time work was more likely to occur where part-time work has been introduced also to respond to company’s need and not only to employees’ needs (Eurofound 2006b).

The basic facts that have been pointed out in this paragraph show that the use of the part-time workforce that was made by European employers during the years 2000s tended to be structured along a strong gender divide, since they tended to drawn part-time workers especially from the feminine group of the workforce. Then, the analysis of different
organizational forms of part-time work in European establishments has confirmed that on the whole these are tailored around specific groups of the pool of part-time workers, but according to operational requirements of enhancing employers’ flexibility (Eurofound 2007a). In this sense, the ways part-time work is organized and conceived from a labour demand perspective suggest that this employment form has not been necessarily involved in a process of transformation of broad groups of adults’ life-courses, but has rather increased the risk of erosion for the life-courses of those groups of adults who were mainly concerned by it. Besides, such a risk was accentuated by a persisting tendency to use part-time work as a mean to acquire flexibility with respect to standard working time that continued to be considered the social norm (Lesnard 2006), and this favours hence also the risk of a further marginalization of this employment form.

4.3.3 Part-time workers’ practices

The basic idea of part-time work is that, by working fewer hours, the worker can devote more time to activities outside work, including household and family responsibilities. At this regard, part-time work patterns as for the labour supply of part-time work over the 2000s showed that men and women presented differences in how they used to feed up part-time working arrangements.

First, there were gender differences in the use of part-time work. Men were less likely than women to cite family or personal responsibilities as reason for working part-time, while they were much more likely to cite education or training as reasons for taking up in a part-time job (Eurofound 2006b; Eurofound 2007). In fact, working fathers were proved to be only half likely to work part-time as men who are not fathers, while for working women a significant greater incidence of part-time work tended to go hand in hand with parenthood (European Commission 2005). As for country differences, in this period part-time working fathers are more frequently found in Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, while they are less frequent in Italy and Portugal. On the contrary, mothers with pre-school or school age children represent an important proportion of female part-time employees in virtually all European countries.

Accordingly, women and men presented differences also in the time spent outside work, particularly on unpaid work. Men working part-time dedicated less time to unpaid work then men working full-time, while women working part-time devoted the time saved by working
part-time to unpaid work (Eurofound 2007). Accordingly, women had the greater number of composite working hours than part-time and full-time employed men.

Even so, it was men, in particular working fathers, who expressed the highest level of dissatisfaction with their work-life balance (Eurofound 2006b). That happened even if more men than women appeared to enjoy some forms of working time autonomy. In particular, more men than women declared to have some scope in determining or adapting their working hours within limits, and this kind of autonomy was common among the minority of men who work part-time (Eurofound 2007). Anyway, the inferior degree of dissatisfaction expressed by women was related more to the fact many more women tailor their working lives to adapt to domestic demands by working part-time (Eurofound 2011).

Such gender differences were largely reflected in patterns concerning long hours of work. At the end of the decade long working hours remained mostly a male phenomenon (18% of men in the EU27 compared to 8% of women), while short hours were primarily a female phenomenon (20% of employed women worked fewer than 20 hours per week as against 7% of employed men) (Eurofound 2011a). Conversely, attitudes towards working hours in terms of working-time preferences tended to go in the direction of some men full-time workers preferring a reduction in the amount of their hours of work, while many part-timers, especially women, were seeking to work longer hours (Eurofound 2002a; Eurofound 2006c; Eurofound 2011). However, research has shown that the share of European firms providing full reversibility between the two employment forms is relatively limited. In some countries, reversibility is a statutory right but the transition is judged as being very difficult by managers of a quite large share of establishments (Eurofound 2007a). On the whole, in a larger part of European establishments part-time workers could easily get a full-time job only exceptionally, while in almost a third of the establishments there is no chance of this happening (Eurofound 2007b; Eurofound 2011). Countries like Belgium, Austria, France, Luxembourg, Sweden, refer to first case; Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands and Greece refer to the second case. In any case, in a majority of European countries, women were shown to be more likely than men to leave employment or to change employers to obtain part-time work, especially when they have young children or other family responsibilities (Eurofound 2007).

The evidence that has been highlighted so far as for use of part-time work arrangements, working hours attitudes and patterns, and patterns of movement between different working hours arrangements, show that all the elements that over the decade could contribute in undermining gender ‘enclaves’ in part-time work and throughout the labour market were actually acting as reinforcing gender differences and risking to push these latter towards an
increasing level of inequalities. Basically, a movement towards a more gender neutral form of part-time work would have required that also men become increasingly willing to play a role in adapting their working time arrangements to the challenges posed by the increasing feminization of the workforce (Eurofound 2006b), which was not what happened over the first decade of the 2000s.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the trends in the evolution of part-time work in the EU over the first decade of the 2000s in the light of three main tensions that have emerged within it as a consequence of the process of transition from the Fordist to the post-Fordist society. The analysis has revealed the potential for dissonance between behaviours and attitudes, which is reflected in a consistent internal and external discrepancy of policy developments and patterns of labour market behaviour as for labour demand and supply of part-time work. Accordingly, how should the transition be expected to develop over the next years? And what will be the consequences for part-time work patterns within the EU scenario?

First of all, the analysis has confirmed that women and men are not equally situated in the labour market in respect to part-time work. Hence, assumptions about a progress towards gender neutral patterns of individualization through part-time work do not seem plausible at the moment. On the contrary, some aspects suggest that the risk of reinforcement of gender inequality is still present. In view of that, as for the first indicator that have oriented the analysis, the tension ‘gender neutrality vs. gender inequality’, it seems that the transition is still developing along the dimension of gender inequality.

Then, part-time work has been advocated all over the decade as an important instrument for achieving objectives in terms of participation rates and its diffusion has been widely promoted. Consequently, its intense diffusion and its contribution to the employment boost have brought it to the core of the labour market. Nevertheless, the analysis has pointed out how part-time work maintains a relative disadvantage in terms of quality standards compared to full-time work, which continues to be considered as the social norm. This suggests that part-time work continues to be seen and treated as an atypical form of employment that responds mainly to a need for flexibilizing some segments of the labour market. Therefore, as for the second indicator that has oriented the analysis, the tension ‘normalization vs.
marginalization’, the transition seems to tend towards the reinforcement of the dimension of marginalization.

Finally, the emergence of new life-course options based on the use of part-time work has mainly concerned certain groups of workers who do not necessarily share malleable employment-oriented life-courses (youth, elderly, and women) and who might experience difficulties in securing their economic independence more than others. For that reason, increases in labour market participation through part-time work cannot be linked with any assumption about an increasing degree of economic individualization to be reflected in work-life related choices and the transformation of working biography. Likewise, as for the third indicator that has oriented the analysis, the tension ‘transformation vs. erosion’, the dimension of erosion seems to be the more consistent with the actual patterns of the transition.

The fact that the transition seems to be moving mainly along the negative dimensions of the three tensions does have to be interpreted in absolute terms. As it has been already said, these tensions have been conceived mainly as theoretical constructions for the analysis of social change; the reality is for sure much more multi-faceted than this, countries differences are still very significant, and positive and negative signals can cohabit in the same reality at the same time. Therefore, the question “lost in transition?” concerning the evolution of the transition of part-time work from the Fordist to the post-Fordist society and its eventual consequences for part-time work patterns remain an open question. What seems to stay relatively stable is the gender divide that characterizes part-time work, while within the boundaries of the latter new social developments create room for changes to be brought in by the transition. Thus, the final question seems to be: is the transition pushing part-time work towards a controversial and hybrid form of part-time work? In particular, such a controversial and hybrid form of part-time work seems to fold in gender inequality as its structural dimension, while deploying at the same time a general diversity frame as a consequence of trends in the flexibilization of labour, individualization of work-lifestyle options and changes in family models. The empirical analyses that will be illustrated in the following section should help in casting light upon such questions.
CHAPTER 5

PART-TIME WORK IN FRANCE: A “POISONED APPLE”?

Introduction

In sociological research, it is quite common to work with the concept of typology in order to grasp in theoretical terms a social reality that otherwise would remain too complex to be caught by our analytical schemes. There are several typologies that can be found in the sociological literature, where one of the most known is probably the Esping-Andersen’s typology of European welfare states. Interestingly, what happens with the French case is that, whatever the typology chosen, researchers will be very likely to agree on the fact that France does not fit in with it, with any of them. In this thesis we have chosen not to work with typologies, but if we have to imagine placing France in a European scenario with respect to the question of part-time work, we will see for sure that once more France represents a sort of “outlier”. Actually, in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom, the development of part-time work has globally encountered supporters and opponents in the context of a more or less equilibrated debate on the theme. On the contrary, in France, part-time work has traditionally been seen as negative, or not “desirable”.

This is true from an institutional perspective, since the government has favoured other kinds of measures to obtain working time reduction which the primary objective was work sharing as an accomplishment of social justice, while social partners have traditionally been hostile to the development of this employment form; from the employers’ perspective, since employers have tended to consider part-time work problematic with regard to work organization and labour force management, and financial incentives on social contribution have been necessary in order to seduce them in this sense; from the workers’ perspective, since the integration of women in the labour market have traditionally been based on full-time work, and full-time work continues to be generally considered the standard and desirable form of employment.

Almost twenty years ago, in a meeting on working time and employment in a gender perspective, the dominant viewpoint on part-time work was resumed in the following statement: “La France est un pays de temps partiel maudit” (literally: France is a country of
cursed part-time work). Ten years after, a researcher came back on that issue and reformulated such a statement in the form of a provocative question “La France est-elle toujours un pays de temps partiel maudit?” (Is France still a country of cursed part-time work?) (Buffier-Morel 2007: 101). Whatever the answer given to that question (in any case, we will come back on that at several occasion later on in the chapter), the point is that in a range of 20 years the main concern about part-time work still refers to whether, metaphorically speaking, sentencing it to death or not for the accusation of being one of the most precarious forms of employment in the French labour market. In fact, in the French public discourse and in the scientific community of social sciences, part-time work has always had a negative connotation. At the same time, attitudes towards part-time work in the French society can be defined as ambivalent.

First, in the public and sociological discourse, part-time work is almost automatically associated with underemployment, till the point that it is defined as the drive behind this latter (Lurol 2001; Bel 2008; Délégation aux droits des femmes et à l’égalité des chances entre les hommes et les femmes 2011). Annual reports from INSEE (the French National Office of Statistics) about employment levels and general employment situation in France evocate very often evidences on part-time work exclusively in the section dedicated to “sous-emploi”

This is especially true from 2009 on, when the effects of the global financial crisis begin to be severe and part-time work is seen as an element favouring precariousness in a context of serious economic and employment problems.

The inscription of part-time work in a section reserved to precarious employment forms in the Labour Code can be considered emblematic as well. Actually, by normatively labelling it as a precarious activity, the French legislator contributes to the disqualification of part-time work with respect to the social representation of this employment form (Buffier-Morel 2007).

Then, feminists have traditionally declared themselves against part-time work, defining it with a number of colored expressions, and making it as a symbol of the battle between sexes for

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23 Such a statement was pronounced by Michel Rocard (a socialist French politician, Prime Minister under Francois Mitterand from 1988 to 1991), at the Parisian Meeting named “Assises du temps, du travail, de l’emploi à l’initiative des femmes” in 1995.

24 According to INSEE, underemployment concerns two kinds of individuals: those who work part-time, would like to work more and are immediately available to do so, independently from the fact that they are actively looking for another job or not; those who work either part-time (but are in a different situation than the one described above) or full-time and have worked less than usual during a reference week for reasons related to the economic cycle or the inclemency of the weather.

gender equality in the labour market. Not long ago, in July 2011, the UMP deputy Marie-Jo Zimmermann, presented a report to the National Assembly on behalf of the Delegation for women’s right (Délégation aux droits des femmes et à l’égalité des chances entre les hommes et les femmes) titled “Une urgence sociale : réduire le travail à temps partiel, source de précarité pour les femmes et facteurs aggravant des inégalités professionnelles” (“A social emergency: to reduce part-time employment, source of precariousness for women and worsening factor of professional inequalities”)\(^26\). In the same framework, few years before, a public consultant of the Delegation for women’s right who was working on a report on work-life balance to be addressed to Human Resources Directors of French companies, asked to notify in the report that part-time work is not “recommendable” for women’s careers. Still at the time of the presidential elections of 2012, a feminist association addressed a video message to the candidate of the Communist Party (Front de Gauche) where, among other issues, they were asking for the abolition of part-time work\(^27\).

At the same time, in January 2012, Darty, one of the biggest chain of electronic and robotics, employing a huge number of workers all around France, launched a recruitment campaign aimed at fulfilling mainly part-time jobs positions. The objective of this campaign was to try to make part-time work attractive to future candidates who might aspire to work in a selling environment, while combining at the same time their professional activity with another type of activity outside the labour market. “Jeune maman? Marathonien? Senior? Etudiante? Et passionné par la vente? Choisissez votre temps partiel en magasin Chez Darty” (“Young mother? Marathon runner? Senior? Student? And keen on selling? Choose your part-time work arrangement at one of our Darty stores”): this was the slogan proposed by a picture advertising the campaign and representing a young woman with a child, a young girl, an adult man and an elderly man\(^28\).

Finally, among workers and employees part-time work has begun to be progressively more wished and accepted, but still this is limited to some particular situations. Evidence shows that high aspirations for part-time work are registered especially for mothers of school-aged children, but such aspirations are consistently reduced once the preferred arrangement for women whose children have left home is analyzed (Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007).

\(^{26}\) Rapport d’information n. 3602.
\(^{27}\) To watch the video: [http://www.jean-luc-melenchon.fr/2012/02/06/recontre-au-foyer-de-lassociation-feministe-fit/](http://www.jean-luc-melenchon.fr/2012/02/06/recontre-au-foyer-de-lassociation-feministe-fit/)
\(^{28}\) At present time, “le temps partiel choisi” is one of the main points of Darty’s HR policy, who proposes part-time jobs position as a way to balance work and investment in other spheres of life. More information at: [http://www.dartyfrance.fr/TempsPartiel.php](http://www.dartyfrance.fr/TempsPartiel.php)
Likewise, women are more in favour of mothers with young children working part-time rather than staying at home.

So what is the matter with part-time work in France? Does it still represent a sort of poisoned apple, an object of discordance? And why is it so? In this chapter we try to answer these questions. In order to do so, it is important to provide some contextual information by summarizing the main issues that characterize the social perception of part-time work in France.

The first element that has to be underlined is a contradictory attitude towards part-time work developed by public policy and institutional arrangements, especially with regard to the issue of negotiated working time reductions (the so called RTT, “reductions du temps de travail”, introduced under the 35 hours regime). Then, there is the juxtaposition between familialistic and egalitarian interests, where the latter are usually represented by the feminist movement, especially by that part of the feminist movement that is identified by the expression “femism d’état” (state feminism). These two elements together have favoured the acknowledgement of certain logics of use of part-time work (flexibility and family responsibilities) and the deny of other logics (individualized working time arrangements), even if it does not mean that the actors promoting or recognizing such logics have explicitly and publicly approved them.

In general, the deny of the private dimension of part-time work and the focus on the economic dimension seem to prevail over the recognition of individual needs, and this can be read as a way of manipulating women’s willing to work for ideological reasons. In view of that, it is possible to talk about a sort of monopolization of the traditional logic of part-time work use (i.e. part-time work as a work-life balance instrument for women), and the subsequent creation of cleavages among women, as well as of winner/looser game among part-time workers in general. This is due also to the affirmation of a full-time working model from a normative point of view and to the missed recognition of the diversity of situations and requirements for both men and women. On the whole, all this has favoured the establishment of a rigid norm of temporality for what concerns the work and outside work articulation, which implies not questioning the actual gender order which still rely on the “male norm” (i.e. full-time work is the standard model that must be protected for the sake of equality).

These points will be developed over the chapter through first, the description in terms of trends, facts and figures of part-time work diffusion in France during the 2000s, then the articulation of the dynamics that have characterized the development of this employment form with respect to the social practices and norms built up by the various actors present in the labour market.
5.1 TRENDS, FACTS AND FIGURES

5.1.1 Employment situation

5.1.1.1 Part-time employment levels: stable, but not static

Part-time work in France has been developed to respond to the requests of employers who wanted the possibility to manage the labour force in a more flexible way in order either to maintain, or expand, or share employment. Right-wing as well left-wing governments have pursued this objective (Bel 2008). In particular, the spread of part-time employment since the 80s has been largely an effort to make manpower flexible in order to face persistent unemployment, especially among young people. Nevertheless, part-time work started to develop significantly from the beginning of the 90s. In the 90s, nearly all new jobs created (net job creations) for manual workers and employees in commerce and the personal service sector were part-time. As a consequence, French scholars tend to consider part-time work as a recent phenomenon (Maruani 2003). We are now going to give a closer look at how such a phenomenon evolved in terms of employment levels during the 2000s.

In 2000, full-time work was growing more and faster than part-time work. Actually, the abolition of financial incentives in terms of reduction on social contributions for employees established by the loi Aubry on 35 hours was discouraging the recourse to part-time work. In particular, between 1999 and 2000 the proportion of part-time workers has been decreasing, passing from 17.2% to 16.8%. Such proportion decreased particularly for employees (-0.7%), since some employees, who would have been working part-time under the 39 hours regime, accept to be considered as full-time workers under the 35 hours regime. Globally, part-time work has continued to growth in the case of men and to slightly decrease for women until the mid-2000s, since for this latter it

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29 At that time, part-time work and fixed-term contracts were used for the “transition period”, a period of socialization into paid work, and as a probationary period, in order to enable employers to make an informed selection of permanent employees.

30 More details about the reform introduced by the loi Aubry will be provided in the following paragraphs.
passed from 31% of 1999 to less than 29% in 2005. In 2003, part-time employment rate was equal to 16.6%.

Nevertheless, the situation began to change between 2003 and 2005. In particular, the jobs created in 2004 were mainly part-time jobs (+55,000) (INSEE 2004), and in 2005 employment has been growing even more consistently as compared to 2004, especially thanks to women who have occupied new jobs, the majority on a part-time basis. In particular, the number of jobs created between 2004 and 2005 amounted to 137,000, which were mainly part-time jobs taken up by women. Accordingly, part-time work has significantly increased in 2005. During this year, 17.2% of working people had a part-time job (they were 16.8% in 2004), that is five millions of workers over 28 million of active people (INSEE 2005). From 2004 to 2006 part-time employment rate increased from respectively from 16.8% to 17.3% (INSEE 2006a), and in 2007, the proportion of part-time workers was stable at about 17.4% of total employment. Among them, 3% of workers were employed for less than 15 hours per week, and 82% were occupied by women (INSEE 2007).

Figure 5.1.1.1-1 Part-time employment in France (% of total employment), 2003-2010

![Graph showing part-time employment in France from 2003 to 2010](image)

Source: Insee 2010

During the crisis that hit Europe in the last part of 2008, employers made recourse to measures to retain the labour force, in order to vary the total amount of hours worked by each worker rather than to proceed to their dismissal. Among the measures adopted there are: definition of working hours on annual basis, part-time work contracts, recourse to “chômage
partiel” (partial unemployment). In particular, this latter has considerably increased during the crisis, and this helped in containing reductions in employment levels. Basically, employers adjusted to the reduction in production through reductions in the volume of hours worked. As a consequence, the average amount of individual working hours has begun to decrease from mid-2008. In 2 years, from the 3rd quarter of 2008 to the 3rd quarter or 2010, such decrease amounted to 0,5% (INSEE 2011). In 2010, part-time work accounted for 17,8% of total employment (INSEE 2010).

On the whole, part-time worker has slightly increased over the decade, oscillating between about 16% and 17%, according mainly to economic conditions in the labour market and employers’ strategies to increase flexibility. If at the end of the decade it was not possible to remark an impressive quantitative change in part-time employment levels despite a slightly increasing trend, it does not mean that part-time work patterns in France have not encountered any transformation at all. In the same way, it does not mean that the visible relevance of the imperative of economic flexibility that comes up from the quantitative photography of part-time work that we have just given, allows for a univocal lecture of the situation in absolute terms. On the contrary, a situation that could be defined as “stationary” with respect to quantitative levels of part-time work, has to be seen as an indicator of the structural dynamics underlying such situation and complexifying it.

5.1.1.2 “Sousemploi”: the French way to talk about voluntary and involuntary part-time work

Underemployment is a delicate subject in France, which is very often automatically associated with part-time work. As we will see later on in the chapter, if the voluntary/involuntary distinction is used to qualify the nature of part-time work itself from a workers’ perspective, underemployment is identified as an intrinsic characteristics of part-time work despite the fact that the wish to work more may not be simply related to a part-time work/full-time work dilemma, but rather to the necessity to obtain a different working hours articulation within a certain working time arrangements (this point will be further developed later on in the chapter). Accordingly, it is not possible to talk about involuntary part-time work in France and dissociate it from underemployment; hence, the two topics will be treated as one in this paragraph.

At the beginning of the decade, underemployment was decreasing (just as part-time employment levels), continuing a trend that begun between 1997 and 1999 and that concerned
full-time workers as well. This was attributed to an improvement in working conditions and general situation in the labour market which allows a better matching between workers’ preferences and employers’ necessities (INSEE 2000). In 2002, underemployment concerned 31.6% of workers, as compared to the proportion of 39.4% back in 1997 (INSEE 2002). Accordingly, underemployment came to a stabilization between 2002 and 2003, when it concerned 27.7% of part-time workers (INSEE 2006). Then, underemployment increased again between 2003 and 2004. In 2004, 1 260 000 individuals, were working less than what they wished to, that is 60 000 additional individuals as compared to 2003. Three quarters of these individuals were women holding a part-time job.

During the second half of the decade, underemployment continued to represent an important pattern among part-time workers. In 2005, the proportion of people in underemployment among part-time workers decreased as compared to 2004: such proportions accounted respectively to 28.7% and 29.1% (INSEE 2007a; INSEE 2007b). This feature marked the rise of a new decreasing trend that continued during the years preceding the economic crisis.

In fact, in 2006, 1,3 millions of workers were in a situation of underemployment, that is 5.3% of all active workers (INSEE 2006a). In 2008, such proportion was lower: 1.2 millions of workers were in a situation of underemployment, representing 4.8% of the total number of people in employment (INSEE 2008). The economic crisis inversed the trend once more. Between 2008 and 2009, underemployment increased by 0.7%, and such increase was stronger for manual workers. In 2010, 1,5 millions of workers were in a situation of underemployment, representing 5.9% of people in employment, pointing out the acute effects of the crisis as compared to the situation back in 2008. As a result, part-time work due to market constraints (i.e. impossibility to find a full-time job) increased as well, passing from 26.8% in 2008 to 27.7% in 2009 (INSEE 2009). In 2010, the effects of economic crisis revealed to be even stronger: three part-time workers out of ten (29.7%) declared that they wished to work more.

Underemployment does not concern in the same way men and women. Broadly speaking, more than three quarters of people in a situation of underemployment in the 2000s were women, while men demonstrated to be comparatively much less concerned by such situation (INSEE 2008). Nevertheless, men are usually less represented in the part-time work category, but they are much more concerned by underemployment when they hold a part-time job. In the mid-2000s about 34% of men working part-time would have liked to work more, as compared to 28% of women (INSEE 2007b). Nevertheless, one effect of the economic crisis
was to increase the underemployment risk for women\(^{31}\), who still at the end of the decade represented 80% of part-time workers (INSEE 2010). Among these latter, involuntary part-time is less incident for the 30-49 age group, probably because in this period family responsibilities are more important.

On the contrary, underemployment concerns especially young part-time workers. This is especially true for young people aged less than 30 years: with no distinction between men and women, evidence for the beginning of the decade shows that 40% of young people were in this situation (INSEE 2006). In 2005, such proportion accounted to 44% (INSEE 2007b). At the end of the decade, one young part-time worker aged less than 24 years old out of ten was in a situation of underemployment (INSEE 2010).

On the whole, these cohorts features reflect the general situation of part-time work, where family responsibilities and market constraints (i.e. impossibility to find a full-time job) as reasons to work part-time represent respectively both about one third of women involved in part-time work. Part-time work for family responsibilities is more frequent among low-professionals (40% of cases, 17% of market constraints), while among employees and manual workers part-time work because of market constraints is more frequent (37% of cases, 25% for family reasons) (INSEE 2009).

**Figure 5.1.1.2-1 Underemployment among part-time workers, by sex and age, 2005**

![Graph showing underemployment among part-time workers by sex and age in 2005]

*Source: Insee, Enquête Emploi 2005*

\(^{31}\) In 2010, 8.8% of women were in a situation of underemployment as compared to 3.3% of men (INSEE 2010).
Underemployment dynamics during the 2000s showed to be related to economic fluctuations just as part-time employment levels. At the same time, they showed to differently affect men and women and people belonging to different age groups. The fact that some individuals, mainly men and young people, are more concerned with underemployment when having a part-time job seems to suggest that part-time work practices over the decade maintained traditional patterns, with women having family responsibility being concerned mainly by voluntarily part-time work, while people in other situations desire to work more. The trends and features presented in the following paragraph might confirm such an idea, without forgetting that there is another one third of people who were working part-time during the 2000s neither because of family reasons nor because of market constraints.

5.1.2 Feminization levels: evolution of women’s part-time work (part-time work for all tastes, for all ages)

The increase in female part-time employment levels constitutes one of the biggest changes in the French labour market since the beginning of the 80s. During the 90s, female participation to the labour force expanded fastest, and for all women (young or old, skilled or unskilled, married or single, with or without children) part-time work was the fastest growing form of employment. Likewise, in the same period employers kept targeting atypical jobs at women, contributing in making these jobs a feminized form of activity (Kieffer et al. 1997).

During the 2000s, the proportion of women working part-time remained more or less stable. On the whole, one third of the jobs occupied by women were part-time jobs. One woman out of three was a part-time worker, as compared to one man out of twenty (INSEE 2007a).\(^{32}\)

In 2010, 30.1% of employed women were working part-time, as compared to 6.7% men. This shows that even if the labour market has become increasingly more feminized, differences between the two sexes with regard to employment patterns remained important.

For a majority of women, part-time work was voluntary, resulting mainly from family reasons. In particular, part-time work is proved to increase when the number of young children in the household (aged less than 3 years old) increases\(^{33}\) (INSEE 2002a; INSEE

\(^{32}\) In 2005, one woman out of three declared to be a part-time worker: back in 1985, the proportion of women holding a part-time job was one to five (Rivaud and Ulrich 2007).

\(^{33}\) In 2001, among women in this kind of situation, 30% works full-time, 26% works part-time and 8.4% are unemployed (INSEE 2002a).
Nevertheless, part-time work for family reasons cannot resume the current state of part-time employment patterns among French women.

**Figure 5.1.2-1 Part-time vs. full-time work by sex, 2005**

The sharp increase of part-time work among the female labour force is confirmed by the growing incidence of this employment form along different cohorts of women. In other words, the proportion of women working part-time at each age period has been increasing between different cohorts (Ulrich 2009). Accordingly, part-time employment rates differ according to different age groups given a certain age point. Nevertheless, two general common trends can be identified among all age groups: after 25 years old, part-time work increases with age; the younger the cohorts, the higher the rates.

On the whole, women are increasingly more active on the labour market, and bigger differences among cohorts do not concerns activity rates, but part-time employment rates (Rivaud and Ulrich 2007). In fact, for almost ten generations, increases in female activity rates have been realized mainly through part-time work and unemployment (Afsa and Buffeteau 2005).

The main difference in part-time work profiles refers to the youngest age group. In fact, young cohorts of women study more and longer than older cohorts, so part-time work becomes more incident among the former, and to find a full-time job has become consequently more and more difficult for them. That explains why the incidence of part-time work has become particularly evident among women from the youngest cohort at the
youngest age (20-25 years old). Anyway, once the youngest cohorts grow old, part-time employment profiles become progressively more similar between all cohorts. Broadly speaking, part-time work in France tends to be a transitory stage of the career as compared to other situations, such as full-time work (Buddelmeyer et al. 2005; Ulrich 2009). However, research on the role of part-time work in women’s employment trajectories have shown that part-time work developed at among all age groups and at every stage of women’s life/employment-course (Galtier 1999; Bué 2002; Ulrich and Zilberman 2007).

**Figure 5.1.2-2 Part-time work at different age points by cohort**

![Part-time work at different age points by cohort](image)

*Source: Rivaud and Ulrich 2007*

At the beginning of the career part-time work represents the first step into the labour market for students, as well as for low qualified young women who cannot manage to find a full-time job and are often employed in selling activities. Referring to adult women with low qualification, part-time work is a means to remain in the labour market (lady’s maid, babysitters, etc.), while for others it is often a choice for coping with family responsibilities. Finally, part-time is for old women a way to progressively retire from the labour market in case of health problems or to join a husband who is already retired. In some cases, part-time work represents a way to exit unemployment, but then transitions to full-time work are rare.
and the unemployment-part-time work trajectory risks to become definitive (Rivaud and Ulrich 2007).

In the end, feminization of part-time work shows the important role of this employment form in the evolution of women’s activity profile in France. Likewise, it points out the complexity of women’s part-time employment patterns which are not normatively trapped in traditional logic of part-time work uses (despite the fact that part-time work for family reasons remain important), but are becoming progressively diversified. Nevertheless, the increasingly weight acquired by part-time work among different cohorts of women, without anything similar happening to men, may be interpreted as a worrying sign of the way women are integrating part-time work in their career paths in absence of a more global societal process of diversification of part-time work.

5.1.3 Diversification patterns: the influence of changes in working time arrangements and new part-time work practices

With respect to the general European situation, where the decrease in weekly working hours registered during the 2000s was mainly due to the increased take up of part-time jobs by women, in France reductions in weekly working hours were introduced at the beginning of the decade through legislative procedures. In fact, the two lois Aubry (we will talk about them in a more detailed way later on in the chapter) introduced the 35 hours working time regime, which entailed consequences for working time duration of both full-time and part-time workers. In particular, the main outcomes of the 35 hours reform with respect to part-time work are the facts that part-time work is no longer encouraged through financial incentives, and that it is excluded from the obligation of collective bargaining in order to establish the modalities through which working time reduction was to be realized. In other words, part-time work was dissociated from RTT (“reduction temps de travail”) measures, which are the modalities according to which it is possible to establish collective working time reductions on the basis of the 35 hours reforms.

This can be considered as a missed opportunity for promoting a diversification in the use of part-time work and also of the workers concerned. This is even more true if we consider that under the 35 hours reform, once this latter came into force, the majority of part-time workers (about 68%) remained under a part-time work regime and did not switched to full-time work, some of them did not have the possibility to chose and either they have been treated as full-
time workers (hence their working time has been reduced), or they remained in a part-time job position without benefiting of a reduction in working hours while maintaining the same salary (i.e. they continued working the same amount of hours for the same salary) (Bué et al. 2004). Accordingly, if on one hand the 35 hours reform favoured the hiring of new employees on a full-time rather than on a part-time basis, on the other it triggered new sources of inequality for part-time workers.

Among these latter, those working more than 29 hours per week were facilitated in the switch to full-time work, while those working about the average duration of weekly working hours for a part-time workers (23 hours per week) had to face a multitude of situations, including not required reductions/increases in the amount of hours worked and in the total workload. On the whole, average working hours for part-time workers over the decade remained relatively high and stable at about 23 hours, while those of full-time workers oscillated between 39 and 41 in the period between the mid-2000s and the end of the decades (varying according to professional category, in this case we take employee as reference category, since for independent workers and self-employed in general average working hours are much higher) (INSEE 2004; INSEE 2005; INSEE 2007).

If working-time reforms did not favour the diversification of part-time work patterns, practices revealed that among part-time workers activity profiles have been characterized by some sort of diversification. An analysis of part-time employment rates by age group over the decade shows that part-time work is higher among young workers aged between 15-24 years old, followed by old workers aged more than 50 years old, while among core age workers aged between 25-49 years old are the less concerned by this employment form.

Given the fact family responsibilities are usually more important during the central ages of life, these features can be interpreted as a confirmation of the fact that part-time work due to childcare responsibilities does not necessarily represent the main social use of part-time work. As a consequence, contrary to what happens in other countries such as Germany where part-time work is traditionally almost exclusively perceived as reserved to mothers, the diversification of part-time work uses in France concerns much more the gender divide that characterizes this employment form and the extent to which women are increasingly concerned by part-time work, rather than the general reasons behind the recourse to part-time work.

34 This point will be treated in a more detailed way, with reference to women’s part-time work practices, later on in the chapter.
Table 5.1.3.1 Part-time employment rates by age group, 2003-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>15-24 ans</th>
<th>25-49 ans</th>
<th>50+</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>23.1</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>17.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Insee, Enquête Emploi 2003-2010

Nevertheless, differences in part-time employment rates between age groups may be interestingly correlated to the rise of multi-activity as a new way of having recourse to part-time work. In fact, part-time workers showed to be quite numerous among multiple job holders, that is a situation concerning people who cumulate two or more jobs. This could be the case of young workers entering the labour market, or young people still in education wishing to have at the same time some sort of income, as well as the case of older workers progressively approaching their retirement age. Around the end of the decade, multiple job holders were 1.2 million, that is 5.2% of the total number of workers. Among them, two groups of workers can be identified: those who exercise only one professional activity for several employers, and those who cumulate several professional activities for different employers. People in the first group present individual and professional characteristics which differ from those of mono-active workers. They are mainly concentrated in the service sector and most of them hold a part-time job as main professional activity. The same stays true for people in the second group of multi-active workers, but contrary to the first group, they present characteristics which make them more close to the group of mono-active workers. The majority of them are professors, “aides à domicile”, “assistantes maternelles”. People in this kind of situation hold jobs which working time and working schedule over the week allows the combination of several activities (INSEE 2008).

In this sense, it can be said that if increasing levels of multi-activity among part-time work have revealed to be progressively important as a sign of diversification in the use of part-time work, it is also clear that part-time jobs position associated with multi-activity profiles present the classical labour market characteristics associated with part-time work: they are either jobs
in the service sector (renewed for being precarious), or essentially feminized activities. Accordingly, it can be supposed that, also in the light of the mentioned effects produced by legislative reforms, a certain renovation of part-time work uses has probably taken place, but following a traditional path, which means that it cannot be considered at the same time a sort or renovation of part-time work in itself.

5.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

5.2.1 Legislative approach: promoting part-time work as an instrument of labour market flexibility?

The use of part-time work in France began to develop outside any dedicated regulatory framework. In fact, the provisions of individual contracts and specific collective agreements on the matter governed this employment form at least until the 80s. From that moment onwards, part-time work was the subject of continuous attention from French policy makers, and its legislative development and expansion have become particularly intense from the start of the 90s, in the context of an employment policy-thrust. As a result, Directive 97/81/EC on part-time work did not required specific transposition, but only few arrangements which left the main points of the French policy approach on the matter more or less intact (Laulom 2004).

Until the 80s, the transformation of a full-time contract to a part-time one was mainly based on individual and consensual arrangements bargained between employees and employers. A limited number of agreements integrated this possibility and organized this employment form, which introduction was most of the time triggered by employees’ requests. The situation changed when the government set out as primary objectives to bring about a general reduction in working time, fighting unemployment and creating new jobs. As a result, even if the focus of the political debate was not directly on part-time work, this latter became a key element in the employment flexibility policy. In particular, the French government designed policy measures aimed at promoting part-time work with the publicly stated purpose of favoring some increase in the level of employment (Kieffer et al. 1997). The measures adopted in that period were aimed at fostering the development of part-time work by abolishing rules and practices that were a possible deterrent to its use from the employers’ point of view.
In particular, during the 90s financial incentives were introduced in order to encourage the take up of part-time work contracts by employers. Such incentives provided with a reduction varying from 30 to 50 per cent in the social security contributions payable by employers hiring new part-time work employees. Only part-time open-ended contracts were eligible for the subsidy, and the working time involved had to be at least 16 hours excluding extra-hours and not more than 32 including extra-hours (Oliveira and Ulrich 2002; Bel 2008). Switches from a full-time open-ended contract to a part-time open-ended contract could benefit of the subsidy as well, but only if respecting one condition: the recruitment of one or more new employees to make up the resultant shortfall in working time (Laulom 2004). Finally, the subsidy was granted for the entire duration of the contract concerned.

Other measures were developed as part of a process of which political and institutional powers have been the main promoters (Loi quinquennale, Loi de Robien, Lois Aubry, Loi Fillon) and introduced annualized part-time, allowing companies to have recourse to this latter even in the framework of fixed-term contracts. This was done in order to help companies in facing variations in their productivity levels, especially as a consequence of seasonal fluctuations, by allowing them to manage their labour force in a more flexible way (Buffier-Morel 2007).

Accordingly, part-time work begun to be progressively more integrated in agreements and bargains on duration and management of working time (Bué et al. 2004). In particular, evidence shows that financial incentives did play an important role in the growth of part-time work, since the period of maximal expansion of part-time work was registered in between 1992 and 1996. Nevertheless, this development was not greater in France than in other countries where no incentives have been introduced. Moreover, even if financial incentives may have contributed to the development of part-time work, they may have had also an influence on the sharp rise in involuntary part-time work that was registered during the 90s (Laulom 2004; Ngan 2008; Bel 2008). In any case, those incentives were abolished in concomitance of the Law Aubry II on working time reduction, which came into force in 2000. In point of fact, the current regulation of part-time work is inextricably linked to the 35-hour week legislation, the so-called Aubry legislation (named after the Ministry of Employment, Martine Aubry), in the form of the loi Aubry I of 13 June 1998 and loi Aubry II of 19 January 2000. These laws were designed to bring about working time reduction and work sharing.

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35 The Aubry legislation contains the only visible action expressly intended to transpose the 1997 Directive, which lies in the new statutory definition of part-time employees. Until 2000, part-time workers were those whose working hours were less than four-fifths of the statutory working week or the collectively agreed working
through the introduction of a statutory 35-hour working week, and in this sense part-time work remained one of their concerns, even if not a major one\textsuperscript{36}. Yet, the two \textit{lois Aubry} entailed a reform of the regulations on part-time work. Hence, the financial subsidies attracted by part-time work were abolished. The aim of these laws was no longer to favour part-time work at all costs, as it was back at the beginning of the 90s, but to focus on a generalized reduction in working time, and the use of part-time work could limit the impact of the effectiveness of this latter. In view of that, the opportunity to lighten the burden of social security contributions was directed to companies undertaking negotiated reduction in working time. In particular, the \textit{loi Aubry} II makes entitlement to a reduction in employment-related costs conditional to the collectively agreed organization of voluntary part-time work for employees.

With respect to voluntary part-time work, it is important to underline that the government’s discourse about part-time work begun to be centered on the principle of making it easier to reconcile professional and private life\textsuperscript{37}. Actually, the two \textit{lois Aubry} were intended to define a more rigorous regulation of part-time work with the stated purpose of making it a voluntary form of employment framed in a predictable system. To some extent, this new approach to part-time work marked the introduction of an implicit regard on the gender dimension of this employment form. Actually, such dimension was not taken into account in the policy approach to part-time work undertaken during the two previous decades; despite the fact that women have traditionally formed the majority of part-time workers (Kieffer et al. 1997). By proposing a generalized reduction in working time and limiting the development of flexible/involuntary part-time work, the legislation implicitly tried to improve equality between men and women in terms of a more equal sharing of paid and unpaid work (Fagnani and Letablier 2004)\textsuperscript{38}. 

\textsuperscript{36} Broadly speaking, the objective of the Acts on the 35-hour working week was to promote negotiated reductions in working time in order to: creating employment, in the form of a growth that provides more jobs; stimulating collective bargaining; enhancing companies performance and competitiveness through the modernisation and improvement of the organisation of production; improving social well-being of employees through working time arrangements that favour a better work-life balance (Laulom 2004; Boisard 2004). All these benefits were expected to rise from a generalised reduction in working time, in the context of which part-time work was intended to be a simple instrument.


\textsuperscript{38} However, with specific regard to part-time work, it has been argued that the application of the principle of \textit{pro rata temporis} to the amount of remuneration accorded to part-time workers stated in the Labour Code and maintained by the Aubry law, can be interpreted as a sign of missed recognition of the link between part-time...
In this sense, the *loi Aubry II* extended the opportunities for employees to transfer to part-time work if they wish so by stating an actual right to work part-time. The effectiveness of this right depends on employer’s acceptance of the employee’s request, which can be denied only in two cases: absence of comparable job in the company; predictable and demonstrated harmful consequences for production and company’s functioning. Likewise, the *loi Aubry II* offers the possibility to employees to request the used of annualized part-time hours. In this way, employees can request a reduction in their working hours in the form of one or more week’s leave of absence according to their family commitments. Also in this case, the employer does not have the obligation to accept the employee’s request if it is demonstrated that such a way of organizing working time is incompatible with the company’s needs.

Other important provisions that go in the direction of favouring voluntary part-time work consisted in reducing employers’ prerogatives in arranging the scheduled working hours of part-time employees. The objective was to ensure predictability in the scheduling and duration of part-time working hours, in order to enable employees to better organize their work-life articulation. Accordingly, the regulation on the use of extra hours (*heures complémentaires*) has been reviewed to make it stricter than the former. Accordingly, the number of extra hours allowed has to be fixed by the employment contract and the refusal to work beyond the stated limits cannot be considered misconduct or a reason for dismissal. Likewise, an enhanced rate of pay for extra hours similar to that for overtime (*heures supplémentaires*) can be applied through branch agreements declared applicable *erga omnes*.

All these measures together, could be judged as being aimed at reducing the flexibility inherent to the organization of part-time work as a working time arrangements and workforce management tool for companies. Nevertheless, it must be pointed out the *lois Aubry* made part-time work a collective bargaining issue, meaning that collective bargain (at branch or plant level) is considered the primary mechanism for regulating part-time work within companies. In particular, collective bargaining has become the instrument of flexibility, since it has the power of derogation from the legal framework that it implements. In this sense, the conclusion of specific collective agreements on the generalized reduction of working time through part-time work can, for example, create or preserve jobs and can give rise as well to a
reduction in social security contributions. As a result, the loi Aubry II achieved the objective of giving an impetus to collective bargaining on part-time work, but at the same time it left to it the hard task of finding a balance between flexibility and employees’ protection.

As a result, part-time work has become part of a collective way of managing employment and working time, in the context of increasing regulative role of collective bargaining. The main point consists in a new definition of working time and a collective management of it, being part-time work an instrument to be associated with the search for flexibility and lower labour costs, in view of a collective objective of adjustment, safeguard and job creation. In fact, collective reductions of working hours are very often bargained as counterpart of flexibility in working time arrangements (annualization, modulation, additional free days, atypical schedules, etc.). If on one hand such reductions have led to a diversification of individual working time arrangements, on the other hand they have favoured a work organization considered as more malleable and adaptable to the needs of companies, being the collective working time arrangement a simple reference that can be seen as “average”. Accordingly, collective reductions in working time and recourse to part-time work as a way to manage the workforce have become the instruments of a more general practice of rationalization of working time.

5.2.2 Social policy approach: the improbable combination of family support and promotion of women’ activity choices

France is one of the few countries in Europe that has adopted a law regulating working time in order to raise employment and to promote social progress, of which employees’ quality of life

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41 The law of 4 May 2004 about social dialogue went further in this direction and confirmed the power of derogation accorded to collective bargain at sectoral or company level for what concerns dispositions on work duration of part-time work (Bel 2008).

42 On the whole, the Aubry legislation accorded great importance to the promotion of company negotiations as a way of getting a better adjustment between employees’ needs and firms’ demand for flexibility (Fagnani and Letabluer 2004). Actually, the government aimed at renewing collective bargain, since this latter was weak because of a long tradition of State intervention, at the point that there are very few example of autonomous negotiation by trade unions and employers’ organizations, especially with respect to the issue of working time. Nevertheless, it has been argued that the idea of improving employees’ social well-being through working time reduction was not treated as a priority by the loi Aubry, while the question of collective bargain received much emphasis mainly as a means to achieve improvements of the employment situation more in quantitative than in qualitative terms (Boisard 2004).

43 At this regard, it must be pointed out that the definition of part-time work duration is not defined according to collective working time. In fact, part-time work duration must be stated in the employment contract stipulated between the employee and the employer (Code du travail, article L212-4-2). This means that work duration stipulated in this way is individualized and derogatory with respect to collective working time (Oliveira and Ulrich 2002; Bué 2004).
and work-life balance are considered as important components (Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007; Boisard 2004). The political discourse has contributed in emphasizing part-time work as a convenient arrangement for women, enabling them to make work compatible with domestic and family responsibilities. Nevertheless, the childcare system in France is one of the most highly developed in Europe, offering mothers the possibility to choose to continue working full-time if they want to. This opens the way to part-time work to serve more other purposes than the pure work-life balance issue, explaining also why the increase of part-time work in France has been interpreted more as a drive for underemployment rather than a means for reconciling work and family life (Fagnani and Letablier 2004). In any case, it is important to remark the use of family policy measures as a tool for regulating the labour market typical of the French State action, and the role played by part-time work in such a framework.

During the last decades, a policy drive towards increased parental choice as for child-care arrangements and parental leave arose, mainly as the result of a growing ideology of “freedom of choice” in the public discourse on women’s participation in the labour market (Daune-Richard 2005; Fagnani and Letablier 2005; Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007). In particular, during the 1970s and the early 1980s, French social policies were characterized by the adoption of several measures aimed at favoring women’s labour market participation through the removal of obstacles related to child-rearing. Hence, those years were characterized by a high level of state commitments to full-time nursery education for young children. Then, changes occurred in public policy for what concerns childcare and part-time work in order to face the employment crisis through the reduction of public expenditure and increase in labour flexibility. Unemployment became the major concern for successive governments and for public opinion, and State’s support to publicly-funded childcare facilities (crèches) declined in favour of more individualized solutions, with a view to encourage families to use market services. As a result, families were encouraged to adopt private solutions and were provided

\[44\] As in the case of labour market regulations and policy, State intervention in France has traditionally been very strong also in the organisation of family life and welfare, and the State is seen as a legitimate social actor in the regulation of the employment-family interface and in the work-life balance debate in general (Hantrais 2004; Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007).

\[45\] In this period the French government invested on the creation of community-funded day-care centers through consistent levels of funding allocated by local authorities and the National Family Allowance Fund (CNAF - Caisse Nationale d’allocations familiales) for the construction of crèches (Fagnani 2007). As a result, childcare became a state responsibility and a public issue to be seen as part of family policy, in the context of which the several contrasting aims could be recognized. First, encouraging women’s labour force participation in a period of strong labour-shortage. Second, favouring the modernization of women’s status in society and supporting equality between sexes. Third, putting parents in the conditions of not have to arbitrate between the mother’s paid work and the family size. Even if this latter has been identified as the prevalent objective of childcare investments realized during the 1980S (Fagnani and Letablier 2005), all together these objectives give the idea of the structural tension between familialism and individualism that has traditionally characterized the French social policy approach (Duane-Richard 2005).
with allowances and tax reductions in order to reduce the costs of hiring the services of a child-minder.

As for rules governing access to parental leave, the mid-1980s marked the introduction of the so-called child raisers’ allowance (APE – allocation parentale d’éducation), which was modified during the mid-1990s, and then completely reformed in 2004 with the introduction of the so-called young childcare benefit package (PAJE – prestation d’accueil du jeune enfant). The APE introduced in the 1980s was a monthly benefit equivalent to half of the national minimum wage, payable on the birth of the third child until he reached the age of three to parents giving up their job in order to take care of the child at home. The 1994’s new legislation extended the APE to parents of two children and enabled them to benefit of such allowance on a part-time basis, which is to obtain partial financial compensation for a reduction in their working hours following the birth of the second child. Accordingly, it was now possible to combine parental leave with part-time employment. With the PAJE reform of 2004, the APE was extended to include the first child. Such a reform was adopted in the context of a public debate dominated by the notions of “free choice” and “reconciliation of family life and paid work”. Actually, the government insisted on the necessity to provide parents with room for choice in the organization of their work-life balance, and hence parents of one child can now choose either to take a six months parental leave (paid as the APE), or to receive financial support to cover child-care costs if they decide to keep working. One of the aims of such measures was to encourage mothers to use the PAJE on a part-time basis. In fact, if coupled with the home care allowance (CLCA - complément de libre choix d’activité) the amount paid under the PAJE regime to parents wishing to take a parental leave is 15% higher as compared to APE if parents opt for working part-time during the leave. Evidence shows that the number of families opting for PAJE has increased by 20% in 2004 as compared to those opting for APE in 2003, and this is mainly due to the home care allowance. In particular, the recipients of the home care allowance on a part-time basis increased by 58% in 2008 as compared to 2003, when the APE regime was still in force. In June 2008, four years and half after the introduction of the PAJE, 36.7% of the home care allowance recipients was working part-time (Muriel 2008). Moreover, they are for the majority women who show continuous careers, either stable or ascending (respectively 50% and 36%) (Boyer and Céroux 2012). Interestingly, half of the people making use of the CLCA make recourse to the complementary childcare benefit (CMG – complément de mode de garde – benefit given to parents hiring either a nanny at their home of residence or a maternal assistance) for the days of the week when they are working (Buffier-Morel 2007).
In the end, all these measures share a basic trend: making childcare a variable of adjustment of the family-work relationship, where the concrete modalities of work-life balance realization are determined by decisions made by individual families (Hantrais and Letablier 1996; Daune-Richard 2005).

These trends can be seen as a clear example of the combination of family and employment policy typical of the French social policy approach, to such an extent that some have argued that since the beginnings of the 1990s family policy has become dominated by employment policy (Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007). In fact, if on one hand the result was the emergence of a great diversity of care arrangements, on the other hand the aims of these measures were also to limit the extension of informal employment in the social care sector, create service jobs, and to reduce the labour supply of women with children in order to reduce the high female unemployment rate (Fagnani and Letablier 2005; Daune-Richard 2005; Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007).

In this sense, the integration of part-time work in social policies targeted at families appears contradictory, and to some extent inconsistent with both. In its representations as a women friendly employment form, part-time work embodies the conflictual tendency that has traditionally characterized the interaction between the labour market and the family. Actually, we have seen that its development took place against the background of the 1980s’ employment crisis and the shortage of full-time jobs as a means of redistributing work in such a way as to reduce unemployment. In other words, part-time was essentially used as a response to the need for both functional and numerical flexibility (Daune-Richard 1998). In such context of long-term employment crisis part-time work began to develop among French women, who until that moment used to enter employment on the basis of the male full-time model. Moreover, the growth of part-time jobs has been facilitated also by measures aimed at promoting employment in the household sector. These measures were adopted with the explicit aim of increasing women’s economic activity rates and promoting gender equality in the labour market, by facilitating women’s access to higher level occupations, fighting unemployment, and promoting a better work-life balance. Basically, these measures contributed to the development of a significant number of flexible, low paid part-time jobs for low qualified women (Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007). Conversely, the essential question of gendered construction of time was not addressed\(^\text{46}\). For example, this is the case of general measures on the organization of working time that have tended to be based on discriminatory

\(^{46}\) Essentially, the notion of “free choice” relies on the influence of family relationship in which economic autonomy tends to be male province and domestic responsibility domestic province (Daune-Richard 2005).
principles: for men such measures used to involve wage compensation, while for women they involve the introduction of jobs with shorter hours and lower pay (Daune-Richard 1998). These trends increased the structural tension between a focus on the family, according to which the institution of family is promoted and defended, and a focus on equality, in the sense of recognizing women as individuals with rights on their own (Daune-Richard 1998; Daune-Richard 2005). In the end, public policies reflect this ambivalence and incorporates contradictory logics when they take into account at the same time, but through a disarticulated approach, the notions of free-choice and reconciliation of family life and paid work, either for the sake of equality or for the sake of family.

By encouraging the development of part-time work and changing the forms of state funding for childcare, French policy makers transformed the conditions under which women, with or without children, enter the labour market. The development of part-time work has made it easier for French women to enter and to remain in the labour market, but at the same time it has widened of inequalities, especially among women. Actually, since childcare has been made easier for families, and French women present a longstanding tradition of labour market activity, the level of women’s labour market participation (i.e. on a full-time or on a part-time basis) and the quality of the jobs they get reflect a polarization of the female labour force. Basically, on one hand the French government designed a legislative framework aimed at developing part-time work as a form of job sharing, while on the other the political discourse emphasized part-time work as a possible arrangement for women, enabling them to make work compatible with domestic chores and to secure their financial independence. That means that economic objectives based on flexibility needs pursued through legislative measures, and social objectives based on the adjustment of the family-work relationship, have been badly conjugated. The result has been in a reinforcement of the familialistic/individualistic ambivalence that characterizes the French policy approach, as also an increased precariousness in female employment. In the end, it can be said that the global institutional framework seems to reflect the lack of consensus on part-time employment, and that has contributed in interpreting the rise in part-time work as mainly part of the broader trend towards the casualization of employment under the label of increasing flexibility.
5.3 **SOCIAL ACTORS’ PRACTICES**

5.3.1 **Companies’ and Social partners’ practices**

5.3.1.1 **Employee-friendly practices in French companies: a matter of ambiguity?**

It is usually said that part-time work in France has been promoted in order to respond to the requests of employers who wanted the possibility to manage the labour force in a more flexible way, mainly for employment sharing reasons (Bel 2008). Accordingly, if on one hand part-time work is considered as the main instrument for providing a solution to the work-life balance dilemma, on the other hand it is used by companies as a way to acquire flexibility from the labour force, thus ignoring the consequences on the private life of their employees (Ngan 2008).

As for the role played by companies in the development of part-time work, this role actually corresponds to a logic of “flexibility” that is related to a need of increased competition in the market. In particular, it is related to a need of realizing atypical working time arrangements and additional working hours (Bué and Roux-Rossi 2002). In this sense, financial incentives provided by the state have had some influences, but determinant have been as well the facts that employers do not have to invest in training for part-time jobs position, and that they can hire part-time workers on fixed-term contracts. In general, employers are not willing to invest in qualifying professional training of employees wishing to occupy a position of responsibility under a part-time employment regime. Nevertheless, promotions are accorded primarily to employees who enroll in a training course underneath employers’ initiative, and mainly to those who wish to occupy a position of responsibility under a full-time employment regime. The part-time work to part-time work mobility in an ascending sense it is usually not contemplated as a possible option. If opportunities of professional mobility would be offered to part-time workers within a part-time work regime, these latter would have the possibility to provide the enterprise with additional productivity, having at the same time access to career opportunities that would not qualify anymore them as precarious workers (Ngan 2008).

Moreover, employers tend to propose part-time work mainly to women on the basis of the idea that this employment form is more adapted to them because of the facilities it provides in terms of work-life balance. This may become problematic if we consider that an important part of part-time jobs positions are proposed to women in the context of flexible strategies for
the management of the workforce, since in this case part-time work is more likely to be subject to atypical working hours in some sectors (Méda 2005).

As for the consequences on employees work-life balance, it is interesting to cite a study from Antan (2003), analyzing the consequences of RTT ("reduction du temps de travail") on the work-life balance of fifteen women active as trade unionists, aged between thirty and fifty years old, presenting different family situations, working in different sectors of activity either in public or private companies. For our purposes, it is interesting to focus on two types of RTT measures, which are annualization of working time (as a form of vertical part-time) and switch to horizontal part-time, and the modalities through which they are arranged. The common point shared by these RTT measures is that the type of consequences they trigger with regard to women’s work-life balance depends on whether each of them is the result of a process of concertation between the employer and the employee, or whether working time organization has been imposed according to a top-bottom scheme.

In the case of annualization of working time, this latter is very often decided by the employer and organized according to companies’ flexibility requirements. That means that serious and complicated consequences have to be faced by the employees, mainly because of the fact that working schedule becomes less stable, and that employees are informed within very short delays at this regard, which makes for them very difficult to organize their private life in a comfortable way (this is especially problematic in presence of young children, if grandparents are not available to support the working mother, to find a solution may be costly – if a babysitter has to hired, for instance – and stressful given the short delay). There are obviously differences between sectors, since it is understandable that with respect to some activities the production is unpredictable and subject to fluctuations, but sometimes even in these sectors and with reference to activities that in general are not confronted to an unstable demand (in the specific case cited in the study under review, it is about a furniture seller), the management tend to recourse to the motivation of exceptional circumstance to justify their extremely flexible use of annualized working time. Accordingly, such a strategy cannot be defined as employee-friendly, since for some women, especially the low qualified, the introduction of RTT measures implies an increase in flexibility and hence the worsening of working conditions.

Another problem refers to the intensification of working time and of workload in general that cannot be linked in an exclusive way to the introduction of RTT, but that in any case emerged in concomitance of the RTT introduction. Again, if RTT in the form of working time
annualization allows workers to have some half-days free\textsuperscript{47}, the intensification of working time entitles consequences on the work-life balance of mothers on a daily basis, especially when working days become too long. This is especially the case of the large distribution sector, as it is confirmed by interviews carried out in the frame of the study under review in some real estate agency and furniture sellers. In particular, such interviews underlie how these mechanisms of working time modulation and flexible organization constitutes in reality vectors of promotion of irregulars working time regime, since they generates consequences on the entire work-life organization in the moment when also free days become the object of these mechanisms (for example, it becomes complicated to obtain two days-off in a row, and almost impossible to have week-end days included in that option, especially in the case of large distribution sector).

In any case, whatever the RTT strategy chosen or adopted, workload remains intense, and it is not adapted to the amount of hours worked (that is, when an employee obtain some free days, for example in concomitance of “\textit{vacances scolaires}” (school holidays) she does not obtain an adaptation of her workload, which means that she has to work more and longer during the days preceding the holidays, with the obvious negative consequences on her work-life balance).

When it comes to the horizontal part-time work as a RTT strategy, it is noticed that the RTT introduction does not really favor part-time work solutions. In some cases, part-time work is demanded by employees because the employer refused to provide RTT in the form of an additional free-day each week (typically Wednesdays). Moreover, where part-time work is a shift-make choice (almost imposed by the absence of real choice), the employees who opt for such solution are asked to accept a system of modulation of working time, that is a flexibilization of their working schedule and organization of working hours. Emblematic in this sense is the case of a company in the retail trade sector, where workers have been denied the opportunity to have a free day a week under a full-time RTT option and have consequently been obliged to work 5 days a week even under a part-time RTT option (which was the solution chosen by workers who could not adopt the first option). In this way employees could not in any case achieve the desired work-life balance.

In conclusion, whatever the adopted RTT strategy, where RTT modalities have been imposed by the employer, the employees are not satisfied about their work-life balance and in some

\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, they cannot always obtain to set free the half-days they choose, like Wednesdays for example. Actually, as it is well known in France, in some case it may be important for working mothers to benefit of a half day free on Wednesday, since children do not go to school on that day, but the employer may not necessarily approve that choice.
cases they remark a worsening in the conciliation between work and family life. On the contrary, those employees who have had the possibility to discuss the RTT modalities with their employers are more satisfied about their work-life balance. Moreover, companies referring to a semi-public regime offer more opportunities to employees to negotiate their RTT option with the management as compared to companies referring to a private regime.

The survey *Familles et employeurs* (Families and employers) conducted by INSEE and INED in 2005, showed that the 78% of employers who declares to be attentive to the work-life balance issues faced by their employees tends to do so for either social (motivating employees and taking care of their well-being) or economic reasons (limiting the turnover, keeping qualified employees in the company, increasing productivity).

As for social reasons, according to this survey, small companies with less than 20 employees present a part-time employment policy particularly favorable to employees’ work-life balance, which means that in 74% of cases family responsibilities play an important role in the attribution of part-time work. Such a proportion increases when the proportion of women working part-time within a given company is already high. Consequently, part-time work is developed in the service sector, and in the public sector (especially in health care – 90%). Additionally, part-time work accorded for family reasons is quite common also in the automobile industry, given the existence of collective agreements on working time arrangements in big companies belonging to such domain of production. In the same way, the proportion of employers indicating that family responsibilities represent a very incident factor in the decision about whether according or not part-time work to employees is higher where there are trade unions in the company, as well as where the employer charged of such decision is a woman (Ulrich 2009).

As for economic reasons, evidence from the same survey indicates that 47% of employers of up to twenty employees declare that there are jobs positions that are opened on a part-time basis for organizational reasons in their companies. Such proportion is even higher in companies which activities do not stop on week-end days (Saturdays and Sundays – 61%) and in companies where the production flow is subject to several fluctuations on a weekly basis (58%). This is especially the case of trade, care services, health and social work related activities. Accordingly, employers’ practices with regard to working time articulation in a employee-friendly perspective can be heavily affected by organizational limitations and production requirements (Ulrich 2009).

On the whole, evidence shows that about half of French companies declare that they take into account the family situation and family constraints of their employees in the process of work
organization and settlement of working time arrangements (Lefèvre et al. 2007). Likewise, almost the totality of employers declare to apply employee friendly work arrangements, but employers who approve arrangements which are modulated on the basis of crèche or school hours are rare. Furthermore, it is confirmed that differences persist between public and private companies: when an employee’s child is sick, most public companies offers care leave, compared to only 44% in private companies (Adema and Thevénon 2008).

The diversity, and to some extent the ambiguity, in employee-friendly practices French model of human resources management with respect to employers’ practices for the management of employees work-life balance has been defined as informal, since it relies on implicit and individualized arrangement (Ollier-Malaterre 2008). French employers are considered less legitimated to interfere in employees’ family life, which is usually considered as being a private domain where only public policy targeted at family can intervene. Another reason refers to an imprecise perception of the economic impact of family-friendly practices, which are more perceived as means of social action used by companies committees and trade unionists, and hence are not seen as appropriate management techniques. Accordingly, the proportion of companies proposing different forms of working time flexibility to cope with the work/family dilemma are limited: 36% of French employers propose flexible working hours to a part of their employees, and 40% propose part-time work (intended as “temps partiel choisi”) (Eydoux and Létablier 2008).

All this happen despite the fact that the reforms about working time reduction and arrangements introduced at the beginning of the 2000s aimed also at favouring the emergence of companies and employers as a new actor in the context of family policy making and equal opportunities objectives. Nevertheless, it seems that individuals’ well-being in terms of work-life balance and professional realization that derive from this latter have not yet become a priority in the organization of economic activities. Actually, employers still do not necessarily take into account the needs of workers with family responsibilities, and in this sense most of companies still rely on the idea that what concerns the private sphere is under the unique responsibility of employees themselves and has to be kept separated from what concerns the production process. This confirms the fact that employers still do not see the economic advantages that are brought in by a family-friendly management policy (Bel 2008).
5.3.1.2 A central, but limited role for collective bargaining

As a consequence of employers’ practices, collective bargaining does not find any room for bringing on the table the issue of the family/work antagonism and related problems, such as equality in the workplace and wage discrimination. Yet, once more collective bargaining is designed by the law as a privileged instrument to treat these problems: the law known as “loi Génisson”, promoted in 2001, introduced an obligation to negotiate on gender equality at work every year at plant level, and every three years at branch level; the law of 23 March 2006 defined the obligation of negotiation on measures necessary in order to reduce and eliminate the gender wage gap. Both laws testify the search for a better work-life balance for employees. However, gender equality and work/family articulation are still approached as secondary themes in collective agreements: in 2006, 24 thousands collective agreements were signed, and only 401 (1.6%) of them contained a reference to this issue (Bel 2008).

With regard to part-time work, collective bargaining is not really active on the subject of making part-time work a choice available to workers to manage their work/life articulation process (Méda 2005). It has been pointed out that current procedures aimed at introducing working time reduction under the RTT framework within firms, usually begin with individual targeted measures to obtain work sharing, while according to legislation priority should be given to the realization of collective reductions that should be arranged on the basis of egalitarian principles (Bué et al. 2004).

A recent report from the General Directorate for social affairs analyzed 136 collective agreements on the settlement of working time arrangements, with the objective of evaluating the extent to which the articulation of working time and different ways of organizing it are taken into account in such a way to favour equal access to professional and family responsibilities of men and women. It showed that in only 14% of the analyzed agreements part-time work is proposed through modalities that do not imply severe disadvantages in terms of reversibility of employment status (i.e. transition to full-time work) and atypical working hours (i.e. in which case employees are given notice within a sufficiently long delay of two or three months). In the rest of cases, part-time work is proposed as a means for increasing flexibility, mainly through adjustment of working hours within very short delay, in order to better respond to market constraints and keen competition. Many of these agreements evoke the economic crisis as a reason for introducing part-time work through these

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48 Replacing the lois Roudy of 1983 which was proved to be inefficient.
modalities, saying that it is asked to employees to adapt themselves to atypical hours and short delays because in this way employment levels can be preserved and dismissal can be avoided.

Broadly speaking, agreements aimed at the promoting part-time work are very rare. During her audition at the Delegation for Women’s rights, the representative of the CFDT\(^{50}\) signaled the existence of two collective agreements aimed at making part-time work an advantage for both the employees and the employers. The first one was an agreements signed in 2008 in the food trade sector and trade unions, where they take the engagement of improving the management of working time arrangements, organizing multi-activity in order to facilitate the construction of full-time jobs positions and limiting the fragmentation of working time over the day and the week. The second one was signed in 2004 in the large distribution sector for the auto-organization of working hours, where employees with different family and individual profiles communicate to the responsible of their section their own availabilities in terms of working time modulation and day off on the basis of their personal preferences.

Out of these rare cases, collective bargaining tend to neglect part-time work issues, such as making part-time work compatible with responsibility positions and favouring family-friendly form of working arrangements (Méda 2005). On the contrary, by avoiding to treat these issues they fall into the trap of targeting this employment form to only some categories of workers with poor working conditions, therefore encouraging the persistence of a sexual division of labour.

In this sense, the consequences on women working part-time in terms of recognition do not necessarily entirely depends on whether part-time work has been chosen or imposed, but they are more often determined by the fact that employers tend to perceive it as an indicator of a limited involvement in a professional career, plus the fact that trade unions and employees representative in general do not undertake real actions against that, reinforcing in this way the social perception of women’s work as an element of secondary importance both in society and in women’s life (Méda 2005). This is strictly related to the construction of women’s work as a societal object, which has been analyzed as well as influenced by the sociological debate on this theme. These elements will be treated in the next sections.

\(^{50}\) « Confédération française démocratique du travail » (French Democratic Confederation of Work), a interprofessional confederations of trade unions representing employees.
5.3.3 Women’s practices: trapped in a dualistic winner-looser game?

The feminization of the French labour market has developed in a context where the main reference remained the concept of full-time employment, while unemployment and the spread of atypical forms of employment were both also quite important. Despite a tendency to homogenization of employment behaviors between men and women, the relationship between women and employment has maintained a certain specificity which is related to inequalities in the normative and practical division of roles and tasks between men and women inside and outside the labour market. Part-time work has become an emblematic element in this sense. Actually, since the 80s and the 90s, employment sharing has been realized mainly through part-time work, but the produced result is that part-time work is still nowadays an essentially feminized employment form, in practical terms as well as in terms of social acceptance. This is due to the fact that the logic underlying the employment sharing strategies elaborated during those years encompasses a precise gendered vision of time devoted to work and outside work activities. Accordingly, the feminization of part-time work is judged problematic not just in terms of employment sharing, but also in terms of employment status and social relations between sexes. In this way, part-time work can be seen as the symbol of the absence of homogeneous mechanisms that allow for reductions in working time according to individual constraints, and representing the social dynamics that differently regulate such reductions according to sex, contributing to the unequal division of social and economic resources between men and women (Bué et al. 2004).

5.3.2.1 Two patterns of part-time work

Nevertheless, before being an element of differentiation between men and women, part-time work is a source of differentiation among women themselves (Milewski et al. 2005). There are several reasons behind different configurations of part-time work uses, however the most determinant is usually identified in what can be defined the choice/constrain factor. In other words, the influence of spells of part-time work on women’s career is different according to

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51 From the post-war period until the end of the 70s, a large proportion of female labour-force in France was still involved in a self-employed capacity in agricultural and family-run small business. The fact that work and family have never really been framed in conflictual terms comes from such historical experience of combining the two spheres in that specific societal context. This has for sure influenced the ways in which women, and households, have experienced the transition to paid work in the following decades (Le Feuvre and Lemarchant 2007).
whether part-time work results from an employee’s choice\footnote{In this case part-time jobs are more likely to be associated to a low-qualified job, instable, fixed-term, and with unusual working hours and schedule.} or it is imposed by the employer\footnote{In this case part-time work involves more likely longer working hours, it concerns medium-high qualified women, and it represents a transitory stage of a woman’s life cycle.} (Galtier 1999a). Thus, even if part-time workers represent a heterogeneous population, this juxtaposition between constraint and choice contributes in creating some point of references for evaluating part-time work in France.

On the whole, the sociological literature and evidence on this topic have confirmed such a dualistic image of part-time work. Essentially, two patterns of part-time work are often recalled: the “\textit{temps partiel choisi}” or “\textit{travail à temps réduit}”, which mainly consists in an individual and voluntary reduction in working time; the “\textit{temps partiel constraint}” or “\textit{emploi partiel}”, that is a job position open on a part-time basis by the employers (Galtier 1999; Bué 2002; Maruani 2003). Accordingly, the first modality is associated to choice, while the second one refers to constraint.

Basically, part-time work as a choice refers to employees with an open-ended contract after switching from full-time to part-time, and to employees who are working part-time for family reasons. This patterns responding to an individual logic, has two main components: part-time work chosen for childcare reasons, and part-time work chosen for “other” reasons (Bué 2002). As a result, women aged between 30 and 40 years old with children or family responsibilities, employed on open-end contract, who wish to have more time to care for their children or family are the most concerned\footnote{From the age of 55, this kind of part-time work becomes quite frequent among men as well, and on the basis of this fact it can be supposed that it is used as a means of realizing progressive retirement (Briant and Loué 2001).}. In particular, reduction in working hours following employee’s request is most popular among female employees working in the civil service or in large corporations. Working 80\% of the full work load is often a way for working mothers to stay at home on Wednesdays, when children do not attend school (Lurol 2001).

By contrast, part-time work as a constraint concerns those workers who want to work more but do not have the possibility to do so. Among these latter it is possible to make an additional distinction among those workers who would like to find a full-time job but do not succeed in their research, and those who would like to work more while remaining under a part-time work regime (Galtier 1999). Most of the time, this type of part-time work respond to managerial logics who seek to increase flexibility and competitiveness through working time arrangements that can be easily modified. In France, most of the workers in this situation are working part-time because they have been hired directly on a part-time basis. This situation is
particularly frequent in the service sector and sales, particularly in the large distribution branch, where part-time work concerns mainly low qualified jobs (cashiers, cleaning ladies, receptionists, etc.) (Bué 2002). In manufacturing industry, it concerns more manual workers and employees. Young people, of either sexes, are the most represented among the group of workers involved in this type of part-time work, since from the 90s onwards they have become the target of employers wishing to open part-time job positions (Lurol 2001).

5.3.2.2 Choice and constraint in women’s practices

The identification of these two patterns of part-time work is useful for studying such a heterogeneous phenomenon, but it is interesting to notice that the articulation of such patterns in women’s practices can be very heterogeneous as well. This is due both to the fact that being employed part-time on a voluntary basis rather than an involuntary one is likely to depend on individual characteristics, and to the fact that the role of part-time work in women’s employment trajectories depends on individual characteristics as well. Analyses on the data provided by the Familles and Employeurs (Families and Employers) survey have confirmed that women working part-time present different characteristics as compared to women working full-time. The survey have revealed women working part-time are heterogeneous in terms of socio-demographic features, which vary according to the type of employment trajectories (Rivaud and Ulrich 2007; Ulrich 2009).

Basically, thanks to such a survey it was possible to analyze the employment trajectories over twenty-five years of women belonging to the 1955-1959 cohorts. To show that three main trajectories can be identified according to importance of part-time work. The first type of trajectory can be defined as ‘full-time: dominant; part-time work: transitory and almost totally reversible’. It encompasses women who have experienced part-time work in a limited way, mainly at young ages around the beginning of their career, and then in an increasingly way during the central years of their adulthood, but then the majority of them have switched back to full-time work making in this way part-time work playing a residual role in their career. This trajectory is associated with the modality of part-time work as a choice. The second type of trajectory can be described as alternated between inactivity/unemployment and part-time work. In this case, part-time work represents either the way to get access to the labour market after long periods of inactivity, or the way to get out of unemployment after the search for a full-time job revealed to be unsuccessful. This trajectory is associated with part-time work as a constraint. The third trajectory is associated with part-time work as main employment status.
Before ending up with part-time work, women who belong to this group have previously experienced full-time work, parental leave and then inactivity. Hence, part-time work is mainly a stationary situation that represents the biggest part of the employment path of these women. In this case, there is not a clear association with one of the two modalities of part-time work, and the choice/constraint factor is much more linked with the stable/instable character that depicts the transitions in and out part-time work.

The type of the followed trajectory and the role of part-time work within it are very much linked to the number of children a woman has. Usually, women who work part-time are more often in a partnership and have children. The *Enquête Emploi* 2005 from INSEE (2005 Labour Force Survey), shows that almost three quarters of part-time workers cohabitate with their partner who has a full-time job and raise young kids. Modifications in women’s activity profiles in general, and working time reductions in particular, become increasingly important as the number of dependent children increases (Pailhé and Solaz 2006). In fact, women with three children or more are more likely to be classified in the second type or trajectories, women with two children present more frequently trajectories that refer to the third type, while women who have one or no children are not very affected by a process of adaptation of their employment status and are most of the time affiliated to the first type of trajectory.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family situation</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>19,1</td>
<td>20,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple without children</td>
<td>24,5</td>
<td>25,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with children</td>
<td>35,3</td>
<td>35,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couple with one child</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with two children</td>
<td>38,2</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with three children</td>
<td>47,9</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Despite the fact that along different cohorts of women inactivity has encountered a significant reduction thanks also to the role played by part-time work, this latter may present some forms of disadvantages for those women using it as a bridge between the family sphere and the
employment sphere. Actually, the APE extension in 1993 to families with two children has favoured the exit from the labour market of mothers, mainly the youngest one and the less qualified, who tended to go back to work after their second child turned three years old through part-time work with marginal working hours and precarious working conditions (Rivaud and Ulrich 2007; Algava et al. 2005). In fact, until 2003 the APE had an attractive effect especially on women with low salaries and poor working conditions, who then experienced difficulties in returning on the labour market after an interruption of their activity of three years. Actually, the way women receiving the APE allocation try to figure out their return to activity depends on the conditions which previously brought them to the interruption of activity. Most of the time less qualified women do not wish to go back to work and decide to do so only in case of financial need. That is also the reason why they end up in part-time jobs, as the consequence of some sort of discouragement effect between precarious job positions and familialistic policy measures (Méda 2005). In this sense, it must be underlined that from 2004 onwards women receiving the PAJE on a part-time basis thanks to the complementary free activity choice benefit declare that the duration of the benefit is too short, and it should be extended from six months to one year. Moreover, they consider as too strict the conditions defining the access to the benefit (Buffier-Morel 2007). This indicates the importance of the need to obtain working time reduction at favourable conditions for women with childcare responsibilities.

In view of that, the level of qualification and occupational status play some role as well, since educational and professional resources seem to be the first determinants of balancing strategies between private lives and employment careers. Actually, the demand for part-time work, which has been influenced by the financial incentives introduced during the 90s (see first paragraph in this chapter), has in some cases favoured the recourse to part-time work for low qualified job positions, especially in the service sector, and positions who are usually considered marginal with respect to the occupational hierarchy. Less educated women are more exposed to this kind of job positions, and show to have less power in the management of their career since they are more likely to be represented by the second type employment trajectory, where part-time work is often a constrained choice after a period of inactivity or

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55 See the paragraph on social policy approach for additional information about that.
56 The right to perceive the CLCA under the PAJE regime is accorded to women having worked for at least two years during the two years preceding the birth of the first child, two years during the four years preceding the birth of the second child, and two years during the five years preceding the birth of the third child.
unemployment. Among more educated women, their professional profile in terms of occupational status ("statut socio-professionnel") represents an important factor in the determination of working conditions associated to part-time work and to the possibilities to get a positive work-life balance through it. In the case of professionals ("cadres"), part-time work corresponds most of the times to a worker’s choice taken in the framework of RTT measures (working time reductions measures), representing hence a transitional phase in their career (which usually the type of the first trajectory described above), and usually presents relatively good working conditions. Nonetheless, career possibilities of professionals may be negatively affected by spells of part-time work, particularly because of job related time pressures. In this sense, even when part-time work represents a transitional phases in a career, it risks to penalize it, especially in terms of career development opportunities and salary. Actually, 75% of the wage gap depends on job structure, where the most important factor is work duration (total number of working hours). This form of penalization that is likely to negatively affect higher and lower professional careers is related to the idea, largely disseminated among French companies, that presence is equal to results, according to which shorter working hours implies lower productivity levels not compatible with responsibility positions (Bel 2008). As a consequence, in order not to be penalized, professionals women working part-time develop new kinds of career strategies based on horizontal rather than vertical mobility, that is they seek to obtaining jobs positions requiring increasingly high expertise instead of looking for hierarchical ascension. In this sense, part-time work as a RTT measure helps those women in managing their family constraints and in preserving good chances to pursue a satisfactory career (Buffier-Morel 2007).

In general, the use of part-time work in the frame of RTT measures for women is much related to parental responsibilities and family constraints, while the same does not happen to men (Defalvard et al. 2005). In this case, the successful use of part-time work depends on the fact that women enjoy more freedom in the management of their RTT options, while men are more constrained. In particular, women prefer to work on alternated weeks and having free Wednesdays, or at least half a day, while men prefer to maintain a 5 days working week, while slightly reducing their daily working time on a daily basis. A higher degree of freedom

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57 Obviously, this is also related to the fact that less educated women leave more often the labour market than higher educated women whom presence in the labour market present a more constant profile, mainly on a full-time basis.

58 Most of women represented in this case are women working in the public function, where choice and reversibility usually characterize part-time work. In 2005, where the proportion of women occupying higher and lower professional positions on a part-time basis in the public section is 18% as compared to 2% of men. In private companies, the same proportion accounts respectively to 13% and 1.8%. On the whole, almost 10% of higher and lower professional women work part-time, that is one out of five (Insee 2007b).
in the management of individual working time reductions is probably due to the fact that women are less involved in responsibility positions, and are more frequently on administrative positions or secretarial work, while men occupy more often high responsibility positions (Antan 2003).

Nevertheless, having a high position at work is not the only factor influencing the use of RTT measures, since these latter are likely to be related also to the fact that men and women have a different conception of time and a different relationship to time management. If women tend to incorporate professional time and familial time in a whole, men tend to dissociate the two spheres of work and family (Defalvard et al. 2005). This is also due to gender stereotypes about women’s and men’s role at work and at home, as it is shown by the recourse to part-time work that men do in professional contexts that aim at diversifying part-time work patterns and propose innovative solutions in this sense. The report released during spring 2012 by the Observatory of Parenthood in Company context (“Observatoire de la Parentalité en Entreprise”) points out how men look more favorably to part-time work when it is possible to have recourse to it according to working time schedules that are not traditionally considered as reserved to mothers and women in general (i.e. free Wednesdays, since children in France do not go to school on Wednesday) (Ballarin 2012). For example, men working at AREVA, an environmental company settled in Lyon, show to be more inclined to switch to part-time work since they are offered the opportunity to take it on an annualized basis. Essentially, they can choose to work the four fifth of the normal amount of working hours and to cumulate in this way a certain amount of days off, which are often used to have vacations during school holidays in order to spend more time with their children. On the contrary, men working at L’Oreal do not seem to appreciate the initiative introduced by their management and called “the Wednesday of fathers and mothers” (“Le mercredi pères et mères de famille”), which consists in offering to employees with children aged less than twelve years old the opportunity to take part-time work in the form of one to four Wednesday off per month. Basically, women represent the 98% of the employees having recourse to such an option.

Then, it can be argued that different modalities of part-time work can be related to different types of involvement in the labour market and to mainly women’s attachment to paid work. The stream of research carried out from the 80s onwards shows that when it comes to time use

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59 In point of fact, women employed in administrative positions, assistants, or secretaries (clerks) are the most satisfied about their work-life balance.

60 Actually, these women tend to consider their time as global, that is they have an activity pattern that can be defined as global, where work in the house and work in the market represent the different components of such a pattern, and stay in a relationship of interdependence. In other words, domestic work and professional work stay in a relationship of mutual influence (Lurol 2001).
issues, women wish to set free the biggest amount of time in order to accomplish housework and domestic/familial work in general. Part-time would correspond to such logic of activity: for French women it seems to represent more a makeshift solution that they accept temporarily with the intention of modifying it later on. In fact, the typical employment pattern of French women is based on the norm of full-time work, and this has led to the widespread view that part-time work is typically involuntarily in France. Conversely, evidence shows that a switch to part-time work generally occurs at the same time of a change of employment rather than during an ongoing employment contract, which suggests that labour-market strategies precede family events (Ulrich 2009). Actually, involuntary part-time work in France, usually treated as one with underemployment (“sous-emploi”) as we have already seen, accounts for a minority of part-time workforce (both male and female), even if it tended to growing steadily over the years. Moreover, it has been shown that working full-time and being outside the labour market are the employment status that present the greater stability over women’s careers (Ulrich 2009). Yet, involuntary part-time work in France was a much more important problem as compared to other countries (Lurol 2001). As a consequence of public attitudes and policy towards part-time work, it can be said that this latter has for sure contributed to work-sharing between men and women, but at the risk of forcing women into disadvantaged jobs. As such, it might be seen more as a form of underemployment rather than as a new strategy of articulation of the work/family dilemma.

To conclude, the relationship between women and part-time work as it emerges from the analysis of women’s part-time employment practices is interrelated with the fact that they are affected by employers attitudes and practices, as well as by social paradigms that concerns the perception of women’s traditional roles as mothers and home keepers. These latter aspects are going to be analyzed in the following paragraph through the lens of the French sociological debate on part-time work.

5.4 The role of the sociological debate on part-time work and its influences

5.4.1 Part-time work as a “specifically female” concept of work

In 2011 the Delegation for Women’s right delivered a report to the National Assembly which title « Une urgence sociale : réduire le travail à temps partiel, source de précarité pour les
femmes et facteurs aggravant des inégalités professionnelles » (“A social urgency: reducing part-time employment, source of precariousness for women and worsening factor of professional inequalities”) can be considered emblematic with respect to the social and sociological debate on part-time work of the last thirty years. In fact, in this whole period research tended to be polarized by the studying of the social effects of women’s part-time work as a form of underemployment and source of precariousness. Basically, the report of 2011, for the elaboration of which the Delegation for Women’s right have benefited from presentations of the most influent scholars and feminist, completely reaffirms such position against part-time on the basis of the same arguments. Hence, we are going to retrace the evolution of the sociological debate on part-time work in order to understand how it reached its current state.

Since the 80s, part-time work becomes an object of sociological study as a consequence of the growing incidence of atypical and flexible forms of employment. Scholars begins to notice that part-time work represents a way of acquiring flexibility from the labour force in a way that produces unequal distribution of part-time jobs among different social categories. Likewise, the gender perspective is immediately adopted to analyze part-time work dynamics, and various researches immediately point out the strong connection between part-time work and female activity (Kergoat 1984, Maruani 1985). Particular attention is paid to the negative effects of part-time work on female employment and women’s career, underlying the fact that there has been a kind of adjustment and increasing correlation between the gendered concentration of jobs in some sectors and occupations and the growth of part-time work (Maruani and Nicole-Drancourt 1989; Maruani 1995; Silvera 1995). The main point of the discourse is that part-time work development has contributed in reinforcing and maintaining gender segregation in employment on occupational basis.

Another argument consists in showing that gendered social relations, as they are crystalized in part-time employment patterns, contribute in generating social precariousness. For example, employment policies that aim at fighting unemployment through flexibility and work sharing contribute in accentuating employees’ poverty when the focus on these policies is on part-time jobs creation. In fact, management’s practices towards part-time work have tended to depreciate the part-time workforce, with regard to qualification, wage levels, employment stability, career advancement etc. etc. (Galtier 1999a). In this sense, many researches have investigated the link between part-time work and women’s poverty levels, and have

61 For example, with respect to the fact that differences between men and women in terms of wage levels are accentuated.
concluded to the emergence of a new social category who can be assimilated to the so called “working poor” (Angeloff 1999, Meulders 1998; Galtier 1999). According to the same logic, part-time work is seen as the answer of employers and institutions to the problem of childcare services availability (since, if there is part-time work, there is no need to invest in childcare services). The silent and indirect support of social policies to the promotion of part-time work is read as a way of encouraging young mothers, who use to be particularly exposed to flexibility and to atypical forms of employment, to leave the labour market in order to devote to childbearing (Afsa 1996, Battagliola 1999, Fagnani 2000).

In general, scholars and commentator come up with the same conclusion: part-time work as it is primarily proposed to women, with reference to the possibility of getting a better work-life balance, is a gendered employment form. Moreover, it is remarked how part-time work does not simply modify working time arrangements, especially in some low qualified and high feminized sectors, but it involves as well changes in the perception of employment status and employment value. The main argument is that, by creating (favouring) some domains (sectors, zones) and forms of employment reserved to women, it is a “specifically female” concept of work (vision, perception, association) that is created. Accordingly, part-time work becomes for them the emblematic figure of the sexual division of labour inside and outside the labour market, as well as the main source of under-employment and working poor (Bel 2008).

Likewise, they insist on the fact that most of the time part-time work is not by choice, but it is a constraint, and in this sense represents a discriminating factor that increase women’s difficulties on the labour market. Accordingly, it is strongly claimed that part-time work has not developed in correspondence of women’s choice and women’s preferences, but because part-time jobs have been mainly created in highly feminized sectors and branches of activity (Maruani 2003). Then, the choice/constraint discourse becomes central, and characterizes the further development of the debate on this issue. In particular, they claim that not only part-time work can represent a choice or a constraint, but according to some part-time work has been built as a social category that incorporates the idea of choice, since it has been promoted as the ideal employment form for women (Maruani 2003). In this way women suffer not only economic or domestic pressures to undertake part-time work, but also ideological pressures. At that point, the research approach changes from women’s relation to part-time work, to the analysis of part-time work as a social construction. Accordingly, the development of part-time work is read in the light of twofold social logic (which have been already introduced in the

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62 In support of this idea it is underlined the fact that for the most, women integration in the labour market started in the 60s on the basis of full-time work.
previous paragraphs): voluntary and reversible part-time work, or “travail à temps réduit”, which is judged to represent a minority of cases; constrained part-time work or “emploi partiel”, which is considered a widespread situation where part-time work is introduced by the employer’s initiative in order to market logics rather than to employees’ needs. In this context, it is argued that it is useless to investigate women’s aspiration given the fact that the initiative on part-time work comes massively from employers as part of a process of diversification of employment forms and flexibilization of the labour market. Consequently, to truly understand the important feminization levels of this employment form, scholars affirm the necessity to take into account the mechanism of social norms that assign part-time work to women (Maruani 2004).

In the end, it can be said that so far the sociological debate on part-time work has tended to be polarized towards the studying of the social effects of women’s part-time work, mainly underemployment and precariousness. Its main argument consists in representing part-time work as a form of employment which is socially constructed as feminized because it is a clear example of social segmentation of employment modes based on gender.

If the negative effects that are sometime triggered by part-time work are undeniable, as well as its gendered character, it must be underlined that the evolution of the debate on part-time work has produced a total rejection of the idea of part-time work as a form of individual time management. On the contrary, it has favoured the depiction of part-time work as a constrained and imposed form of employment producing dehumanizing effects in a context of high work flexibilization and strong expansion of the service industry. Accordingly, a reflection on the representation of the concept of part-time work for women and their identity seems necessary in order to underline the theoretical distance between the sociological category or concept that is used in research, the representation that women themselves and society have of this concept, and the complexity that characterize part-time work in the social reality.

5.4.2 Rejecting part-time work for the sake of equality

The point with the French debate on part-time work is that it has tended to be characterized by the predominance of an egalitarian ideology according to which only full-time work is considered a legitimated form of employment for women, for the sake of equality. This is confirmed once more in the 2011’s report from the Delegation for Women’s Right, stating that part-time work is still a thorny issue because of its precariousness and the lack of those
characteristics that are typical of full-time work and that would make it closer to this latter. This obviously implies the risk of favouring a very exigent social norm of activity, very likely to produce discriminating effects and limiting women’s access to the economic sphere. Likewise, this shows how the principles of equality and freedom have been hardly conjugated together in the feminist discourse, since no compromise has been allowed between the two and a culture of diversity has been hardly developed. Of course, this has also to do with part-time work practices and the way/modes to access voluntary part-time work and its implications, from both a qualitative and quantitative point of view.

In this sense, part-time has never been considered determinant to women’s work-life balance strategies. In a report titled “La famille, une affaire publique” (The family, a public affair) (2005:309), when the subject comes to work-life balance measures, part-time work is declared not to be the most appropriate instrument in this sense, while RTT measures are widely favoured. Actually, researches and surveys have demonstrated that since the introduction of RTT parents are more satisfied of their work-life balance thanks to such measures. Nevertheless, the deny of the potentialities of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument does not take into account the diversity of the various categories of workers, and their needs in terms of work/private life articulation. Moreover, the focus should not remain on the parental discourse as well, otherwise the different categories of workers risk to be taken into a dynamic of concurrence, which may result in the creation of winners/losers game (Buffier-Morel 2007).

On the whole, under the influence of the feminist stream, the majority of analyses and researches on part-time work have emphasized the negative elements of part-time work and have neglected the benefits that part-time work can provide to women with regards to many aspects: identity construction, agency, and combination of professional and private life. According, continuous references to underemployment when talking about part-time work do not leave enough space to the development of an idea of individual right to time use and management that can be realized also through part-time work.

This shows to what extent the logic of equality promoted by French feminists (known as “féminisme égalitaire”) is deeply destabilized by “diversity” and encounters several

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63 The report cite Françoise Milewski « Si le temps partiel contraint permettait d’accéder au temps plein, si les emplois à durée limitée permettaient d’accéder aux emplois stables, si la faible qualification pouvait être surmontée par la formation professionnelle et l’évolution vers d’autres métiers, on s’interrogerait moins sur la précarité ». « La précarité des femmes sur le marché du travail », « La précarité des femmes sur le marché du travail », Lettre de L’OFCE n. 26530 juin 2005.

64 Quantitative dimension refers to the number of hours worked, the qualitative dimension concerns the way those hours are schedule during the day/week.

65 Precisely, in the contribution from Dominique Meda which title is “Concilier travail et famille”.
difficulties in modulating the logics of equality and the logics of freedom. Basically, feminists doubt about the capacity of women to making genuine choice about part-time work because of socio-institutional constraints (which derive mainly from the “domination masculine”). Hence, it is not a case if, as we have already mentioned, this represents one of the main issues at the basis of the French debate about part-time work. In particular, the feminist discourse uses it to express its opposition against any employment form that is not assimilated to what is normatively considered the standard form of employment (i.e. full-time work). In other words, this argument is used to stigmatize and to obstruct any employment form that is not full-time work for the sake of professional equality between men and women. This is done despite evidence for Enquête Emploi shows for example that the full-time work model is realizable just for 50% of mothers living in a partnership and having children aged less than 15 years old. Accordingly, this confirms the fact that defending the domination of the full-time work model implies the risk of driving away from the labour market a consistent part of women, especially in case of difficulties to get access to part-time work. It is the same 2011’s report from the Delegation for Women’s right who recalls data from Enquete Emploi 2005 to show that about one third of female part-time workers are doing so for family reasons (35,4%) and about another one third is using part-time work as a makeshift solution (30,7%). Anyway, the report insists on proportion of involuntary part-time, and do not cite the fact that there is another one third of workers who held a part-time job for other types of reasons that are linked to what can be defined multi-activity (ongoing education or training, wish to having more spread time, health reasons etc etc). Accordingly, it questions the centrality of part-time work use for family reasons, but do not open a perspective of the development of other types of uses, focusing exclusively on the juxtaposition between choice and constraint.

This kind of discourse has influenced the possibility of changing the normative perception of part-time work, as well as RTT practices who favour the recourse to part-time work, excluding hence this latter from those practices as a means of promoting logics of individualization of working time (Buffier-Morel 2007). This is extremely problematic if we consider that concerns about gender equality when it comes to part-time work refer more to the question of the articulation of time between work and other spheres. In particular, the point is not obstructing the way to any form of employment diversification tout-court, but to address such diversification towards the promotion of a society where the time devoted to the different activities of life is more equilibrated, activities other than work are turned to better account and are better shared between men and women. Actually, the use of time is gendered, due to the rigidity of social norms which are based on the conviction that men’s work is
evident while women’s work is contingent and sometimes opposite to the interests of the social institution of family (Bel 2008). The 2011 report’s from the Delegation for Women’s Right recognizes the necessity to invest in a culture of equal division and investment between the market and the family for men and women, but then it falls again in the ideological trap of “feminisme égalitaire”, since it insists at the same time on the necessity of stopping the development of part-time work. The question is: is this the real point with part-time work?

**Conclusion: the absence of consensus on part-time employment and its consequences on part-time work patterns**

The elements provided over the chapter with respect to the actors involved in the French part-time work scenario reflect the absence of consensus on part-time employment. For what concerns the legislative framework, the French government designed a policy aimed at developing part-time work as a form of job creation. However, outside the framework of financial incentives and the presence of an economic activity for which part-time work is suitable like the service sectors, employers and managers in general are often hostile to part-time work since they found that it disorganizes production. The political discourse emphasizes that part-time work is a convenient arrangement for women, enabling them to make work compatible with domestic chores and to secure their financial independence. Nevertheless, since the childcare system in France is one of the most highly developed in Europe, mothers can choose to continue working full-time if they want to, and part-time jobs seem to serve more other purposes. Accordingly, in France, the rise of part-time work is often considered as part of the broader trend towards the casualization of employment with more precarious jobs created since the early 80s under the label of increasing flexibility.

In the institutional and policy framework paragraphs we have seen that the approach promoted by the French governments towards part-time work has not given space to an explicit recognition to the link between part-time jobs and women’s work, a thing that has been done instead, in a somewhat biased way, through family policies. The lack of any reference to the European Community case-law with respect to the principle of equality between part-time and full-time employees can be considered emblematic in this sense. Actually, the authority granted to the social partners to adjust the principle of equality suggests that, in practical terms, the role conferred to collective bargaining as a way of
granting to employees the means of improving their situation can be judged as a way of not directly treating the issue of working conditions for part-time workers. On the contrary, this seems to indicate that the French approach to part-time work has consisted in integrating it into the wider framework of negotiated reduction in working time as a way of stimulating both employment in terms of a growth that provides more jobs, and improved company performance as a corollary of modernization of employment forms.

Whether the conciliation of employees protection, employment growth and employers needs for flexibility has been achieved or not, it is still matter of discussion, as we have underlined since the introduction to this chapter. What is relevant is that, by adopting such an approach and by legally assimilating part-time work to the development of a generalized reduction in working time, French governments have denied the specificities of this employment form, such as its gender dimension, and have treated in a marginal and not explicit way the question of voluntary part-time work as a way of accommodating a better balance between professionals and private life for workers. In other words, they have not aimed at promoting innovating logics of part-time work uses and development since, as we have seen, the role attributed to collective bargaining is fundamental only in a figurative way, and social patterns are constrained in part-time work regulation by employers’ attitudes and practices. On the whole, this has left women, and particularly some categories of women, exposed to the negative effects of part-time work and unable to develop certain uses of part-time work such as a genuine instrument for the articulation of work/outside work activities.

In fact, as we have seen in the paragraph dedicated to women’s practices, part-time work uses in France seem to respond to differences related to social classes (to the extent to which we can consider occupational status as a proxy for social class), in a global context where part-time work risks to trigger undesirable consequences on the career of women concerned by this employment form. Women who work as professionals are more likely to be involved in voluntary part-time work for family reasons, while women at lower stage of the occupational scale (employees and unskilled workers) are more exposed to involuntary part-time work or to the impossibility to arrange their working schedules according to their needs. If professional women can, as we have seen, develop alternative strategies to cultivate a satisfying career path in a way that alleviate the adverse conditions posed by part-time work to career advancement (and still they are subject to some discriminating effects such as pension entitlements, for example), less qualified women do not have this kind of resources at their disposal in order to manage the effects of penalizing part-time working time schedules and conditions. Such differences in opportunities and conditions reveal that for some women part-
time work represents the possibility to give continuity to their career in periods when an additional investment in terms of time is demanded by extra-work activities, while for other women part-time work is the condition under which labour market participation is possible. All this happens in the framework of an institutional and normative context incapable of containing the negative aspects linked to part-time work for women’s employment and rather inclined to favour in a coercive sense certain logics of part-time work and a certain ways to perceive them that corresponds more to the economic dimension of part-time work.

Nevertheless, the depiction of such a scenario should not lead to the misrecognition of women’s willing and to a systematic disqualification of part-time work tout court. There is, of course, a big difference between the part-time work position of a professional and a part-time job at cash desk in a supermarket, but what marks the difference between these two types of workers it is not part-time work in itself, but rather the kind of resources these two types of women can invest and mobilize for their professional emancipation and development. Identifying part-time work as the symbol of patriarchy (“domination masculine”) transposed in the labour market, as it is done in the traditional sociological arguments, can be very dangerous and create serious disadvantages for women in first place, just as dangerous as claiming part-time as a social urgency that must be eradicated.

A low-qualified woman working at the cash desk in a supermarket would not turn into a qualified woman working as a professional if part-time work was not more an available option and both of them were working full-time. Under certain conditions part-time work is fundamental to women’s labour force participation, and differences in working conditions for women with different occupational status are not related to the nature of part-time work itself, but to the different kinds of protection (that derives from the interaction of norms and employers’ practices) that is offered to part-time workers belonging to different working environments and sectors. Accordingly, such differences cannot be intended as the proof of the fact that in any case a part-time job may not be meaningful to those women who are more exposed to precariousness just because it is a bad job. Actually it can, in some way that refers exclusively to women’s willing and degree of involvement in the labour market, and just for the fact of being a job, contribute to their emancipation and then progressive integration into economic activity.

In this sense, there are two arguments that can be pointed out. The first refers to the huge importance attributed to the issue of underemployment in the French discourse on part-time work. As we have already said, there is a sort of overlapping of the concepts of underemployment intended as the wish to work more and involuntary part-time work as a
result from the impossibility to find a full-time job. In reality, as evidence shows (individual elaboration of data from INSEE’s Enquête Emploi which will be illustrated in the following chapters), the wish to work more may be simply related to the desire to acquire a different amount of working hours within the same working time arrangements, and not necessarily a switch between part-time and full-time work. The second concerns the fact that, as we have seen in the women’s and companies’ practices sections of this chapter, women working full-time having recourse to negotiated working time reductions (RTT measures) may not be enjoying the desired working time arrangements and schedules, mainly depending on the sector and type of economic activity in which they work. Hence, to continue in the line of the example given before, in the theoretical case in which jobs at the cash desk in supermarkets would be offered on a full-time basis, women occupying those jobs may need to obtain some forms of modulation and reduction of working hours at some point according to the circumstances of their private life. Nevertheless, the fact that they are employed on a full-time basis would not necessarily mean that they are in the position of getting the working time conditions they wish. In other words, working full-time would not avoid them to suffer from forms of discrimination or precariousness with respect to working time organization and balance of their professional and private needs.

Finally, the main issue has not necessarily to do with a simplistic part-time/full-time divide, but with the room left for the recognition of women’s willing and ability to project and realize their desired level of involvement in the labour market, as well as to fasten their occupational development in view of that (whatever their occupational status). Accordingly, an egalitarian conception of time use and temporality and the prevalence of the concept of “constraint” in discourses on female part-time work practices, with the subsequent rejection of any form of female part-time work for the sake of gender equality in the labour market, seem not to be the proper argument to catch the issue. Pretending to assimilate in absolute terms women’s working time patterns to a male based full-time working regime, simply means to refuse to recognize women’s willing and ability to project and realize their occupational development and to constrain women into a deeper situation of disadvantage. As it has already been recalled along this thesis, part-time work has massively developed independently of women’s employment levels, while women has progressively more made recourse to part-time work, till the point that in some countries high female employment levels are related to high levels of part-time work. This is not necessarily the case of France where, as mentioned above, women’s integration in the labour market has been realized mainly through full-time work, but the increasing expansion of part-time work among different cohorts of French women
during the last decades cannot be considered as just the result of a multitude of constrained choices. The juxtaposition between part-time work as a genuine choice and part-time work as a constraint, which has monopolized the sociological debate on part-time work since the 80s, does not allow to take into account for the diversity of employment models and management forms, as well as for the dynamicity of the process of differentiation of men’s and women’s roles in the societal and institutional system. However, this kind of perspective, together with a standing norm of precarious part-time jobs, have for sure favoured an underestimation of voluntary part-time work ("temps partiel choisi") and of its potentialities in the terms of modernization of the employment scenario with respect to the gendered division of work. This is what makes us moving in the direction of confirming the hypothesis of the existence of path dependency mechanisms in the recourse to part-time work by French women. Part three will be presenting the results of the statistical analyses conducted on the empirical data, which should provide additional evidence in order to validate or not such a hypothesis.
CHAPTER 6

PART-TIME WORK IN ITALY: A “STRANGE CASE”

Introduction

Contrary to what happens in France, part-time work in Italy does not represent a heated issue, to the point that it is difficult to depict a specifically genuine debate (in public and sociological terms) on the development, the characteristics and the effects of this employment form in the Italian labour market. This is not much related to the weak diffusion of part-time work in Italy if compared to other countries. Actually, part-time employment rates in France are not among the highest in Europe; still, as we have seen in the previous chapter, part-time work in France has been the object of a variegated and flaming debate since the 80s. Accordingly, this may not be simply considered as the result of deterring factors quite commonly found in all European labour markets, such as the social and trade unions’ wariness of the presence of part-time work and an entrepreneurial lack of enthusiasm towards it (Lo Faro 2004). Yet, this does not refer to the traditional role attributed to women in the Italian society. In Germany, for example, part-time work was promoted with the aim of fastening female labour force participation, and part-time work is well present on the scenes of the public and sociological discourses for its relevance to women’s employment patterns, and recently for the important role it plays in the reformed parental leave schemes.

The limited attention dedicated to part-time work in Italy is linked to one main reason: the enormous attention dedicated to the issue of atypical employment. As we will see later on in the chapter, over the last 20 years a series of reforms have been introduced in order to make the Italian labour market more flexible, insisting mainly on the promotion of new atypical forms of employment. As a consequence, an incredible number of analyses about the consequences in terms of precariousness for the workers concerned by these employment forms have developed in recent years (Altieri and Carrieri 2000; Bagioli et al. 2004; Pescarolo

In this sense, it is important to underline that, given the plurality of atypical employment profiles that has emerged from the implementation of those reforms, there is not a unanimously accepted definition of atypical employment. This also explains why part-time work is not considered as deserving so much attention as other atypical employment forms that are judged as being more precarious and negative for workers.

Essentially, instability has been identified as the main characteristic of atypical employment forms, which are all those employment forms that are not comparable to the ideal-typical of the Fordist model of work: subordinate, protected (with respect to a wide number of situations like accident at work, illness, maternity, unemployment, retirement, etc.) work, based on the assumption of permanent and full-time jobs (Lo Faro 2004; Ferraro 2004). Accordingly, the employment forms that are peculiarly considered as atypical are fixed-term contracts and their variants⁶⁷, and all those employment forms that do not strictly refer to the area of subordinate atypical work, but present the most important characteristics of this latter such as temporariness of the job, low level of protection with respect to employment status and retirement entitlements, high flexibility, limited organizational autonomy. In particular, in this category are regrouped all the employment forms that represent quasi-subordinate work and respond to the general name of ”co.co.co” (“collaborazione coordinata e continuativa”)⁶⁸, which applies to all those workers involved in coordinated and continued forms of collaboration with firms. Most of the times, the work of these collaborators is concretely used by firms as they were standard dependent workers. Nevertheless, given the link between employment status and access to welfare, collaborators are excluded from the entitlement to a wide variety of social rights, and hence they enjoy inferior levels of protection and more difficult working conditions as compared to genuine standard workers (Ballarino 2009; Pelidda 2010).

In general, part-time work has traditionally been perceived “in the negative”, but not as “sufficiently atypical” to be associated with the employment forms we have just enumerated. On the contrary, in terms of an atypical deviation from standard full-time employment model with respect to access to social rights and the permanent/non-permanent nature of contract, part-time work is viewed as the type of contract which is more closed to such model, since on

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⁶⁷ These are: “contratto a tempo determinato” (subordinate fixed-term work) and “contratti a causa mista” (mixed-cause contracts) such as “apprendistato” and “formazione/lavoro e/o inserimento” (apprenticeship, training/work contracts and insertion in the labour market contracts).

⁶⁸ The concerned employment forms are: “collaboratori a progetto” (employer coordinated freelance work, which is the most widespread category), “collaboratori occasionali” (occasional collaborators), and “soci di cooperativa” (member of cooperative society).
the basis of current legislation it is considered as characterized by a high degree of stability in terms of job tenure, and by an ample level of protection in terms of employment and social rights (Ballarino 2009). Accordingly, if in France part-time work is considered as one of the most illustrative forms of atypical work and it particularly embodies the symbol of domination masculine under the influence of the feminist discourse, in Italy it is rather the “co.co.co” employment form the one who represents the figure of atypical employment and the emblem of precariousness that characterize the generic category of the “outsiders”.

All this seems to suggest two things: first, gender issues with explicit reference to atypical employment such as part-time work do not enjoy as much relevance in Italy as they do in France; second, part-time work is invested of a different role in the Italian labour market as compared to the French one.

In Italy, under the influence of the European Employment Strategy, public discourses over the last decade have emphasized the role of part-time work as a precious work-life balance solution for women, just as it happened in the majority of European countries. Likewise, the negative characteristics that may be linked to part-time work and the negative effects that part-time work may have on the employment trajectories of workers have been recognized, even if not necessarily in a gender perspective. Accordingly, there is common agreement on the fact that part-time work may be a penalizing factor in a career framework. This is extremely important in a labour market background that promotes and protects mainly the “insiders”, under the influence of a still too strong gender-blind institutional context. At the same time, and not surprisingly, the undesirable features of part-time work, especially in the case of women, have not received as much attention in the public debate as it happened in a country like France. In fact, the general public perception of part-time work in Italy has been characterized for a long time by a collective attitude of “formal indifference but substantive dissuasion” (Lo Faro 2004), until the moment when, in line with the necessity of implementing the EU Directive 97/81/EC, a general institutional intent of favouring its

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69 Moreover, legal limits exist on the percentage of workers that a firm is allowed to employ on their basis, meaning that the diffusion of part-time work can be to some extents contained.

70 “Generic category” in the sense that in such a framework there is not necessarily a specific reference to gender issues when the matter is atypical employment and its consequences for workers.

71 Nevertheless, as we are going to see, it cannot be stated that the use of part-time work in order to reconcile work and family life was a topic to which particular attention was paid by the regulation on part-time work promoted during the 2000s. In this sense, a bigger importance has been accorded to parental leave regulations.

72 The “Rapporto di monitoraggio sulle politiche occupazionali e del lavoro” (Monitoring Report on Employment and Labour Policies) delivered in 2000 stated “On the whole, the chances of future employment for part-time workers are fewer than those for full-time workers (...). This difference is, however, due to the differences in age, sex, family position, between the two groups and thus cannot be attributed to the inherently nature of part-time work”. In other words, the existence of indirect discrimination, which can have a great impact on women’s employment patterns as it is demonstrated by several statistical analyses, is ignored.
promotion has appeared, particularly as a way of encouraging female employment (at least in normative terms).

The point with part-time work in Italy is that it is scarcely diffused, just as women employment is. Given the classical association between part-time work and women employment, it is important to underline that female employment rates in Italy have been traditionally low as compared to other EU countries. In 2010, female employment rate was equal to 46.1%, almost 14% inferior to the EU15 average of 59.5% (58.2% if EU27 is considered). At present time, for several reasons, the first of which is economic growth, both part-time work and women employment represent two precious factors for this country. Italian Governments have to some extent tried to promote both of them, without necessarily succeeding. In the specific case of part-time work, what it appears relevant is the cohabitation of some divergent elements in the same scenario: the promotion, at least in normative discourses, of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument for women; the parallel appreciation and preference expressed by women for this form of part-time work; the negative elements and consequences for workers associated with part-time work, which are recognized, but not explicitly condemned; the still scarce diffusion of part-time work, especially with respect to other forms of atypical work that have been promoted in the framework of the same legislative procedures.

In this chapter we will try to disentangle such a scenario and to apprehend all the elements that have contributed to its development. In order to do so, here some general views about the Italian labour market and societal background are provided in order to contextualize the evidence and facts that will be presented in the following paragraphs.

First, it is important to mention some features about what has been the dominant gender culture in Italy since the post-war period. Cultural traditions and established social and employment policies in Italy have conventionally placed different obligation upon the state, the market, the family and especially upon family members, to provide care for children, but also support for elderly and disabled persons. Childcare has been seen as a primarily female and maternal responsibility, and women’s employment patterns have generally reflected this. As a consequence, a persistent, even if progressively less rigid, division of labour between the two sexes have conventionally kept in affecting the orientations of both workers and employers. From a workers’ perspective, this has determined different rigidity/flexibility mechanisms between men and women, and different employment cultures. From the employers’ point of view, this has resulted in a system of preferences and practices that tend to underestimate women and to assign the labour force to sectors of activities, professions and
hierarchical levels in a very significant different way on the basis of gender (Pelidda 2010). If on one hand such arrangements have contributed to the maintaining of a traditional gender system where the “male norm” of employment remains the dominant one, obstructing the way even to the development of traditional logics of use of part-time work (i.e. part-time work for family reasons), on the other hand this has even produced dynamics of polarization within the female group of the labour force. This is especially true in a territorial perspective since, as a result of the dualism North/South that has historically characterized Italy, socio-cultural differences between geographical areas determine different set of options that are economically and socially made available for choice by men and women (Pruna 2008). Nevertheless, it is important to underline for the sake of clarity that various researches have showed how the main geographical variations in women employment patterns do not refer to a presumed dissimilarity in the social mechanisms in force, but they are rather related to an “original” gap between North and South which represents the framework within which common labour market dynamics act (Reyneri and Scherer 2008).

Second, the Italian productive and economic structure is a diversified one, mainly articulated on a territorial basis. A diffused industrialization based on micro and small companies with high specialization levels (very often in artisanal activities) is typical in the North-East and to some extent in the Centre as well. The centrality of big and very big companies has traditionally been typical in the North-West. Then, Southern Italy has historically been characterized by a delayed economic and productive development (Cnel 2003). In this sense, a major or minor incidence of companies of different size in the various geographical areas has necessarily an influence, as we will see later on in the chapter, on the possibilities of development that part-time work can encounter in such areas, which nevertheless remain framed in and are affected by the broader national institutional context. Third, the innovation brought to the national Labour Force Survey, which became continuous in 2004, revealed that the previous survey tended to clearly underestimate part-time work both at the national level and at the territorial one. As a result, the new methodology according to which the continuous survey is carried out has shown that part-time work is more homogenous in a

73 For instance, in 2010, female employment rate for Northern Italy was equal to 60,7%, that is about 9% point higher than the national average (51,2%), while in the South it was equal to 35,9, that is 15% lower than the national average.

74 In this chapter, for this reason, and for problems of comparability between the two versions of the survey, statistics from the national Labour Force Survey (“Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro”) are mainly used when the focus is on internal labour market dynamics and especially on the comparison between different geographical areas. When statistics are presented in a comparative perspective between Italy and Europe, statistics from the harmonized Labour Force Survey provided by Eurostat are used.
territorial perspective than what it used to be previously estimated (Cnel 2005). This confirms that territorial differences do not have to be interpreted in absolute terms, and that their importance has to be carefully related to the complexity and specificity of the whole societal Italian system. Accordingly, even if some regional experiences seem to suggest that there is to some extent room for the recognition of the private dimension of part-time work (at least in terms of traditional logics of use of it), the more general context appears more focused on the economic dimension of part-time work, and it is marked by an overall disarticulated misrecognition of women’s attitudes and preferences for employment.

On the building of these points we can now proceed to the studying of part-time work evolution in Italy during the 2000s, following the same analytical scheme that we have adopted for the studying of the French case. Nevertheless, given the absence of a proper sociological debate on part-time work in Italy as compared to France, this point will be not treated in the chapter, while space will accorded to some aspects of the legal debate, which is definitively more pertinent in this country.

6.1 TRENDS, FACTS AND FIGURES

6.1.1 Employment situation

6.1.1.1 Employment levels: a recent rapid growth, but still a scarce diffusion

Compared to others European Member States, the extension of part-time employment in Italy during the 2000s has been modest. Despite Italy has shared with the EU the goal of promoting part-time work, this latter has remained quite scarce in this country. Cross-sectional data show that in the mid-2000s part-time workers accounted for almost 13% of the total employment rate, and such a percentage was 7 points lower than the EU15 average, which reached 20.4%. Nonetheless, going beyond its poor performance in terms of quantitative spread, it cannot be denied that during the 2000s part-time employment in Italy rose in a considerable way. In particular, part-time work contribution was already evident during the last years of the 90s, since its development accounted for four tenths of overall occupational growth between 1995 and 2000 (Cnel 2001). Then, this rise steadily continued during the following decade, despite the effects produced by periods of economic crisis and economic cyclical dynamics.
At the beginning of the 2000s the Italian labour market entered a process of deep transformation mainly aimed at introducing some sort of flexibility in the occupational structure. Mainly, the occupational crisis that invested Italy, as the rest of Europe, during the 1990s resulted in extremely high levels of unemployment especially hard during the last years of the decade, pushing Italian policy makers to seriously reconsider the functioning of the Italian labour market. In fact, international comparative analysis carried out at that time pointed out Italy as one of the most rigid regulated labour market (Del Boca 1998), at least until the end of the 1990s.

The regulation of atypical contracts played an important role in transforming such a scenario. Actually, new flexible forms of employment like part-time work provided with reductions in labour costs for employers, and this favoured an increasing labour demand that was satisfied through ‘marginal’ workers (women, young, elderly), that is workers who were usually considered as having low-productivity profiles (Cnel 2007). In the specific case of part-time work, it has been estimated that already between the end of the 90s and 2003 more than 42% of the jobs created were part-time jobs (Cnel 2005). Accordingly, we will now have a deeper look at part-time work dynamics during the first ten years of the 2000s.

A short term perspective shows that, compared to the situation in 2000, in 2005 the incidence of part-time in the total employment grew by nearly 5% (Cnel 2006). That happened even if at some moments, like between 2002 and 2003, the proportion of part-time workers as percentage of total employment slightly decreased, as a consequence of a minor economic slowdown that affected Italy and the rest of Europe (Cnel 2004). Nevertheless, in the following years part-time continued to grow and the growth was particularly fast between 2003 and 2005, with a peak in 2005 (Cnel 2005; Cnel 2006; Ministry of Labour and Social Security 2006). A national survey revealed that if in 2003 only 13,2% of employers declared to be inclined to introduce part-time work in their company, in 2004 such a proportion amounted to 24,3% (Cnel 2005). Likewise, in 2005 the number of part-time workers was growing more than the number of full-time workers. In point of fact, in 2005 the number of full-time workers increased by 1,9% compared to 2004, while the total number of part-time workers increased by 7,2% (Cnel 2006).

Between 2000-2005, part-time work increased all over the country. The North-West and the Centre of Italy showed similar patterns of annual variations in the total number of part-time workers (respectively +7,3% and +7,2% in 2005), sharing a noteworthy upward pattern, while

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75“Le innovazioni della Legge Biagi e le assunzioni delle imprese in un’indagine ad hoc”, in ISAE (2005), Le previsioni per l’economia italiana. Crescita e struttura produttiva, Roma.
the growth tended to remain the least consistent in the South (+1.1% in 2005) (Cnel 2006). The largest increase was registered in the North-East. Accordingly, in 2005 the North-East part of the country showed the highest proportion of part-time workers and the highest part-time employment rate (13.8%, +1.4% compared to 2004) (Cnel 2006).

During the period 2005-2007 the contribution of part-time work to overall employment levels was not predominant compared to full-time work, however it was still significant: part-time work accounted for one third of the total increase in employment rate (Cnel 2007; Cnel 2008). Actually, in 2006 part-time work continued to rise: the number of part-time workers increased by 5.4%, and the incidence of part-time work in overall employment increased from 12.8% to 13.3%, representing 0.7% of the employment growth. However, despite such an upward trend, the diffusion of this employment form continued to remain relatively low as compared to other EU countries (Cnel 2007). In 2007 still less than 14% of employed people were working part-time, compared to the 20% EU15 average (more than 17.5% if EU27 is considered instead) (Cnel 2007). And yet, compared to the situation back in 2000, in 2007 the incidence of part-time work in total employment in Italy increased by 1.5% (+4.3% in the case of women) (Cnel 2007; Istat 2011). Territorial differences persisted, but remained consistent only in a North/South perspective. A higher incidence of part-time work continued to be registered in the North and Centre (respectively 14.6% in the North-East, 14.1% in the North-West and 14.5% in the Centre) compared to the South (11.1%) (Istat 2011).

On the whole, between 2005 and 2008 the relative growth on part-time continued to be substantial in Italy, reaching 3.3 millions of people in 2008 (representing 14.4% of the employed work-force) (Istat 2009).

However, the effect of the global economic crisis in 2008 resulted in a halt in the growth of part-time work. A contraction in the expansion of the workforce was observed, while the incidence of part-time work in total employment continued to increase. In fact, in some cases employers made use of part-time work as a way of reducing working hours in order to respond to the negative recession effects without having to proceed with workforce dismissal⁷⁶ (Cnel 2009; Istat 2011a). This trend partially continued in 2009 as well, but during

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⁷⁶That happened even if the majority of employers opted for a massive recourse to “Cassa integrazione guadagni” (Cnel 2009). “Cassa integrazione guadagni” (CIG), was legally instituted to serve the function of maintaining a high degree of flexibility at least in terms of hours worked in the case of economic slowdown: it enables employers to reduce hours of work of workers (to zero) while formally retaining them as employees. The CIG copes with sectorial economic crisis as well as with firms’ restructuring and reorganization. The wage supplement provided by the CIG equals to 80% of previous earnings and is almost completely financed by the state and extendable indefinitely by the Ministry of Labour. Since the CIG is mostly financed by the state, firms receive indirect subsidies to compensate employers for the difficulties of reducing number of workers when they decide to reduce hours of work (Del Boca 1998).
the third quarter of that year labour demand began to decline considerably. Consequently the
share of part-time work tended to remain more or less stationary. In 2010, overall
employment levels continued to decline (Istat 2011b), as confirmed by a significant decrease
in full-time employment (-1.6%), but the demand for part-time work began to grow again.
Accordingly, compared to 2009, 156000 new part-time workers were registered, that is +4.7%
compared to 2009 (Istat 2010).
From a territorial perspective, part-time employment rates in the main territorial divisions
remained substantially unchanged as compared to the pre-crisis situation. Little increase was
registered in the Centre and in the South, where in 2009 part-time employment rates
accounted to 15.3% and 12% of total employment respectively, as compared to 14.8% of the
North-West and 14.7% of the North-East.
In 2010 about 15% of employees in Italy were working part-time, representing an increase of
nearly 2 percentage points in ten years. As a result, changes in the incidence of part-time work
during the first decade of the 2000s seem to indicate a constant, upward trend.

Figure 6.1.1.1-1 Part-time employment in Italy (% of total employment), 2000-2009

On the whole, the evolution of part-time work in Italy during the 2000s shares with other
countries the main patterns that have characterized the spread of this form of employment
over Europe. It means that its development has been largely connected to changes in the
macro-economic environment and exogenous changes in the labour supply composition, in
interaction with labour market reforms that promoted atypical forms of employment contract
while making the labour market more flexible. In this sense, part-time work has contributed to the overall employment expansion during the 2000s in Italy. Nevertheless, its scarce incidence as compared to other European countries suggests that part-time work in this country is characterized by a number of features that have to be taken into account in order to grasp its development path. In particular, variations in the incidence of labour contracts based on part-time work in each market sector, gender and age category of the part-time workforce are some of these features, which will be analysed in the following sections.

6.1.1.2 Labour market characteristics associated with part-time work: similar to the European context, while specific to the Italian case

As it has already been pointed out, part-time work development in Italy shares the same patterns as in most European countries (Sestito 2002; Cnel 2004). Accordingly, also in Italy specific characteristics as economic sector and company size can be associated with the incidence of part-time work. However, there are also features that specifically relate to the Italian case and the specificity of its labour market. These characteristics mainly refer to territorial differences, as already specified in the introduction to this chapter, and to a particular form of atypical employment mainly known as “co.co.co” (“collaborazione coordinata e continuativa”, co-ordinated and continued collaborations), which applies to all those workers involved in coordinated and continued forms of cooperation with firms, i.e. collaborators. All these elements and their features, as part of the compositional consistencies of the labour market and productive structure of the country, have remained relatively stable over the first decade of the 2000s.

Starting with economic sectors, the sectorial increases in the share of part-time work over the first decade of the 2000s were significant. As in many other European countries, part-time work in Italy is heavily concentrated in the service sector. Interestingly, during the period 2003-2005, while part-time work still remained dominant in the service sector, its expansion was extremely dynamic in the industry: the share in the hiring of part-time workers passed from 2,3% of 2003 to 3,5% in 2004, reaching the proportion of 4,5% in 2005. As a result, between 2003 and 2005 the highest increase on annual basis in the total number of part-time workers was in industry (+10,2 in 2005) (Cnel 2006). As for the service sector, the proportion of part-time work decreased between 2003 and 2004 from 18,7% to 17,6%, but then it increased again to 22,5% in 2005 (Cnel 2005). In 2006, 80000 new part-time workers were hired in the service sector (Cnel 2007) and in 2007 15,5% of employers in the service sectors
were hiring more than half of their new workforce on a part-time basis, compared to 5.3% in
the industry (Cnel 2007). On the whole, during the last years of the decade, the incidence of
part-time work remained higher in the service sectors (more than 17%), compared to
agriculture (about 11%) and industry (6.4%) (Istat 2011). Actually, more than 2 million and
600 thousands part-time workers were employed in the service sectors, that is more than 82%
of the total number of part-time workers in Italy (Istat 2011).

Table 6.1.2.1 Incidence of part-time work (%) by economic sector and sex, 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic sector</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>5,4</td>
<td>23,7</td>
<td>11,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>2,6</td>
<td>20,4</td>
<td>6,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services</td>
<td>6,6</td>
<td>28,3</td>
<td>17,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trading</td>
<td>5,0</td>
<td>30,1</td>
<td>15,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26,9</td>
<td>13,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro

Therefore, it can be said that part-time work development over the decade was especially
consistent in the service sectors, where it resulted particularly useful as a means for acquiring
flexibility from the labour force (Samek-Lodovici & Semenza 2004). Nevertheless, such
diffusion was not uniform: part-time work tended to be concentrated in some branches of the
service sectors and within these latter its incidence varied between geographical areas. Part-
time employment rate was higher in trading and tourism (encompassing hotel and catering
services), with differences between Centre-North and South that accounted, in the mid-2000s,
respectively to 15.3% against 10.5 for the former and 18.1% against 13.9% for the latter
(Ministry of Labour and Social Security 2006). Moreover, if the service sector is the one that
has mainly contributed to the diffusion of part-time work, this was not because women have
occupied the biggest part of the new jobs that have been created in this sector. On the
contrary, this was due to an organizational revolution that took place in the service sector
between the 90s and the 2000s, as shown by the number of new part-time jobs registered
during the first years of the 2000s, which was significantly higher than the number of jobs
occupied by women during the 90s (Cnel 2005).

Differences related to firm size revealed to be important. In general, during the 2000s part-
time work in Italy are more common among big firms with more than 250 employees (about
93% of big firms made use of part-time work in 2005), and the incidence of part-time work
tended to decrease as the size of the firm decreases. Nevertheless, when the total number of part-time workers is taken into account, firms who have up to 9 employees are those who present the larger part-time staff, followed by big firms with more than 250 employees and medium firms who have between 10 and 49 employees.

**Figure 6.1.1.2-1 Proportion of companies resorting to part-time work and incidence of part-time work by firm size (%), 2005**

![Proportion of companies resorting to part-time work and incidence of part-time work by firm size](image)

Source: Cnel 2006

Data from 2005 shows that 14.9% of part-time workers were occupied in firms who have up to 9 employees, while bigger firms had lower proportions of part-time workers: such a proportion amounted to 7.5% for firms who had between 10 and 49 employees, and 9.4% for firms who had more than 250 employees (Cnel 2006). This is very likely to be related to the specificity of the Italian productive structure. In fact, the Italian specialization system is traditionally based on micro and small firms, characterized essentially by low and medium-tech production, and mainly based on traditional sectors (Made in Italy) and on Mechanics. In particular, one of the peculiarities of this type of industries is represented by higher organizational flexibility and large utilization of low qualified workers, which would explain the higher recourse to part-time work as compared to medium and big size companies.

77 Micro and small firms play a very relevant role in the Italian economy (the percentage of such firms on total firms is the highest among the main industrialized countries and is increased over time: for example the contribution of firms with fewer than 20 workers in terms of employment, has increased from 45.7% in 1971 to 55.4% in 2001). The low number of big firms is due to the exit from strategic industrial sectors as Electronics, Chemicals, Aeronautics, etc. (Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico, Istituto per la promozione industriale, 2007).
Finally, atypical forms of employment represent an important element in explaining the diffusion of part-time work. In fact, part-time work tended to be more frequent among atypical workers: employees with fixed-term contract, collaborators with either a “co.co.co” contract or a “provider of occasional work” contract. Over the last years of the decade, among these workers, the incidence of part-time work accounted for more than 26% of total employment, compared to about 12% of non-atypical workers (Istat 2011). In particular, the highest incidence of part-time work was registered among collaborators (45%), while the lowest was among self-employed (9.4%); employees were in an intermediate position (14.1%)(Istat 2011). These patterns are not surprisingly if we consider that regional distribution of collaborators reveals that their presence tended to be greater in the most developed regions, with almost 60% of collaborators concentrated in the Northern regions of Italy (Lombardia, Emilia-Romagna, Veneto), which used to be also the regions with the higher incidence of part-time work. It is possible that employers of these regions developed an utilization of part-time work based on coordinated and continuing collaborations, since these latter allow an appreciable reduction in labour costs (Addabbo 2003).

6.1.1.3 Voluntary and involuntary part-time work: a portrait of the gendered employment patterns in the Italian labour market

The incidence of involuntary part-time work in Italy during the 2000s tended to be noticeably higher as compared to the rest of Europe. At the beginning of the decade, back in 2000, the share of involuntary part-time work as percentage of total part-time employment was already equal to 17.2%, while the EU15 average was 12.8%. Ten years later, in 2010, the gap had worsen: involuntary part-time work in Italy accounted to 37.4% of the part-time work share, against an EU15 average of 20.2% (17.7% if EU27 is considered). These data reveal that involuntarily part-time work in Italy has been increasing all over the decade. However, the most significant increase was registered between 2008 and 2010: in this period involuntary part-time work rate raised by 7%; quite a drastic increase for a short-term period, which can be considered a consequence of the situation of economic crisis that characterized those years. On the whole, the rate of involuntarily part-time work tended to be clearly higher among men. In the mid-2000s, the share of involuntary part-time work was about 33.6% for men and 26.5% for women. At that time, voluntary part-time work for women was growing faster than involuntary part-time work (Cnel 2005). Actually, over half of women working part-time in
that period were doing so because they did not want a full-time job\textsuperscript{78}, while only about one quarter of men were reported to be in such a situation (Cnel 2006).

Nevertheless, during the second half of the decade the incidence of involuntarily part-time work increased noticeably also among female part-time workers. Essentially, even if such incidence remained higher among men, for women it increased of about 8% (Istat 2009). Furthermore, involuntary part-time work among women revealed to be particularly severe in comparative perspective: in 2005 26.5% (36.2 in 2010) of Italian women who were working part-time considered themselves as “involuntary part-time workers”\textsuperscript{79}, while the EU15 average for women amounted to 16.1% (19.2% in 2010).

Broadly speaking, these gender differences in the incidence of involuntary part-time work are related to gendered employment patterns in the labour market. Looking at gender differentials in the predicted probability of being an involuntary part-timer within individuals working part-time, Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides (2005) found that in Italy (as in United Kingdom, France, Portugal and Greece) part-time work is more likely to be classified as involuntary among single women than among single men. Instead, when looking at married individuals with children, they find that the gender differential in the probability of being an involuntary part-timer is not significant (as in Finland, the Netherlands and Greece)\textsuperscript{80}. Finally, they highlighted that in some cases the involuntarily of part-time work is related with gender discrimination against women in regular, full-time jobs, and not with gender differences or comparative advantages related to part-time work employment, such as short working hours that facilitate work-life balance\textsuperscript{81} (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005).

\textsuperscript{78} However, these data should be interpreted with caution because such reason for working part-time do not qualify as involuntary part-time work, but part-time work may well be as involuntary option under constrained circumstances (for example the lack of childcare services).

\textsuperscript{79} In interpreting this figure it is important to consider territorial and regional differences between Centre-North and South, especially in a gender perspective. In fact, in the Centre-North women’s part-time work is more likely to be voluntary and very often it corresponds to women’s working time preferences that can be hardly realized. In the South, part-time work is more likely to be involuntary and it represents the only response to the lack of availability of full-time jobs.

\textsuperscript{80} It is interesting to note that in the other two Mediterranean countries two opposite patterns have been found. In particular, in Spain the gender differential in the probability of being an involuntary part-time for married individuals with children is negative, indicating that men are more likely to be involuntary part-timers. In Portugal, such a differential is positive, indicating the exact opposite trend.

\textsuperscript{81} In this way, even when the reason of working part-time is “did not want full-time job” there is space to think that the choice to work part-time could be due more to a discouraging effect rather than to a free and genuine choice.
6.1.2 Feminization levels: the contribution to the growth of women’s labour force participation by an extremely feminized employment form

During the first decade of the 2000s part-time growth as a proportion of total employment accounted to almost 2%. Such a growth was primarily made up by the female component of the labour force: the incidence of female part-time work as a percentage of total employment increased by more than 4%, while in the case of men a decrease of about 1,2% was registered (Istat 2011). In 2005 only 4,6% of part-time workers were men against 25,6% of women, reporting a gender differential of about 21% (European Commission 2006). Nevertheless, compared to other European countries, especially EU15 countries, part-time work remained scarcely diffused among Italian women.

In this sense, it must be considered that female labour force participation is in general much lower in Italy than in other EU15 countries, like for example the closer Germany and France, not to mention differences compared to Sweden or the United Kingdom. Accordingly, the low incidence of part-time work should not be surprising, since evidence has shown that countries with higher part-time rates are those countries where women employment rates are higher as well (Reyneri 2005; Cnel 2011).

Table 6.1.2.1 Distribution of part-time workers in EU15 and Italy, all and by sex (% over total employees), 2000-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All EU15</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Men EU15</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Women EU15</th>
<th>Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>33.2</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>17.9</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>18.1</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>25.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>26.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>36.6</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>14.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>27.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: European Commission 2010

In any case, it is extremely important to underline that part-time employment in Italy revealed to be much more feminized than in others European countries: in the mid-2000s one woman
out of four had a part-time employment contract (Cnel 2006), and four part-time workers out
of five were women (Ministry of Labour and Social Security 2006). Hence, these stylized
facts show that also in Italy it is important to underline the salience of the gender dimension
of part-time employment.
At the beginning of the 2000s, part-time employment among women was already
characterized by a constant upward trend that initiated in the 1990s. In 2003, the number of
female part-time workers had already doubled as compared to ten years before: in 1993 there
were 793 thousands women working in part-time, against 1 million and 447 thousands in
2003 (Istat 2004). Interestingly, between 2002 and 2003 women’s part-time employment
continued to increase even if men’s part-time employment was slightly decreasing. In fact,
while men’s part-time work rate shifted from 3,5% to 3,2%, women’s rate increased from
16,9% to 17,3%. Between 2004 and 2005 such a growth continued, and still it remained more
consistent for women than for men: for the former the incidence of part-time work increased
by 1,2%, for the latter there was an increase of 0,2% (Cnel 2006). In 2005, increase in full-
time work interested mainly men as compared to women (respectively 2,5% and 1%).
Conversely, increases in part-time work concerned primarily women (+7,5% on the total
number of part-time workers), but it touched in a significant way men as well (+5,6%)(Cnel
2006). Both in 2005 and 2006 the growth of part-time work was the main contributor to the
increase in women’s employment rate (Cnel 2007). It has been estimated that between the end
of the 1990s and 2005 the number of female part-time workers increased to 2 million and 262
thousands, with an average annual increase equal to 4,6% (Cnel 2006). About one quarter of
employed women was working part-time in the mid-2000s, against an incidence of part-time
work among men equal to 4,6% (Cnel 2006; Istat 2011). On the whole, it can be said that over
the mid-2000s part-time work heavily contributed to the growth of women participation rates
in the labour market (Cnel 2007).
In the following years such a pattern was maintained, and part-time work continued to
increase considerably for women. Nevertheless, women’s part-time employment level, just as
women’s overall employment levels, continued to remain substantially low as compared to
other European countries, especially EU15 countries. In 2007, 26,9 % of employed women
were working part-time, while the EU15 average was 36,7% (40% in the case North European
countries; 31,1% in the EU27) (Cnel 2008). At the end of the decade about 28% of employed
women and 5% of employed men were working part-time.
Figure 6.1.2-1 Increase in female employment rate, part-time employment rate and activity rate, 2000-2005

Source: Cnel 2006

Figure 6.1.2-2 Female employment rate and incidence of part-time work on female employment levels in Italy and EU15, 2007

Source: Istat 2011
The incidence of part-time work among women has grown more in the North, as compared to the South. Between 1995 and 2007 the proportion of female part-time workers in the North of Italy passed from 22% to 28%, against an increase from 20% to 23% in the South (Reynieri 2009).

Accordingly, in relative terms the contribution of part-time work to the growth of female employment levels has been higher in the North, where such levels have historically tended to be higher, as compared to the Centre and especially the South. Broadly speaking, female part-time work remained more diffused in the North-East (particularly in the region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia and Veneto), while it tended to be scarcely present in the South (especially in the region of Campania, Calabria e Basilicata). In 2009, 29.1% of employed women were working part-time in the North-East, against a proportion of 25.4% in the South. Moreover, if female part-time work in the North-East constantly increased over the decade, in the South a significant and rapid increase of about 3% took place mainly between 2005 and 2009.

**Figure 6.1.2-3 Female part-time workers by geographical area (%), 2000-2007**

![Chart showing female part-time workers by geographical area, 2000-2007](source: Istat 2008)
At the end of the decade the North-West and the Centre presented similar profiles in terms of female part-time employment levels (respectively 28.4% and 28.7%), which were in any case very closer to the North-East levels. Nevertheless, the growth of part-time work in the period 2000-2009 was more consistent for the North-West (about +5%).

Table 6.1.2.2 Incidence of part-time work (% of total employment), by geographical area and sex, 2005-2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Men</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>13.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro

Gender differences refer not only to the share of part-time work, but also to the occurrence of part-time work by age.

In general, for men part-time work is more common at the moment of entering and exiting the labour market, that is for the age group 15-24 and for workers aged 65 years old and more. In particular, the incidence of part-time work is almost constant for adult men between 30 and 57 years old, it is the highest for elderly men (workers who are aged more than 65 years old), and it tends to decrease from very young (15-19 years old) to young men (around 29 years old)(Istat 2011). As for women, a similar pattern, even if more consistent in quantitative terms, is observed among young and elderly women (the 15-24 and the 65+ groups), but an important proportion of part-time work is registered also among adult women aged 35-44 (Istat 2011). Essentially, the incidence of part-time work is more articulated among adult women: part-time work growths gradually among women between 27 and 40 years old, and then it decreases for women between 40 and 56 years old. That suggests that part-time work plays a crucial role in those phases of the life-course when the burden of family responsibilities is particularly demanding for women. This is confirmed by the fact that
increases in the employment rates of women aged between 45 and 62 years old are explained mainly by full-time work opportunities\textsuperscript{82} (Cnel 2005).

**Figure 6.1.2-4 Incidence of part-time workers (% of total number of part-time workers) by age and sex, 2007**

![Graph showing the incidence of part-time workers by age and sex, 2007.](image)

*Source: Istat 2011*

The distribution of part-time work by age changes from one geographical area to another. In the North and in the Centre, where overall women’s employment levels are similar, part-time incidence among cohort is different: in the North part-time work is particularly incident for women between 35 and 44 years old; in the Centre, it concerns mainly young (15-24) and elderly women (65+). In the South, where female employment levels are low, part-time work diffusion seems to affect mostly young women (15-24) and women until 34 years old (Cnel 2005; Istat 2011). This may be related to differences in the productive structure and labour market dynamics of each geographical area.

\textsuperscript{82} This is probably linked to high diffusion of “badanti”, immigrant women who works as domiciliary assistant for very low salary and often as moon-light workers, and that gave the possibility to Italian women to maintain full-time labour force participation while buying care services at very cheap prices for their family members in need for assistance.
### Table 6.1.2.3 Incidence of part-time workers by geographical area, age and sex, (%), 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical area</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td><strong>North-West</strong></td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>30,6</td>
<td>18,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
<td>4,2</td>
<td>23,9</td>
<td>12,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>3,2</td>
<td>31,7</td>
<td>15,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-54</td>
<td>2,2</td>
<td>24,6</td>
<td>11,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>55-64</td>
<td>7,3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>25,9</td>
<td>36,9</td>
<td>28,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,5</td>
<td>27,3</td>
<td>14,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North-East</strong></td>
<td>15-24</td>
<td>10,1</td>
<td>25,8</td>
<td>16,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
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<td>12,3</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>35-44</td>
<td>2,1</td>
<td>36,4</td>
<td>16,7</td>
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<td>45-54</td>
<td>2,4</td>
<td>27,1</td>
<td>12,7</td>
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<tr>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>7,3</td>
<td>26,9</td>
<td>14,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
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<td>38,3</td>
<td>25,9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>29,3</td>
<td>14,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centre</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-54</td>
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<td>23,4</td>
<td>11,5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>55-64</td>
<td>7,6</td>
<td>17,3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65+</td>
<td>25,7</td>
<td>32,8</td>
<td>27,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>14,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South</strong></td>
<td>15-24</td>
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<td>31,9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>26,9</td>
<td>13,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source:* Istat, Rilevazione sulle forze di lavoro
In the North, part-time work is for women a possible answer to the necessity of balancing family responsibilities and employment; in the Centre, where some regions present a relatively good offer of childcare services both in terms of availability, accessibility and affordability, part-time work is not fundamental to the participation of women’s with family responsibilities; in the South, where women’s labour force participation is very low and labour market withdraw very high, especially in correspondence of family formation and childbearing, part-time work is more like a means for young women to gain access to a labour market that offers scarce job opportunities.

Briefly, it can be said that the rapid diffusion of part-time work during the 2000s has profoundly changed women’s labour force participation patterns by cohort. Moreover, patterns of behaviour by cohort remain consistent even when distinguishing for educational level, meaning that educational attainment seems to remain ineffective with respect to changing labour market participation of Italian women (Cnel 2005). The main changes refer to the fact that women who entered adulthood during the first decade of the 2000s were likely to be gradually more employed on a part-time basis compared to older women who entered adulthood in the past (Cnel 2005; Reyneri e Scherer 2008). Furthermore, women from the youngest cohort were much more likely to begin their career with a part-time job than the older cohorts (especially if compared to men) (Bozzon 2008). In 2000, the proportion of young women (aged between 20 and 29 years old) who made their first enter in the labour market through a part-time job was about 27% (15% higher than for men). In 2005 such a proportion increased by further 9% (Cnel 2009).

Gender differences in part-time employment patterns are also influenced by the fact that women in the Italian labour market are much more exposed to flexible and atypical employment than men (Cnel 2004). We have previously mentioned the fact that part-time work is particularly incident among atypical workers (i.e. collaborators), and this is much more the case of women as compared to men. In fact, in 2007 among male atypical workers there was an incidence of part-time work equal to 15,5%, while among male typical workers such an incidence accounted for 3,9%. In the case of women these two figures account respectively for 35,9% and 25,2% (Istat 2011). This gendered pattern is somewhat reversed only when the distinction typical/atypical employment is investigated for what concerns the voluntarily/involuntary character of part-time work. Looking again at data for 2007, involuntarily part-time work was higher among atypical workers: among men part-time work reveals to be involuntarily in 44% of cases if it concerns typical workers, while such a proportion amounts to 61,9% of cases if atypical workers are considered; the proportion of
involuntarily part-time work among women is 29% for typical workers, and 59.4% for atypical workers. Basically, contrary to all expectations, when flexibility of work concerns both working time and employment status, gender differences are to some extent neutralized in a situation of common disadvantage such as involuntarily part-time work.

As we have already mentioned, during the 2000s part-time work contributed in increasing women’s occupational levels, but at the same time it provided a further basis for the strong diversification of the employment profiles of men and women. In fact, women began to be more and more involved in jobs with reduced working hours or jobs that provided with some form of modulation of the working time schedule (Cnel 2004). That is, the increase in women’s employment rate has been achieved because a growing number of women were offered shorter weekly working hours (sometimes very short, below 20 hours per week) compared to standard ones (Cnel 2004). In 2003 women working less than 30 hours per week represented already one third of women’s total employment. In this sense it seems that part-time work has been affecting the gender divide in the labour market along the dimensions of duration and structure of the working time (Cnel 2004).

All in all, such pattern has probably been reinforced by certain patterns of occupational segregation and concentration, which tended to remain relatively stable over time. In fact, in all sectors women part-time rates stayed sensitively higher than men part-time rates, but average weekly working time of part-time workers in each sector remained similar instead for men and women (sometimes slowly higher for women). However, women’s part-time jobs tended to be mainly concentrated in unskilled jobs, especially in the service sectors and the trading branch (Istat 2011). Accordingly, segregation in occupations has been determinant in reinforcing gender differences with respect to labour market participation patterns on a part-time basis.

In conclusion, Italy used to be the only European country where female employment rates have been increasing without a parallel substantial increase in the incidence of part-time work, conversely to what happened in other countries that have then become countries with high female employment rates (Reyneri 2005). Nevertheless, during the 90s the situation began to change, and the rapid diffusion of part-time work during the 2000s has given a significant contribution to the growth of women’s labour force participation. Moreover, even if part-time work employment levels remain low as compared to the EU15 average, part-time work in Italy has developed as in other countries upon the reinforcement of gender differences. All the same, taking into account the specific characteristics of the Italian labour market, part-time work evolution in Italy has produced very diversified and peculiar outcomes.
with respect to women’s integration into the labour force, which will be further investigated along this thesis.

6.1.3 Diversification patterns: gendered employment practices confirmed

In the previous section it has been pointed out how part-time work growth during the 2000s in Italy has concerned mainly women. A survey conducted by Istat in the beginning of the decade showed that part-time work was the preferred working time arrangement by a considerable proportion of women as compared to men, especially by mothers of very young children. However, evidence reveals as well that preferences for full-time work have been decreasing over the decade among workers in general, men and women, young and elderly. In particular, workers have become slightly more inclined towards part-time work (Cnel 2004). Signals of this trend can be seen in the growing importance acquired by part-time work among young workers. Actually, part-time work for the group age 15-24 years old rose considerably over the decade. In 2010, 21.5% workers in this age group work part-time, marking an increase of about 10% in ten years. The largest increase was registered between 2007 and 2010, when part-time employment rate of young workers raised by 3%. A greater incidence of part-time work among young workers was mainly related to a progressively more diffused pattern of combining part-time work with further education. Nevertheless, it must be underlined that in some cases part-time work for young people was related to difficulties in finding a sustainable full-time job (Signorelli et al. 2004).

Then, young women were more concerned by part-time work than young men. In fact, the share of part-time work was noticeably higher for the former than for the latter (respectively 63.7% and 36.3% in 2010; part-time employment rates in the same year were respectively 34.8% and 12.9%), even if the share of young women tended to decrease over the decade, while the share of men tended principally to increase.

Part-time work increased among older workers as well, even if increases for this group of workers on annual basis were less marked than the ones of young workers. However, part-time employment rate of older workers tended to remain higher than the ones of young workers. In this sense, the fact that Italy received recommendations by the European Union through the Kok report 83 (2004), which suggested implementing part-time work as a means to

83A High Level Group headed by Mr Wim Kok, former Prime Minister of the Netherlands, was asked to carry out an independent review to contribute to the mid-term review of the EU’s Lisbon Strategy. The group’s final
maintain older workers in the labour market and to encourage them to postpone retirement, might have played some role (Cnel 2004). In actual fact, the growth of part-time work for older workers was more consistent between 2004 and 2010, increasing of 3%. In 2010, part-time employment rate of older workers reached 29.6%. Not surprisingly, the share of part-time work was all in all higher for women when the age group 55-64 years old is considered, but the situation is reversed when the group 65+ is under review, given the fact that women withdraw from the labour earlier than men. Part-time employment rates for the two age groups accounted in 2010 respectively to 34% and 37.2% for women, 9.8% and 27.3% for men. As it can be observed, the age group 65+ reported a higher part-time employment rate than the 55-64 age group, especially for men. On the whole, this pattern was observable all over the decade, suggesting that part-time work was a suitable employment form for those workers about to retire from the labour market from the labour market.

Looking at these diverse patterns in part-time work uses over life-course, it is possible to detect the persistence of a clear gender dimension. This is not surprisingly if we consider that trend in diversification (to be intended mainly as reduction) in working hours over the decade were driven mainly by the development of part-time work, which accounted for the majority by women taking part-time jobs.

In point of fact, a decreasing trend in working hours was observed in Italy during the 2000s just as it happened in the rest of Europe. During the first years of the decade (2000-2004), a decrease of 1 hour (from 39 to 38) in weekly working hours was registered. The reduction consisted in 1 hour for men and 2 for women: the average weekly working hours of the former was 40 hours, 34 hours for the latter. In this sense the divide in terms of working hours between men and women widened, increasing from 5 to 6 hours. In the following years, weekly working hours levels remained stable around 38 hours. Then, a noticeable reduction in working hours was registered between 2008-2010, in correspondence of the economic crisis, when employers’ reactions consisted first of all in a reduction of weekly working hours per worker rather than in the reduction of number of workers (Cnel 2010). Accordingly, the decreasing trend in working hours can be considered as cyclical only during the last years of the decade, where it was possibly related to an increase in involuntary part-time (Cnel 2011). For the most, just as in the rest of Europe, the reduction in working hours was related to the spreading of part-time work and its increasing incidence on overall occupational levels.

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Report, titled “Facing the Challenge: The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment”, was released in November 2004.
through the creation of new jobs based on part-time working hours, which were undertaken mainly by women.
In this sense, during the first years of the decade (2000-2004), the proportion of women employed full-time according to a standard working time arrangements (36-40 hours) was 11% was lower than ten years before, representing less than 50% of all employed women (Cnel 2004). At that time about half of the female employed population was already working either part-time or “reduced full-time hours”. The majority of the jobs created in this period were jobs demanding reduced working hours compared to the amount of hours usually considered as being the standard one (Cnel 2004). As a result, a consistent proportion of women (about 8%) were working short part-time hours (less than 20 hours per week), while another 15% to 19% were working what is generally considered an adequate amount of hours for a part-time job (20-29 hours per week). Together, these two categories of women represented one third of the overall female employed population (Cnel 2004). Then, only a smaller proportion of women (about 5%) were working a substantial amount of part-time working hours (30-34 hours per week), but this group probably corresponds to women who are in the national education system with a contract considered as full-time, despite the limited amount of working hours compared to a standard full-time job in the private sector. This general picture did not change to a very large extent during the second half of the decade, except for women working full-time hours (35-40 hours per week), whose proportion continued to decrease, while the incidence of short or very short part-time continued to increase among employed women (average increases between 1% and 2%).
In terms of diversification patterns in a life-course perspective, the increasing incidence of short or very short part-time working hours compared to standard hours was striking among young women (15-24 years old) much more than among young men. The same is still true for older workers in the age group 55-64 years old, while in the group 65+ increase in the incidence of short or very short part-time work is more consistent for men.
In conclusion, trends in diversification patterns of part-time work among age groups concerned by this employment form confirm that part-time work over the 2000s has favoured the emergence of new life-course options, but these latter have built up however along a significant gender dimension. Accordingly, part-time work tended to be more common among young women, increasing the risk that this employment form becomes a trap in the perspective of subsequent career opportunities for women (Bozzon 2008); conversely, it seems that part-time work succeeded in maintaining older workers in the labour force for a longer period mainly for men, confirming gendered retirement patterns.
6.1.4 Part-time employment in Italy: a general outline

During the first decade of the 2000s, the share of part-time work in Italy has been growing as in the rest of Europe. The main features that have characterized such growth are:

- rapid growth, but low diffusion;
- high feminization, despite lower level than in EU comparative perspective;
- rising incidence among young and older workers that follows gender patterns (just as changes in the distribution of part-time work among cohorts);
- high incidence of involuntary part-time work, stronger for men, but considerable for women as well, especially as compared to other EU countries;
- relevant geographical differences, which means that that all these features are somewhat differently declined at the various territorial levels.

On the whole, part-time work in Italy during the period under review seems to represent a segment of the labour force where the convergence of all these elements may to some extent determine negative effects and contribute in reinforcing some sort of segregation around this form of employment. Briefly, negative effects tend to be emphasized in a part-time labour market of small dimension, and this latter risk to be further penalized, strengthening in this way a process of acute marginalization.

A possible scenario that may be triggered by this kind of dynamic includes a vicious circle acting in a double direction: many individuals may feel discouraged in undertaking professional paths that integrate, for shorter or longer (temporary) periods, this form of employment; in the case of women, these latter may probably rather prefer to withdraw from the labour market (discouraging effect); this may be favouring an even more weak diffusion of part-time work and make even more difficult to obtain an improvement in working conditions associated with part-time jobs.

Moreover, contrary to what is quite common in Northern and Central Europe, it seems that part-time work in Italy did not develop to a very large extent its potential value as work-family life balancing measure. Actually, during the 2000s, part-time work in Italy was more likely to be perceived as the consequence of market constraints on the number of hours worked (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005). Anyway, these kinds of problems seemed to be much more related to the general context in which part-time employment has developed rather than to part-time employment by itself. We are going to have a further look to the actors and the elements that influence such a context in the next paragraphs.
6.2 INSTITUTIONAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

6.2.1 Part-time work legislation in the Italian system: trapped in the “flexibility-creates-job” scheme?

Italy has been defined as one of the most rigid regulated labour market until the end of the 1990s. “A major source of this labour market rigidity was the post-war construction of the welfare state based on the specific social, economic and demographic conditions that obtained in the Fordist era: full-employment for male industrial workers, a lifelong secure career with increasing and relatively high wages and income insurance during non-active stages of the life cycle, and a traditional stable family in which women had time for care” (Solera 2009:77).

The regulation of atypical work contracts such as part-time work had a prominent role in the transformation of such a scenario and a strong influence on labour market participation of those groups of workers who traditionally were not directly entitled to enjoy the benefits of such a system, particularly women and mothers. In Italy part-time work was legally first introduced with the intention of encouraging and increasing employment levels through the induction of some doses of flexibility in the labour market, especially referring to those local areas suffering of marked economic underdevelopment as compared to the rest of the country.

In this sense, if there is a debate that found some room for development as compared to a more general public discussion and sociological debate, this is the legal debate about the employment dimension of part-time work, which was seen as the main parameter by which to assess the decision made by national legislators. In fact, representing part-time contracts as one of the main ways to improve the employment performance of the labour market was a common practice in Italy (Lo Faro 2004). As a result, in first place this has favoured a trend in the field of juridical analysis towards the interpretation of domestic legislative measures providing with financial incentives for part-time work development, based on the criterion of whether and to what extents such measures make it possible for part-time work to fulfil its task of promoting employment. Then, another debated issue concerned the flexible use of part-time work, particularly with reference to the “how much” and “when” of part-time work (i.e. the possibility for an employer to impose extra-hour, and his power to vary the time at which the work should be done (the so called “elasticity clauses”, as we are going to see later on in the paragraph). Finally, another important question consisted in ascertaining whether the objectives of employment, firms’ efficiency and workers’ protection could find some sort of
genuine synthesis in the field of part-time work, or if they reveal to be necessarily mutually inconsistent. The evolution of the legal debate on part-time work reflects to some extents the chronological development of the legislation on part-time work in Italy since the 80s. We are going to retrace such a development, bearing in mind that it has been characterized by two main trends, not always clearly discernible: pursuing the objective of increasing employment rates through a policy of demand-side flexibility, allowing “bad” part-time jobs; pursuing the objective of increasing employment rates through a policy of supply-side flexibility, postulating “good” part-time jobs.

6.2.1.1 At the basis of the part-time work reform: financial incentives and promises of flexibility

Until the mid-80s, part-time work contracts had simply not been juridified. The first law aimed at officially ruling part-time work was introduced in 1984, Law No. 863/1984, and it came into force while part-time work was already present in the labour market as a concrete employment practice. Previously, with the exception of few collective agreements aimed at providing few rules for some specific sector, the regulation of part-time work used to be left to the individual choices of employers and employees. This fact underlines the delay that characterized the action of the Italian Government in this sense. Moreover, such delay in legally regulating part-time work can be considered one of the main barriers that the diffusion of part-time has encountered in the following years, and one of the main elements that led to a sort of spontaneous marginalisation of such contract in the Italian labour market.

The main measure through which the promotion of part-time employment was undertaken by the Law No. 863/1984 is represented by some limited intervention aimed at cutting the labour costs for employers with respect to wage levels and social protection for part-time workers. Such aim was pursued mainly through a reduction on contributory levels due by employers.

Moreover, even if the broad aim of the law in question was to favour the diffusion of part-time work, a clear distrust towards this employment form was manifested through the choice to set up some rigid rules concerning employers’ prerogative to manage working hours of part-time employees. In view of that, employers were forbidden to introduce the so-called “flexible clause” and to make use of “supplemental work”. In this way, part-time workers could not be asked to work extra-hours. Additionally, the law L.863/1984 provided trade unions with the authority not just to control part-time diffusion, but also to introduce quantitative and qualitative restrictions to employers’ exploitation of part-time work, confirming in this way the intention to contain the diffusion of this employment form. Quantitative restrictions referred to so-called “curtailment clauses” which aimed at limiting the maximum number of part-time contracts allowed through the introduction of quotas in each individual enterprise. Qualitative restrictions referred to the compulsory indication of some specific tasks, jobs and working time patterns that could be opened to part-time work.
for occupational pensions of their part-time workers. However, it can be said that the law did not embrace very strong incentives in this sense, since wages, social security and other working conditions continued to be generally fixed pro-rata to the equivalent full-time job. Moreover, the Law No. 863/1998 did not sufficiently change the contextual normative frame surrounding part-time work in a way to make part-time jobs better-matched with the previous pre-existing labour law rules based on the ideal-typical permanent and full-time employment relationship (Lo Faro 2004). As a result, the impact of the law was limited: employers continued to choose other means to achieve flexibility, mainly overtime and irregular labour.

On the whole, the provision of financial incentives for employers to taking up part-time work represent the core instrument through which the Italian governments have attempted to promote the diffusion of part-time jobs (Loi 2004). In fact, the Law No. 863/1984 was substituted by new rules introduced at the beginning of the 2000s, precisely in 2000 and 2001 through the legislative decrees D. Lgs 61/2000 and D. Lgs 100/2001, which continued the approach designed by the former regulation in terms of economic incentives to sustain employers’ labour demand of part-time work. In particular, the D. Lgs 61/2000 was primarily designed to implement the EC Directive on part-time work, which called for securing an acceptable trade-off between a quantitative spread and a qualitative increase in part-time work to be achieved by means of an innovative regulatory technique combining legislative obligations, collective autonomy and individual choice. Nevertheless, such decree and the one that followed one year later (which was aimed at reforming the former), were welcomed as a policy aiming merely at a quantitative increase of part-time contracts and paying less attention to the request for quality from workers than to requests for flexibility from employers.

Essentially, one of the main issues treated by such legislation was the possibility for an employer to use extra-hours and his power to vary the time at which the work should be done (so called “elasticity clauses”) (Lo Faro 2004).

Incentives introduced by the two decrees were based on the recognition of two kinds of part-time work: the so-called “long part-time” (closer to 30 weekly working hours) and “short part-time” (closer to 20 weekly working hours). In particular, incentives are provided in terms of wage-cost reductions to those employers who choose to draw up long part-time

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85 Formerly, full-time and part-time employment shared the same normative in terms of pensions: hence, for employers a part-time worker had the same cost than a full-time one regarding pension contributions.

86 In any case, as we are going to see, the attempts of making part-time more flexible through the implementation of the EC Directive were negatively judged as demonstrated by the critical earlier comments published in the Italian financial newspaper “Il Sole 24-ore” in 2000. For instance: “Ingressato e costoso. Ecco il nuovo part-time” (Plastered and expensive. Here comes the new part-time work), by A. Del Boca; “Sul part-time aperture a metà” (Half-way innovations on part-time work), by L. Pelaggi; “Mentre l’Europa corre l’Italia fa passi indietro” (While Europe runs, Italy stays behind), by M. Biagi.
employment contracts, since the reduction in terms of percentage point of these costs increases as weekly working hours of each hired part-time worker increase^87. Therefore, such a choice aimed at favouring long-part-time work contracts, probably because this form of part-time work is more likely to lead to an improvement in professional qualification of part-timers, therefore weakening the marginality and precariousness that usually characterize part-time jobs. Anyway, concerns can be raised about the appropriateness of these kinds of incentives and whether they really represent an innovative and genuine way to promote part-time employment. First, the course of action taken up by the Italian Government through D. Lgs 61/2000 and D. Lgs 100/2001 lacked any attempt to adopt other kinds of specific solutions out of economic incentives to promote part-time employment as a measure to help particular categories of workers, like young unemployed and women, in facing their typical disadvantaged condition in the labour market. For example, the promotion of long part-time contracts risked to sort the effect of providing job opportunities for women who would have liked to work full-time but could not find any feasible option to do so, pushing them to involuntarily shifting to part-time jobs because this was the only option available at the moment. In this way, part-time work had the possibility to contribute in increasing levels of female labour force participation, but at the same time it risked to lose all its potential as a work-life balance solution for those women who were looking for different employment perspectives in order to juggle the trade-off between work and family life. Therefore, the legislative decrees of 2000 and 2001 could have favoured the participation of women that would have chosen to work in any case, but they have emptied in this way all the scope for action of part-time work to develop a broader labour force participation attachment of those women who tend to have problems in entering or maintaining themselves involved in the labour market.

In this sense, it must be noticed that if the decrees of 2000 and 2001 did not pay particular attention to the topic of the use of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument (either during the public debate before and after the decrees’ formulation), at that time the Government was carrying out a reform of parental leave regulation (Law No. 53/2000), which revealed to be more successful on this point (Lo Faro 2004; Pellacani 2006). By providing financial incentives, the law did not renounce to address employees life-course needs and encouraged employers to implement family-friendly policies such as, for example, flexitime for working fathers and mothers, temporary part-time work and “hours-bans”. Basically, the

^87It is stated that wage costs are cut by: 7% for weekly working hours between 20 and 24, 10% for weekly working hours between 24 and 28, 13% for weekly working hours between 28 and 32.
Law No. 53/2000 provided with incentives to employers who introduced positive actions in order to guarantee more flexibility in the management of working time. In particular, such actions could be specifically targeted to working fathers and mothers, and could also consist in reversible forms of part-time work. The law specifies also that working time flexibility measures have to be bargained with the most representative labour unions in order to guarantee that the exigencies of flexibility expressed by employees gain priority over the needs for flexibility of the firms (Cnel 2004). In this sense, such law encouraged local governments and authorities to take part in this process of bargaining by giving them the possibilities to promote, thanks to public funds, those measures that could potentially be considered as good practices and, hence, proposed as virtuous examples to other enterprises. In view of that, it seems that the main problematic aspect of the decrees of 2000 and 2001 regulating part-time work was the exclusive link that was established between reductions in social security contributions accorded to employers and increase of occupational levels (Samek-Lodovici and Semenza 2004). Moreover, part-time employment has been scarcely used by employers despite such incentives. Hence, it seems logic to suppose that those incentives have not accomplished the mission of stimulating employers to undertake more part-time employment contracts. Essentially, part-time work regulation introduced by the decrees D. Lgs 61/2000 and D. Lgs 100/2001 was criticized by the employers as well, who especially complained about certain rules that they identified as a strong obstacle to flexibility in working time management. In particular, the introduction of a threshold to the maximum number of hours for the use of supplementary work and the high wage-costs related to this latter, plus the severe rules about the utilization of the so-called “elastic clauses”, resulted in strong rigidities and significant disincentives to the expansion of the labour demand of part-time work.

In the end, it was clear that economic incentives could not represent an alternative to the necessity for a more substantial regulation of part-time work. Actually, those incentives could not truly encourage the diffusion of part-time employment without any additional intervention on the rules concerning the management of individual working hours aiming at favouring more balance between employers’ needs and employees. Even the Government, in the White

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88 Evidence provided by the Ministry of Labour, particularly concerning the period 2002-2003, shows that very few measures have been financed through such a procedure, and all of them referred to firms situated in the Central and Northern part of the country. Interestingly, all these projects concerned mainly measures aimed at promoting flexibility in working time through part-time jobs based on a varied articulation of working hours in terms of both duration and schedule over the week (Cnel 2004). However, in very few cases the grant of part-time work was formally linked to a request made by employees because of family reasons, and such a grant was very often limited to a quota calculated as a threshold over the total number of employees in the firm.
Book on Employment and Welfare (2001) declared that the D. Lgs. 61/2000 could not be considered a feasible response to the acknowledgement duties imposed by the European Directive 97/81/CE and its aims to promote part-time employment, since such a regulation introduced new barriers and strictness to the adoption of part-time work.

As a result, the reform of the labour market undertaken in Italy through the introduction of the so-called “legge Biagi” in 2003 (Law No. 30/2003, carried into force by the legislative decree D. Lgs. 276/2003) aimed at reviewing the previous regulations on part-time work in order to introduce wider spaces of managerial manoeuvring in terms of flexibility when drawing up part-time employment contracts (Pellacani 2006). Such law expanded the regulation of part-time work (vertical, horizontal, mixed), mainly trying to granting greater flexibility to employers: they were allowed to ask part-timers to work over-time (recourse to “supplemental work”) \(^{89}\) and to change their working schedules over the day, or the week, or a certain period (recourse to “flexible and elastic clauses”). On the other hand, employees’ needs for flexibility and room for choice of their working time were scarcely taken into account, as shown by the lack of any statutory right to part-time work and the large importance attributed to employers decisional autonomy with respect to full-time/part-time contract reversibility (Brun 2010). Actually, employers who decide to open any part-time job position in their company are not asked by the law to give priority to employees already in force, but they just have to give an internal communication and eventually evaluate the requests they receive by internal employees interested in part-time work. Nevertheless, the law does not give employers any obligation to accept such requests and, if a worker who sees his/her request refused specifically ask so, employers simply have to specify the reasons behind refusal. Likewise, when any full-time position is going to be open in a company, internal employees who work part-time do not enjoy anymore a priority over external candidates. The same applies to internal employees who had previously transformed their full-time contract in a part-time one. Moreover, in presence of well-motivated technical and organizational reasons, employers have the power to transform full-time work contracts in part-time work and vice versa, as well as they are allowed to dismiss those employees who refuse such unilateral modification of their contract.

The debate around the effects of such a reform encompasses very contrasting position.

\(^{89}\) In order to do so, the agreement of the worker is considered as a sufficient condition, meaning that a legal contractual provision in this sense is unnecessary either with reference to the individual contract, or to the collective one.
The trade unions adopted a position of strong opposition, and generally expressed themselves as definitively supporting the previous regulations, since they were more favourable to a kind of regulation that prioritizes the protection of part-time workers’ rights. Then, it has been argued that the necessity of promoting a higher degree of flexibility in the use of part-time work has not been matched with the basic elements of job security and individual autonomy of part-time workers, making flexibility the main reason underlying the reform rather than a simple instrument in the accomplishment of this latter (Loi 2004; Lo Faro 2004). This seems to be confirmed by the fact that, as previously mentioned, more flexible rules have been introduced referring to “supplementary work” and “elastic clauses”, but still not any rule stating an individual right to part-time work was introduced. Moreover, the negative aspects of the “legge Biagi” might have been emphasized by the absence of wider policy projects concerning social reorganization aimed at acting against degenerative dynamics of extreme flexibilization. In this way, part-time work incorporated the risk of becoming an instrument of potential segregation (Pellacani 2006). Actually, one of the effects of the “legge Biagi” has been to increase the level of involuntary part-time work. That was once more attributed to the fact that this law seemed to give priority to the principle of freedom of economic initiative and employers’ needs for flexibility, by giving them the possibility to introduce high levels of flexibility, both in terms of working time duration and full-time/part-time contract reversibility, in the management of part-time work (Cnel 2008; Brun 2010).

Nevertheless, there are also positions that sustain the inefficacy of the “legge Biagi” in making part-time work an attractive flexible form of employment to employers. Once more, it was argued that new kinds of rigidities have been introduced and that employees’ protection has been privileged at the expenses of claims for flexibility coming from employers, especially in terms of working time organization and hourly wage-costs. It can be supposed that employees who complained about new rigidities probably referred to the role given by the law to collective bargaining, which could now intervene in any case in order to restore or improve employees’ rights and conditions (Pellacani 2006).

Few years later, the Law No.247/2007 reinforced the role of collective bargaining for what concerns the discipline of the introduction and definition of “flexible and elastic clauses” for part-time workers. Consequently, such discipline cannot anymore be defined by employers in agreement with union’s representations at the firm level, but has to be harmonized to the rules defined by the most representative unions at the national level for each branch of activity (Cnel 2008). Moreover, the law Law No. 247/2007 stated the necessity to provide incentives for the drawing up of part-time work contracts with a high amount of daily working hours,
and for the transformation (even if temporary) of full-time work contracts in part-time work when required by employees who demonstrate that they are experiencing difficult family situation and hence need more free time to take care of family members like children and old parents (Cnel 2008). In any case, these workers do not enjoy any statutory right to part-time work (as in the case of workers who suffer from oncological diseases): they are just given a priority, which is conditional to technical and organizational evaluations from the employer (Brun 2010). As a result, it can be said that the Law No. 247/2007 did not really introduce any very substantial change in the part-time work scenario, and it is easy to conclude that the Italian regulation of part-time work during the 2000s has been much more keen on employers’ requests for flexibility rather than favouring the use of part-time work for balanced individualised management of working and non-working hours by employees.

6.2.1.2 The absence of a coherent policy approach: a missed opportunity for “dual-flexibility”

At the end of the decade both employers and employees could enjoy some sort of benefit from part-time work according to regulations that have been promoted over years. Nevertheless, limited use has been made of “employees-friendly flexibility” measures, and the provision by firms of voluntary part-time work has remained limited (Solera 2009). Essentially, it seems that such regulations did not succeed in promoting part-time work as a flexible and at the same time “employees-friendly” employment form. On the contrary, the employment-oriented flexibility on the employers’ side has been privileged. Such missed opportunity for “dual-flexibility” has to be framed into the broader logic that has driven the labour market reforms undertaken over the decade.

On one hand, the aim of those reforms was both to introduce higher flexibility in the labour market and to promote in this way employment opportunities for specific groups of disadvantaged workers such as women and young people (Barbieri and Scherer 2005). Reforms have attempted to act both on the labour supply side, with the promotion of new contractual employment typologies, including part-time, and on the labour demand side, mainly through labour costs reductions, especially referring to contributions to social security systems (Bagioli, Reynery and Serravalli 2004). On the other hand, as in many European countries, the flexibilization introduced in Italy has mainly catered the employers’ needs, without any parallel reform of social rights likely to develop an “employee-friendly flexibility”. Moreover, the fact that this deregulation was only partial and selective (Esping-
Andersen and Regini 2000; Micheli 2006; Barbieri and Scherer 2007) did not help: it amounted to no more of 20% of total employment, it made no change to the regulation of permanent jobs, and it was mainly concentrated among outsiders. On the whole, the reforms adopted during the 2000s have not acted on the whole labour market context, but just on some segments of the labour force, trying to inject among them some dose of flexibility that have been meant to represent controlled exceptions to the general criteria that have traditionally oriented the functioning of the Italian labour market (Regini 2003). This means that those criteria have never been seriously questioned, and it seems reasonable to think that the obtained effect has been to discourage and to marginalize both those new forms of employment, as part-time work, and those categories of workers that the reforms aimed to promote. The lack on real institutional reforms and long-term employment policies have particularly penalised women and the young, especially those residents in the South of Italy, for whom entry into paid work has been difficult and often consisted of precarious employment (Barbieri and Scherer 2008; Solera 2009).

In this sense, the lack of an integrate policy approach encompassing employment and social measures likely to calibrate the equation between flexibility and quality, between innovative forms of work organization and employee-friendly working time solutions, demonstrates that the Italian regulative approach adopted during the 2000s was far from promoting the instances of individualization/activation typical of the Adult worker model encapsulated in the EU Lisbon Agenda (Ales 2008). On the whole, the deregulatory reforms, including regulations on part-time work, did not change either the performance or the distortions of the Italian labour market, but they progressively eroded employment protection of the new entrants, even if the level of labour market segmentation remained virtually unaffected.

90 Young people for example, have increasingly entered the labour market on atypical contracts, but with fewer guarantees compared with previous cohorts, and with long and difficult transitions into the primary labour market (Solera 2009).

91 See previous chapter for more information on the AWM in the Lisbon Agenda.
6.3 SOCIAL ACTORS’ PRACTICES

6.3.1 Companies’ and Social partners’ practices

6.3.1.1 Between innovation and pure flexibilization: employers’ recourse to part-time work

Despite the rapid diffusion of part-time work during the 2000s, Italian companies did not seem to be particularly inclined to the use of part-time staff (Villa 2010). One of the main factors that might have retained employers to offer part-time work is the cost. In particular, employers used to complain about the high contributions and taxes that they are required to pay in case of hiring part-time workers. As we have seen, even if the most recent normative reforms concerning part-time work attempted to reduce the variable costs related to this employment form, it seems that the objective to make this latter less costly and more attractive for employers has not been accomplished. It can be supposed that organizational issues play some role in companies’ choice to make recourse to part-time work.

In a complex and big company the decision to introduce part-time employment usually requires to re-organize jobs and to allocate differently tasks and responsibilities in order to cope with the intermittent presence (organized on a weekly, monthly or yearly base according to the type of contract: fixed hours, fixed cycle, flexible working hours, etc.) of part-time workers. On the contrary, in a small company where jobs, tasks and responsibilities are not strictly defined and arranged in such a way that they result independent and exclusive with respect to each other, having part-time workers may imply serious organizational difficulties (Saraceno 2004). Actually, the hours worked by part-time workers may cover a considerable share of the total number of hours worked in the company, and consequently the organizational problems related to the use of part-time work may represent an obstacle to an efficient use of this form of employment.

In this sense, regional experiences show that features of the productive and employment system on a territorial basis may give rise to a variety of managerial approaches to part-time work as a flexible work arrangement depending on the firm size.

In Tuscany, for instance, the diffusion of part-time work has been relatively scarce (as the development of atypical work in general), mainly because of a limited expansion of the
service industry in its economy. Moreover, this latter has been traditionally characterized by high incidence of small and very small enterprises specialized in artisanal production used to make recourse to overtime from full-time workers in order to meet the needs for flexibility of their production. Competitive pressures, especially from communities of non-European immigrants implanting their business and economic activities on the territory (as in the case of the Chinese community in the district of Prato), have pushed employers to look for new and innovative forms of flexibility other than overtime. Accordingly, some enterprises agreed to compensate long working hours schedules with part-time work. In particular, they proposed to eliminate long working days (12 hours) by reducing the individual number of working hours per day up to 8, and covering the remaining 4 hours through part-time work to be assigned either to the wife or the son of the worker occupying the full-time position. The objective was to grant both the firm with the same level of flexibility and the workers’ family with the same level of salary. Nevertheless, such a strategy was not really successful, mainly because it did not take into account the composition and the needs of the labour supply, like young (highly) educated workers not interested in a part-time job in manufacturing industry, or mothers with limited availability and strong time constraints. As a result, employers who adopted such a strategy were paradoxically confronted to new forms of rigidities (Bortolotti e Giaccone 2009).

Different experiences were reported in the Venetian region. This is the case of two big firms (more than 1500 employees) located in that area: Aprilia (specialized in the production and design of motorcycles) and San Benedetto (specialized in the bottling of drinks and mineral water). Both companies have conventionally been characterized by a high degree of seasonal discontinuity in their production, which has been constantly subject to cyclical fluctuations, and both of them have met their needs for flexibility through seasonal work. Nevertheless, in moments of great expansion of their production, particularly at the beginning of the 2000s, seasonal work revealed not to be sufficient to respond to production peaks, and both enterprises had to reorganize the management of the seasonal segment of their work-force. Accordingly, vertical part-time work formalized through open-ended contracts was introduced in both firms. The result was quite successful in both cases because part-time work is used to meet the flexibility need of the firm, but at the same time it provides workers with high employment standards in terms of working time flexibility. For example, job sharing was introduced to help women to adapt to uncomfortable working time schedules, and professional training was provided during the period of the year when the workload is less intensive (Bortolotti e Giaccone 2009).
Then, a different case is represented by the region of Lombardy. Here part-time work levels are higher than the national average, mainly as a consequence of the characteristics of the regional labour market: high female employment levels, low productive specialization, high incidence of the service sector with respect to both the so-called “advanced tertiary” (informatics and counseling) and “neo-industrial tertiary” (cleaning services, security system, catering). Nevertheless, the majority of employers have shown to be scarcely interested in part-time work because it provides with low levels of flexibility than other forms of atypical employment. In particular, in this region firms tend to use part-time work to acquire functional and temporal flexibility only in those cases where they can simultaneously get numeric and salary flexibility. This happens more often within firms of the service sector (no matters the firm size) where flexibility needs are high, though not automatically beneficial for workers (Ballarino 2009).

On the whole, in different ways and for different reasons, the introduction of part-time work contracts may represent a problem for both small/medium and big companies. Depending on managerial prerogatives and capabilities, the main concerns relates to human resources organization within the firm because it requires to organize and to coordinate the work of more individuals on the same job or task, which may be particularly difficult, and even more it may imply notable inefficiencies.

Data show that during the 2000s, as for different types of part-time working schedules (horizontal, vertical, mixed), the organizational form of part-time used the most by employers was horizontal part-time, which was particularly common in the trading and service sectors. At the same time, the trading sector registered the highest incidence of mixed part-time as an organizational form of work (Cnel 2006). Generally, depending on the economic sector, employers tended to offer different kinds of part-time working arrangements. In the textile trade, for example, seasonal work has been substituted to “vertical” part-time work on annual basis (two period of part-time work per year). In the mechanical sector some firms introduced a “vertical part-time” on a weekly basis with two days of work per week and economic incentives to those who accept to work on Saturday and Sunday. Piaggio, one of the biggest mechanical firms in the country (who acquired Aprilia, which case has been previously cited in this paragraph), introduced a “vertical part-time” on a 8 months-period basis (March-October), which is the period of intensive production. In the trading sector, one of the biggest chains in the large distribution like Auchan gave birth to a pioneering experience by giving part-time workers the possibility to organize their working time schedule in autonomy through internal mutual agreement between workers (Cnel 2004).
Then, the law provides employers with “flexible and elastic clauses” regarding working time arrangements in order to change part-time work organization with respect to working time structure and duration. Data shows that 45% of firms who make use of part-time work have applied flexible clauses, and more than 54% have used elastic clauses (Cnel 2006).

**Figure 6.3.1.1-1 Recourse to “flexible and elastic clauses” (%), by firm size, 2005**

![Graph showing the percentage of firms using flexible and elastic clauses by firm size.](image)

*Source: Cnel 2006*

On the whole, the growing incidence of part-time work within Italian companies during the 2000s depends on the trade-off between the persistence of traditional components in the logistic and production system of such companies and the limited incidence of new elements of flexibility in the management and organization of their labour force. In particular, new flexibility forms consist mainly in the introduction of atypical forms of work granted of very low level of employment and social protection, which risk becoming a source of new rigidities for management in many companies. In this situation, part-time work tends to pursue its expansion in those contexts and sectors where it was already widespread: trading, restaurants/hotels, tourism and tertiary sector in general. In fact, these are sectors in which both production and allocation of products are not conditioned in any negative way by the presence of part-time workers. Not surprisingly, one employers’ main reasons in the sector of tourism and catering, private education and care services, for using part-time work was that it better fits with the working time schedule demanded by the type of production or service provided by their activity. This was true also for those branches of the manufactory sector that
showed a high incidence of female employment. On the contrary, employers who did not resort to part-time work stated that this was because this employment form was not suitable to the type of production and management of their activity. Nonetheless, there was also an important proportion of employers (43%) stating having introduced part-time work in their enterprise mainly to satisfy the requests coming from their employees (Isfol 2005). In view of that, it is worth to underline that there are also cases where employers tend to merely evaluate part-time work as an instrument able to accommodate employees’ needs rather than to conform to firm’s flexibility needs in terms of productivity (Signorelli et al. 2004).

Framing all these elements together it is clear that, even if the scarce diffusion of part-time work do not represent a favourable condition to segmentation strategies, constraints and obstacles to the diffusion and utilization of part-time work from the employers’ perspective have represented an important determinant referring to those flexibilizing and margining dynamics, as well as to the difficulties of favouring a diversification of the part-time work scenario, that have characterized this employment form all over the decade in the Italian labour market.

6.3.1.2 Social partners’ practices: the multiple faces of part-time work?

Recent legislative reforms have tried to inject increasing doses of individual autonomy into the regulation of atypical employment relationships, such as to bring about a partial modification of a model of negotiated flexibility that was introduced in the late 1970 and firmly constructed around the two consolidated pillars of labour legislation and collective agreements (Lo Faro 2004). This is confirmed by the fact that the new forms of employment are not among the issues most frequently addressed by company-level bargaining. However, when bargaining over flexible employment does take place, it often extends beyond their use per se, coming to cover various forms of issues such as work organization and workers protection (Ballarino 2009).

In the specific case of part-time work, this seems confirmed by the fact that rarely part-time work represents the main object of a collective agreement. More often, part-time work is treated as a complementary issue which function varies according to each specific case. Below we are going to present some cases of collective agreements that have found application in different economic contexts and as a result of different labour matters, in order to give an illustrative depiction of how social partners have tended to perceive the role of part-time work in the Italian labour market during the 2000s.
In first place, part-time work is agreed as a solution to the maintaining and stabilization of employment levels in case of industrial plan for the restructuring or the re-launching of production in companies, as showed by the cases of the agreements signed at Nestlé and Electrolux, or as an answer to the need of new forms of work organisation, as showed by the case of the agreements signed at Sierra SpA.

Nestlé Italiana SpA produces chocolate and confectionery products, and employs about 5,000 workers, counting both employees on open-ended contracts and seasonal workers. In 2003, the Nestlé-Perugina plant located in San Sisto (Perugia), the largest of Nestlé's nine sites in Italy at that time, was involved in a company's new industrial plan, in the context of which the management had initially proposed making 220 recently recruited workers redundant and making working time more flexible. After six months of negotiations, company management and trade unions signed an agreement according to which 200 workers had to leave the company with financial assistance, while the employment of part-time and seasonal workers was going to be stabilized. In particular, seasonal workers who had worked for the company for at least four months were hired on a part-time contract for 12 months (or where possible, on apprenticeship or work/study contracts in view of a possible transformation of their employment relationship into an open-ended contract, after the partners have assessed the situation). Likewise, workers already hired on part-time contracts and who had worked for the company for at least 1,800 hours during the past year will saw their contracts changed into full-time contracts. The signatories welcomed the agreement. Particularly, the trade unions underlined the importance of the deal because they managed to achieve 190 “soft” departures from the company instead of the 220 redundancies forecast by the company. Accordingly, they were particularly satisfied by the fact the achievement of the stabilization of employment at Nestlé in Perugia (Paparella and Rinolfi 2003).

In 2008, the management of the electrical appliances company Electrolux and the trade unions reached an agreement regarding the relaunch of production at the Susegana plant, in the province of Treviso. The new direction in production implied a reduction in personnel of 324 workers, which finally diminished to 299 job losses through the voluntary transformation of some employment relationships from full-time to part-time. The agreement envisaged also rotation of the unemployment benefit scheme (Cigs) on a bimonthly basis, in order to equally distribute the effects between the workers in terms of reduced working hours and salary. The trade union representatives considered the agreement to be very positive were very satisfied by the high number of workers who accepted the proposal, since for them what was to be judged very encouraging was the fact that a multinational had agreed to discuss a plan to
relaunch a company rather than opt for delocalisation, saving in this way many job positions (Rinolfi and Paparella 2008).

At the beginning of the 2000s, the Veneto region of northern Italy was facing a combination of labour shortages and economic growth, encouraging the social partners to seek new forms of work organisation which could enable the recruitment of groups previously excluded from the labour market. As a result, companies and trade unions had to find more flexible regulations and organizational forms which are able to meet the diversified needs of an ever more differentiated labour force. An agreement signed in October 2000 at the metalworking company located in Verona, Sierra SpA, represents a good example of this necessity to experiment in order to attract new types of workers. In fact, the company's personnel was predominantly composed of men: in 1999, out of 407 employees, only 70 were women. Consequently, in order to extend the use of its plants, the company and its trade union representative body signed an agreement addressed in particular at recruiting women through the introduction of a form of part-time shift-work able to help workers reconcile work and family responsibilities. Accordingly, a system of part-time work of 30 weekly hours distributed over five days (from Monday to Friday) in three shifts (from 06.00 to 12.00, 12.00 to 18.00 and 18.00 to 00.00) was introduced. On the basis of the agreement, the company hired 36 people on part-time and fixed-term contracts. The new recruits were largely women in their late 40s, the majority of them "homemakers" without previous experience of industrial work and in some cases who were not previously in paid employment. Moreover, all the existing workers on open-ended, full-time contracts were also able to switch to the new part-time work schedule, on a voluntary basis. The trade union organisations welcomed the agreement since they judged that they managed to give access to employment to the groups so far excluded from the labour market, such as women over 40, by making labour demand flexible (Paparella 2001).

The case of the agreement signed at Ferrero points out the approval of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument. In July 2006, a proposal of renewal of the company collective agreement was signed by the international chocolate and confectionery manufacturer Ferrero and the food sector trade unions affiliated to the three main trade union confederations. The deal reached between the company and the trade unions covered the four Ferrero plants in Italy, employing around 6,000 workers, who subsequently had to approve the draft agreement. The most innovative part of such agreement concerned measures to help reconciling work and family life, which were extended to a wider number of employees. Part-time work was among such measures. In particular, horizontal part-time work arrangements
were made possible, meaning shorter working days. The agreement did not extend to ‘vertical’ part-time work, as this pattern was not considered as facilitating day-to-day reconciliation of working hours and personal life. Access to the horizontal part-time contract was restricted to some categories of workers: parents returning from periods of compulsory (for mothers) or voluntary (for fathers) parental leave; and to workers with serious health problems or in need to take care of sick relatives. Both cases apply to those being employed with an open-ended contract. Parents could switch to horizontal part-time work on the basis of a daily schedule of four to six hours until the end of the calendar year in which the child reaches its third birthday. Thereafter, the employee could return to full-time work, although she or he could reach agreement with the company on continuation of a reduced work schedule of no less than six hours’ work per day. Alternatively, the employee could return to full-time work at any time upon agreement with the company. The signatory unions expressed their approval of the agreement, and with special reference to part-time work they appreciated the fact that reversible part-time work offered to workers the possibility to enhance the quality of their lives inside and outside the company. On the whole, their main satisfaction consisted in having favoured the emergence of a best practice in the field of initiatives aimed to make it easier for workers to reconcile work, family and private life, given the numerous and significant social protection measures that could not to be found, all together, in any other collective agreement (Muratore 2006).

Finally, the agreement signed in the information and communications technologies sector privileges the economic issues linked to part-time work in a context of economic crisis. In October 2009, all parties in the information and communications technologies sector agreed on the renewal of the nationwide collective agreement for employees of telecommunications companies. The agreement covered 160,000 workers in the sector and treated a number of questions about part-time work, leave provisions, supplementary bargaining and the grading of call-centre workers. Anyway, the main innovation brought up by such an agreement was the fact that it provided for pay increments. In relation to part-time work, the agreement increases the pay for extra hours from 15% (in the previous agreement) to 20%. The trade unions welcomed the agreement, especially because they found that it gave concrete answers to the necessities of workers at a time of severe economic crisis (Trajani 2010).

On the whole, it can be said that social partners have mainly be concerned by three aspects of part-time work: its employment-promoting value; its potential in terms of work-life balance; pay-related issues to guarantee employees a decent standard of living. This pattern reflects a change in the attitudes of trade unions towards part-time work, which has traditionally been
seen in the negative, especially because it was considered as not compatible with the standardized procedures for supervision usually employed by them in order to ensure egalitarianism among workers\(^92\). Accordingly, the 2000s marked the beginning of period during which the social partners insisted on the necessities of promoting “long part-time contracts”, in line with an approach that aims at protecting workers from the most negative effects of flexibility in work organisation. In this sense, the most sensible issues are the increase in the number of minimum hours established through agreements at the national level, stabilization of working time arrangements in a way that integrate supplemental work carried out on a non-occasional basis, and making working hours compatible with family responsibilities. The debated originated by the renewal of the national collective agreement of the service sectors (where is registered the highest proportion of part-time work) in 2007, as well as the agreement between the Government and the social partners achieved the same year (fundamental for determining the degree of authority that collective bargain has in the regulation of part-time work), are a further confirmation of such tendencies. In particular, what emerges is the willing to promote part-time work in order to encourage female activity and to favour the integration of women with children into the labour market. This can for sure be read in a positive sense, at least to the extent to such purposes sort an integrative effect on women’s activity profile (in the sense that women participate more and more easily in the labour market), but posing an almost exclusive target on women is a sign of the fact that, if companies draw part-time work mainly in terms of flexibilization without being necessarily able to bring innovation in the part-time work scenario, social partners try to promote traditional uses of part-time work on the basis of a traditional gendered logic that assigns this employment form primarily to women.

6.3.2 Women’s practices

6.3.2.1 Why women? The uses of part-time work from a gender perspective

Even if in the previous section it has been highlighted how in some case employers tend to perceive part-time work essentially as an employment form likely to accommodate

\(^{92}\)Such a change is part of a more general adjustment towards atypical work, which begun to gain more attention in trade unions discourses and practices, in line with a national context progressively more concerned by the negative effects of atypical forms of employment. Previously, the primacy of the standard employment relationship was assured through numerical restrictions imposed on recourse to the various forms of atypical work, which in the majority of cases were established by collective bargaining (Ballarino 2009).
employees’ preferences and constraints rather than firms’ needs, from an employees’
perspective it seems that the regulative reforms of the 2000s have not been successful in
stimulating of part-time work. In view of that, it has been argued that employment protection
and job security, as they are regulated by Italian legislation, in association with the more
general societal and institutional context, have favoured specific employment patterns and
practices from a workers’ perspective (Bratti, Del Bono and Vuri 2005) where a balance
between advantages and disadvantages of part-time work is difficult to be reached. By
looking at the interaction between positive and negative aspects of part-time work and its
outcomes referring to the trade-off between individual preferences and real possibilities of
choice, it is possible to understand why part-time developed as it did from the employees’
point of view, and notably why membership of the group of people who are prepared to work
part-time, and are judged suitable to do so by firms, is mainly constituted by women.

At a first sight, it might be argued that high female concentration within part-time jobs is the
result of a free employment choice by women. Such a “choice” would be based on the fact
that, as it is generally known, part-time employment allows combining labour market
participation and family responsibilities. By working part-time women can acquire a position
within the production system while contributing to the household income, as well as to family
life and various time-intensive activities related to this latter (like care duties). Moreover, in
Italy, since the 1970s, in coincidence with the emergence of the feminist movement, the
concept of dual role (“doppia presenza”93 combining work and caring has characterized both
women’s experiences and the representation of working identities of adult women (Bimbi
1993; Perry 2010). In other words, the concept of “dual role” has become an essential
component of women’s identity (Basile 2007). In such a context, the work-life balance
potential of part-time work represents the most important benefit that this form of
employment can provide to women. Nevertheless, in concrete terms the situation is not that
straightforward. That’s why we will spend some additional time illustrating the typical
features that characterize part-time work by looking at women’s part-time employment
patterns from a gender perspective.

In the 2000s, men and women showed different reasons for working part-time. The most
popular reason was the impossibility to find a full-time job (in 2005, 61,6% of men’s part-
timers gave this reason), while family reasons were marginal (7,1%). Other reasons for men
were: the desire or the necessity to have more free time (22,3% compared to 13,4% for

women); having a second job (12.4% against 2% of women) (Cnel 2006). On the contrary, family reasons were important for women (62.1% in 2005), especially in the Northern part of the country. In fact, during the first years of the decade, more than 40% of employed mothers in the Centre-North of the country were part-time workers, while such a percentage amounted to about 30% in the South. If we consider that over the decade female labour force participation increased especially for core-age women (Cnel 2003; Scherer and Reyneri 2008), it is clear that part-time work has played an important role in helping women to manage discontinuous labour force participation.

At a first sight it could be said that in Italy there is room for developing part-time work as a work-life balance instrument, especially for women. Actually, a survey conducted by Istat at the beginning of decade showed that when the main reason of part-time work for women is the possibility to have more time for children and family responsibilities, it seems that thanks to part-time work such an objective can be achieved: 81% of mothers working part-time say that part-time work helps to balancing work and family life, compared to 53% of mothers with the same characteristics working full-time (Cnel 2003).

Table 6.3.2.1.1 Part-time employed women living in a couple with children, by age group of youngest children and reasons for part-time employment (%), 2002-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for part-time employment:</th>
<th>0-2</th>
<th>3-5</th>
<th>6-10</th>
<th>11-13</th>
<th>14 and over</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To care for the children</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>87.3</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To reconcile household</td>
<td>21.8</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>48.8</td>
<td>45.4</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responsibilities and extra-domestic work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To spend more time with the family and/or home</td>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>47.7</td>
<td>33.4</td>
<td>30.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have more spare time to devote to oneself</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>15.7</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Istat, Time use survey 2002-2003

Nonetheless, as we have already underlined, there are different reasons for working part-time. In particular, even if constrained part-time work for women (part-time work as makeshift solution) has tended to decrease since the beginning of the decade, it continued to seriously

affect women, especially in the South, while in the North it concerned less than 20% of women in 2002.

Table 6.3.2.1.2 Part-time employed women living in a couple, by presence of children and reasons for part-time employment (% composition)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for part-time employment</th>
<th>Type of family</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Couple without children</td>
<td>Couple with children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not choose it; imposed by contract and/or company</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not succeed in finding full-time employment</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did not want full-time employment</td>
<td>28.8</td>
<td>51.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would like to work full-time, but cannot</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other reasons</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Istat, Time use survey 2002-2003

Evidence shows that in other cases, choices made by employers represented the main constraint to the possibility to come up with a free choice about working part-time. Finally, in some other cases part-time work represented the alternative to a reject (voluntary or imposed by necessity) to work full-time.

Broadly speaking, staying in the labour market may be very problematic for Italian women, since the “official” labour market have traditionally been characterized by long working hours and rigid working time schedules outside the public sector (Pescarolo 2007), and scarce support for childcare costs (Saraceno 2003). Once more, the survey carried out by Istat at the beginning of the 2000s on a sample of fifty thousand women with children aged between 12 and 24 months revealed that about 44% of those women encountered difficulties in maintaining their participation in the labour force, mainly because of the working time rigidity imposed by the majority of employers (Cnel 2004). Accordingly, the work-family balance becomes strongly dependent on educational level, availability of informal help, type of contract and sector, and employment opportunities in the area where the woman lives (Reyneri 2005; Pescarolo 2007; Scherer and Reyneri 2008; Solera 2009). The declination of all these dimensions concurs to a deep dynamic of polarization among women that present different combinations of these characteristics (Villa 2010).

For example, in order to overcome the rigidity in working time arrangements that are typical of dependent employment, many women have been increasingly undertaking autonomous
entrepreneurial activities in order to work as self-employed and be able in this way to manage their working time in a more flexible way (Cnel 2004). Others, have undertaken employment paths based on atypical quasi-subordinate work (co.co.co contracts, workers involved in coordinated and continued forms of collaboration with firms) in order to enjoy short working hours in absence of concrete possibilities to get a part-time job (Tonarelli 2006). All this may be problematic. Although self-employment may offer more flexibility in the management of the working time, it often demands an important additional amount of working hours compared to employees. As for co.co.co contract, as we have explained in the introduction to this chapter, it exposes women to a high degree of precariousness and job insecurity.

Even so, it has been observed that women’s employment patterns have changed during the last decade: women’s careers have become less discontinuous, while the average duration of their weekly working hours has been decreasing (Cnel 2003; Cnel 2004). This suggests that, during the 2000s, despite scarce diffusion compared to other EU countries, stable part-time jobs have limited Italian the withdrawing of Italian women from the labour force, avoiding the interruption of their employment trajectories. Accordingly, it can be supposed that a major availability of such kind of jobs would open new possibilities for managing family responsibilities and labour force participation also for those women who experience difficulties in obtaining more flexible working time, and who use self-employment and precarious quasi-subordinate employment contracts as a problematic substitute for part-time work. Yet, it would help of course in maintaining and integrating more and more women on the labour market.

A territorial perspective confirms such an idea. In the North, female labour force participation has traditionally been higher than in the South, and is mainly made up by occupation, so during the 2000s it has become clear that more part-time work opportunities have to be considered as a condition in order to expand the employment rate of women (Cnel 2003). The same is true in the South, but contrary to the North, where part-time work was more frequently used for solving work-life balance problems, in the South part-time jobs utility relates to the traditional scarcity of jobs for women. However, part-time work can become a general means to integrate women (particularly women with family responsibilities) into the labour force only when high female occupational levels have been reached, particularly for more emancipated women (i.e. high educated, work-oriented women) (Pescarolo 2007). In other words, the growth of full-time female employment levels has been revealed to be depending on increasing educational attainment realized by women, while part-time work opportunities concur to increase overall levels of female labour force participation when
educational level is controlled for (Scherer and Reyneri 2008). At national level, those women who were students or unemployed during the 90s (1995) passed to part-time employed at the beginning of the 2000s (2003), confirms such an hypothesis and suggests that part-time work can, under certain conditions, help women in gaining emancipation by integration into the labour market (Cnel 2005).

6.3.2.2 Is there really room for a genuine work-life balance use of part-time work in Italy?

Following this logic and adopting a broader perspective, part-time work may constitute an option for workers in some particular moments of his/her career in order to have more free time devoted to other activities rather than to working. Anyway, during the 2000s employed people demonstrated to have scarce inclination both to take up part-time jobs and to modulate their career with some spell of part-time employment (Lucifora 2004). Likewise, as it has already been pointed out, for many part-time workers the choice of working part-time represents an “obliged alternative” rather than a real and genuine employment opportunity (Lucifora 2004). From a gender perspective, part-time work revealed to be reinforcing the specialization between men and women, according to which in presence of pre-school children women tended to encounter significant reduction in working hours, while men were likely to experience increases in the hours spent on the labour market (Anxo 2007). In such framework, it appears clear that the benefit that women get by working part-time, which is an easier way to balance working and private life, is actually mediated by the effect of some costs. In particular, it is possible to suppose that these costs act in such a way that women are the only subject in the labour market who “chooses” to address their employment choices towards part-time at particular period of their life, that are childbearing periods (Saraceno 2003). In this way, an eventual genuine choice risks to become a constrained choice under precise conditions.

This latter aspect is extremely important when considering women’s participation in the labour force by a life-cycle perspective, especially if we take into account that in Italy the availability of part-time opportunities has been found as having a positive impact on both the probability of women participating in the labour market and the probability of having children

95 In other countries, the amount of working hours for men seems to be independent of the family situation. The specificity of the Italian pattern in this sense can be seen as an indicator of the uneven distribution of working time and total work within the Italian couples, with men providing the larger share of paid work and women in secondary labour market still bearing the main burden of domestic and care work (Addabbo 2003).
In fact, if we refer to the effect of childbirth on women’s careers and working conditions, we see that such an effect can be considered quite variable and controversial for Italian women (Bozzon 2008). On one hand, when we look at the employment conditions of women before and after childbirth during the 2000s we can see that, similarly to the rest of Europe, mothers were at high risk of becoming either unemployed or inactive, or they were likely to experience downward occupational mobility. That is, even if a woman stayed employed after childbirth, she could end up in an occupation which was inferior to the one held before the birth, in terms of quality, payment and responsibility, especially if she opted for part-time work. On the other hand, it should be considered that in Italy, as in all the other Southern European countries, only a small proportion of working women shift to part-time work after childbirth (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005).

Nonetheless, the full reversibility between part-time and full-time work showed to be mainly “theoretical” in Italy (Cnel 2004). In fact, if it is difficult to obtain a temporary reduction in working hours for those who work full-time, when such a reduction is obtained it is even more difficult to get back to a complete full-time working schedule once the reasons for a part-time schedule expire. The problem is particularly acute for women, who risk remaining trapped into part-time work beyond childbearing and maternity years, mainly because part-time jobs tend to be concentrated in a number of sex typed occupations with limited career opportunities. Women are aware of such a risk, and not surprisingly, two third of women working part-time voluntarily tended to consider the option as definitive (Isfol 2005).

In this context, fixed costs and productivity issues related to part-time employment may on the demand side concur to trap women both in terms of entrance into the labour market and maintenance of a continuous participation pattern when referring to wage, working conditions and career prospects. Actually, employers may be reluctant to hire women (especially if they are already mothers) for high profile (full-time) positions, since they believe that their future or actual family role may absorb most of their energy and interfere with their productivity (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005). Hence, employers’ attitudes towards the relation between working hours and productivity, when those hours are worked by women, has the effect of strengthening the wage penalty related to part-time employment and, consequently, part-time jobs result in having negative impact on women’s career opportunities and in being

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96 Solera (2009) documented that Italian women are unlikely to experience a career break more than once in their lives and this usually it occurs at the time of the birth of the first child.

97 This is because the proportion of working women in this country is much lower than in the rest of Europe, and they are predominantly employed in full-time, permanent jobs.
concentrated in low wage and low qualified occupations. Moreover, such a pattern seems to be confirmed by Bardasi and Gornick (2000), who found that the wage gap between female full-timers and part-timers is mostly due to a “selection effect”, meaning that women are selected into the two labour markets (full-time and part-time) in a way that increases the gap between their earnings.\footnote{Anyway, the authors are not able to explain what is different about the two groups of workers.}

Then, in such a scenario, the institutional assets of public and private services in terms of available childcare and care services in general play a role. Actually, a childcare system characterized by rationing, low availability and rigidity of opening hours which reduces the opportunities of combining care work with paid work (Saraceno 2003; Del Boca, Pasqua and Pronzato 2005; Del Boca 2007) constitutes a crucial cost that weighs on female’s decisions to participate in the labour market through a part-time job. In this sense, when part-time employment represents a response to the scarcity of childcare services and, thus, a forced alternative to full-time work, it indirectly imposes a cost on women’s wage in terms of lost income (since full-time employment would pay more). Moreover, it should be considered that the high costs of such childcare services act as additional “tax” on women’s labour earnings (Lucifora 2004) which makes part-time employment even more inconvenient from an economical perspective.

Therefore, from an employees’ perspective these could explain why part-time work is mainly taken up by women and is only slightly diffused. Then, as already mentioned, the contribution of part-time work to work-life balance depends on other characteristics of the environment which may affect women according to their individual and household situation. For example, empirical evidence suggests that when women can count on their parents support for caring children, they are more likely to participate in the labour market through full-time jobs (Marenzi and Pagani 2003; Como 2007), while when women are part of households with low income or where one of the member is unemployed they are more likely to be involuntary part-time workers expecting a full-time job that may provide an adequate income to support their family (Lucifora 2004).

Contextual factors related to workplace practices play a role as well. For instance, part-time workers have usually few opportunities to get promotions and to upgrade during their career as a result of firms’ attitudes and expectation towards part-time work (Colombino and Di Tommaso 2000). Consequently, being conscious of this, part-time workers tend not to invest so much in professional qualification and human capital in general and in this way they
anticipate the limited possibilities they have in terms of promotion, training and earnings. Moreover, in such a context firms’ negative approach to part-time work may be reinforced in such a way that a preference for part-time work might become a signal to employers of a lower attachment to the job and to employment of part-time workers (Colombino and Di Tommaso 2000). In this way part-timers take in a self-fulfilling expectation mechanism that favour a deeper precariousness of their working conditions (Lucifora 2004) and a worst consideration of part-time employment from both employees and employers.

6.3.2.3 The shadows of part-time work in Italy: high feminization and scarce diffusion.

What does it mean?

Until now we have illustrated a set of factors that interact and make part-time work particularly repulsive from a labour supply perspective. These factors explain both the high feminization and the scarce incidence of part-time work, in the sense of an almost unique female availability to take part-time jobs. Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides (2005) confirmed that Italy is one of the few European countries (with France, Spain and Portugal) where gender by itself explains most of the variation in the incidence of part-time employment between men and women. Moreover, the these scholars show that compared to other European countries (such as Sweden, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands) the presence of small children in Italy (as well as in France) explains virtually nothing in the variation of gender difference in the incidence of part-time work. This pattern is consistent with findings from Bardasi and Gornick (2002). According to these authors, the effect of child-related factors (both the age and the presence of children) on gender differences in part-time employment is confirmed to be extremely small. The fact that in Italy the effect of child-related factors is almost non-existent represents a questioning pattern since, usually, in cross-country comparisons the variation of gender differences in part-time work is found to be relatively small for workers without family duties, but rising substantially when married workers with young children are considered (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005). These

99For others Mediterranean countries like Spain and Greece this figure is particularly small, but more consistent than the one for Italy: the presence of small children explains less than 30% of the gender difference in the incidence of part-time work. However, it should be noted that this figure is also particularly small for non-Mediterranean countries such as Denmark, Germany and Belgium (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005). Obviously, there are different kinds of explanation for that.

100Broadly speaking, even if differences in working hours for single women without children are far smaller across Europe than the differences among married women with or without young children, there is no clear international pattern in the explanatory capability of marital status about the gender differential in the incidence of part-time work. Hence, this is also the case of Italy (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005).
results confirm that beyond its potential value as work-family life balancing measure there are also some shadows concerning the over-representation of women within part-time workers. Different explanations can be suggested. Actually, going beyond childrearing and parenthood, the incidence of part-time employment may be gendered since men and women may differ in their human capital and productivity in non-market activities, potentially leading to differences in comparative advantages across jobs. Nevertheless, investments in women’s human capital may be discouraged by the expectation of future labour market discrimination and by pre-labour market discrimination in the quantity and quality of schooling. Additionally, men and women preferences for the characteristics of job may differ. In the same way, also those preferences of women for certain type of jobs (typically part-time jobs) may be driven by social norms or the impossibility of finding someone to help with housework and childcare. Finally, it should be highlighted that in some cases involuntarily part-time work is related with gender discrimination against women in regular full-time jobs rather than with gender differences or comparative advantages related to this kind of employment.\(^{101}\) (Boeri, Del Boca and Pissarides 2005).

Nonetheless, what is evident is that the female labour supply of part-time work seems to pay for the consequences of the conditions posed by both the institutional framework and the patterns of labour demand for part-time work, in such a way that the negative features of part-time work generated by the interaction between institutional framework and labour demand is strengthened. Accordingly, women remain the main subject that estimate the possibility to take up a part-time job, and even if in some cases they do so because of the benefit it provides in terms of conciliation between paid work and family responsibilities, they have to include numerous costs that actually limit the economical and personal convenience of this form of employment and the range of available alternatives. As a result, putting things together (high feminization, no influence of child-related factors on the gender difference in the incidence of part-time work, high involuntarily of part-time work where single women are more likely to be involuntary part-timers), it is reasonable to suppose that in the Italian labour market there is an ample part of female labour supply “forced” to part-time work, while probably at the same time there is also a “potential” part that is not used in a positive way, or that is even wasted. In other words, in Italy a large part of part-time work supply results more from

\(^{101}\) In this way even when the reason of working part-time is “did not want full-time job” there is space to think that the choice to work part-time could be due more to a discouraging effect rather than to a free and genuine choice.
gendered constraints and lack of choice rather than from a consolidate right of choices between different employment options.

**Conclusion: part-time work in Italy between old and new paths of development**

The contextual descriptions about the Italian part-time work scenario given in this chapter have revealed a certain number of patterns with respect to institutional developments, as well as to labour market dynamics from the employers’ and employees’ standpoints, that if grasped together provide with the picture of a societal background characterized by important discrepancies, especially in gender perspective.

Under the pressures of the European Directive on part-time work and the targets imposed by the European Employment Strategy, and after a long period of negative perception and scarce attention dedicated to part-time work, contemporary Italian policy makers have been looking at this employment form as a powerful instrument able to make labour market more women-friendly, particularly in a work-life balance perspective. Nevertheless, the regulative approach pursued during the first decade of the 2000s didn’t obtain a great success in terms of both stimulating a greater participation and integration of women into the labour market (i.e. female employment rate is still very low in Italy, and part-time employment is scarcely spread), and especially favouring a positive solution to the mother’s dilemma between child bearing and paid work (i.e. it has been demonstrated that the presence of children is not a determinant factor in gender difference in the share of part-time work, and there is still a high incidence of involuntary part-time). That is the reason why part-time employment in Italy can be defined as a strange case: a case where gender differences have been reinforced over the time by the intersection between institutional and behavioural old paths based on traditional familialistic assumptions, and the compelling necessity of re-addressing these latter in order to construct new paths of action towards a modern societal configuration able to question the traditional gender order.

Old paths encompass the idea of the basic differentiation of society into public and private spheres where women and men are seen as to be complementarily competent for one of these spheres. In this sense, the presence of women into the labour force is considered as determined by the need either for a second job outside home or to contribute to household’s finance with a secondary source of income. New paths rise from the recognition of the fact that the growing presence of women in the work force seems to be increasingly characterized
instead by a keen awareness of economic and social equality. Nevertheless, some facts confirm the complexity that typifies the overall situation. On one hand, when women want to engage in paid work, if they are mothers to do so they still need to rely on the presence of the “extended family” for the care of children, and when such a presence is available they prefer to take full-time employment instead of part-time, while within female part-timers there is an high incidence of involuntary choices. On the other hand, among mothers, those who have managed to get a part-time job reveal to be satisfied by the kind of work/family life arrangements that they get through this employment form, while young women who do not experience the burden of family responsibilities are the ones who are the most likely to be affected by involuntary part-time work. These evidences show that the question that women seem to ask themselves do not concern whether or not to work, as it may appear from the more general normative and institutional approach to part-time work, but rather when to start, how to leave and how to resume, and part-time work looks far from providing an answer to them. In other words, women are faced to questions like where exactly to invest their efforts and at which particular period of their life. Consequently, it is important to underline that even if women have been constructing new roles and identity profiles through a progressively more important presence in the labour market, this has not necessarily triggered a real process of change in the whole institutional and societal system. The discrepancy between these elements have contributed in determining contradictory female’s labour force participation patterns and in widening a process of polarization among women themselves, where the most difficult struggle does not concern yet, as it may happen in France, the kind of job or working conditions a woman can get, but rather the possibility to have and maintain access to the labour market.

With specific reference to the role played by part-time work in this scenario, it stays true part-time work has represented an important share of the new hiring all over the decade, and that the type of protection offered to it have led some to argue about whether it is correct to continue defining it as form of atypical work. Nevertheless, we have seen that as part of a process of flexibilization of the labour market, part-time work regulation has been introduced as a means to realize some injection of flexibility to be addressed to those workers who used to be considered as having low productivity profile (like women, young, old). As a result, the reforms undertaken during the 2000s revealed to be not directly committed to the containment of those dynamics of marginalization that might affect some forms of part-time work, especially those that represent an answer to the needs for flexibility of companies and which are, as we have seen, particularly recurrent. In this way, the wide range of manoeuvring that
part-time work regulations have offered to employers have implied in some cases the reinforcement of a number of penalties that may affect part-time workers. In particular, what has been reinforced in this context is the still institutionally predominant familialistic logic according to which the members of the large network of relatives with strong socio economic links lays upon gender relations based on the male breadwinner. In other words, those workers, that is especially women, who have progressively been more employed on a part-time basis have remained to some extent dependent on the male breadwinner member of the family, whose life-course and employment patterns have not been involved in a general process of transformation. Then, the risk of erosion of the working biographies of the various categories of part-time workers is even higher if we consider that so far an ensured right to shift from part-time employment to full-time and vice versa has not been established yet. Such right is fundamental to contribute in making the choice of working part-time an effective choice and not a constrained one due to the absence of alternatives, that is a choice implying fewer costs and more advantages which is made available for a broad set of individuals with different kinds of exigencies during different phases of their life-course.

On the whole, what lacks to Italy is the concrete recognition of women’s work and its link to part-time work, which would explain also the absence of a more concrete sociological debate on this theme while there is a more intensive focus on the flexibility issue. In other words, it seems that the Italian case reflects the persistence of gender inequality as a sort of structural dimension. As we have seen, this is mainly due to a consistent discrepancy between the institutional and societal system based on old paths of action, and the concrete social practices and individuals’ behaviour. In particular, the normative and institutional frameworks have missed any attempt to promote specific courses of employment policy aimed at endorsing different means to integrate diverse groups of workers into the labour force according to the specificity of the needs that might be experienced in different phases of the life-course, being part-time one of this means. In other words institutions have undertaken the promotion of logics of flexibility related to part-time work, leaving to the concrete practices of social actors the deployment of the uses of part-time work. This kind of perspective has favoured divisive dynamics from the employers’ perspective as well. As a result, women have been touched in first place, since they still have to struggle to gain space in the labour market, and then still have to juggle to maintain it, with part-time work occupying a controversial position in such a frame. Once more, the extent to which there is room for change to be brought in will be revealed by the empirical analyses that will be illustrated in the third part of this thesis.
**CONCLUSION: FRANCE AND ITALY IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE**

Chapter 5 and 6 have accounted for the specificity of the complex paths of development of part-time work respectively in France and Italy. An intense in-depth analysis of our case studies has revealed that the actors involved in the national part-time work scenario of the two countries differently contribute in determining a particular set of conditions within which different part-time work patterns are likely to emerge and develop. In this conclusive section we try to address a more direct comparative perspective in this sense, by looking at the different approaches to part-time work promoted by each actor in the two countries, the dimensions of part-time work they endorse and the type of part-time work uses they favour. On the building of these elements, we shall try to speculate on the possible effects that these joint dynamics are likely to produce with respect women’s part-time work profiles and part-time uses patterns. The question of the effects will be then further investigated and tested through the empirical analyses on micro-level patterns of part-time work uses that will be presented in the third part of this thesis. Accordingly, the speculative and empirical evidence that we will have revealed through these two parts of our work and the elements that will emerge from this double comparison will be framed in the general conclusion to this thesis, in order to give account of the logics of social uses of part-time work that are developed within each national context and the extent to which each country is moving along the transition to a new form of part-time work.

In order to make the comparison more intuitive and of easily interpretation, we decided to frame it in a graphical representation through a table where there are illustrated for each relevant actor (institutions, employers, social partners, women) in each of the country under review, the endorsed dimension of part-time work (economic vs. individual), the favoured type of part-time work uses (traditional vs. innovative), the produced effects (period, emancipation, integrative or scar effect, cfr. chapter 3, section 3.1).

Given the fact that this table synthesizes several and many-sided aspects over space and time, it may happen that the chosen category cannot be resumed in a univocal way. Accordingly, the terms “ambiguous” and “hybrid” are used to indicate those cases where an essentially multifaceted situation is detectable, or when one category seems to prevail over the others, but not in a clear and definitive way.
Table II-1 Elements for the cross-country comparison of part-time work development in France and Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actors</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutions</strong></td>
<td>ambiguous (economic)</td>
<td>economic</td>
<td>hybrid (traditional)</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>scar</td>
<td>ambiguous (scar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employers</strong></td>
<td>ambiguous (economic)</td>
<td>economic</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>scar</td>
<td>scar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social partners</strong></td>
<td>economic</td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>hybrid (traditional)</td>
<td>scar</td>
<td>integrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
<td>individual</td>
<td>hybrid (economic)</td>
<td>innovative</td>
<td>traditional</td>
<td>integrative</td>
<td>emancipation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table we can see that in analytical terms France and Italy differ particularly with respect to social partners’ and female part-time workers’ practices. In both countries institutions and employers have validated primarily the economic dimension of part-time work, through the adoption of measures and practices that have resulted in favoring mainly traditional uses of part-time work, and this have triggered principally negative effects with respect to concrete part-time work patterns.

In France, the recent reform on the 35-hour week has clearly missed the opportunity to include part-time work in a larger set of measures aimed at giving to employees the prerogative to manage their work-life balance on an individualized basis. In fact, the *lois Aubry* introduced some rules to favour voluntarily part-time on the basis of the principle of making it easier to reconcile professional and private life, but in concrete terms they finished by accommodating part-time work as an instrument to be associated with the search for flexibility and inferior labour costs. Family policies, which are consistently used as employment tool in the French policy approach, have to some extent supplied to this gap through the PAJE reform. However, this latter obviously targets only work-life balance exigencies related to family responsibilities, and in some indirect ways it favours gendered patterns of part-time work on the basis of a normative contradictory framework that poorly conjugates the principle of freedom of choice and the reconciliation of paid work and family life. This aspects show how the French legal and policy approach to part-time work have ambiguously endorsed the economic dimension of this employment form, and how it has act in the direction of a reinforcement of traditional uses of part-time work, despite the fact that some elements for the promotion of innovative uses are noticeable, but not pursued in actual facts. Employers have showed an ambiguous attitude towards part-time work too. Actually,
on one hand they are called to be in first line in the application of the reforms about working time reduction as new actors in the context of family policy making and equal opportunities objectives. On the other hand, the analysis of their practices shows that individuals’ well-being in terms of work-life articulation has not become yet a priority in the organization of economic activities. Most of the times, they keep in conceiving part-time work mostly as a means of acquiring flexibility from the labour force, or at the best they look at it as a solution for the limited involvement in work that mothers can guarantee. As a result, the role of social patterns is heavily conditioned by this whole framework. Actually, the Aubry reform made part-time work a collective bargaining issue and collective bargain the instrument of flexibility, giving to it the power of derogation from the legal framework that it implements. However, we have seen that the role attributed to collective bargaining remains fundamental only in a figurative way, and social patterns are constrained in their action by employers’ attitudes and practices to such a point that collective reductions of working hours are very often bargained as counterpart of flexibility in working time arrangements and a work organization that better responds to the needs of the companies, especially in times of economic crisis.

If in France social partners follow employers and institutions in endorsing the economic dimension of part-time work and favoring traditional type of uses of part-time work, in Italy they play a more original role as compared to the more general national framework. As we have seen, the 2000s marked the beginning of period during which the social partners insisted on the necessities of promoting part-time work within an approach that aims at protecting workers from the most negative effects of flexibility in work organization. Accordingly, in a context where companies draw on part-time work mainly in terms of flexibilization without being necessarily able to bring innovation in the part-time work scenario, and where institutions are not able to promote a coherent policy framework within which develop good practices of ‘double-flexibility’ for part-time work, social partners reveal to be very concerned by part-time work especially with regard to its potential in terms of work-life balance. In this sense, social partners differentiate themselves from employers and institutions given the fact that, even if more often collective bargain treats part-time work as a complementary issue which function varies according to each specific case, they definitively show to be able to profit of economic matters to develop interesting positions on part-time work through which they take action for the promotion of the individual dimension of this employment form. However, their concerns about part-time work are diversified, but a prevalence of discourses encouraging the promotion of part-time work as a way of fastening female activity and
favoring the integration of women with children into the labor market, reveals that social partners try to promote traditional uses of part-time work on the basis of a traditional gendered logic that assigns this employment form primarily to women. In any case, contrary to what happens in France, the action of social partners with respect to the employment-promoting value of part-time work, its potential in terms of work-life balance, and pay-related issues to guarantee employees a decent standard of living, have brought in undeniable advantages for part-time workers and mainly favored an integrative effect with respect to the employment patterns of these latter. The same cannot be said in the case of employers, whose experiences have given rise to variety of managerial approaches to part-time work as a way to acquire flexibility from the labour force, but showed also their prevailing incapacity of estimating the composition and the needs of the part-time workers group, as it can be observed in the French case too. Likewise, the lack on real institutional reforms and long-term employment policies have mainly sorted the effect of discouraging and marginalizing both the diffusion of part-time work, and those categories of workers that the measures promoted over the 2000s aimed at favouring.

On the whole, the situation appears mainly in the negative both in France and Italy, and in the specific societal context of each country women seem to develop different kinds of practices and to encounter different types of effects for their part-time work patterns. In France, the global context favours situations in which part-time work risks to trigger undesirable consequences on the career of women concerned by this employment form. Nevertheless, women show a deeper awareness in their recourse to part-time work according to the fact that part-time work interests progressively more all cohorts of women as well as different categories of women. Differences between these groups of women imply the existence of differences in opportunities and condition, which if examined show that for some women part-time work represents the possibility to give continuity to their career in periods when an additional investment in terms of time is demanded by extra-work activities, while for other women part-time work is the condition under which labour market participation is provisionally possible. In this sense, French women show a strong willing and degree of involvement in paid work, and they use part-time work somehow to develop articulated employment profiles through which consolidate their position in the labour market according to the different kinds of resources they have at their disposal (in terms of qualification, social status, etc.). That is the reason why we talk about integrative effect with reference to French women’s part-time work practices. However, the fact that part-time work expands among French women despite a general negative connotation of this employment form is worrying to
the extent to which women engage progressively more in part-time work without a concrete change in social practices of the other actors that also contribute in determining a certain characterization of part-time work in the specific national employment context. Actually, this may trigger path dependency mechanisms in the recourse to part-time work by French women, which may at the same time find roots in the strong and enduring presence of women themselves in the labour market.

In Italy, women’s labour market participation is a more recent phenomenon and the position of women on the labour market is not as consolidated as it is in France. In this sense, part-time work does not emerge as a substantive way of articulating women’s employment paths, and it represents a work-life balance solution only in a limited way. The fact that the effect of child-related factors on gender differences in part-time employment is confirmed to be extremely small is very emblematic in this sense. In fact, part-time work for Italian women seems to represent more the way of access to a labour market that offers very few possibilities of entry. Essentially, for Italian women the most difficult struggle does not concern yet, as it may happen in France, the kind of job or working conditions a woman can get and the way she integrate these factors in the development of her employment path as it is the case of part-time work, but rather the possibility to have and maintain an access to the labour market. For this reason, we talk about an emancipation effect that results from Italian women part-time work practices, and of an hybrid endorsement of the economic dimension of part-time work.

For the majority of these women part-time work is not yet an affirmed work-life balance instrument, and it is not a way to manage a more personalized work-life balance, neither it is an exemplification of their labour market involvement at different stages of life, but it is above all the way through which women try to obtain a position in the labour market. Accordingly, the question is whether the situation of Italian women with respect to their part-time work practices can be defined as “one generation behind” French women to the extent to which the modalities and the individual conditions upon which such practices are developed depends on the degree of consolidation of women participation into the labour force.

On the whole, both in France and Italy women seem to be the real drive behind the evolution of part-time work and its concrete patterns. The empirical analyses that will be presented in the next part of this thesis will go further in the investigation and testing of these specific aspects concerning women’s part-time practices in the two countries.

We conclude with a note on the role played by the sociological debate on part-time work, which revealed to be particularly animated in France, while it is scarcely developed in Italy. We have seen that in France the sociological debate on part-time work has tended to be
polarized towards the representation of part-time work as a clear example of social segmentation of employment modes based on gender. As a result, the French debate has focused mainly on studying of the social effects of women’s part-time work, mainly underemployment and precariousness. On the contrary, in Italy the undesirable features of part-time work, especially in the case of women, have not received as much attention as it happened in France. Particularly, sociologists pay more attention to other atypical employment forms that are judged as being more precarious and negative for workers. Accordingly, the evolution of the debate on part-time work in France has produced a total rejection of the idea of part-time work as a form of individual time management, while the general public perception of part-time work in Italy has been characterized for a long time by a collective attitude of “formal indifference but substantive dissuasion”. The consequences of these two different types of patterns in approaching the subject of part-time work can be resumed into simple facts: gender issues with explicit reference to atypical employment such as part-time work do not assume the same relevance in the two countries; part-time work is invested of a different role in the two national societal contexts. Nevertheless, what it is interesting to notice is that despite such differences, the type of debate and positions adopted within each country yields to the same result: they do not seriously and concretely question the established gender order where only the typically male standard employment model is legitimated and is taken as point of reference. In some way, this reinforces the idea of a basic differentiation of society into public and private spheres where the acknowledgement of the activity of women and men in the two spheres is made according to mechanisms that do not set off diversity as a value. In France, the refuse of part-time work for the sake of equality leads to a misrecognition of the fact that, for the real sake of equality, it is necessary to move towards a society where the time devoted to the different activities of life is more equilibrated, activities other than work are turned to better account and are better shared between men and women. In Italy, the scarce recognition of the gender issues related to part-time work and of the undesirable features of this employment form indicates the limited qualitative value that it is attached to the diversification of working patterns for the modernization of the gendered societal system. We consider that the real questioning of the gender order on which a societal system relies is very important to concerns about gender equality with respect to part-time work and its role in the issues about the balance of time between work and other spheres.
PART III

EMPIRICAL RESULTS
CHAPTER 7

EMPirical STRATEGY AND METHODS

Introduction

The main focus of our study is on the relationship between women employment and part-time work, where such a relationship is considered as a major indicator of the patterns that characterize the process of transition to a new form of part-time work. As we have already mentioned in chapter three, the main objective we want to achieve is to understand to what extent the realization of such a transition really constitutes a potential development of the actual process of evolution of part-time work. If the three previous chapters were mainly aimed at framing our international comparison by providing with some structured contextual overviews, in this part of the thesis we provide empirical evidence through detailed statistical comparative analyses that have been conceived with the aim of formulating some answers to the three sub-questions raised in chapter three.

In order to do so, this chapter describes the preliminary aspects that are at the basis of the empirical analyses: hypotheses, data and methods. In particular, the first section of the chapter will be dedicated to the illustration of the empirical strategy adopted and the hypotheses we want to test. This means that the main assumptions of our work will be reviewed, our conceptual model will be operationalized in order to be treated in terms of variables and relationships between variables, and general expectations will be formulated in more practical terms with respect to effects that can be interpreted as dynamics of change (or not) in the types and correlates of part-time work profiles and types of part-time work uses over the 2000s in France and Italy. This section describes also the empirical design within which we have framed our analyses, the datasets used, the variables chosen, paying particular attention, with respect to the aims of our study, to the strong points and the shortcomings of the data we had at our disposal. The second section follows on the specific technique used in the empirical analyses, namely logistic and multinomial logistic regression. Then, the section focuses on some methodological issues that refer either to the particular technique we have adopted in order to analyze our data (as the problem of unobserved heterogeneity in logistic regression),
or to the design of our analyses and the variables involved in it (as the problems of sample selection and endogeneity).

7.1 **EMPirical STRATEGY**

7.1.2 The operationalization of research questions and relevant concepts

In chapter three we have delineated the conceptual scheme of our research and we have consequently formulated three sub-questions. The first question concerns the evolution of logics of social uses of part-time work, or: to what extent do we observe an evolution in these logics? The second question concerns the realization of the logics of social uses of part-time work, that is: what logics have higher possibilities to be realized in actual fact? The third question refers to the elaboration of logics of social uses of part-time work, or: what are the factors that influence the elaboration of these logics?

We will try to answer these questions through the empirical analyses presented in this section. In order to do so, in this section we are going to transpose these questions into more practical terms, which means translating the main aspects proposed in the conceptual scheme of our research (cfr. chapter three, section 3.1) in operational elements that can directly find application in the framework of our empirical strategy. In other words, we are going to describe our empirical strategy by proceeding to an operationalization of the concepts and ideas that elaborated so far mainly in analytical terms in order to measure and test them.

We begin by recalling the main aspects of the conceptual scheme that are at the basis of the elaboration of the three sub-questions we are interested in. We stated that the main level of our analysis is the micro level, represented by females’ labour supply, and that we are interested in changes over time in part-time work profiles. Accordingly, we have chosen to work on the basis of a horizontal perspective, which takes into account the interrelation of various life spheres of individuals at the same time through a holistic approach that look at people who combine work with other activities during their working life-course. Actually, the aim of this project is to analyze the relationship between part-time change and women’s part-time employment patterns during the 2000’s, and not part-time’s role in women’s life-course *per-se*. So, in the frame of our empirical strategy, it means that at this stage we can already clarify the fact that our empirical analyses are based on a *pseudo-panel* approach which
focuses on part-time changes over the time, rather than on a panel approach that focuses on women’s part-time work trajectories. In other words, we do not observe individuals over continuous spells of time, but we observe part-time work patterns with reference to some precise aspects (to be further précised soon in the paragraph) with cross-sectional data that are analyzed at some points in time. On the whole, our aim is to build a pseudo-panel approach with a comparative design situated within an institutional paradigm. The data and variable paragraph will provide with more details about that.

Then, in our study particular relevance is on the concept of path dependency, which in the context of our analyses represents both group-specific and institutional context situated choices and behaviors that fossilize into particular patterns of time uses or arrangements. In particular, path-dependency was assumed to be a possible outcome of contrasting dimensions resulting from what we identified as cultural and structural. With cultural dimension we referred to the possibility of an evolution in women’s profiles of part-time work social uses that might be related to a growing attachment of women to the labour market, hence to a more general process of emancipation for women, who finally use part-time work as an instrument for widening their process of individuation of personal areas of self-investment (this latter interpreted as part of the process of emancipation). The structural dimension is meant to reflect the effect of changes in the effective quality of part-time work according to social and working contexts in evolution, and that could contribute either to the elaboration of certain logics of part-time social uses, or to possibilities for concrete realization of these latter. Hence, at this point, we have identified two dimensions that in the frame of our empirical strategy concur in outlining our hypotheses: a cultural dimension that (positively) affects the evolution of part-time work profiles and type of part-time uses; a structural dimension that (negatively) affect the elaboration and the realization the logics that are behind the different types of part-time uses. However, we need to return on same additional elements in order to fully articulate our hypotheses.

In particular, the interplay, and to some extent the juxtaposition, of these two dimensions (cultural and structural) is at the basis of the series of effects that the experience of part-time work may have on women labour force participation, which have been identified in the context of conceptualizing the relation between part-time work and women’s employment patterns. These effects are: period, emancipation, integrative, scare (cfr. chapter three, section 3.1). In the empirical strategy scheme, these effects are the expected results of the concrete patterns that we aim at detecting through the empirical analyses, and they are hence the concrete elements on which our hypotheses will be formulated.
On the basis of the elements recalled so far we are now able to operationalize our research questions, the ideas behind our conceptual scheme (mainly the cultural and structural dimensions), and to formulate hypotheses in terms of expected effects which we want to detect through the empirical analyses.

The first question, concerning the evolution of part-time work uses and logics, is studied through the investigation of changes in part-time work profiles and types of part-time work uses over the 2000s. In particular, we are interested in observing changes over the 2000s in part-time work levels as compared to full-time work according to specific characteristics observed at the individual level that could give any insight on the action of the cultural and structural dimensions in determining such changes. This is the only step of the analyses that involves all active women having a job (full-time or part-time). All the next steps involve only women working part-time.

In the same way, we look at changes in the recourse to different types of part-time work use. Essentially, on the building of the literature reviewed and of the case studies presented in section two, we identify three main types of part-time work use: part-time work for family responsibilities; part-time work for multi-activity; part-time work due to market constraints. The first type refers to all those cases where a person opts for part-time work either in order to assure care tasks in her family (to children, or to elderly, or to a component of the family who suffer from illness) or to have more time to get all kind of housework done. Since the reference to family remains essential in determining the type of recourse to part-time work, this type of part-time use is identified as the more traditional one and it is related to what is mainly known as part-time work as a work-life balance instrument, where the “life” component of this binary expression is meant to represent the sphere of family.

The second type refers to a variegated category of persons who use part-time work either to combine a main professional activity with a wide range of other activities (these could be another professional activity, or some sort of professional training, or education, etc.), or to arrange a situation of personal disease (temporary or permanent state of illness), or to simply have at disposal more free time. It could be argued that our decision to define this second type with the term of multi-activity is inappropriate to the extent that multi-activity indicates the presence of multiple activity status, either inside (i.e. more than one job) or outside the labour market (i.e. training or education). Nevertheless, we chose this term in order to contrast this type of part-time work use with the previous one, family responsibilities, which we have identified as the more traditional one. Actually, in the case of part-time work for multi-activity the use of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument is also present, but in a
more innovative way in the sense that the “life” component does not imply an exclusive reference to the sphere of the family, but it opens up to the accomplishment of the self in a wider way with reference to multiple and different spheres.

The third type refers to the situation in which a person was not able to find a full-time job, which it was hence supposed to better match her professional needs and aspirations, and hence accepted a part-time job. This is commonly known as involuntary part-time work. We chose the expression “market constraints” instead, and this was done in order to indicate the fact that the constrained nature of the choice of working part-time is related to limitations imposed by the market situation, but to underline at the same time that the take up of a part-time job opportunity indicates some sort of willingness, which is the willingness to participate in the labour market.

At this stage of our analyses we will compare part-time work due to market constraints to the other two types of part-time work, part-time work for family responsibilities and part-time work for multi-activity, since the first represents the type of situation in which less room for action is left to the worker in terms of time management and where this latter less expresses the need of articulating work with other activities of sphere of his/her life. In comparison, part-time work for family responsibilities is seen as a traditional use of part-time work in terms of time management and work-life articulation, while part-time work for multi-activity is seen as the innovative one at least in terms of diversification patterns. Of course, the extent to which a traditional or innovative use can be developed in the context of traditional or innovative logics of use has to be evaluated, and this is actually what is done through the analysis of the next two sub-questions.

The second question, about the realization of logics behind different types of part-time use, is studied through the investigation of the realization of working time preferences in the context of the individuals’ actual employment situation. This means that we investigate whether, according to different types of part-time uses, a person is satisfied with her working time arrangements in terms of working hours, or whether she is not satisfied because she would rather opt for different working-time arrangements (part-time with a different amount of hours or full-time). By doing so we go beyond the concept of underemployment, and we rely on the

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102 In this case, as in the case of the operationalization of the third research question, when talking about “working time preferences” or “preferences for part-time work” we do not intend to refer neither to gender roles attitudes à la Hakim (cfr. chapter 2, section 2.2.2.2), nor to the direct studying of the gendered dimension of working time options as it is done in many researches by Fagan et al. (cfr. chapter 2, section 2.2.2.9). In this research, these concepts are conceived as indicators of the way different part-time work uses contribute to individuals’ working time organization in terms of elaboration and realization of work-life articulation strategies. Hence, they are used here for their operational rather than theoretical value. This latter has been already critically and deeply discussed in chapter 2.
dimension of adjustment in working time to assess the role of part-time work and its uses in the realization of different logics for the articulation of time between work and outside work. The third question, concerning the elaboration of logics of part-time work use, is studied through the investigation of preferences for part-time work according to types of part-time uses in the context of a wish for an adjustment in individual working time arrangements. In this case, we check under the influence of what factors (i.e. factors that are more related to the cultural dimension? Or factors that are related more to the structural dimension?) and conditioned to the fact of having recourse to a certain type of part-time work uses, individuals wish to adjust their working time in terms of a change or not of working time regime (i.e. switch between part–time and full-time work). This allows us to detect whether, in correspondence of different type of uses of part-time work, part-time work is a real option for the articulation of time between work and other life spheres.

The interplay and juxtaposition of cultural and structural dimensions is caught through the identification of factors that refer to both the spheres. Factors that concern the individual, demographic and motivational spheres are taken as representative of the cultural sphere (like for example age, educational level, partnership status). Ideally these are all the personal factors that bring an individual to opt for part-time work in order to make a certain use of it. Factors that are employment related and concern the job a person occupies, mainly factors which could be linked for example to the professional position of an individual and to the sector of activity in which his/her job is situated, are taken as representative of the structural dimension. These aspects are the aspects that could represent constraints or easing conditions to certain type of part-time work uses and the logics that influence these latter. Then there are the factors that refer to what can be defined a “grey zone”, which can be seen as the intersection between these two kinds of factors, and it encompasses factors that embrace both structural characteristics related to the job market and the personal experience of each individual in terms of growth and orientation of its employment path. In order to better clarify all this, we shall now proceed to the next step in the process of operationalization of our conceptual scheme, and hence present the data and variables on which our empirical analyses are based.

7.1.2 Data and variables

The empirical analyses of this section drawn on the national labour force survey of the two countries under review, which are knows under the name of Enquête Emploi for France and
The survey is carried out by INSEE (French Office of National Statistics) since 1950. Since 2003, the survey has been quarterly and the data has been collected from a sample of households on an ongoing basis each week in the course of the quarter. The purpose of the survey is to observe both the structural and economic situation of people in the labour market. It is the only source that provides a measurement for the concepts of activity, employment, unemployment, inactivity as defined by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Questions cover employment, unemployment, training, social origins, situation one year before, and the main situation on a monthly basis over the last twelve months. Accordingly, the survey provides data on professions, the activity of women and young people, working hours and casual employment. It offers a clearer vision of the situation of different categories of workers and changes in working situations.

The statistical area of operation is represented by Metropolitan France and the statistical coverage is limited to “ordinary housing”. In this framework, all individuals belonging to a household and aged 15 years old and over are surveyed. Data collection is quarterly and the survey is conducted continuously, every week of every quarter. The same dwelling is surveyed six times (the different waves of the surveys are spaced at intervals of exactly three months). The sample is based on area sampling. The areas are determined from the results of the 1999 census (until 2009). When the survey is carried out, data is stratified by region and by degree of urbanization. Every quarter, about 54000 dwellings are surveyed, and surveys are repeated in one sixth of the dwellings every quarter. Ultimately, there are survey files for about 72000 people aged 15 or over who are respondents every quarter, in about 38000 households.

The survey is carried out by ISTAT (Italian Office of National Statistics) since 1959 and it represents the main source of information about the situation of the Italian labour market. On the basis of its data, ISTAT provides the official estimates of national employment and activity rates, and the main indicators about the aggregated labour supply such as professions, industry, working hours, work contracts and professional training.

\[103\] We chose to work on the datasets provided by the national surveys rather than on the Labour Force Survey harmonized by Eurostat because we believe that, in the context of a societal approach, analyses carried out separately for each country on the basis of national datasets allow to better explore the richness of the different contextual factors (social, institutional and cultural) and to control for them. Accordingly, the data we use do not suffer from the limitations posed in substantial comparative terms by an eventual procedure of harmonization that risks de-contextualizing them, but at the same time they remain absolutely comparable because we work only on what are defined as “core variables”. These are variables are collected by National Statistical Institutes on the behalf of Eurostat according to the latest European Commission regulation on the codification to be used.
Data from this survey are used as well to analyze various individual aspects with respect to family and social dynamics such as the increase of occupational mobility, changes in professions, the growth of female employment, and labour market participation patterns of the adult population in general. As France and many other European countries, Italy as well switched to the continuous design and quarterly data collection for its labour force survey, and so since 2004 the survey is conducted continuously, every week of every quarter. The sample is constituted by households who are randomly selected from municipal registries over the Italian national territory. People in the households selected are surveyed four times over a period of fifteen months. It means that every household is contacted and then surveyed over six months, which are followed by an interval of six months where the household is not surveyed, to conclude with other 6 months where the household is contacted and surveyed for the last time before being dropped out from the sample. Every year, about 300 thousands dwellings are surveyed and about data 800 thousands respondents are registered.

In this study we use for the two countries the continuous version of the surveys. This is done for comparative reasons within and between countries. Actually, in first place the questions and variables available in the continuous version are much richer than those contained in the annual version. Then, the national continuous versions are better harmonized in terms of contents and structures than the annual versions. Accordingly, bearing in mind the fact that we are interested in the first decade of the 2000s, this choice limited the data available to the purpose of our study to the period 2003-2010 in the case of France and 2004-2010 in the case of Italy. As we have already specified, since we are interested in changes in part-time work profiles and patterns, and not in female part-time work trajectories per-se, we retain the structure of the data in a cross-sectional perspective and to run analyses in a way to compare different points in time among countries and across countries. Since we consider that the period is too short (respectively 6 and 7 years) to justify the running of the analyses on every year of the survey available to us (changes to one year to another risk to reveal to be uninterestingly to the scope of our study, because we risk to get the effects of short-term economic fluctuations rather than more general societal changes), we decided to choose two points in time which comparison would be capable to reveal substantial dynamics of societal changes with respect to the dimensions and elements of our interest. Accordingly, we chose to compare data from the earliest and the latest points in time at our disposal, which means that

\[104\] In this way, since we did not convert the structure of the datasets into a longitudinal one based on person-period records, through the analysis of different waves of each survey we got annual estimates which have been weighted through the apposite annual weight variables.
for France we run analyses and compared results for the survey from 2003 and 2009\textsuperscript{105}, while for Italy this was done for data from the 2004 and 2010 surveys. In this way we obtain a pseudo-panel design for our study, covering a sufficiently large period of the decade for the two countries giving us the possibility to grasp the mechanisms and the dynamics in action between the first and the last years of the decade. We believe that these technical and methodological choices respect our aim to work on pseudo-panel approach with a comparative design situated within an institutional paradigm.

Because we are interested in three aspects which are changes in part-time work profiles, changes in patterns of part-time work uses, effects related to different types of part-time work uses, we basically worked on two samples. For studying changes in part-time work profiles, the sample is composed by all active women having a job (either a part-time or a full-time one) at the time they were surveyed, and who were susceptible to be in an age range that justifies their activity status on the labour market. We have hence excluded women that we consider as too young (aged less than 24 years old) and too old (aged more than 64 years old) at each of the time points chosen, in order to have a somehow comprehensive sample of women who are likely of being starting or already having a professional independent life with respect to individual and societal roles both in the work and family sphere. In this way we open a window of observation broad and varied enough to evaluate the dynamics and the elements in which we are interested in. For the studying of the other points, changes in patterns of part-time work use and effects related to different types of part-time work use, the sample involves only employed women with a part-time job and, again, compelling with the same age conditions we have illustrated for the previous sample.

As a result, the first type of sample is composed of 54414 women in 2003 and 60375 women in 2009 for France, and of 80570 women in 2004 and 71347 women in 2010 for Italy; the second type of sample includes 16107 women in 2003 and 18714 women in 2009 for France, and 21272 women in 2004 and 22562 women in 2010 for Italy. Of course, these may be further reduced due to missing data on some controlling variables in the descriptive analyses part, and after list-wise deletion of respondents for whom information is missing on any of the explanatory variables used in the multivariate analyses part\textsuperscript{106}.

On the basis of the \textit{Enquête Emploi} and \textit{Rilevazione sulle Forze di Lavoro}, the relevant notions derived from our conceptual framework have been further operationalized by defining

\textsuperscript{105} At the moment when we were working on the data analysis part of this study, the \textit{Enquête Emploi} 2010 had not been released yet by INSEE.

\textsuperscript{106} In these cases, the definitive (N) will be indicated.
a set of variables through which make these aspects and relationships between them assessable. For both surveys, the main variables we are interested in come from the sections containing information about current employment status and actual job(s) characteristics, the section regrouping questions about social origins and family situation\textsuperscript{107}. We begin by describing the dependent variables.

For the investigation of the first research sub-question, concerning the evolution of part-time work uses and logics, we have two independent variables. The first one is meant to allow the studying of changes in part-time work profiles, and it is full-time/part-time work distinction to make clear under what working time regime a person’s job is classified. As a general rule, in our study a job position is classified as part-time if average weekly working hours are lower than 34, and full-time is average weekly working hours exceed 35\textsuperscript{108}. The datasets on which we draw contain a question which directly asks to the respondents to self-classify their actual job as part-time or full-time, and hence a variable that resume this full-time/part-time work distinction. We rely on such a variable and we cross it with another variable that resumes information about the average weekly-working hours, this in order to make sure that individuals correctly self-selected in the proper group. The second dependent variable is targeted at the studying of the different types of part-time work profiles and it is called part-time work uses. This variable has three categories and is based on answers given to the question concerning the principal reasons for working part-time. Respondents can choose between six alternatives: person is undergoing school education or training; own illness of disability; looking after children or incapacitated adults; having more free time or doing housework; person could not find a full-time job; other reasons. On the basis of the distinction between part-time uses that we have described in the previous section, we label under “multi-activity” the use of part-time work that regroup the answers ‘person is undergoing school education or training’, ‘own illness of disability’, ‘have more free time or do housework’, and ‘other reasons’. The answers ‘looking after children or incapacitated adults’ is considered the use for “family responsibilities”. Finally, the answer ‘person could not find a full-time job’ is attributed to the use of part-time work that we defined as “market constraints”. As we are going to see soon, the variable part-time uses becomes our main independent variable in the

\textsuperscript{107} In the case of Italy the section aimed at collecting information about the respondent’s situation one year before had to be used too.

\textsuperscript{108} Average weekly working hours do not include overtime, and are declared by the respondent on the basis on his/her personal evaluation with no reference to what is stated at this regard in his/her work contract.
contest of the statistical analyses carried out for the investigation of the next two research sub-question.

As for the investigation of the second sub-question, the dependent variable used is called *match* and is aimed at checking whether a woman achieves her working time preferences through her actual working time arrangements. In particular, the variable has two categories and is constructed on the basis of the answers given to the questions on whether a person wishes to work a higher or lower amount of hours per week, and of the answer given to the question on the wished amount of working hours per week (asked only to those who wish a different amount of weekly working hours) conditioned to the variable containing information about the actual amount of working hours. Answers “no” to questions concerning the eventual wish to work a different amount of working hours than actual concur to form the category “match realized”, which encompasses all individuals who are in point of fact satisfied with their working time arrangements. The category “match not realized” is constituted on the basis of two conditions. The first condition is having answered “yes” to questions about the wish to work more or less hours (i.e. a person wishes either to work more or to work less). The second condition is the non-correspondence between actual and preferred working time arrangements. Since this part of the analysis is carried out on the sample formed by women working part-time only, the actual working time arrangement has been coded in three categories in order to diversify the different types of part-time work profiles according to the diverse extent of labour market involvement they imply on the basis of weekly working hours. We define as: marginal part-time work all those jobs that require until 15 hours per week; moderated part-time jobs that require between 16 and 29 hours per week; substantial part-time work jobs that require between 30 and 34 hours per week. The variable about the wished working time arrangements has been obviously coded according to the same scheme, but it contains also the additional category of full-time work (more than 35 hours per week). We think that the control for the simultaneously presence of this two conditions is important because it allows to grasp not simply the dimension of underemployment (as it is usually done with the analysis of this kind of variables), but the more articulated question of workers needs for individual adjustment in working time arrangements, which is definitively more important to the scope of our study.

Coming to the investigation of the third sub-question (elaboration), the dependent variable has two categories and is based on the question of how many hours per week an individual ideally wish to work, and we called it *wished working time arrangements*. This question is not asked to every respondent, but only to those who previously declared through the answers to some
preliminary questions that they would like to work either a higher number of working hours per week or a lower number. The wished working time arrangement is coded according to a full-time/part-time distinction on the basis of the criteria we have previously mentioned (i.e. up 34 hours per week is considered part-time; higher than 35 hours per week is considered full-time). Since this part of the analysis is carried out on part-time workers only, it means that through this variable we check whether people who are not satisfied with their actual amount of working hours wish to get a number of working hours that would imply a shift between different working time arrangements such as passing from part-time to full-time work, or simply an adjustment of working hours while remaining under a part-time work regime.

We come now to the explanatory variables. As we have previously mentioned, we identify our controlling factors with reference to three main spheres that are meant to be representative of the effects produced by the cultural and the structural dimension, and by the interplay between these latter. Hence, our explanatory variables can be classified in three main groups: individual-related variables, employment-related variables, and variables who grasp both individual and employment-related aspects. All the chosen variables refer to factors that in the literature have been found having an influence on women’s part-time work patterns. We proceed to the illustration of the explanatory variables according to the group distinction we have just shown, and by distinguishing variables which are considered as a main independent variables in the context of our conceptual framework (hence, they have a particular interest to the scope of our study), and variables which are considered simple control variables.

Individual-related variables refer to individual’s socio-demographic, household and domestic characteristics. The main independent variables we chose in this group are cohort of birth and level of education. For the variable cohort of birth we identify four successive cohorts of women; 1940-49, 1950-59, 1960-69, 1970-79. These cohorts have entered the labour market and build their families and employment histories in different decades and under different material, institutional and cultural conditions. This variable is important because it allows grasping changes in the different components of the supply of female part-time work, since changes may have affected some types of women but not others. In particular, the profile of

\[109\] Unfortunately, the Labour Force Surveys does not contain attitudinal questions. Hence, in our analyses we do not dispose of variables about gender identity, work attitudes and work-life preferences, which would have been very interesting in the context of our study. The French survey contains a variable on the work experience of a woman’s mother, which could represent a valid proxy in this sense, but since the same variable is not available in the Italian survey it is not used for comparative reasons.
women looking for labour market participation and pursuing a continuous career may be
diverse across generations, and also the work-life balance aspect may differ with this respect.
At the same time, with the weakening of male-breadwinner norms and policies, and in a
moment of high labour market and family instability, the experiences of women with respect
to employment choices and the family/work dilemma may have become more homogeneous,
cutting across education, social status and region. Likewise, such choices and experiences are
influenced by the normative and moral context of both actual and past social contexts. As a
result, in our study we use the variable cohort of birth to compare part-time work profiles and
patterns of part-time work uses across generations at some specific points in time, in order
to observe similarities and differences with respect to these aspects in the experiences of
women who have been born and grown up and different periods, but who all contemporary
live in the same labour market and societal frame. The variable level of education is relevant
to our study because it captures human and social capital. Essentially, education may directly
influence women’s labour market position, but it may also yields non-monetary advantages
since it offers to women new forms of identity, social legitimation and independence, and
greater bargaining power within the family though the opportunity of earning an autonomous
wage. The variable level education is measured in three categories which have been
regrouped following their recode on the basis of the ES-ISCED classification: low (no
qualification, only primary, or lower-secondary), medium (upper-secondary, post-secondary)
and high (tertiary).

Employment-related variables refer to an individual’s professional and occupational positions
and the characteristics of the job a person occupies. In this group of variables, the variable
working time arrangement is identified as main independent variable. It is basically a variable
aimed at recognizing the different types of part-time work with regard to the diverse extent of
labour market involvement they imply and different employment characteristics they offer on
the basis of weekly working hours. Actually, inequalities and differences in labour market
opportunities, as well as in work-life articulation choices, are also related to the effects of
flexibilisation in working time as long as standard working time continue to be considered the
social norm. As we have already specified, we define as: marginal part-time work all those
jobs that require until 15 hours per week; moderated part-time jobs that require between 16

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Since cohort differences do not necessarily imply the existence of generations (i.e. the existence of a
collective identity who share a distinctive culture by the virtue of having experienced the same historical events
at the same time in their lives), the term ‘generations’ has to be grasped in as soft sense.
and 29 hours per week; substantial part-time work jobs that require between 30 and 34 hours per week.

We have then variables who grasp both individual and employment-related aspects. As main independent variable in this group we have the variables part-time uses and previously activity status. The variable part-time uses, which has been already presented, when it not used as dependent variable, it is the main independent variables of our analyses. It is included in this group of variable because the type of part-time use can be considered as both linked to an individual’s personal exigencies and to the opportunities offered by the labour market context. The variable previously activity status is coded in three categories, which are active employed, active unemployed and inactive, and it refers to the labour market situation of a woman previous to the occupation of her actual job. We think that this variable grasp the personal and employment experience of an individual, since it basically incorporates both structural factors linked to job characteristics and labour market positions previously occupied and factors related to her personal and motivational experience with respect to the family and outside-work life.

As controlling factors, among the individual-related variables we have included the following list of variables: partnership status, presence of dependent children in the household, region of residence. Partnership status indicated whether a person lives in a partnership or not. Basically, it is a variable that does not makes a distinction between legal marriage and cohabitation, but recognizes whether a woman lives in a union. It was chosen over a classical variable such as marital status in order to account for the diversity of situations in partnership patterns, especially for what concerns the younger cohorts where cohabitation becomes increasingly frequent. Presence of dependent children in the household indicates whether a woman lives in a household where there are her children up to 18 years old. Region is obviously coded into different ways for France and Italy. For France, the variables region is coded in three categories which are: Parisian region and ‘bassin parisien’; North, East and Centre-East; West, South-West and ‘Mediterranée’ (South-East). For Italy, region assumes the three following category: North, Centre, and ‘Mezzogiorno’ (South). 

111 In the case of Italy, this variable refers to the labour market situation of a woman exactly one year before because we did not dispose of the variable referring to activity status previous the actual job.

112 This variable is not available for the analyses concerning Italy in 2010.

113 This variable is not available for the analyses concerning Italy in 2010.

114 In the French context, national analyses that control for a region effect over the whole national territory are not common at all. Hence, it was not easy to identify a proper classification for this variable. We chose to rely on the geographical criteria and the general labour market situation of each zone, considering the fact that the Parisian region and its surroundings present numerous specificities as compared to the rest of the national territory.

115 The three categories have been identified on the basis of the classification traditionally used by ISTAT.
Among the employment-related variables we have included: *occupational status, type of work contract, economic sector of activity, farm size and employment status* (this latter is included in analyses for Italy only)\textsuperscript{116}.

**Occupational status** is represented by professional position occupied in actual job (from manual worker to engineer/manager). It is coded into categories: low-medium and medium high. Assignment to one category or another is based on the nature of the work carried out in each professional position (i.e. manual/conceptual work), the level of qualification required to occupy each professional position (i.e. from low skilled to high skilled work) and the prestige attached to each professional position in terms of social status (i.e. a manual worker enjoys a lower social status than a manager). This variable is meant to represent labour market position and social stratification mechanisms\textsuperscript{117}. **Type of work contract** is a dichotomous variable that distinguished between open-ended contract and atypical contracts (including fix-term contracts and others atypical). **Economic sector of activity** is classified in tertiary and others, where others regroup industry, agriculture and construction\textsuperscript{118}. Finally, **farm size** has three categories: micro, regrouping all establishments with up to ten employees; P.M.E (small and medium enterprises), representing establishments employing between 11 and 249 workers; big, concerning establishments with more than 250 employees\textsuperscript{119}. In the case of Italy, employment status distinguishes between standard employees, and other kind of workers (where are included self-employed, collaborators and family workers).

Table A1 in the annex, gives technical definition and classification of all the variables included in the analyses. Tables from A2 to A4, presented again in the annex, give descriptive statistics of the various variables used in the analyses by year and country for the two samples on which such analyses are based.

\textsuperscript{116} The choice of introducing the variable employment status only in analyses concerning Italy comes from the fact that, as we have seen in the chapter dedicated to the contextual overview on this country, a great diversification of employment status exists in this country, and it represents a factor playing an important role in determining different labour market dynamics for workers enjoying different status. On the contrary, in France such factor is not that much determinant.

\textsuperscript{117} It was chosen over the commonly used variable occupation coded on the basis of the ISCO classification because we consider it more exhaustive in the context of our analyses where the sample is constituted by women working part-time and the category “clerical work and services” would have surely risked to be over-represented. In this sense, the variable “economic sector of activity” is likely to better catch the effect of being a worker in clerical or services positions.

\textsuperscript{118} Part-time work, it is well known and it has often pointed out in this thesis, is for the majority present in the service sector, hence we regrouped the others sector in one category in order to avoid problems of small number.

\textsuperscript{119} This classification is based on the definition given by the European Commission in its recommendation 2003/361/CE, and it is the one used by both the National Statistics Office of France and Italy, INSEE and ISTAT respectively.
7.1.3  **Hypotheses: what has changed in part-time work uses and their effects over the 2000s in France and Italy?**

In chapter three we have presented the main hypotheses of our study. In this section we are going to reformulate them in more practical terms and in a stylized form referring to the effects we can measure through the analysis of the possible relationships between the variables we have presented earlier in this chapter. These expectations must pay attention to several factors at the micro level and contextualize these latter through the comparison across space and time. Like the research questions, the hypotheses can be divided in three subsets. The first subsets concerns changes in part-time employment patterns with particular respect to type of part-time work uses. As we have seen in chapter five and six, in both France and Italy, the growth of part-time work has not been addressed with respect to its relevance in terms of feminization patterns. Nevertheless, part-time work has been progressively increasing in these two countries especially for women, despite the fact that women’s integration into the labour force has traditionally been based on women assimilation to the male occupational model, at least for those women who were able to do so. However, the further growth of jobs more compatible with family responsibilities such as part-time jobs, together with the decline of the figure of the female homemaker and the fact that employment of married women and mothers has become more respectable and acceptable, may have opened the door to an increasingly taking up of part-time work among different groups of women and to a diversification of part-time work uses. In this sense, part-time work profiles may have become increasingly related to women’s individual characteristics, personal attitudes and exigencies at specific stage of their life. At the same time, while women’s involvement in paid work may have become more universalized, strong labour market inequalities may have favoured high gender polarization of part-time work as a time use option, endorsed by the general institutional contexts and by social norms. This may be especially the case of Italy where at the institutional and societal level a strongly gendered division of labour based on the traditional Italian familialistic model still persists. On the whole, we expect to observe, in concomitance of an increasingly growth of part-time work across successive cohorts of women, a progressive diversification in part-time work uses in a cohort perspective and depending on the level of education of women concerned, which could be interpreted as the result of a period effect (i.e. at different stages of their life women engage in different type of part-time work uses) and of an emancipation effect (i.e. women are more independent in their labour market decisions and different types
of part-time work uses are part of such decisions). Accordingly to what we have previously said (i.e. strong gendered division of labour persisting in Italy), these effects are likely to be stronger in France than in Italy. Then, for those women whose individual characteristics would have not allowed them to manage to participate in the labour market on a full-time basis under the constraints of the societal and employment context, or simply because of a lack of opportunities, part-time work may have provided them with alternatives to integrate the labour market anyway. Hence, in practical terms, we expect that the variable previous activity status matters in the sense that it shows to what extent there is an integrative effect played by part-time work in women’s employment histories. In comparative perspective, we believe that this effect is stronger in Italy, where the intense growth of part-time work has granted to women the access to a labour market that offers very few opportunities to female employment. In France, where women are better integrated in the labour market, this effect is likely to consist in a wider capacity of women to manage the recourse to different types of part-time work uses. However, we also expect that patterns of work-life balance through different types of part-time work uses are likely to be characterized by growing inequalities, given the fact that part-time jobs do not offer the same employment and working conditions, especially in contexts of increasingly labour market flexibility. Particularly, those forms of part-time work which are less close to the standard full-time working pattern, like marginal and moderated part-time work, are likely to offer less choice and room for maneuvering in the possibilities offered by part-time work uses in terms of work-life balance. In this case, structural factors incorporated in the job’s characteristics may constrain the modalities of recourse to part-time work and hamper the diversification in part-time work uses, showing hence a scar effect of part-time work on women’s employment paths. This effect is likely to be quite strong in Italy, where the growth of part-time work has been part of a process of injections of flexibility targeted at specific segments of the labour market through the promotion of atypical employment forms. Likewise, we expect a strong effect in this sense in France as well, since in this country the growth of part-time work itself has been favoured mainly in periods of high unemployment as a work sharing strategy, becoming also part of the process of casualization of work.

The second subset of hypotheses refers to the effect of different types of part-time work uses on the realization of working time preferences and demand for adjustments in individual working time arrangements. On the building of what we have just illustrated, we expect that traditional use of part-time work (part-time work for family reasons) is more likely to favour the realization of working time preferences and be less susceptible to demands for working
time adjustments, because they are normatively better integrated in the institutional and societal context. Accordingly, this would be the type of part-time work use more likely to favour an integration effect of part-time work of women having recourse to it. This is the case in Italy, where part-time work is still perceived in a traditional perspective in line with gendered social norms, when it is not the result of pure dynamics of flexibilization. On the contrary, in France the situation may appear more articulated than that, since part-time work does not necessarily assume a traditional connotation in terms of gender roles, and where the recourses to part-time work are hence more diversified. Moreover, we have seen in chapter five that women working part-time for family reasons often do not have the opportunity to manage their working time in order to match it with their family obligations and exigencies, and they are sometimes asked to adapt to the needs for flexibility of their companies. In this sense, those working part-time for multi-activity reasons are likely to suffer less from such limitations, since their outside-work engagements are likely to be less constraining. On the whole, we expect the effects of individual characteristics being stronger for younger and better educated women, who are the ones who are more likely to be more exigent on the extent of their labour market involvement. Then, employment related factors are expected to have an important influence in both countries, but particularly in France, where part-time work assumes more frequently atypical connotations, while in Italy the desire for working time adjustments is more likely to be related to the wish for a different type of labour market involvement (i.e. full-time work).

The third subset of questions deals with the effects of different types of part-time work uses on the elaboration of preferences for part-time work in the context of a wish for an adjustment in individual working time arrangements (i.e. working time preferences of people who to adjust their actual working time patterns). On the basis of expectations formulated in the previous subset of hypotheses, we expect that preferences for part-time work are obviously lower in concomitance of the part-time work use that we defined as “market constraints”. Again, this effect is expected to be more marked in Italy because of the scarce diversification of part-time work uses in this country. Then, we expect that preferences for part-time work remain important among women who make recourse to part-time work for family reasons, which indicates that among these women part-time work is needed, but according to others working time patterns. This can be interpreted as the presence of a scar effect of part-time work recourse, since part-time work do not allow to maximize the advantages it can possibly bring in terms of work-life balance solution. Once more, this effect is expected to be more significant in France in the light of what has been recalled above about the somehow imposed
flexibility in working time arrangements to women trying to balance work and family life. As for the effect of individual characteristics, we expect that lower educated women are more inclined towards preferences for full-time work because they are more likely to sustain uncomfortable working time arrangements. Likewise, we suppose that preferences for part-time work increases across successive cohorts of women, given the fact that women’s crucial decision about their involvement in the labour market concerns more and more critical moments in which they might be asked to interrupt and successively resume participation in employment. At the same time, this would mean that they are keen to opt for part-time work, even if in their current situation they are not satisfied with their work-life articulation. We suppose that the effect of cohort is more important in France because in this country women traditionally present more continuous employment histories, while in Italy the most critical phases in women’s career concerns the entering and the re-entering in the labour market. Finally, the effect of employment related characteristics is expected to be important to the extent to which more marginalized forms of part-time work push women into uncomfortable working-time arrangements that they wish to adjust.

7.2 METHODS AND METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Concerning the methodology, both descriptive and analytic analyses will be carried out. The descriptive analyses will include cross tabulations and frequency tables referring to the main explanatory variables. The analytical analyses will be based mainly on logistic regression technique. At the moment of running the logistic and multinomial regression models, all the categorical variables presenting more than two categories have been introduced in such models through a set of dummy variables.

In the next paragraphs we briefly present logistic regression and some methodological issues that may be either directly related or not to use of logistic regression itself.

7.2.1 A brief overview of binary logistic and multinomial logistic regression

Logistic regression is part of a category of statistical models called generalized linear models (Agresti 1996). It allows one to predict a discrete outcome, such as group membership, from a set of variables that may be continuous, discrete, dichotomous, or a mix of any of these.
Logistic regression can be used to predict a dependent variable on the basis of continuous and/or categorical independents and to determine the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independents; to rank the relative importance of independents; to assess interaction effects; and to understand the impact of covariate control variables. Generally, the dependent or response variable is dichotomous, such as presence/absence or success/failure. Binary (or binomial) logistic regression is a form of regression which is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous (or binary) variables, such as presence/absence or success/failure.120 Accordingly, the dependent variable in logistic regression can take the value 1 with a probability of success \( \theta \), or the value 0 with probability of failure 1-\( \theta \).

Multinomial logistic regression is an application of the binomial logistic regression which allows handling cases where the dependent variable has of more than two cases, that is when the dependent variable is polychotomous (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996). The main assumption of this kind of model is that for each combination of values of the explanatory variables, the responses counted for the categories of the dependent variables have a multinomial distribution (Agresti 1996).

Continuous variables are not used as dependents in logistic regression. Unlike logit regression, there can be only one dependent variable. As mentioned previously, the independent or predictor variables in logistic regression can take any form. That is, logistic regression makes no assumption about the distribution of the independent variables. They do not have to be normally distributed, linearly related or of equal variance within each group. The relationship between the predictor and response variables is not a linear function, and the logistic regression function is used instead.

Although logistic regression finds a "best fitting" equation just as linear regression does, the principles on which it does so are rather different. Logistic regression applies maximum likelihood estimation after transforming the dependent variable into a logit variable (the natural log of the odds of the dependent occurring or not). The maximum likelihood method maximizes the probability of getting the observed results given the fitted regression coefficients. In this way, logistic regression estimates the probability of a certain event occurring. This means that logistic regression calculates changes in the log-odds of the dependent, not changes in the dependent itself as linear regression does though the least-squared deviations criterion for the best fit. In particular, instead of classifying an observation

120 Discriminant analysis is also used to predict this kind of outcomes. However, discriminant analysis can only be used with continuous independent variables. Thus, in instances where the independent variables are a categorical, or a mix of continuous and categorical, logistic regression is preferred.
into one group or the other, logistic regression predicts the log odds that an observation will have an indicator equal to 1 (which means that logistic regression equation does not directly predict the probability that the indicator is equal to 1). The odds of an event is defined as the ratio of the probability that an event occurs to the probability that it fails to occur. Thus,

\[
\text{Odds(indicator}=1) = \frac{\text{Pr(indicator}=1)}{[1 - \text{Pr(indicator}=1)]}
\]

or

\[
\text{Odds(indicator}=1) = \frac{\text{Pr(indicator}=1)}{\text{Pr(indicator}=0)}.
\]

The log odds is just the (natural) logarithm of the odds.

When there are two groups, one that has experienced the event of interest and the other that has not, the logistic regression model can be written as the following log model:

\[
\log \left( \frac{P(\text{event})}{1-P(\text{event})} \right) = B_0 + B_1 X_1 + B_2 X_2 + \ldots + B_p X_p
\]

where \(B0\) is the intercept, \(B1\) to \(Bp\) are the logistic regression coefficients, and \(X1\) to \(Xp\) the independent variables. The logit \(\log \left( \frac{(1-P(\text{event}))}{P(\text{event})} \right)\) represents the natural log of the probability that the event will occur. Hence, when the dependent variable has only two values, there is only one nonredundant logit that can be formed. Instead, if the dependent variables has \(J\) positive values, the number of nonredundant logits that be formed are \(J-1\). They specify the probability for each possible way of allocating the \(n\) independent observations to the \(J\) categories. The simplest type of logit for this situation is called the baseline category logit and it compares each category to a baseline category. Hence, if the baseline category is \(J\), for the \(ith\) category the logistic regression model can be written as the following log model:

\[
\log(P(\text{category}_{i})/P(\text{category}_{j})) = B_0 + B_{i1} X_1 + B_{i2} X_2 + \ldots + B_{ip} X_p
\]

In this kind of model a set of coefficients for each logit will be estimated and that’s why each coefficient has two subscripts: \(i\), which identify the logit; and a ordinal number, which identify the variable. For the baseline category all the coefficients will be zero.

In multinomial logistic regression all the pairs of \(J\) categories are taken into account and the model describe the odds of response in one category instead of another (usually the one set as baseline one). In the case of the current analyses, where we have a dependent variables with three values, for each of the regression that has been run two set of non-zero coefficients have been generated: one for the comparison of each of the first two groups to the last group.
Hence, in a general multinomial model aimed at estimating the logit \( \log(P(\text{category}_i)/P(\text{category}_j)) \), for each value of the dependent variable, \( \text{category}_j \) represents the reference group, which is the group of the respondent who have realized the match between actual and preferred working hours, and \( \text{category}_i \) represents each of the other groups that have to be compared with the reference one.

The most common way of interpreting a logit is to convert it to an odds ratio using the \( \exp() \) function. One can convert a logit back to an odds ratio using the \( \ln() \) function. Note that an odds ratio above 1.0 refers to positive odds that the dependent = 1 (i.e. the expected outcome) in binary logistic regression. The closer the odds ratio is to 1.0, the more the independent variable's categories don't matter and are independent of the dependent variable, with 1.0 representing full statistical independence. For instance, if the logit \( b_1 = 2.303 \), then the corresponding odds ratio (the exponential function, \( e^{b_1} \)) is 10, then we may say that when the independent variable increases one unit, the odds that the dependent = 1 increase by a factor of 10, when other variables are controlled. On the building of this, in our analyses we will present results in terms of odd-ratios.

### 7.2.2 Unobserved heterogeneity in logistic regression

Logistic regression is widely used by social scientists when they are concerned by quantitative studies where the outcome under observation is represented by necessarily or naturally dichotomous variables. Actually, many outcome variables in quantitative social science research take the form of binary events like in the case of educational transitions, childbirth patterns, social benefit take up, or voting behaviors. The popularity of non-linear regression model comes from the fact that researchers interested in estimating the probability that the event under study occurs, typically turn to logistic regression, even more that this practice is recognized as the best one by recommended textbooks in quantitative methodology. However, the use of logistic regression implies a serious problem that has been underestimated so far in sociological cross-sectional analyses with binary outcomes: the bias that derives from unobserved heterogeneity.

\[\text{unobserved heterogeneity}\]

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121 In this paragraph the problem of unobserved heterogeneity is presented with respect to models that hold dichotomous dependent variables, but the points that are going to be illustrated are valuable also for multinomial logistic regression, which is also applied in our analyses.

122 Conversely, this is problem has been largely studied in the case of analyses on panel and longitudinal data, where it is known also as “frailty”, and this has offered to researchers a wide set of knowledge to deal with it when running this kind of analyses. This is related to the fact that identification of the unobserved heterogeneity
Unobserved heterogeneity is the variation in the dependent variable that is caused by omitted variables, which are either variables that are unobservables or variables that are excluded from a model given the fact that, in a model building process, researchers can seldom take into account all variables that affect an outcome (Mood 2009). In particular, the bias that results from unobserved heterogeneity refers to logistic regression estimates: estimates of the effect of independent variables on the binary outcome are biased if all the relevant independent variables that affect the outcome are not observed (Wooldridge 2002). In this sense, if researchers are familiar with the consequences that this kind of problem implies in the case of linear regression models (OLS), where the bias in effects estimates arises only if omitted variables are correlated with the observed independent variables (Buis 2005), they often ignore the fact that non-linear regression models do not behave in the same way in this respect. Actually, in logistic regression estimates of the effect of independent variables will be biased even if the unobserved heterogeneity is not correlated with the observed independent variables (Abramson et al. 2000; Ejrnæs and Holm 2006). This means that, in an hypothetical illustrative model - hence, a very simplified one - where there is one dependent variable \( y \) and two independent variables \( x_1 \) and \( x_2 \), the exclusion of \( x_2 \) from the model affects the odds ratio\(^{123} \) of \( x_1 \) in two ways: by biasing it upwards or downwards on the basis of the correlation between \( x_1 \) and \( x_2 \), and the correlation between \( x_2 \) and \( y \) when controlling for \( x_1 \); by biasing it downwards on the basis of the difference in the residual variance between the model including \( x_2 \) and the model excluding it. Accordingly, the omission of \( x_2 \) from the model results in confounding the effect of \( x_1 \) with the effect of \( x_2 \) or, in other words, the coefficient for \( x_1 \) \((B1)\) captures the effect of \( x_2 \) depending on the extent to which \( x_1 \) and \( x_2 \) are correlated. To put it in another way, the effect of an unobserved variable depends on the values of the observed variables even if the unobserved and observed variables themselves are uncorrelated (Buis 2005). Likewise, the omission of \( x_2 \) from the model results in an increase of the residual variance as well. As a consequence, the size of the unobserved heterogeneity depends on the variance of omitted variables and their effects on \( y \) and, as it has already underlined, the odds ratios from logistic regression are affected by unobserved heterogeneity even when it is unrelated to the included independent variables. On the whole, this means that

\(^{123}\) In this paragraph we talk about odds ratios without mentioning log-odds ratios because, as we have previously mentioned, we have chosen to provide our results in terms of odds ratios. However, all the arguments that we are going to expose apply to log-odds ratios as well.
the coefficients for the independent variables change when including in a model other controlling variables that are correlated with the dependent variables, even when these are unrelated with the original independent variables (Mood 2009).

Unobserved heterogeneity cause problems to the common ways through which social researchers are used to interpret results from logistic regression. This is true with respect to three main aspects.

The first aspect concerns the interpretations of odds ratios as substantive effects, since they also reflect unobserved heterogeneity. Actually, the interpretation of odds ratios as effect estimates requires to researches to be very careful when interpreting logistic regression estimates as causal effects. In fact, models can usually afford to explain a small degree of variance, given the fact that it is tricky to control for all factors related to independent and dependent variable, as well as it is difficult to control for all variables that are significant for explaining the dependent variable. This entire means that unobserved heterogeneity is almost always present. What can be helpful to researchers in this case is that, even if the magnitude of the impact of unobserved heterogeneity unrelated to the independent variables is not known, what is known is the direction of the impact, which always leads to an underestimation of the effect that would be estimated if accounting for unobserved heterogeneity. Moreover, it must be bear in mind that unobserved heterogeneity that is not related to the independent variables does not affect the possibility to draw conclusions about the direction of an effect and the relative effect of different variables within a model (which variable has the largest effect) (Wooldridge 2002).

The second aspect refers to the comparison of odds ratios across models with different independent variables, since the unobserved heterogeneity is likely to change across models. As it has been already specified, in a logistic regression model the odds ratio for one variable ($x_1$) can change when controlling for another variable ($x_2$), even in the case where $x_1$ and $x_2$ are not correlated. Consequently, researchers may be misled by the common practices of controlling for additional effects and decide to include new independent variables in the model. In this case, such a procedure does not necessary work out, since changes of coefficients across models can depend also on changes in unobserved heterogeneity.

The third aspects deals with the comparison of odds ratios across samples, across groups within samples or over time, this even when models with the same independent variables are used, because the unobserved heterogeneity can vary across the compared samples, groups, or points in time. In point of fact, assuming that the unobserved heterogeneity stays the same is most of the times a very strong assumption.
To sum up, the fact that odds ratios in logistic regression reflect effects of the independent variables as well as the proportion of unobserved heterogeneity affects the possibility to draw conclusion about substantive effects, to compare coefficients over models, and to compare coefficients across samples, across groups within samples, and across different points in time. Even though all these problems are relevant to our research, the third one is the most critical. Accordingly, we are going to review the solutions proposed to overcome the limitations posed by unobserved heterogeneity to the use of logistic regression for sociological quantitative analysis, with a particular interest for the procedures that has been specifically elaborated to solve the third problem. As a preliminary issue, and for the sake of clarity, it must be underlined that so far any of these solutions has been unanimously defined as satisfactory by the research community.

The most common solution to unobserved heterogeneity consists in replacing the dependent binary variable with a continuous one, like for example when the outcome is a binary measure of poverty coded in a 0-1 scheme (0 if non-poor, 1 if poor) and is replaced by a continuous measure of economic hardship. Anyway, this is not always a feasible option, either because a reasonable continuous variable does not exist, or because the original dependent variable is intrinsically qualitative and cannot be converted in an alternative continuous one. In our case, this was neither a proper solution nor a feasible one: for the dependent variable concerning the full-time/part-time work distinction, a continuous measure of working hours would have not allowed to catch the division between the two working time arrangements; the other dependent variables (part-time uses, preferred working time arrangements, and match between actual and preferred working hours) are qualitative variables that cannot be expressed in continuous terms.

Winship and Mare (1984) propose to divide coefficients with the estimated standard deviation of the outcome variable in order to make them comparable across models, and hence to do so for each model to be involved in the comparison. This procedure is known as y-standardization and basically, by dividing coefficients by estimated standard deviation, it neutralizes the increase in the standard deviation of the logit and its scale that derives from the inclusion of new variables in a model as a way of improving the prediction of y. As a result, coefficients are rescaled to be expressed as the standard-deviation unit change in the estimated standard deviation of the outcome variable for a one-unit change in the independent variable. In any case, such procedure does not reveal the proportion of unobserved heterogeneity, and it just allows for the comparison of a variable’s coefficient between models estimated on the same sample with different control variables. Accordingly, y-standardization works for
comparisons across models estimated on the same sample because through this procedure it is possible to know the difference in unobserved heterogeneity across models, but it doesn’t work for comparison across different groups, samples, points in time etc. In fact, in these cases unobserved heterogeneity is unknown.

For comparisons across groups, samples, points in time, Allison (1999) proposes a procedure based on the notion of the fact that in this kind of comparisons unobserved heterogeneity that is unrelated to the independent variables affects in the same way all coefficients within a group, sample, point in time, etc. Such procedure consists of two tests: a test of whether at least one coefficient differs across groups, and a test of whether a specific coefficient differs. Nevertheless, it has been shown that the first test runs into problems if the effects of several variables in one group deviate in the same direction from the effects in the other group (Williams 2006). Accordingly, such procedure can falsely ascribe group differences in effects to group differences in residual variation. Moreover, testing whether a specific coefficient differs requires an assumption that at least one of the underlying ‘true’ coefficients is the same in the compared groups. This is a very strong assumption which cannot be easily justified. Only strong theoretical reasons or external evidence can support it, and this only in cases where the exclusive aim is to know whether an effect differs across groups and in which direction. In our research, beyond the fact that we are rather interested in differences between more than one coefficient, we cannot make such an assumption, even more that our objective is to detect for changes in some factors across different points in time.

Williams (2006) propose to set the issue in the framework of a larger family of so-called heterogeneous choice models, proposing a more flexible use of them to compare logit and probit coefficients across groups. At the basis of this models there is the idea of estimating first one ‘choice equation’ in order to model the effect of a range of variables on the outcome, and then one ‘variance equation’ aimed at modeling the effect of a range of variables on the variance in the outcome. However, this kind of models cannot really solve the problems of unobserved heterogeneity in logistic regression, since by definition logistic regression handle categorical variables, which mean and variance cannot be separately identified. Accordingly, these models are more likely to work out for ordinal dependent variables, where it is possible to express the outcome in ordinal rather than nominal terms (Keele and Park 2006). Once more, this is not a feasible option for our models given the necessary or naturally qualitative nature of our dependent variables.

Finally, Allison (1999), suggests to get a rough indication of whether differences in odds ratios depend on unobserved heterogeneity by inspecting if coefficients are consistently
higher in one group, sample, model etc. than in another. If it is the case, this is an indication that there is less unobserved heterogeneity, but researchers must be aware that the true effects can also differ. Hence, this is not a foolproof test. Anyway, since any of the solution described seem to really be the appropriate one for the purpose of our research, and on the basis of the fact that in any case a totally approved and foolproof procedure has not been detected yet, we have chosen to rely on this last criterion when running out and interpreting our statistical analyses based on logistic regression models. In particular, for the interpretation of our results we have also relied on two points stated by Wooldridge (2002), which have been already mentioned over paragraph: the direction of the impact of unobserved heterogeneity unrelated to the independent variables always leads to an underestimation of the effect that would be estimated if accounting for unobserved heterogeneity; unobserved heterogeneity that is not related to the independent variables does not affect the possibility to draw conclusions about the direction of an effect and the relative effect of different variables within a model (which variable has the largest effect). Moreover, when thinking about the relevant source of unobserved heterogeneity between our dependents and independents variables and whether some of the measures included in our models have dealt with them or not, we have given huge importance to the role of the sociological theory at the basis of our research by giving to this latter priority over statistical criteria or correction procedure.

Putting all these elements together, in the end we can say that we were not able to account for unobserved heterogeneity through a proper statistical technique in our analyses, but we were at least able to gain a certain awareness of the problem across our logistic regression models. Other solutions based on estimates in probability terms exist, but we decided not to give directly space to their description in this paragraph because probability changes effects are not adapted to both the structure of our data and the objectives of our analyses. In particular, there are various measures of changes in probability. Among them, it has been shown that average marginal effect (AME) and average population effect (APE) are not affected by unobserved heterogeneity that is unrelated to the independent variables in the model, so these are measures that can be compared across models, groups, samples, etc. Anyway, these measures represent population-averaged estimates (in probability terms), which means that in an hypothetical exemplificative model they have to be interpreted as the average conditional effects of the independent variable \( x_1 \) on the probability that the independent variable is equal to one \( P(y=1) \). In other words, AME and APE estimate average effects (they estimate the average change in \( P(y=1) \)), while we are interested in conditional effects, that is change that would occur in the outcome upon a change in the independent variable(s). Nonetheless, there are other measures of changes in probability such as marginal effect (MFX) which are calculated at specified values (usually means) of all independent variables, or estimated changes in probabilities for discrete changes in independent variables \(_P\) evaluated at different values of independent variables, that result to be more appropriate in this sense. However, these measures have been revealed to be affected by unobserved heterogeneity, and cannot be directly compared. In addition, they can show very different effects depending on the values chosen for the independent variable and the conditioning variables (Mood 2009). As a result, we decided to rely on logistic regression estimates based on odds ratios because these latter, out of providing with an intuitive interpretative logic, they allow for the estimation of conditional effects that are valid for all values of the independents variables. Likewise, on the bulding of the knowledge we could acquire from the current literature on the theme, we judged that it was easier to us to account for unobserved heterogeneity, at least in analytical terms, if working with odds ratios rather than with marginal effects in probability changes terms.
and to take the necessary analytical cautions in order to provide with accurate interpretation of our results.

7.2.3 Sample selection bias and endogeneity

In the previous paragraph we have treated the problem of unobserved heterogeneity as regarding all variations caused by unobserved variables, regardless of whether the unobserved variables are group specific and/or stable over time. In some cases, unobserved heterogeneity is defined as unobserved differences between certain categories or unobserved individual characteristics that are stable over time. This can be relevant to what is known as sample selection bias. As we are going to illustrate, selection bias can be thought of as a form of omitted variable bias.

Bias is a systematic error that can prejudice the evaluation findings; hence, sample selection bias is consistent error that arises due to the sample selection. In general, sample selection bias refers to problems where the dependent variable is observed only for a restricted, nonrandom sample. Sample selection bias may arise in practice for two reasons. First, there may be self-selection by the individuals or data units being investigated. Second, sample selection decisions by analysts or data processors operate in much the same fashion as self-selection (Heckman 1979:153).

There are many examples of selection bias. A survey of high school students to measure teenage use of illegal drugs will be a biased sample because it does not include home schooled students or dropouts. Selecting a sample using a telephone book will underrepresent people who cannot afford a telephone, do not have a telephone, or do not list their telephone numbers. Distributing a questionnaire at the end of a 3-day conference is likely to include more people who are committed to the conference so their views would be overrepresented.

A popular example refers to the case of the effect on wages of workers of being in a trade union: this implies observing wages for union members who found their nonunion alternative less desirable. That is equal to say that one observes an individual’s wage within a union only if the individual has joined a union. Conversely, one would observe an individual’s nonunion wage only if the individual does not belong to a union. Similarly, another well-known example concerns market wages for working women whose market wage exceeds their home wage at zero hours of work. When focusing on the studying of the determinants of women’s wage, the researcher implicitly limits the analysis to those women who have started a labour market career. In other words, the dependent variable “level of wage” depends on women’s
labour force participation decisions. Since it cannot be assumed that women made such decisions randomly, this means that wages are observed only for a subgroup of women. In fact, those women who are most likely not to participate in the labour market are those who are more likely to present specific characteristics like low level of education and low earnings potential. In this sense, the sample of observed wages would be biased upwards.

Basically, sample selection bias can occur any time the sample under study is not a random sample. If it is not random, some individuals are more likely than others to be chosen. Accordingly, in presence of non-random selection, the inference may not extend to the unobserved group.

Sometimes it is possible to identify the sample selection bias just by being very thoughtful and comparing the characteristics of respondents in the sample under study to what the researcher knows about the population in general. This could be, for example, the demographic characteristics that might have an important relationship to respondents’ answers. Anyway, this is a rough strategy that at the best can bring to the choice of reporting results in terms of who did respond and to the cautions of not extending them to anyone other than those who responded when differences between respondents in the sample and in the target population are identified (which is obviously very likely if a sample selection bias mechanism is in action).

A supplementary strategy with which to detect sample selection bias is to control for it statistically through the procedure that was first introduced by Heckman (1979), and which is hence known as Heckman selection model. This procedure is based on the estimation of two equations: the usual regression equation that estimates the probability of the outcome under study of being Y=1, and a selection equation that estimates the probability of observing the outcome Y at all. Whether the two equations have to be estimated simultaneously depends on the possibility to find instrumental variables: variables that strongly affect the chance for observation, but not the outcome under study. It is in this sense that sample selection bias can be seen as a matter of omitted variables. In the frame of the example given before about the studying of women’s wage, finding instrumental variables means finding variables that affect women’s labour force participation decisions but not women’s wage.

When good instrument variables cannot be found, the selection and regression equations have to be estimates jointly and their correlation has to be modeled. In other words, the error terms

125 For example, if one knows that gender is an important variable, and that the population includes 50% males and 50% females, then the sample needs to include the same proportions. If the sample includes 20% males, the results are likely to be biased because there are not enough responses from men.
of the two equations are modeled to be correlated in order to compel with the assumption that there are unobserved factors affecting both the probability of observing the outcome (women’s decisions to work) and the level of the outcome (wages). A parameter called Rho captures the potential unobserved effects: if it is not significantly different from zero, this indicates that there is no difference between the coefficients obtained through the selection model and those that would derive from the estimation of separated models; if it is significantly different from zero, this means that sample selection bias is not well captured in the regression equation.

In the context of our study the problem of sample selection bias arises since we are interested in the studying of different profiles of part-time work social uses and their characterization over the 2000s. This means that our sample is to some extent not random, since we select only people who are involved in a part-time job at the moment they were surveyed. Nevertheless, making a certain use of part-time work implies that an individual previously made a choice (no matter if constrained or not) to work part-time. This means that, when modeling part-time work uses profiles as a dependent variable, the estimates might reflect the effects of unmeasured factors affecting both the fact of being a part-time worker and the fact of making a certain use of part-time work. In other words, the reason for which a person works part-time (which is the variable on the basis of which the variable part-time uses has been constructed) may not straightforward capture by itself all the factors that affect a person’s choice to work part-time. This is can be considered, once more, a problem of sample selection due to omitted variables, or in other words problem of unobserved heterogeneity, as it has been discusses in the previous paragraph. In fact, the problem derives also from the fact that most selection processes are complex and the complete list of variables influencing selection is often cannot be measured, or it is unknown.

Unfortunately, in our datasets, we did not have at our disposal a valid instrument variable to control for sample selection bias. Moreover, we were not able to control for it statistically through the simultaneous estimation of a selection equation based on the estimation of probability to be a part-time rather than a full-time workers, and a regression equation based on the estimation of the selected type part-time work uses. Actually, the most common used models are Heckman 2-steps procedure (for continuous outcomes) and bivariate probit with selection (for binary discrete outcomes)\textsuperscript{126}, while in our case we would have a dichotomous

\textsuperscript{126} The Heckman 2-steps procedure was first introduced in the context of ordinary least squares (OLS), hence it useful for handling linear regression models when there is a selection mechanism at work, that is when the outcome equation involves a continuous dependent variables. In cases where the outcome equation involves a
dependent variable for the selection equation (being a full-time rather than a part-time worker) and a multcategory response variable for the outcome equation (the three different types of part-time uses that we have identified through the original “reasons to work part-time” variable). Beyond the fact that it is difficult to find an analytical reformulation and application of the Heckman selection model in these terms, the software that we had at our disposal for the estimation of our analyses does not allow the estimation of selection models other than Heckman 2-steps procedure and bivariate probit with selection. However, even if we were able to estimate such a model, our impossibility to find an instrument variable would give rise to the problem of identification. Identification arises when the same independent variables in the selection equation appears in the outcome equation, which implies that the selection equation is not very good at determining selection. The most immediate consequence is represented by imprecise estimates in the outcome equation. As already mentioned, it is hence required to have at least one independent variable that appears in the selection equation, but not in the outcome equation (i.e. an instrument variable) (Sartori 2003). At this regard, a common practice consists in either dropping a variable for the outcome equation, or adding a variable in the selection equation. However, proceeding in such a way is often theoretically unmotivated and implies that the outcome or the selection equation if incorrectly unspecified. As a result, we have chosen once more to give priority to the role of theory over accurate statistical specification, which means that the choice of variables and model specification when mainly theory-driven, while maintaining a certain awareness of the fact that our results may be sensitive and relevant at the theoretical level, but they may present at the same time some limitations in technical terms. This can be considered as one of the shortcoming of this work that needs to be addressed in further research.

This brings us to the problem of endogeneity. Endogeneity is to some extent a problem that can be formulated in terms of unobserved heterogeneity. It occurs when, in a context where it is supposed that the independent variable \( x \) influences the level of the outcome variable \( y \), some unobserved characteristics affect in reality both the outcome and the independent variable. In the framework of our analysis, there are of course many variables that cannot be considered as truly exogenous (like for example previously activity status, and occupational

dichotomous dependent variable, bivariate probit with selection applies, which is a reformulation of the Heckman selection model to include also binary outcomes with the application of maximum-likelihood probit estimation with sample selection.

In SAS, it is the command PROC QLIM that allows for the estimation of sample-selected models. The users may provide the probability distribution of a dependent variable in the ENDOGENOUS statement or in the DISCRETE option of the MODEL statement. In both cases, the only distributions allowed are logistic and normal. If a multivariate model is specified, logistic distribution is not allowed and only normal distribution is supported.
status) and there may be some unobserved individual as well as work-related factors that affect simultaneously our dependents and independents variables. Essentially, in our datasets we lack of information on beliefs, preference and attitudes, as well as on jobs contents and job tasks characteristics, which could be related for example to both the realization of working time preferences (dependent variable “match”) and to the designated type of part-time work uses (independent variable “part-time work uses”). Economists typically control for this issue through instrument variables, but once more this does not represent a feasible option of us. Accordingly, we insist again on the role of theory during the interpretation phase of our analyses for accounting for the problem of unobserved heterogeneity in the form of sample selection and endogeneity, and we rely on the fact that we have at least provided with a reliable analytical awareness of these issues.

To sum up, we do not strictly control for sample selection bias or endogeneity in statistical terms, but we follow a theory-driven approach. In practical terms, this means that before modeling type of part-time work use as the dependent variable, we first estimated a model on full-time/part-time distinction, or in other words we checked for under what conditions the individuals in our sample were most likely to be a part-time worker rather than a full-time worker. We consider this step as a way of getting some basic insights about the characteristics of part-time workers’ profiles in the two countries under review over the two different time points on which we focus our attention. On this basis, we consider that we also gain additional knowledge useful for the interpretation of the results of the three core models of our study, which estimate: the types of part-time work uses selected by individuals; preferences for part-time work according to types of part-time uses in the context of a wish for an adjustment in individual working time arrangements; the realization of working time preferences in the context of the individuals’ actual employment situation\textsuperscript{128}.

\textsuperscript{128} With respect to these last two models we have not raised concerns of sample selection bias because in these cases the variable “part-time uses” is included in the analysis as an independent variable, hence we can say that we are selecting our sample on the basis of such a variable (i.e. models are estimated on a sample constituted of all those part-time workers who have provided an answer to the question about the reasons for working part-time, on the basis of which we have constructed the variable “part-time uses”). Selection mechanism related to only an explanatory variable is usually considered as not so problematic, but demand cautions when extending the obtained inferences to the larger population (King et al 1994:137-149). Accordingly, it is preferable to interpret results as valid for the given sample.
Conclusion

In this chapter we have proceeded to the operationalization of our analytical and conceptual argumentations and we have presented the main technical aspects on which the analyses that will be presented in the next chapters are bases. The findings of such analyses will give confirmation or not of our hypotheses, and they will be then elaborated in the frame of the main objectives of our study stated in the context of our conceptual framework. These objectives include getting empirical evidence about four points: the path through which the relation between women’s employment patterns and part-time work move forward along both the cultural and structural dimensions; the dynamics of interaction between these two dimensions; the direct and indirect outcomes through which such an interaction takes an explicit form; the concrete direction of the transition and the way it proceeds along its evolutionary path between the cultural and the structural dimensions. While the process of operationalization we have carried out in this chapter will allow us to full-fill the first three points through the statistical analyses we are going to present in chapters eight and nine, the fourth point will be the object of the conclusions of this work and will be based on the argumentations presented in both the case-studies and empirical analyses sections of this thesis.
CHAPTER 8

WHAT HAS CHANGED?
THE EVOLUTION OF WOMEN’S PART-TIME WORK
PROFILES AND USES OVER THE 2000S

Introduction

The issues raised all over this thesis have shown how the growth of female part-time work together with changing labour market dynamics are possibly related in the determination of women’s employment patterns and of the role played by part-time work within these latter. What has concretely changed at this regard over the 2000s? How does the share of women pursuing labour market careers make recourse to part-time work? Under what individual and working conditions? Have part-time work profiles undertaken a process of diversification? How and according to what characteristics are women involved in such a process?

The results of the comparative empirical analyses presented in this chapter shall provide with an answer to this kind of questions. We begin with the illustration of our descriptive results. First we look at changes in part-time work levels as compared to full-time work and we furnish a descriptive picture of how many and which women have undertaken part-time work over the 2000s. In other words, we try to delineate typical part-time work profiles of women presenting different individual and work-related characteristics, and investigate if and how those profiles have changed in the two countries and over the period under review. Then, we focus on patterns of part-time work use and their specific characterization in France and Italy, trying to identify what types of use are the most frequent and representative in relation to each specific national part-time employment context, and in correspondence of what factors different types of part-time work use show significant dynamics of change over time. After this first descriptive section, we examine the effects and changes of the factors we are interested in with respect to both part-time work profiles and patterns of part-time work use. Through the techniques of logistic and multinomial regression, we investigate the changing relationships between the correlates that represent the individual and work-related characteristics considered relevant in the context of our study and the depiction of part-time work in terms of women’s employment patterns and types of use. Models are run separately
by country and year in order to better control for contextual factors that could be specifically related to a national or time perspective.

8.1 CHANGES IN WOMEN’S PART-TIME WORK PROFILES AND PATTERNS OF PART-TIME WORK USE: DESCRIPTIVE EVIDENCE

As we have seen in chapters five and six, part-time work development over the 2000s has followed different dynamics in France and Italy. In France we have defined the growth of part-time work as stable, but not static, meaning that if part-time employment levels have not changed that much, it cannot be said the same for part-time work profiles and characteristics. In Italy, on the contrary, increase of part-time work showed to be quite intensive and rapid in quantitative terms, and this potentially opened the way to new paths of development in a labour market particularly hostile to women. We have also seen that recourse to part-time work is to some extent diversified and sometimes problematic in France, where a great attention is paid to the issue of involuntary part-time work in terms of underemployment, while in Italy part-time work for family reasons is gaining room at the side of a high rate of involuntarily among women part-time workers. The descriptive figures we are going to present give a closer look at what all this means in a micro perspective with respect to the labour market experience of women in our sample.

8.1.1 Part-time work diffusion and types of part-time uses among different cohorts of French and Italian women

Figure 8.1.1-1 shows the distribution of part-time work and full-time work across different cohorts of French and Italian women. Figure 8.1.1.-2 illustrates changes in part-time work levels over time. Figure 8.1.1-3, 8.1.1-4, 8.1.1-5, 8.1.1-6 show the distribution of types of part-time work uses across cohorts and changes over the period under review. The data confirm the quantitative trends that have been already pointed out. They reveal substantially stable levels of part-time work as compared to full-time work in France over the 2003-2009 period (only a slightly increase of 1.33 pp), and significant increasing levels of part-time work for Italy over the 2004-2010 period (+4.91 pp).

In this chapter, as well as in the next one, changes over time are expressed in terms of percentage point (indicated with the term pp), which is the unit for the arithmetic differences of two percentages. This is because we are interested in absolute variations in the variables under study over different points in time.
Figure 8.1.1-1 Incidence of part-time work according to cohorts, France and Italy (%) by year

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Figure 8.1.1.-2 Changes over time in the incidence of part-time work according to cohorts, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Looking at types of part-time work uses, it is possible to remark that the realities behind these trends hide a spectrum of situations that discloses the complexity and the specificity of part-time work in each national context.
Figure 8.1.1-3 Incidence of types of part-time work uses according to cohorts, France, (%) by year

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009

Figure 8.1.1-5 Changes over time (2003-2009) in the incidence of types of part-time work uses according to cohorts, in France, (pp)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009
In France a certain diversification in part-time uses is noticeable given the fact that part-time work for family reasons remains predominant (respectively 40.08% and 38.39% in 2003 and 2009) but part-time work due to multi-activity is also very consistent (31.08% in 2003 and 33.58% in 2009). Moreover, the proportion of part-time work due to market constraints is inferior to the proportion concerning other types of uses and represents less than one third of cases (28.91% in 2003 and 28.03% in 2009). This confirms the fact that the relevance attributed to the phenomenon of constrained part-time work is clearly overestimated in the French debate, at expense of other forms of part-time work that in the majority of cases seem to respond to women’s life exigencies. Likewise, a further indicator of diversification is the slight decrease in the incidence of part-time work due to market constraints between 2003 and 2009 (-0.88 pp), together with the decrease of the proportion of part-time work due to family responsibilities (-1.69%) and the parallel increase of part-time work for multi-activity (+2.57%).

**Figure 8.1.1-4 Incidence of types of part-time work use according to cohorts, Italy, (%) by year**

![Graph showing the percentage of part-time work by type and cohort in Italy, 2004 and 2010.](image)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*

In Italy, the situation is clearly different and can be defined as polarized. Part-time work for family reasons and part-time work due to market constraints are the most frequent patterns, while part-time work for multi-activity is scarcely developed and it is even subject to a slight
decrease over the period under review (it represents respectively 18.46% of cases in 2004 and 17.83% in 2010). In practical terms, this means that the recourse to part-time work in Italy is dual and visibly representative of a divide between women who have the possibility to use part-time work as a work-life balance instrument (they are the majority in 2004, about 50%, and an important proportion of cases in 2010, about 40%), and women who are constrained in this employment form. Interestingly, the proportion of part-time work due to market constraints compared to other uses is in every case higher in Italy than in France (in Italy it amounts to 31.47% in 2004 and 41.34% in 2010), but this does not necessarily constitute an issue in the Italian debate. Yet, this is a worrying trend since this type of part-time work use is the only one which has registered a significant increase in Italy over the period under review (+9.87 pp), while part-time work due to family responsibilities has dramatically decreased (-9.87 pp). In 2010, part-time work due to market constraints represents the most frequent patterns among Italian women working part-time, exceeding part-time work for family responsibilities which so far appears as the only sign of the fact that in Italy part-time work can in some cases be used by women to respond to biographical exigencies.

Figure 8.1.1-6 Changes over time (2004-2010) in the incidence of types of part-time work use according to cohorts, Italy, (pp)

Quantitative changes are of course less impressive in France than in Italy, but data provide evidence of a scenario which is confirmed to be quantitatively stable, but qualitatively
dynamic and diversified. In Italy large quantitative changes are constrained in a polarized outline where dualist patterns of part-time work use seem to converge towards an univocal reality dominated by the economic dimension of part-time work, where concrete possibilities for a diversification risk to be definitively cut off. A look at the distribution of full-time and part-time work across cohorts\textsuperscript{130}, as well as at the distribution of types of part-time work uses across cohorts, shall provide with additional evidence about the main patterns of this employment form in each country, especially in terms of diversification.

In Italy part-time work has been significantly increasing across all cohorts. This can be read both as a confirmation of a continuing trend of growth for part-time work, and as an indicator of the growing presence of women in the Italian labour market. At the same time, since we have seen that part-time work due to market constraints significantly increased over the decade, we know that this can also be an effect of the economic crisis that has constrained a growing number of women into part-time jobs. Of course, these aspects may be related all together. In France, an important growth in part-time work for the youngest (1970-1979) and the oldest cohort (1940-1949) is compensated by more moderated trends for the central cohorts of adults (1960-1969 and 1950-1959). These patterns may be related to the growth of part-time work for multi-activity reasons that we have previously mentioned. Essentially, young women may be carrying out training or completing education while working part-time, while old women may be experiencing some sort of pre-retirement. At the same time, the cohort of young adult is also likely to experience the entrance into motherhood and family responsibilities over the period under review.

\textsuperscript{130} In order to make the interpretation of these data easier, here we provide with a concise scheme of the age distribution at the different time points under study of the cohorts we are interested in. For France, the cohort 1970-1979 includes women aged between 24-33 years old in 2003, and women aged 30-39 in 2009; the cohort 1960-1969 includes women aged 34-43 years old in 2003, and women aged 40-49 in 2009; the cohort 1950-1959 includes women aged 44-53 years old in 2003, and women aged 50-59 in 2009; the cohort 1940-1949 includes women aged between 54-63 years old in 2003, and women aged 60-69 in 2009. For Italy, the cohort 1970-1979 includes women aged between 25-34 years old in 2004, and women aged 31-40 in 2010; the cohort 1960-1969 includes women aged 35-44 years old in 2004, and women aged 41-50 in 2010; the cohort 1950-1959 includes women aged between 45-54 years old in 2004, and women aged 51-60 in 2010; the cohort 1940-1949 includes women aged between 55-64 years old in 2004, and women aged 61-70 in 2010. Accordingly, in this chapter and the next one we are going to define each cohort in the following way: the cohort 1970-1979 is the cohort of young adults, since it represents young women who are progressively entering into independent life and stabilizing it with regard to employment and family patterns; the cohort 1960-1969 is the cohort of core adults, since it represents women who are the core stages of both their career and family life; the cohort 1950-1959 is the cohort of older adults, given the fact that it encompasses women who are gradually exiting the phases where childcare responsibilities are the heaviest (i.e. the biographical phase known as “empty nest”) and who are in the last stage of their career; the cohort 1940-1949 is the cohort of senior because it is constituted of women who are approaching retirement and possibly preparing their exit from the labour market.
Anyway, it is clear that in the two countries the cohorts 1970-1979 and 1940-1949 are emblematic of change. In fact, independently from overall quantitative levels, the cohort of young adults (1970-1979) is the one for whom part-time work levels have consistently increased over the decade (+6.83 pp in France and 7.17 pp in Italy), followed by the seniors cohort (1940-1949, registering +4.21 pp in France and 5.44 pp in Italy). It is possible to imagine that these trends are related to the fact that these two cohorts represent the most dynamics cohorts in terms of employment profiles, since they symbolize the situation of women entering the labour market and trying to stabilize their position within it, as also of those who are preparing their exit from the labour force. Interestingly, this can be seen as an indicator of the role played by part-time work at different phases of women’s career. Nevertheless, a closer look at changes over time in types of part-time uses by cohorts shows that same cohorts of women experience different part-time work dynamics in the two countries.

In both countries young women and also seniors are those who are the less concerned by part-time work due for market constraints. In France, if this latter has decreased over time it has done so only for women belonging to these two cohorts, and especially for women in the youngest cohort (-14.27 pp) as compared to the oldest one (-3.84 pp). In Italy, the general increase in part-time work due to market constraints impacted these two cohorts much less as compared to the other cohorts. At the same time, data show that the decrease in involuntary part-time work for the cohort 1970-1979 in France has been accompanied by a decrease in part-time work for multi-activity (-6.50 pp) and a significant increase in part-time work for family responsibilities (+20.77 pp). This possibly means that women belonging to these cohort have shifted from part-time work as a means of combining training or education with employment or as a constrained way of entering the labour market, to part-time work becomes as a work-family balance instrument. In other words, for these women changes in the types of part-time work uses over time are very likely related to transitions between different phases of life and seem to respond to the exigencies that derive from these latter. In Italy, the same cohort has experienced a stronger decrease in part-time work for multi-activity (-10.03 pp), which has been accompanied by an increase in part-time work due to market constraints (+3.98 pp) and a lower increase in part-time work for family responsibilities (+6.05 pp). Accordingly, it seems that in Italy the youngest cohort moves in a direction that confirms the polarized patterns characterizing the general part-time work scenario, therefore testifies that women belonging to this cohort experience major difficulties in consolidating their position in the labour market and in using part-time at this purpose in congruence with the particular
necessities posed by their life phase. On the contrary, the oldest cohort seems to experience major and positive changes. Besides a noticeable reduction (-23.12 pp) on part-time work for family responsibilities (which is reasonable at this stage of life), and a minor increase of part-time work due to market constraints (+2.22 pp), this cohort registers a considerable increase in part-time work for multi-activity (+20.89 pp). In France, women in the same age group experience similar, but less intense patterns of change: a reduction in part-time work due to family responsibilities (-6.16 pp), a decrease in part-time work due to market constraints (-3.84 pp) but an increase in part-time work due to multi-activity (+10 pp). A possible interpretation of these facts may be straightforward: social and cultural norms in Italy impose heavier and longer family duties to women, whose family role characterizes a great part of their life and to some extent of their identities, with the obvious consequences that this may have on their employment paths. This is not the case in France, where women have access to a larger set of care and housework services, and diversify their employment profiles earlier in their life. Hence, the less intense changes for the cohort 1940-1949 in France may be explained by stronger changes occurred to the part-time work patterns of the younger cohorts. On the whole, evidence shows that the most dynamic patterns of changes over time in types of part-time work use concern the youngest cohort in France and the oldest one in Italy. This confirms to some extent the idea that French women, thanks to a more consolidated presence in the labour market, are better able to manage the use of part-time work for the articulation of the work-life conflict along their career since the earlier stages of their labour and family roles. This is not the case of Italian women who seem to acquire this possibility once they are more experienced with respect to both work and family, while the risk to be trapped in a constrained part-time job is always present at every stage of their career. Interestingly, the patterns registered for the central cohorts of adult (1960-1969 and 1950-1959) seem to go in the same direction and further confirm such idea. Basically, in both countries these cohorts experience consistent and similarly intense decreases over time of part-time work for family reasons, together with increases of part-time work for multi-activity and part-time work due to market constraints. However, in France increases in part-time work for multi-activity are higher than those for Italy (respectively these are +8.61 pp and +2.65 pp for the cohort 1960-1969, +18.33 pp and 7.21 pp for the cohort 1950-1959), while increases in part-time work due to market constraints are much lower (respectively +4.2 pp and +13.35 pp for the cohort 1960-1969, +2.40 pp and 12.24 pp for the cohort 1950-1959). In other words, if we compare these two cohorts to the youngest and oldest cohorts in the two countries, we see that they are
progressively more interested by the diversification of part-time work uses in France, while they are progressively less constrained by polarized part-time work uses in Italy.

In order to see what kind of internal dynamics drive these general changes over time, we look further at within-country and within-year distribution of part-time work and part-time work uses by cohort. First of all, it is important to underline that part-time work levels are similar in the two countries. In France, part-time work concerns about one third of women in our sample both in 2003 and 2009, while in Italy it represents a bit less than one third of cases in 2004 and a bit more in 2004. However, these similarities cover different realities.

In Italy part-time work is more common among the cohort of core adults (1960-1969) as compared to other cohorts, and this pattern remains stable over time in the frame of a general increase of the presence of part-time work among women belonging to this cohort (31.64% of women working part-time in 2004 against 35.32% in 2010). The cohort of young adults (1970-1979) follows behind and register the same pattern of an important presence and substantive growth of part-time work among its members (respectively 24.86% and 33.03% in 2004 and 2010). The cohorts of older adults (1950-1959) and seniors (1940-1949) present inferior levels of part-time work. Interestingly, while the proportion of part-time work was similar for the two cohorts in 2004 (respectively 22.19% and 22.55%), in 2010 such proportion was higher for the 1940-1949 cohort (27.99%) confirming the trend of intensive growth in the recourse to part-time work that have interested this cohort over the 2004-2010 period. On the whole, both in 2004 and 2010, the cohort of older adults is the cohort who is the least affected by part-time work.

Interestingly, in 2004 the most recurrent type of part-time work use across all the cohorts is part-time work for family reasons. Again, this is probably related to the important family role that it is attributed to women at several stages of their life. However, in 2010 the situation has changed. Part-time work for family reasons remains very recurrent only among the cohorts of young adult (1970-1979) and core adults (1960-1969), which explains why within-year part-time work levels are the highest among these two cohorts. Yet, what is remarkable is that part-time work due to market constraints now represent more than one third of cases among the first three cohorts: 42.92% for the cohort 1970-1979, 40.66% for the cohort 1960-1969, 42.28% for the cohort 1950-1959. Evidently, it cuts across age groups. Back on evidence for 2004, differences between cohorts at this regard are still observable and part-time work due to market constraints less incident. Once more, the polarization that characterizes part-time work uses appears really obvious. Essentially, this confirms the fact that the effects of the economic crisis, or anyway of an increasingly flexible labour market that insists on the economic
dimension of part-time work, has probably stopped any form of diversification in part-time work that could have timidly started to develop at the beginning of the decade.

This is somehow confirmed by the patterns registered for the cohorts of seniors and older adults. The cohort 1940-1949 is the least concerned by part-time work due to market constraints in both 2004 and 2010, probably because at this stage of life women chose to withdraw from the labour force instead of getting a job which does not correspond to what they wish. This also explains why within-year part-time work levels are lower for this cohort as compared to the youngest cohorts. At the same time, part-time work for multi-activity is clearly their prerogative, since this use is consistently more common among this cohort in both 2004 and 2010. This is a further explanation for the comparatively lower levels of part-time work, but at the same time it is also an explanation for the reason why part-time work for this cohort has grown consistently over time: part-time work for multi-activity remains scarcely developed in Italy, but this cohort of women makes recourse to it as much as they can. As for the use of part-time work for multi-activity, the cohort 1950-1959 follows behind both in 2004 and in 2010. This is reasonable since, even if in 2004 part-time work for family reasons is very incident for this group of women, in comparison to younger cohorts these are women that over the years are likely of being progressively experiencing the phase of the “empty nest”. Accordingly, they undertake either part-time work with the aim of having time to invest themselves in other activities or full-time work. The latter option would explain part-time work levels are the lowest for this cohort both in 2004 and 2010, and why this cohort does not escape from the trap of a dramatic increase in constrained part-time work.

On the whole, if we look at the distribution of part-time work for multi-activity across cohorts in 2010, we see that its frequency increases passing from one cohort to another. If on one hand this leaves room open for diversification of part-time uses to be brought in, on the other hand it demands to control for the emergence of mechanisms of path-dependecy.

In France, the distribution of part-time work across cohort and over time presents different patterns. The cohorts who are less concerned by part-time work are the cohort of young adults (1970-1979) and the one of older adults (1950-1959). If in 2003 these two cohorts present different levels of part-time work (respectively 21,89% and 28,87%), such difference is lower in 2009 due to the consistent increase of part-time work among women of the youngest cohort. It can be supposed that for these two cohorts the involvement in the labour market is more significant as compared to the oldest cohort (1940-1949), and relatively unaffected by family responsibilities as compared to the cohorts of core adults (1960-1969). However, part-time work for family reasons is very recurrent among women of the 1970-1979 cohort,
especially in 2009 (60.06%). This explains the increase over the years in part-time work levels for this cohort, while the fact that women of this group are the less concerned by part-time work is probably linked to a major investment in the labour market, as shown by the highest frequency of part-time work due to market constraints registered among them in 2003 (38.13%). For the cohort 1950-1959, part-time work is mainly a matter of multi-activity: among this cohort it is possible to notice very high frequency for this type of part-time work both in 2003 and 2009 (respectively 36.84% and 55.17%). At the same time, the incidence of part-time work due to market constraints is the highest among this cohort (over 30%). This may suggest that diversification in part-time work patterns concern women with particular socio-demographic and employment characteristics.

The cohort 1960-1969 is the most concerned by part-time work in 2003, but in 2009 it leaves the place to the cohort 1940-1949 in correspondence of the fact that, as already mentioned, it is the only cohort that experiences a reduction in part-time work levels over the period under review. This can be interpreted as a sign of the fact that over the years the cohort of core adults is progressively less constrained by family responsibilities and consequently women in this cohort re-orient themselves towards full-time work, while part-time work increasingly represents an answer to need of the cohort of seniors who prepare their labour market exit through a diminishing involvement in paid work. The evidence about types of part-time work uses confirms this idea: in 2009 part-time work due to market constraints is particularly common for women belonging to the cohort of core adults (28.40%); at the same time, the highest incidence of part-time work for multi-activity is registered for women belonging to the cohort of seniors (73.90%). Broadly speaking, the French situation confirmed to be diversified.

In comparative perspective, within-country part-time work distributions across cohorts are similar between France and Italy for what concerns the cohort of core adults and the one of older adults. In fact, both in France and Italy part-time work levels are more or less stable over time for the 1950-1959 cohorts, especially because their increase over the period under review is the least consistent as compared to other cohorts. Accordingly, it seems that in both countries this is the cohort that is on the whole the least concerned by part-time work in substantial terms. This is confirmed by patterns of part-time work uses for this cohort: part-time work due to market constraints is important in the two countries, testifying of a willing to be less involved in part-time work, while part-time work for multi-activity is a privilege that only French women enjoy. As a result, the types of uses of Italian women are more constrained than what happens to their French counterpart. The cohorts 1960-1969 are the
most concerned in both France and Italy, but the different patterns of change in part-time work levels that they show over time (decrease in France, increase in Italy) indicate that different types of dynamics are in action in the two countries. Once more, patterns of part-time work use for this cohort go in the same direction: French women drop from part-time work for family reasons and move towards either part-time work for multi-activity or a switch to full-time work; Italian women got mainly trapped into constrained part-time work. Finally, we have seen at the beginning of this section that the cohorts 1970-1979 and 1940-1949 are those who registered the most important changes over time (consistent increases in both France and Italy), but within-country distributions indicate once more that behind this generalized growth of part-time work for women belonging to these cohorts there are different patterns of part-time work recourse and use. In particular, higher possibilities to make recourse to part-time work for multi-activity reasons for the French cohort of seniors and, once more, a much more significant presence of constrained part-time work for the Italian cohort of young adults. In the end, it appears that the individual dimension prevails in determining part-time work profiles and uses in the case of French women, which are to some extent related to a period effect, while Italian women suffer from a structural effect that negatively influence their modalities of recourse to part-time work. In the following sections about the results of the regression models shall provide with more evidence in this sense.

8.1.2 Individual part-time work profiles and patterns: recourse and uses among women with different educational background and employment trajectory

The evidence presented in this section helps in further delineating part-time work profiles and patterns of part-time work uses and their changes over time according to the individual characteristics of women concerned by this employment form. As mentioned in chapter 7, level of education and previous activity status to current job are considered of primary importance in our study, so here we focus on these two aspects.

We have seen in chapter 5 and 6 that part-time work is more often associated with poorly-educated or low-qualified women, and that it is represented as an employment form for those who show a marginal situation on the labour market like the unemployed, or the inactive looking for a reintegration into the labour force. Moreover, we have also noticed that the two aspects frequently cumulate on the same individuals, who are more likely to experiencing involuntary part-time work. However, the situation revealed not to be so univocal, with a group of women enjoying medium-high socio-economic profiles who can manage to integrate
part-time work into their career path and limit at the same time the possible negative consequences that this choice can imply. This is particularly true in France, while in Italy the undesirable effects of part-time work still cuts across socio-economic profiles.

8.1.2.1 Part-time work among women with different educational levels

Figure 8.1.2.1-1 to figure 8.1.2.1-6 show the distribution of part-time work levels and part-time work uses among women with different levels of education. Evidence about part-time work distribution among women presenting different educational levels shows that in both countries part-time work decreases when level of education increases. Overall, this pattern remains stable over time, and within-year distributions, which are similar in the two countries, reveal that low-educated women are the more concerned by part-time work. Anyway, it is interesting to notice that part-time work levels have increased among all educational levels both in Italy and France\textsuperscript{131}, and major changes do not concern necessarily low educated women.

Figure 8.1.2.1-1 Incidence of part-time work according to levels of education, France and Italy, (%) by year

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure8.1.2.1-1.png}
\caption{Incidence of part-time work according to levels of education, France and Italy, (%) by year}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source:} Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

\textsuperscript{131} Obviously, increases among the different educational levels are more conspicuous in Italy than in France, in correspondence of the fact that in the former country the growth in part-time work levels over time revealed to be much larger.
In France, for example, part-time work increased particularly for women with medium education (+2.7 pp), followed by high-educated women (+1.8 pp) and finally low-educated women (+1.8 pp). This can be seen as a further sign of diversification of part-time work patterns in this country. The distributions of types of part-time uses among different educational levels seem to confirm this idea.

**Figure 8.1.2.1-2 Changes over time in the incidence of part-time work use according to levels of education, France (2003-2009, Italy (2004-2010), (pp)**

![Bar chart showing changes in part-time work use by level of education in France and Italy](chart.png)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*

Actually, if part-time work due to market constraints remains higher for women with low educational level, its increase over time among this group of women remains very low (+0.98 pp), while part-time work for multi-activity noticeably increase (+5.88 pp). At the same time, it is interestingly to notice how this latter form of part-time work is more recurrent exactly among low-educated women, and how part-time work for family reasons is on the contrary the least frequent among them, registering even a significant reduction over time (-6.86 pp).

Likewise, if within-year distributions show that part-time work for family reasons is in general more frequent among medium-educated women, the analysis of changes over time shows that major changes at this regard have occurred among high educated women who, between 2003 and 2009, are interested by a consistent increase (+9.25 pp) in the recourse to part-time work for family reasons.
Figure 8.1.2.1-3 Incidence of types of part-time work use according to levels of education, France, (%) by year

![Bar chart showing the incidence of types of part-time work use by levels of education and year for France, with data from 2003 and 2009.]

*Source:* Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009

Figure 8.1.2.1-4 Changes over time in the incidence of types of part-time work use according to levels of education, France (2003-2009), (pp)

![Line chart showing changes over time in the incidence of types of part-time work use by levels of education for France, with data from 2003 and 2009.]

*Source:* Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009
This corresponds to a reduction in part-time work for multi-activity for them (-10.60 pp) and a slight increase in part-time work due to market constraints (+1.35 pp). On the contrary, the situation of medium-educated women is more or less stable over time, with part-time work for family responsibilities as a form of part-time work which is particularly common among them.

Broadly speaking, if in 2003 each type of part-time work use can be clearly associated to each group of women classified on the basis of their educational levels, in 2009 this is not the case anymore. Basically, in 2003 part-time work for family responsibilities is the prerogative of medium educated women, part-time work for multi-activity is most common among highly educated women, and part-time work due to market constraints affects mainly low-educated women. In 2009, nothing has changed as for part-time work due to family responsibilities, part-time work due to market constraints still concerns chiefly low educated women, but these latter are now also mainly concerned by part-time work for multi-activity, while high educated women are now closer to the profile of medium-educated women with an important use of part-time work for family responsibilities. Hence, we can point out that such patterns testify of a process of diversification that finally sees women with high socio-economic profiles opening up to part-time work as a way to balance work and family life, and low educated women finding room for developing more favourable uses of part-time work with respect to their labour market involvement. However, these changes may be related to changes in the forms of part-time work (marginal, moderated, substantial) that are associated with different part-time uses. For example, it may be that marginal forms of part-time work have increased among those kinds of jobs that used to serve part-time work for multi-activity reasons, while more favourable forms of part-time work have developed in correspondence of the use of part-time work for family reasons. This would explain why high educated women have consistently left part-time work for multi-activity and progressively engaged in part-time work for family reasons, while the opposite is true for low educated women. We shall come back on this point in the next section. Nevertheless, it must be considered that as a general pattern part-time work due to market constraints decreases as the level of education increases in France, meaning that education is an important resource that protects against the undesirable type of part-time work use.

The Italian situation is similar and different at the same time. In Italy, where increases over time are larger, all the educational levels are concerned by such increases to the same extent, that is to say that part-time work increased for all of them by about 5 pp. Essentially, part-time work increased more for low-educated women (+5.58 pp), but high-educated women follow
immediately behind showing a similar trend (+5,09 pp) and the same can be said for medium-educated women (+4,88 pp). In some way, it can be said that part-time work development over the 2000s was to some extent accompanied by some form of generalization concerning diverse groups of women. Nevertheless, we have seen in the previous section that part-time work due to market constraints increased noticeably in this period. Hence, in order to check whether such generalization can be considered a positive effect of the growth of part-time work, it is important to assess how the distribution of different types of part-time work uses has change over time among women with various educational levels.

**Figure 8.1.2.1-5 Incidence of types of part-time work use according to levels of education, Italy, (%) by year**

![Graph](image)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*

Evidence shows that important changes over time concerns all the group of women with different educational backgrounds, consisting mainly in an extensive increase in part-time work due to market constraints and important reductions in the other types of part-time work uses that cut across educational levels.

In particular, part-time work due to market constraints increases noticeably for women with low educational level (+12,57 pp), and in a similar and significant way for medium and high educated women (respectively +7,71 pp and 7,56 pp). Conversely, part-time work for family
responsibilities consistently decreases, with a more intensive reduction for low educated women (-14,91 pp) and more contained decline for the other two groups (-4,45 pp for low educated women and -1,34 pp for high educated women).

**Figure 8.1.2.1-6 Changes over time in the incidence of types of part-time work use according to levels of education, Italy (2004-2010), (pp)**

These data confirm the polarization in recourse to part-time work and types of part-time work detected when analysing distributions by cohort. The data illustrate that it acts in a different ways according to different socio-economic profiles of the women concerned by this employment form. If on one hand, even more educated women do not escape the trap of the most undesirable type of part-time work use, they are more protected against that than low educated women and their patterns of recourse to part-time work for family reasons result as progressively less undermined by the massive increase of involuntary part-time work. Interestingly, part-time work for multi-activity registers a steady decrease for high educated women (-6,22 pp) and an increase for low educated women (+2,34 pp). This trend is similar to the one registered for France, but it is difficult to interpret it as a possible sign of diversification in the Italian context. Additional information about the forms of part-time work (marginal, substantial, etc.) that have developed the most and in correspondence of which types of part-time work uses are needed in order to address a reasonable interpretation of this patterns, and they will be provided in the next section. Within year distributions testify

*Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*
of a situation substantially stable over time in terms of uses patterns: part-time work for family responsibilities is most frequent among medium educated women, part-time work for multi-activity is mainly detectable among high educated women, and part-time work due to market constraints is more common for low educated women. However, as compared to France, despite similar trends the effect of education on part-time work patterns is less defined, particularly differences between medium and high educated women are not consistent in relative terms, and the fact that increases in part-time work levels and in part-time work due to market constraints cut across educational levels suggest that there might be some structural dynamics intervening on these patterns.

8.1.2.2 Part-time work among women with different employment trajectories

Figure 8.1.2.2-1 to Figure 8.1.2.2-6, illustrate the distributions of part-time work levels and type of part-time work use between the categories of the variable previous employment status, and how such distributions have changed over time.

Figure 8.1.2.2-1 Incidence of part-time work according to previous employment status, France (2003-2009) and Italy (2004-2010), (%) by year

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
As main trends we can see that in France part-time work is more frequent among women who were unemployed before occupying their actual job, while in Italy the same is true for those women who were previously inactive\(^{132}\). This pattern remains stable over time and suggests that part-time work serves as a step into the labour force for women who want to gain a position on the labour market in Italy, while for the French it is a primary way to exit unemployment.

Likewise, the within year distributions for types of part-time work uses show that in France part-time work for multi-activity and for family reasons, and to some extent due to market constraints, are similarly frequent among women who were previously already in employment and those who were inactive, while part-time work for market constraints is extremely frequent among those who were previously unemployed. In Italy, the only clear pattern that emerges is part-time work for family reasons that is more frequent among the previously employed, and part-time work due to market constraints massively concerns the previously unemployed. Overall, the most undesirable use of part-time work seems to be reserved to those who were previously unemployed in both countries. However, it is important to notice that Italian women who were previously inactive are those who registered the most important

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\(^{132}\) It must be recalled that in Italy the meaning of this variable is slightly different and refers to employment status one year before.
increase over time in part-time work due to market constraints (+13,86 pp) despite a minor increase in part-time work levels (+1,155 pp) compared to the other two categories.

**Figure 8.1.2.2-3 Incidence of part-time work uses according to women’s previous employment status, France, (%) by year**

![Graph showing the incidence of part-time work uses according to women’s previous employment status.](image)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009*

**Figure 8.1.2.2-4 Changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use according to previous employment status, France (2003-2009), (pp)**

![Graph showing changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use.](image)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009*
This suggests that for these women part-time work may represent a second choice just as it does for women exiting unemployment, and that probably an integrative use of part-time work in Italy is mainly possible for those women who enjoy a more consolidated position in the labour market.

**Figure 8.1.2.2-5 Incidence of part-time work uses according to women’s previous employment status, Italy, (%) by year**

![Bar chart showing the incidence of part-time work uses according to women's previous employment status in Italy, 2004 and 2010.](image)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*

In both countries only a minority of women who were previously employed hold a part-time job at the time of the survey. However, it is important to notice that trends in changes over time show that it is exactly this group of women who has been concerned the most by increases in part-time work levels (+2.45 pp in France and +5.8 pp in Italy). If in France this may be related to the diversification observed in part-time work uses over the period under review, in Italy this is more likely to represent one of the effect of the economic crisis\(^\text{133}\) or of labour market deregulation. Evidence about changes over time in types of part-time work uses confirms this idea. In France, those who were previously employed register an increase in part-time work for multi-activity (+4.36 pp) accompanied by a reduction in both part-time

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\(^{133}\) As we have seen in chapter 6, during the crisis employers have increasingly reduced the amount of weekly working hours of their employees in order to contain labour costs and save jobs.
work for family reasons (-2.74 pp) and part-time work due to market constraints (-1.37 pp). In Italy, the same groups of women are concerned by a consistent growth of part-time work due to market constraints (+10.37 pp), and by a parallel and almost equivalent decrease in part-time work due to family responsibilities (-10.38 pp), while the proportion of part-time work for multi-activity remains absolutely unchanged. Basically, these aspects further validate the contrasting national patterns that we have so far encountered several times: diversification across part-time uses in France, polarization between part-time uses in Italy.

**Figure 8.1.2.2-6 Changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use according to previous employment status, Italy (2004-2010), (pp)**

![Chart showing changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use in Italy.](image)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*

General patterns of change over time in the two countries go in the same direction. In France part-time work for multi-activity increased for all the groups of women (those previously already in employment, the previously inactive and the previously unemployed), and at the same time part-time work for family reasons and part-time work due to market constraints decreased for all of them. In Italy, all these groups of women experienced a reduction in part-time work for family reasons, and in part-time work for multi-activity, while they were all interested by consistent increases in part-time work due to market constraints.
8.1.3 Different forms of part-time work for different types of use

Part-time work is not a univocal employment form and according to the different amount of weekly working hours on which a part-time job is based, working conditions and a series of working-related factors are likely to vary. Different forms of part-time work may also open different possibilities of recurring to a certain type of part-time uses. Figure 8.1.3-1 to figure 8.1.3-4, present evidence that confirms such a statement.

Figure 8.1.3-1 Incidence of part-time work uses according to working time arrangement, France, (%) by year

Looking at the situation of both France and Italy it is possible to see how part-time work for family responsibilities is much more frequent among those forms that imply longer working hours, being substantial part-time in first place (more than 50% of cases in both countries at the various time points). On the contrary, part-time work due to market constraints is more frequent among those women who work a marginal amount of working hours. Likewise, conversely to what can be imagined, part-time work for multi-activity is mainly noticeable among marginal part-time work as well. This suggests that the traditional use of part-time work as work-family balance instrument is to some extent the most comfortable in terms of
employment protection and conditions, given the fact that it presents working hours patterns that are closer to standard full-time employment. In other words, such a model still have an exceptional influence in determining differences among employment situations, to the point that the more an individual get closed to the standard full-time work, the more her employment conditions improve. In this sense, part-time work for family reasons is the only real protected and recognized type of part-time work uses. This can be read as a sign of a missed recognition of the diversity that characterize part-time workers’ situations, as also of a societal persistence of a traditional vision and approach to part-time work.

**Figure 8.1.3-2 Incidence of part-time work uses according to working time arrangement, Italy, (%) by year**

Data on changes over time validate this proposition. In France, part-time work for multi-activity increased mostly among marginal part-time work (+5.39 pp)\(^{134}\), and the same is true for part-time work due to market constraints (+4.35 pp). On the contrary, part-time work for family reasons consistently decreased among marginal part-time work (-9.75 pp), and less intensively also among moderated of part-time work (-2.75 pp), while it increased only among

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\(^{134}\) This may explain why this type of part-time work use increased among low educated women, who are usually more concerned by marginal part-time work, and why an increasing number of high educated women opted for part-time work for family responsibilities.
women working substantial part-time hours (+4.87 pp). Moreover, this latter group of women is the only one who experienced a reduction in part-time work due to market constraints (-6.89 pp). As a result, the French situation seems characterized by an employment context that favours a reinforcement of the traditional use of part-time work in traditional terms, that is to say that other types of use that imply a diversification of employment situations and workers concerned by part-time work are, on the contrary, invested by a process of marginalization. If we interpret such a dynamic as a sign of the presence of the structural effect, we can say that conditions imposed by labour market dynamics constraint and negatively affect the process of diversification of part-time uses that has to some extent developed as the result of changes in individual profiles of women working part-time which patterns we have illustrated in the previous sections.

**Figure 8.1.2.2-3 Changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use according to working time arrangements, France (2003-2009), (pp)**

![Chart showing changes over time in part-time work use](chart.png)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009*

In Italy the situation is definitively oriented towards the negative side of the dualistic dynamic that interests part-time work in this country. Part-time work for family reasons dramatically decreased among all forms of part-time work (anyway, more strongly among marginal and moderated part-time work, respectively –9.16 pp and -10.14 pp), while part-time work due to market constraints increased for all of them (once more, especially for marginal and moderated part-time work, respectively +11.72 pp and +10.62 pp). This confirms the absence
of any process of diversification at all and shows that real possibilities of changes in individual profiles are strongly affected by market dynamics that do not leave almost any room for developing part-time work as a work-life balance instrument even in a traditional (familialistic) sense.

Figure 8.1.2.2-4 Changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use according to working time arrangements, Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

![Bar chart showing changes over time in the incidence of different types of part-time work use, Italy (2004-2010)]

Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

In the end, it can be said that Italy seems to proceed just one step behind France. In France, changes in individual profiles and patterns reveal that women experiences are now characterized by an important diversification in part-time work uses. Such diversification has to be intended in a large sense, since women in France have not historically made recourse to part-time work as a way to integrate the labour force on the basis of a compromise between family and paid work, and have firstly experienced part-time work as a way of exiting unemployment (often involuntarily). Hence, the increasingly presence of the use of part-time work for family responsibilities among various groups of women is also a sign of diversification, together with the diffusion of part-time work for multi-activity. However, the structural context mainly supports the use of part-time work as a way to conjugate family and paid work in a traditional sense, by favouring its association with those forms of part-time work which are closer to the standard full-time model, and not recognizing in this way the diversity of situations that concern part-time workers. In Italy, women are progressively
opening up to part-time work opportunities and seem particularly interested in part-time work as a work-life balance instrument. This is a completely new experience because in this country, as in France, part-time work has not been the main drive behind the growth of female labour force participation, but it has anyway played some role in pushing women out of inactivity. However, the predominance of the increase over the decade in part-time work due to market constraints among all forms of part-time work shows that the structural context keeps in pushing women mainly towards marginalized forms of part-time work. It means that that it obstructs the possibility to develop the use of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument at all, even in a traditional work-family balance framework.

8.2 Changing part-time work profiles and uses: the analysis of correlates

The previous sections have highlighted the fact that in France part-time work levels are mainly static, but they hide an interesting diversification of part-time work profiles and patterns of part-time work use that is to some extent constrained by a socio-economic context that favours traditional uses and logics of part-time work. In Italy, great changes in the incidence of part-time work have invested in a global way woman with different characteristics whose profiles and uses with respect to this employment form have mainly developed according to polarized /dualistic patterns within a socio-economic context that still highly penalizes women’s employment based on part-time work.

In order to gain a better understanding with respect to these national contexts a closer examination of the factors that influence each part-time work scenario and the relationships between them is required.

What really affects women’s recourse to part-time work? Have these effects changed their incidence over time? Is there a substantial variation in the representation of part-time work profiles and patterns in the two countries?

This section reports the results of the logistic and multinomial models used to estimate the probability of women being in part-time work and of experiencing different types of part-time work use. In each case two models have been run: a model estimating the effects of main independent variables only (called model 1); a model estimating the effects of main independent variables and controlling factors jointly (called model 2), in order to detect the eventual influences of the latter type of variables on changes in the incidence of the former
group of variables. Accordingly, we shall first speculate on the effects of correlates in model 1 and on how they eventually change in model 2, and then look at the effects of controlling factors in model 2 as a way to further contextualize the main findings. Results are presented in terms of odds ratio.

8.2.1 The effects of main independent variables and selected controlling factors

Tables 8.2.1.1 to 8.2.1.4 present estimates of logistic regression models on the probability of being working part-time and estimates of multinomial regression models on the probability of having recourse to different types of part-time work uses. The results from model 1 concerning the situation of both France in 2003 and 2009 and Italy in 2004 and 2010 substantially confirm the descriptive evidence presented in the previous sections by showing that women’s recourse to part-time work and the type of part-time work use they undertake are significantly linked to cohort of birth, educational level, previous activity status and working time arrangements. The direction and magnitude of the effects of these elements on the dependent variables reflect the patterns that emerged through the illustration of descriptive results, so we do not go back on that. We rather look at estimates in model 2 and their changing effects over time, considering also relevant changes that eventually occurs when passing from model 1 to model 2, that is when controlling factors are also taking into account, so that we can understand how essentially the main independent variables we are interested in count in influencing part-time work profiles and uses. As a general rule for the interpretation of results, it must be underlined that basically, an increasing likelihood (increasing positive odds or decreasing negative odds) means that differences among groups become larger and that, all other factors equal, the variable under control has an important influence on the patterns of the concerned groups of women. Conversely, a decreasing likelihood (decreasing positive odds or increasing negative odds) indicates that differences become smaller and that, hence, the influence of the variable becomes more limited.

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135 Overall, both in the cases of estimates on the probability of being working part-time and making a certain uses of part-time work, when passing from model 1 to model 2 the direction of the estimated effects remain unvaried (i.e. positive effects remain positive, same for negative), and main changes concern either the loss of statistical significance on some estimates, or changes in the magnitude of the estimated effects. The loss of statistical significance, indicates that when controlling for other factors (i.e. all things equal) there are not differences between the category that becomes insignificant and the reference one. Since this happens in very few cases that we consider uninteresting, we focus on changes in the magnitude of the estimated effects which we consider as more relevant to the scope of our study.
Estimates on the probability of being a part-time worker shows that in France the effect of cohort becomes stronger over time. In particular, while the cohort of seniors and older adults are progressively more likely to be concerned by part-time work as compared to the cohort of core adults, the youngest cohort becomes less distant from the profile of this latter and is slightly less likely to be involved in part-time work. If we look at the estimates about types of part-time work use, we see that in France the situation changes for women in the 1970-1979 cohort who, in the period 2003-2009, becomes more likely of having recourse to part-time work for family reasons rather than because of market constraints, while the patterns of the other cohorts remain stable at this regard, and are more subjected to changes in the likelihood of being concerned by part-time work for multi-activity. In particular, such likelihood increases, while it decreases for the cohort of young adults.

In Italy, estimates on the probability of being a part-time worker depicts a situation that is substantially stable over time for what concerns the influence of the variable cohort of birth, with coefficients registering no or little variation over time and showing a general inferior likelihood of being working part-time time for all the cohort groups as compared to the reference one (1960-1969). It is interesting to point out that, as in France, over the period under review the cohort of young adults becomes closer in its part-time work profile to the reference one (i.e. increasing negative odds). Evidence about part-time uses reveals that significant differences between the two cohorts with respect to the use of part-time work for family responsibilities disappear over time, and appears in 2010 in the form of a lower probability of being involved in part-time work for multi-activity for the youngest cohort. The two other cohorts, older adults and seniors, become progressively less likely to be involved in part-time work for family responsibilities and more likely to be concerned by part-time work for multi-activity with respect to part-time work due to market constraints.

These patterns indicate the presence of a period effect of part-time work in the two countries, that is to say that part-time work responds to the diverse work-life balance needs of women who are at different stages of their life. However, such an effect is probably stronger in France, where the importance of the cohort factor increases over time (i.e. differences among cohort groups increase) and where it reflects the diversity of women’s situation who work part-time. In Italy changes over time are less impressive (i.e. differences among cohort groups remain stable, which confirms that the growth of part-time work cuts across cohorts) and seem more axed on the work-family balance use of part-time work.
Table 8.2.1.1 Logistic regression model, probability of being working part-time, France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
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<tr>
<td>cohort 1970-1979</td>
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<td>0.998</td>
<td>0.685***</td>
<td>0.796***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.415***</td>
<td>1.368***</td>
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<td>industry</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>tertiary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>others</td>
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<td>0.377***</td>
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<tr>
<td>farm size</td>
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<tr>
<td>micro</td>
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<tr>
<td>grande</td>
<td></td>
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<td><strong>individual variables</strong></td>
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<td>1.548***</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>parisian region-bassin parisien</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>north, east and centre-east</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>west, south-west and mediterenean</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constant</td>
<td>0.528***</td>
<td>0.513***</td>
<td>0.182***</td>
<td>0.223***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The effect of education in both France and Italy confirms that as a general pattern more educated people are less likely to be concerned by part-time work as well as less likely to be involved in the undesirable type of part-time work. However, different dynamics are at work. In France, dissimilarities between groups of women with different levels of education are stable for what concerns the probability of holding a part-time job, but they decrease when considering the likelihood of having recourse to part-time work for family responsibilities or multi-activity as compared to part-time work due to market constraints. The biggest changes concerns the highly educated, who reduce their distance from the low educated more than what happens to medium educated women. In some way, it means that the gap between highly and poorly educated women has diminished over time and that the recourse to part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument has progressively become more diversified.

This is not the case in Italy. Once more, if differences in the likelihood of holding a part-time job do not encounter much change over the period under review, the varying effect of education emerges from the investigation of part-time work use patterns. Contrary to what happens in France, differences between women with low and medium/high educational levels increases over time particularly with respect to the use of part-time work for family responsibilities, which accordingly seems to become increasingly more characterized by inequalities in this sense. When estimating the probability of making recourse to part-time work for multi-activity rather than because of market constraints, estimates show no or little change over time, meaning that when the question is about other uses of part-time work than the traditional one education cannot completely protect against the extreme rise of involuntary part-time work revealed by descriptive evidence. Overall, this confirms the polarized patterns revealed by descriptive evidence that consists in a sort of dualization between the recourse to part-time work for work-family balance reasons and constrained part-time work.

In any case, it is interesting to remark that odds are higher in France than in Italy, especially those that refers to the probability of using part-time to respond to family needs, which means that differences between low and high educated women are larger too.
Table 8.2.1.2 Logistic regression model, probability of being working part-time, Italy

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort</td>
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<tr>
<td>cohort 1940-1949</td>
<td>0.564***</td>
<td>0.659***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort 1950-1959</td>
<td>0.590***</td>
<td>0.605***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort 1960-1969</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>cohort 1970-1979</td>
<td>0.714***</td>
<td>0.927***</td>
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<td>0.775***</td>
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<td>0.558***</td>
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<td>2.970***</td>
<td>2.531***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>occupational status</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low-medium</td>
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<td>medium-high</td>
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<td>0.434***</td>
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<tr>
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<td>1.337***</td>
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<td>other</td>
<td>1.256*</td>
<td>1.075</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>industry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>tertiary</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>others</td>
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<td>0.460***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>farm size</strong></td>
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<td>micro</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>grande</td>
<td>0.670***</td>
<td>0.601***</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>individual variables</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>presence of dependent children</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>1.596***</td>
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</table>
Overall, the persistence of such differences, whether they are decreasing or not, can be considered a sort of limited emancipation effect in the sense that enhanced part-time work opportunities that help women in remaining in paid work while taking care of other spheres of their life are linked to a gradually more consolidated position of those women in the labour market who are better set-off in terms of educational resources. The extents to which such differences decrease indicates how such opportunities are likely to become more generalized. Estimates for the variable previously activity status show that both in France and Italy part-time work is more likely to occur among those who were previously inactive or unemployed as compared to those who were previously already employed.

Moreover, differences among these groups of women slightly decrease over time in the two countries (i.e. decreasing positive odds), meaning that part-time work progressively more concerns not only those who are at the margins of the labour market. Nevertheless, estimates show that part-time work, whatever its use, is a second choice for those who are already integrated into the labour market. Both in France and in Italy, women who were previously unemployed are more likely to be concerned by constrained part-time work rather than part-time work for family responsibilities or part-time work for multi-activity as compared to women who were already in employment previously to current job (or one year before in the case of Italy). The contrary is observed for those who were previously inactive. Moreover, the odds do not register consistent changes over time, meaning that such differences represent stable pattern over the period under review. Only in France, differences between these groups of women disappear at the end of the decade (i.e. estimates are no longer significant) when estimating the probability of being working part-time for multi-activity reasons rather than because of market constraints.
Table 8.2.1.3 Multinomial models, probability of having recourse to different types of part-time work use, France

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<th>Exp(B)</th>
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<tr>
<td>cohort 1950-1959</td>
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<td>0.274***</td>
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<td>cohort 1960-1969</td>
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<td>medium (up to post-secondary)</td>
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<td>3.132***</td>
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<td>1.509***</td>
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*Note:* a denotes reference category.
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<th>cdi</th>
<th>cdd or other atypical contract</th>
<th>industry</th>
<th>teritary</th>
<th>others</th>
<th>farm size</th>
<th>micro</th>
<th>PME</th>
<th>grande</th>
<th>individual variables</th>
<th>partnership status</th>
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<td>0.540**</td>
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<td>0.3869</td>
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* p<0.10  ** p<0.05  *** p<0.01

a Reference category

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009
Table 8.2.1.4 Multinomial models, probability of having recourse to different types of part-time work use, Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
<th>Exp(B)</th>
</tr>
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Pseudo R2: 0.111 0.122 0.204 0.2102
(N): 21272 23629 11590 19642

* p<0.10   ** p<0.05   *** p<0.01, a Reference category, Source: Individual elaboration on Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
On the whole, it can be said that the use of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument are more likely to concern women who were previously inactive first, and those who were previously already employed then, while part-time work due to market constraints concerns those who were previously unemployed. These patterns reveal the dualistic nature of part-time work. On one hand, it can be said that there is an integrative effect of part-time work that helps women in either reintegrating the labour force after a period of inactivity or keeping themselves active on the labour during those life-phases when they need to reconcile work with other activities. On the other hand, there is a sort of scar effect since previously unemployed people are the more exposed to constrained part-time work, which means that structural aspects linked to labour market dynamics push them in a marginal situation who see them first losing a job and then accepting a part-time job that do not correspond to their wish.

We look now at the effect of the variable working time arrangements. In France differences over time increase and women who work in marginal and moderated part-time work arrangements are both less likely to enjoy the opportunity of using part-time work to respond to exigencies linked to family responsibilities as compared to substantial part-time work. On the contrary, differences among these groups of women about the likelihood of being involved in part-time work for multi-activity rather than in constrained part-time work tend to decrease over time, with a little difference persisting between those who work in moderated part-time work and those who work substantial part-time work, while no statistical significant differences are registered between these latter and those who work marginal part-time work over the period under review. All this confirms the patterns revealed by descriptive evidence: part-time work for family responsibilities is the use which really marks differences on the labour market for what concerns the conditions that are associated with the form of part-time work that is the most concerned by this type of part-time work use. As a result, it can be said that there is a scar effect, which is reinforced over time, of those forms of part-time work that are less closer to standard full-time work arrangements since they are more likely to be pushed into part-time work due to market constraints.

Italy presents the same kind of pattern, but more marked. In fact, differences between working time arrangements do not encounter much change over time and marginal and moderated part-time work are less likely to use part-time work for work-life balance purposes (both part-time work for family responsibilities and for multi-activity), and consequently more likely to be concerned by part-time work due to market constraints.

For all the results that have been presenting so far, it is important to underline that on the whole changes in estimates passing from model 1 to model 2 mainly indicates a reduction of
differences between groups concerned for each of the variables considered. Basically, this means that those differences are now “absorbed” by the other controlling factors that constitute model 2. All these factors are found to be statistically significant with respect to both the estimation of the probability of being in part-time work and the estimation of the probability of making a certain use of part-time work. Accordingly, it can be said that factors that keep women in part-time work and that influence the type of part-time uses to which they make recourse have not changed over time, and in some cases it is rather the direction and the magnitude of their effects that have changed over the period under review. However, this latter is the case of estimates about types of part-time work uses, which means that selection into part-time work present very stable patterns over time.

Overall, factors that register important changes are found among employment-related variables. These are mainly occupational status and industry (also farm size for Italy). Basically, both in France and Italy differences among people with different occupational status increase: those with a medium-high occupational status become progressively more likely to be involved in one of the part-time uses that implies the articulation of work with another life sphere rather than of being constrained to part-time working. Changes in the variable industry show that in France, sectors other than tertiary are progressively more invested by diversified uses of part-time work, and in these sectors the use of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument is more likely than part-time work due to market constraints as compared to the service sector. In the Italian case it is possible to observe the same dynamic, but differences between sectors decrease over time. Finally, the estimates of the variable farm size for Italy, reveal that big establishments progressively more differentiate themselves from small/medium ones (PME) in the likelihood of women working in such establishment of making recourse to part-time work for family reasons rather than being concerned by constrained part-time work. Individual factors like partnership and presence of dependent children are highly significant, but their effects do not encounter remarkable changes over time. Even the effects of territorial differences do not change over time, and this is especially true in Italy. The prevalence of employment-related factors in accounting for changes indicate that the structural dimension prevail over the cultural one in affecting part-time work profiles and patterns of part-time work uses. We shall further argue on this point in the conclusive section of this chapter.
Conclusion

In this chapter we have investigated how involvement in part-time work and the recourse to various types of part-time work use among different groups of women have developed and eventually changed over the 2000s in France and Italy. The final purpose of such investigation was to collect evidence about the extent to which it is possible to say that logics of social uses of part-time work have changed in the two countries, and if patterns of change can be framed in the context of a process of transition to a new form of part-time work. While we will develop this second point in a more extensive way in the conclusive part of this thesis, in this section we are going to summarize the main findings that emerged from the analyses presented over this chapter and we are going to confront them to expectations formulated in chapter 7.

What has concretely changed in the role that part-time work plays with respect to women’s employment patterns?

General findings about part-time work profiles and uses have shown that quantitative changes that refer to France are less impressive than those registered for Italy. In particular, the French case emerges as a scenario which is quantitatively stable, but qualitatively dynamic and diversified. Actually, a noticeable process of diversification in part-time work uses have developed in correspondence of a predominant role played by part-time work for family reasons, a consistent growing presence of part-time work for multi-activity, and above all a limited and deceasing incidence of constrained part-time work as compared to other types of uses. We interpreted these patterns as a confirmation of the relevance attributed to the phenomenon of constrained part-time work is clearly overestimated in the French debate, at expense of other forms of part-time work that in the majority of cases seem to respond to women’s life needs. In Italy large quantitative changes have taken place in a progressively more polarized outline, where dualist patterns of part-time work uses have evolved towards an univocal reality dominated by the economic dimension of part-time work, where concrete possibilities for a diversification risk to be definitively cut off. In fact, in this country the end of the decade is characterized by the heavy presence of part-time work due to market constraints, which represents at that time the most frequent pattern among Italian women working part-time, and the only one which registered a significant increase over the period under review, exceeding part-time work for family responsibilities.
In this sense, we can say that the general expectations we have formulated at this regard are confirmed by empirical evidence: part-time work uses in France have become more diversified, while in Italy they have encountered a growing polarization.

Findings about the role played by cohort of birth in the characterization of part-time work profiles and uses go further in this direction. In the two countries it is possible to observe an increasingly growth of part-time work across successive cohorts of women, which can be seen as an indicator of the role played by part-time work at different phases of women’s career. Overall, results confirm the presence of a period effect of part-time work in both in Italy and in France, that is to say that in point of fact at different stages of their life women engage in different type of part-time work uses in order to respond to their various work-life articulation needs. However, such an effect is more consistent in France, where the importance of the cohort factor increases over time and where, through diversified part-time uses patterns, it reflects the variety of situations that characterize women who work part-time.

In Italy changes over time are less impressive and seem more axed on the work-family balance use of part-time work. Moreover, the growth of part-time work and of the incidence of constrained part-time work among the different types of uses cuts across cohorts, limiting the accomplishment of the period effect. Consequently, we have argued that the individual dimension prevails in determining part-time work profiles and uses in the case of French women, while Italian women suffer from a structural dimension that negatively influence their modalities of recourse to part-time work.

The effect of education for both France and Italy confirms that as a general pattern more educated women are less likely to be concerned by part-time work as well as less likely to be involved in constrained part-time work. However, in the two countries part-time work development over the 2000s has been somehow accompanied by some form of generalization among women with diverse levels of education. In France, the gap between highly and poorly educated women has diminished over time and the recourse to part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument has progressively become more diversified. As for Italy, the effect of education on part-time work patterns is less defined, and increases in part-time work levels and in part-work due to market constraints cut across educational levels, suggesting once more that there may be some structural dynamics intervening on these patterns. Broadly speaking, the persistence of dissimilarities between women with different educational background in France and Italy can be considered as a sign of the presence of a sort of limited emancipation effect in the sense that, enhanced part-time work opportunities that help women in remaining in paid work while taking care of other spheres of their life are linked to a
gradually more consolidated position of those women who are better set-off in terms of educational resources. The extents to which such differences decrease indicates how such opportunities are likely to become more generalized.

So far, our hypotheses about how part-time work profiles have become increasingly related to women’s personal exigencies at specific stage of their life and to individual characteristics capable of making them more autonomous in their labour market decisions about part-time work and different types of part-time work uses, have been confirmed. Anyway, the results of our analyses have shown that changes in part-time work profiles and uses are linked as well to factors that refer to women’s employment histories and work-related characteristics.

For what concerns the role of employment histories, our findings reveal that part-time work serves as a step into the labour force for inactive women who want to gain a position on the labour market in Italy, while for the French it is a primary way to exit unemployment. This sort of integrative effect of part-time work is differently declined in the two countries. In France part-time work uses that allow the articulation of work and other life sphere increase among all the different types of employment histories taken into account, while part-time work due to market constraints decreased for all of them. In Italy, the contrary is true. Basically, these aspects further validate the contrasting national patterns that we have so far encountered several times: diversification across part-time uses in France, polarization between part-time uses in Italy. Anyway, in the two countries, the uses of part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument concern mainly women who were previously inactive first, and those who were previously already employed then, while part-time work due to market constraints concerns those who were previously unemployed. These patterns confirm that there is an integrative effect played by part-time work in women’s employment histories, since this employment forms helps women in either reintegrating the labour force after a period of inactivity or keeping themselves active on the labour during those life-phases when they need to reconcile work with other activities. However, we have pointed out also the presence of a scar effect related to the fact women exiting unemployment are the more exposed to constrained part-time work, which indicates that structural aspects linked to labour market dynamics and part-time work contribute in marginalizing their employment position. Therefore, we consider that these results indorse our hypothesis about the extent to which part-time work may have provided with the opportunity to integrate the labour market to those women whose individual characteristics would have not allowed them to manage to participate in the labour market on a full-time basis, but they reveal also some additional elements. In point of fact, they show that the structural dimension incorporated in women’s
employment histories play a role as well, a role that can be stronger than the simple effect of individual characteristics that are behind such employment histories and that can influence the recourse to different types of part-time work uses.

Finally, our results confirm that patterns of work-life articulation through different types of part-time work uses are characterized by growing inequalities related to diversity in working time arrangements. Both in France and Italy part-time work for family responsibilities is more frequent among those forms of part-time work that imply working hours patterns similar to standard full-time employment model, suggesting that the traditional use of part-time work as work-family balance instruments is to some extent the most comfortable in terms of employment protection and conditions, while other types of uses are invested by a process of marginalization. In view of that, we have pointed out how the important diversification in part-time work uses than have taken place in France as a result of changes in individual profiles and patterns is obstructed by an employment context that mainly support long forms of part-time work and their association with the use of part-time work as a way to conjugate family and paid work in a traditional sense, leading to a misrecognition of the diversity of situations that concern part-time workers. In the Italian case, despite the facts that women are progressively opening up to part-time work opportunities and to part-time work as a work-family balance instrument, the predominance of the increase over the decade in part-time work due to market constraints among all forms of part-time work shows that the structural context favours mainly marginalized forms of part-time work and obstructs the possibility to develop the use of part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument at all. These findings confirm our hypothesis about the role of the structural factors incorporated in the job’s characteristics that constrain the modalities of recourse to part-time work and hamper the diversification in part-time work uses, showing hence a scar effect of part-time work on women’s employment paths.

In this sense, it is important to remark that our findings concerning the controlling factors included in our analyses also point out that the most significant effects are registered on employment-related factor, confirming in this way the prevalence of structural dimension in accounting for changes in part-time work profiles and patterns of part-time work uses.

On the basis of the results, we shall now try to clarify whether we can say that there is an evolution in the logics of social uses of part-time work in the two countries under study, that is to say whether innovative logics of social uses are a real option in correspondence of the various types of part-time work uses.
As we have already pointed out, France is the country for which we can say that part-time work profiles have undertaken an important process of diversification with respect to part-time work uses. However, such process reveals to be mainly axed on the individual characteristics of women involved in it. In other words, in France a process of diversification of part-time uses has primarily developed as the result of changes in individual profiles of women working part-time. The most immediate consequence for women’s employment patterns based on part-time work have been: an increased possibilities of having recourse to part-time work in correspondence of specific work-life balance exigencies proper of each stage of life (i.e. period effect); a progressive generalization of the taking up of part-time work and of its use as a work-life articulation instrument among women with different socio-economic profile (i.e. emancipation effect). Nevertheless, women face other consequences that are the result of the effects of conditions imposed by labour market dynamics, which constraint and negatively affect the process of diversification of part-time uses. First, such conditions have an influence on the possibilities of having recourse to part-time work and to different types of uses according to different employment histories (i.e. integrative and scar effect depending on type of employment histories). Then, they reinforce the traditional use of part-time work in traditional terms, and in this sense they can penalize those forms of part-time work that are less close to standard full-time work arrangements, and push them into marginalized and constrained forms of part-time work (i.e. scar effect).

In view of that, we can say that in the French context the structural dimension, related to employment-related factors, prevails over the cultural dimension, related to individual factors, and obstructs the full accomplishment of the process of evolution in the logics of social uses which has its sources in individuals’ part-time work profiles and patterns of uses. This is not surprisingly, since in this country the growth of part-time work itself has been favoured mainly in periods of high unemployment as a work sharing strategy, becoming also part of the process of casualization of work. Likewise, we have seen in chapter 5 that the *lois* Aubry, with the introduction of the 35-hour regime, have voluntarily missed the opportunity to organically integrate part-time work into the general scheme of such reform with the aim of making it one of the main instrument to which workers may have recourse in order to respond to work-life articulation’s exigencies. On the contrary, they have favoured the promotion of long part-time work arrangements in order to leave a major room for the application and the implementation of RTT measures, which were judged more in line with the aims of the reforms. In other words, this course of action have completely neglected the diversity that characterizes women’ part-time work patterns, which has remained a sort of unaddressed
issue. In the framework of our analyses, these patterns are interpreted as the sign of discrepancy between logics of development and logics of social uses. Can we say that there has been an evolution in the logics of part-time work uses despite that? We will further argue on this point in the conclusive part of this thesis.

In the case of Italy, it is not possible to say that a process of diversification in part-time work uses has emerged in correspondence of renewed part-time work patterns. In fact, what we pointed out is basically an important polarization concerning part-time work profiles and uses, which emerged in correspondence of an important growth of part-time work, and which most evident consequence consists in limited possibilities of having recourse to part-time work in order to respond to varied work-life balance needs. Actually, the most recurrent part-time work uses in this country are part-time work as a work-family balance instrument (i.e. limited period effect) and, in the great majority of the other cases, constrained part-time work.

The consequences that this kind of dynamics trigger for women’s part-time employment patterns are to some extent similar to those reported in the French case, but they can be defined as minimized with respect to their positive implications and predominantly dualized. In fact, the possibilities of having recourse to part-time work in correspondence of specific work-life balance exigencies refer mainly to the exigencies related to family roles (i.e. “limited” period effect). At the same time, the progressive generalization of patterns of recourse to part-time work is not accompanied by the “universalization” of the use of part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument among women with different socio-economic profile, but by a global extreme incidence of constrained part-time work (i.e. “limited” emancipation effect). As a result, the effects of conditions imposed by labour market dynamics are stronger in this country. In fact, these conditions impacts on the possibilities of having recourse to part-time work and to different types of uses pushing indistinctly women with different employment histories mainly in constrained part-time work (i.e. mainly scar effect). Likewise, such conditions favor mainly a generalized marginalization of the various forms of part-time work in the sense that they obstruct any opportunity to develop the use of part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument at all (i.e. scar effect).

These dynamics highlight how in the Italian context there are few signs that indicate the progress of a process of evolutions in the logics of social uses. This happens despite the fact that individuals’ part-time work profiles and patterns of uses show some small signs of a limited diversification. Actually, these signs are completely constrained in their manifestation and their further development is stopped by the effect of employment-related factors linked to
the structural dimension which, as in the French case but accordingly to stronger dynamics, prevails over the cultural dimension and individual factors. The main possible explication for such dynamics refers to three kinds of factors. First, women traditionally encounter several difficulties in integrating the paid work and inactivity represents a common and almost structural feature of female labour force participation that easily puts women at the margins of the labour market. Moreover, as we have previously argued in this chapter, social and cultural norms in Italy impose heavier and longer family duties to women, whose family role characterizes a great part of their life and to some extent of their identities, with the obvious consequences that this may have on their employment paths. As a result, women have progressively more adapted to part-time work in order to cope with increasing difficulties in maintaining a position on the labour market. However, the heavy process of deregulation that invested the Italian labour market over the last decade, and effects that the economic crisis may have added up, have contributed in in further marginalizing and weakening part-time work, and hence in sharpening women’s difficulties with respect to work-life balance patterns based on part-time work. Finally, it is clear that in the Italian case innovative logics of social uses are not at all a real option for the various social uses of part-time work. In the framework of our analyses, we can say that differently from France, where there are signs of discrepancy between logics of development and logics of social uses, the Italian situation can be limited to certain logics of development that visibly constraint the evolution of logics of social uses. What are the consequences that these patterns may have on the progression of part-time work in this country? We will come back on this point in the conclusive part of this thesis.
CHAPTER 9

WHAT KIND OF EFFECTS FOR WHICH TYPE OF USES?
THE REALIZATION AND ELABORATION OF
WORK-LIFE ARTICULATION STRATEGIES BASED ON PART-TIME WORK

Introduction

In chapter 8 we have highlighted the major changes concerning part-time work profiles and patterns of uses over the 2000s. In particular, we have investigated the extent to which changing part-time work profiles and varying recourse to traditional and innovative uses of part-time work adapted into different societal contexts, and how the dynamics that derive from the interaction of all these elements have contributed in determining new assets in each national part-time work scenario. In this chapter we go further in such investigation and we focus on the effects that different types of part-time work uses may have on work-life articulation patterns, trying to detect if and which type of uses is developed in correspondence of traditional or innovative logics of part-time work use.

Which types of uses allow a full and satisfying realization of work-life articulation exigencies? Under the influence of what factors is it so? How and according to what characteristics do women express preferences for an adjustment in their actual working time arrangements? In what cases, and in correspondence of which type of part-time work, does such an adjustment take the form of a wish of either pursuing or giving up part-time work? Is there any change in the dynamics affecting such patterns?
We try to answer these kinds of questions in order to assess the role of part-time work with respect to its uses in the realization and elaboration of different logics concerning women’s articulation of time between work and outside work. The final aim is to ascertain whether, according to different types of uses, part-time work is really developing as an option for the generalized articulation of time between work and other life spheres.
The first section of this chapter focuses on the illustration of descriptive results about the investigation of the realization of working time preferences in the context of the individuals’ actual employment situation (dependent variable that we call “match”), and the investigation of preferences for part-time work the context of a wish for an adjustment in individual
working time arrangements (dependent variable that we call “wished working time arrangements). The second section presents the results of the logistic regression models.

9.1 PART-TIME WORK, WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS ADJUSTMENTS AND PREFERENCES: DESCRIPTIVE EVIDENCE

9.1.1 The role of different types of part-time work use

Figure 9.1.1-1 and 9.1.1-2 illustrate the distribution of different types of part-time work uses among the group of women who declared to be unsatisfied with their actual working time arrangements\(^{136}\). Figure 9.1.1-3 and 9.1.1-24 shows how different types of part-time work uses relate to those women who stated that, in the framework of a wish for an adjustment in weekly working hours, part-time work still would be their preferred working time arrangements.

Figure 9.1.1-1 Incidence of the category match not realized according to types of part-time work use, France and Italy (%) by year

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 201

\(^{136}\) This group is represented by the category of the dependent variable “match” named “match not realized”. For practical reasons, the titles of the graphs reproduced in this chapter report the name of such category.
First, it is important to notice how in the countries under study only a minority of part-time workers is not satisfied with their actual working time arrangements, and such a proportion decreases over time (-2,24 pp in France and -5,7 pp in Italy). While the reduction is stronger in Italy, the incidence of people who do not realize their match between actual and preferred working hours is overall higher in France (27,27% in 2003 and 25,03% in 2009, as compared to 15,81% in 2004 and 10,11% in 2010 in Italy). Interestingly, data about the type of preferred working time arrangements of women who are not satisfied with their actual ones show that in Italy there is a higher incidence of women who would still prefer to remain under a part-time work regime (49,12% in 2004 and 42,50% in 2010) as compared to France (32,82% in 2003 and 34,65% in 2009). Nevertheless, the incidence of this group of women decreases over time in Italy (-6,64 pp). One reason can be the process of deregulation that invested the Italian labour market over the last decade, and as an effect of the economic crisis that contributed in marginalizing and further weakening atypical jobs position. On the contrary, it slightly increases in France (+1,83 pp).

Overall these patterns indicate that women who work part-time are for the majority and progressively more satisfied with their working time arrangements, and when they are not still there is a part of them who show preferences for part-time work. Consequently, at a first sight it can be said that individuals’ work-life articulation exigencies are either directly realized...
through part-time work, or they could be realized through an adjustment in working time arrangements. However, it is important to look behind this general configuration and to verify how it is declined among different types of part-time work uses in order to testify the extent to which part-time work can be attributed to an integrative effect as a work-life balance instrument.

Figure 9.1.1-3 Incidence of preferences for part-time work according to types of part-time work use, France and Italy (%) by year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Family Responsibilities</th>
<th>Multiactivity</th>
<th>Market Constraints</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>55.99</td>
<td>82.39</td>
<td>63.04</td>
<td>66.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>50.06</td>
<td>67.44</td>
<td>21.09</td>
<td>42.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>47.83</td>
<td>63.04</td>
<td>34.60</td>
<td>38.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>32.82</td>
<td>34.65</td>
<td>42.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Figure 9.1.1-4 Changes over time in the incidence of preferences for part-time work according to types of part-time work use, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>France</th>
<th>Italy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family responsibilities</td>
<td>-5.93</td>
<td>-6.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiactivity</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market constraints</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
In the two countries those who are the least satisfied are of course those who are in a situation of part-time work due to market constraints, but their share decrease over time both in France (-5.34 pp) and Italy (-14.92 pp). Once more, the reduction is stronger in Italy, together with the fact that French women who are constrained to part-time work express preferences for an adjustment in their working time arrangements in greater proportions (61.45% in 2003 and 56.11% in 2003, while for Italy the proportions range between about 35.55% and 20.33% respectively in 2004 and 2010). The fact that there is, in any case, an important proportion of women who do not wish to change their working time arrangements despite the fact that these latter are more the result of a market constraint rather than a proper choice, together with a decreasing proportion of those who are not satisfied, is questioning. The most intuitive explanation may be related to a discouragement effect: those women did not chose to work part-time, but the difficulties they encountered in getting the type of job they want have pushed them to adapt to what they were able to get. This would explain why the proportions of not satisfied are lower in Italy and have consistently more decreased among those who work part-time because of market constraints (-14.92 pp). In fact, Italy is a country were labour force participation have traditionally represented a challenge for women with respect to several aspects, and the rapid growth of part-time work has offered to women a chance to get a position on the labour market, at the risk of remaining trapped in a job that do not correspond to their preferences. The economic crisis and the increase in involuntary part-time work over the last years of the decade may have accentuated such patterns. On the whole it can be said that, especially in Italy, for those women part-time work clearly has a scar effect rather than representing a sort of truly integrative opportunity in the labour market.

However, evidence about the type of preferred working time arrangements of women who are not satisfied with their actual ones, suggests that this sort of effect have been subject to reinforcement in France. Actually, for this country the proportion of women who would prefer to get an adjustment while remaining under a part-time work regime increases over time (+4.56 pp). In Italy, such a proportion register a slight decrease (-1.42 pp). In any case, within-year distributions show that preferences for part-time work among women concerned by part-time work due to market constraints are comparatively higher in Italy (36.60% in 2004 and 33.18% in 2010) than in France (21.09 in 2003 and 25.65% in 2009).

The use of part-time work for family responsibilities is the one that reports the lowest incidence of women who are unsatisfied with their actual working time arrangements both in France and Italy, and in the two countries such incidence decreases over time (-0.85 pp in France and -3.56 pp in Italy). Once more, also in this group the proportions of women who
wish to adjust their working time arrangements are higher in France (12.13% in 2003 and 11.48% in 2009) than in Italy (5.94% in 2004 and 2.98% in 2010). When looking at the preferred working time arrangements of those who are not satisfied with their actual ones, we see that part-time work remains by far the preferred option, representing more than 80% of cases in Italy and more than 50% in France, and registering an increasing trend over time in Italy (+1.93 pp) and a decreasing one in France (-5.93 pp). A lower incidence of the group of women who wish to adjust their working time arrangements, together with higher preferences for part-time work among these latter, registered for Italy may be interpreted as a consequence of the difficulties that women with family responsibilities encounters in both entering the labour market and conjugating paid work and family life given the scarcity of adequate childcare services and the rigidity of working time patterns that characterize this country. Accordingly, these women find in part-time work a concrete response to such difficulties.

Anyway, these data point out that in the two countries the use of part-time work to respond to family responsibilities concretely represents a solid work-life articulation option for women, who for the majority consider it the optimal working time arrangement, even in cases when an adjustment in working time patterns is wished. With regard to the French context, these results confirm that the issue of underemployment is incorrectly evaluated, since our investigation reveals that when taking into account the diversification of part-time uses, what is usually considered as underemployment is in point of fact a matter of adjustment in working time arrangements to be situated in the framework of individual work-life articulation strategies.

Evidence about the use of part-time work for multi-activity is very similar to the one registered on part-time work for family responsibilities, and present very similar patterns. Both in France and Italy, only a minority of women are not satisfied with their actual working time arrangements (about 14% in France and between 8.44 and 2.87% in Italy), and this proportion decreases over time especially in Italy (-5.57 pp). Among women who make recourse to this type of part-time work use and who do not realize the match between their actual and preferred working hours, part-time work represent the preferred working hours arrangement for a big part of them (about 47% of cases in France and more than 60% in Italy).

Overall, these results show that part-time work allow women to realize their work-life articulation strategies in correspondence of those uses that are developed as concrete responses to the need of adapting involvement in paid work to the necessities coming from other life spheres. Moreover, the decreasing trends over time for the category match not
realized according to the types of part-time work uses suggests that women progressively more integrate part-time work to their career in a successfully way, according to their needs and time patterns. Evidence about the influence of other individual-related variables shall provide with more elements at this regard. Finally, it must be noticed that in both countries and at all the time points considered preferences for part-time work are higher among women having recourse to part-time work for family reasons, suggesting that the traditional use of part-time work is the most acknowledged by women’s patterns.

9.1.2 Individual profiles related to the realization and elaboration of part-time work as a work-life articulation strategy

We now look at individual factors such as cohort of birth, levels of education and previous employment status with the aims of detecting the types of individual profiles which are related to successful patterns of part-time work uses in terms of work-life articulation strategies.

9.1.2.1 Cohort of birth

Figure 9.1.2.1-1 and 9.1.2.1-2 illustrates how different cohorts of women get their working time preferences realized through their actual working time arrangements and changes over time at this regard. For all the cohorts considered, the proportion of those who are not satisfied with their current working time arrangements is relatively contained and it decreases over time both in Italy and France. In some way, this suggests that over the decade women have progressively continued in effectively integrating part-time work into their career as part of their work-life articulation strategies.

As a general trend, in the two countries such proportion progressively increases when passing form the oldest to the youngest cohort, and hence it is consistently higher for the cohort 1970-1979 (34.50% in 2003 and 26.12% in 2009 for France, 17.64% in 2004 and 11.13% in 2010 for Italy) as compared to the others. However, trends about changes over time show that this cohort is interested by important reductions (-11.34 pp in France and -6.51 pp in Italy) at this regard, meaning that its members become gradually more able to fit their working time preferences into the working time arrangements associated with their job. Interestingly, in the two countries the cohorts of core adults (1960-1969) and the cohort of older adults (1950-1969) present very similar profiles: in France, women who are not satisfied with their current
working time arrangements account for about 26% of women in each of the two cohorts (very little change between 2003 and 2009), in Italy they are about 15% in 2004 and 10% in 2010.

**Figure 9.1.2.1-1 Incidence of the category match not realized according to cohorts, France and Italy (%) by year**

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

**Figure 9.1.2.1-2 Changes over time in the incidence of the category match not realized according to cohorts, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)**

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
These patterns can be interpreted as a sign of the fact that the ability to get the match between actual and preferred working hours is linked to the individuals’ employment experience. In other words, those women who have been on the labour market for longer enjoy a more consolidated employment position that helps them in better fitting out the optimal working time arrangements in relation to their exigencies. Moreover, there may be an additional factor playing a role that add up to the length of employment experience and which refers to the specificity of the work-life balance exigencies proper to each life stage, or what we call period effect. In other words, young women are in the period where they are likely of being both entering the labour market, trying to build up a career, and starting an autonomous family life, and they need to find a new balance between the two sphere; the cohorts of core adults and older adults have already consolidated their labour market position and are in the central phases of their family roles, hence they are more experienced for what concerns the balance of paid work and private life, that in some cases they try to further adjust to their needs; the cohort of seniors is basically interested by a progressive reduction in involvement on the labour market, while family roles becomes progressively less demanding as well, hence for this group finding the working time arrangements that respond to their needs is less problematic. Accordingly, part-time work arrangements differently fit with different cohorts of women who hence present different profiles in this sense.

All this can also explain why the most important changes over time are registered among the cohort of young and the one of seniors, which are the most dynamic with references to the aspects that we have just illustrated. In particular, these aspects are in line with what emerged from descriptive evidence presented in chapter 8: the most dynamic patterns of changes over time concern the youngest cohort in France and the oldest one in Italy. Once more, this evidence supports the idea that French women, thanks to a more consolidated presence in the labour market, are better able to manage the use of part-time work for the articulation of paid work and other life spheres along their career since the earlier stages of their involvement in labour and family roles. Conversely, Italian women seem to acquire this possibility as long as they progress over their life with respect to both work and family.

Looking at the preferred working time arrangements by cohort of women who are not satisfied with their actual ones (Figure 9.1.2.1-3 and 9.1.2.1-4) it is possible to see that preferences for part-time work are important among all the cohort groups in the two countries. In particular, preferences for part-time work seem to respond to a period effect as well, and to some extent they reflect the patterns of part-time work uses by cohort illustrated in the descriptive evidence section of chapter 8.
Figure 9.1.2.1-3 Incidence of preferences for part-time work according to cohorts, France and Italy (%) by year

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Figure 9.1.2.1-4 Changes over time in the incidence of preferences for part-time work according to cohorts, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Within-year distributions show that the cohort profiles are similar in the two countries and correspond to the scheme that we have previously delineated: preferences for part-time work increases passing from the youngest to the oldest cohort, indicating that part-time work
responds to the varying exigencies that women are confronted with at different life stages. However, it is interesting to notice that in 2010, the three Italian cohorts 1970-1979, 1960-1969, 1950-1959 present very similar patterns that recall the ones reported in chapter 8 when showing the distribution of part-time work due to market constraints among the various cohort groups. Accordingly, it seems that in this case preferences for part-time work cut across cohorts and the reduction registered over time suggest that this may be one of the effects of the economic crisis such as increasing levels of part-time work, especially involuntary part-time work. In France, the evolution of within-year patterns recall more the distributions by cohort observed in chapter 8 about part-time work for family responsibilities and part-time work for multi-activity, meaning that adjustments in part-time work arrangements may be related to life-stage related exigencies. Actually, changes over time show that preferences for part-time work increase consistently among young women (+9.29 pp), who progressively more evolve towards the use of part-time work for family responsibilities over the period under review, as well as among the oldest cohort (+4.53 pp), and the cohort of older adults (+2.97 pp), who are the cohorts that increase their recourse to part-time work for multi-activity over the same period. Finally, these patterns explain why preferences for part-time work are higher in Italy than in France, but it is exactly in this country that major increases over time are registered.

9.1.2.2 Education

Education appears as a relevant factor in the realization of women working time preferences through part-time work. Figure 9.1.2.2-1, shows that both in France and Italy the proportion of women who are not satisfied with their current working time arrangements decreases as the level of education increases. Moreover, if trends over time (figure 9.1.2.2-2) reveal that the missed realization of working time preferences is a pattern that encounters reduction for the educational groups considered, this is especially true for the group of highly educated women, who are interested by the largest changes (-5.43 pp in France and -8.67 pp in Italy). These results are in line with those exposed in chapter 8, where we have seen that education protects against the less desirable features of part-time work (i.e. involuntarily), and confirm that the level of educational attainment is an important resource in determining possibilities of fruitfully using part-time as a work-life articulation instrument. At this regard it is interestingly to point out that in the French case, medium and low educated women are interested by marginal chances over time as compared to the more educated one, since the
proportion of women who wish to adjust their working time decreases only by respectively 1.25 pp and 0.97 pp. As for Italy, these two groups register lower reductions over time as compared to the group of highly educated women, but still they are steady reductions that account respectively to -4.82 pp and -5.55 pp.

Figure 9.1.2.2-1 Incidence of the category match not realized according to levels of education, France and Italy (%) by year

Accordingly, these differences testify the persistence of imbalanced part-time work opportunities linked to educational inequalities in the two countries, but show also that somehow in Italy such differences are slightly attenuated over time. This is in line with, and it is probably an effect of, what we have observed in chapter 8 about the fact that increases over time in part-time work cut across educational levels. Overall, education is a crucial resource that makes women able to accommodate their labour force participation patterns in terms of working time with respect to their outside-work engagements, and that can hand on an emancipation effect of part-time work in this sense, especially in cases where part-time work cuts across educational inequalities.
Higher educated women distinguish themselves from women who have an lower educational level also with regard to preferences for part-time work in case of a wish for an adjustment in working time. In France and Italy part-time work as preferred working time arrangement register its higher incidence among women whit higher educational attainment (46,61% in 2003 and 44,52% in 2009 in France, 52,48% in 2004 and 50,71% in 2010 in Italy). This can be considered as a sign of the attractiveness of part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument. Likewise, preferences for part-time work represents more than once third of cases also among medium and low educated women, suggesting once more that the desire of an adjustment in working time, even if it concerns groups of women who are more likely of experiencing poor working conditions, does not necessarily disqualify part-time work. In France these patterns are the result of relatively stable trends over time (slight changes are registered over the period under review), while in Italy they take place in the framework of important reductions over time in preferences for part-time work especially among low (-6,35 pp) and medium educated women (-8,77 pp), which hypothetically derive from a worsening of working conditions resulting deregulation and effects of economic crisis.

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
Figure 9.1.2.2-3 Incidence of preferences for part-time work according to levels of education, France and Italy (%) by year


Figure 9.1.2.2-4 Changes over time in the incidence of preferences for part-time work according to levels of education, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

9.1.2.3 Previous activity status

The realization of the match between actual and preferred working hours varies according to the previous activity status of women concerned. In Italy, data show that there is a marked difference between those who were previously in employment and the others, while in France the group of women who differentiate themselves the most is the group of the previously unemployed. Clearly, in Italy the previously employed present a lower incidence on women who are not satisfied with their current working time arrangements (13.14% in 2004 and 27.12% in 2010).

Figure 9.1.2.3-1 Incidence of the category match not realized according to previous activity status, France and Italy (%) by year

![Figure 9.1.2.3-1](image)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

In France, the contrary is true for the previously unemployed (39.23% in 2003 and 37.37% in 2009), while the other two groups present very similar patterns. The previously active and previously inactive do not show very dissimilar profiles probably because of the fact that inactivity among French women is more likely to be a temporary event due to particular conditions (usually the birth of the third child), while in Italy inactivity represents a common and almost structural feature of female labour force participation and puts more easily women at the margins of the labour market. For this reason (i.e. in order to avoid to be marginalized),
the reductions over time that occur in Italy among all the groups considered with respect to the proportion of women who are not satisfied with their actual working time arrangements, can be interpreted once more as resulting from reactions to the increase in involuntarily part-time work during the economic crisis at the end of the decade. In other words, women adapt progressively more to part-time work in order to cope with increasing difficulties in maintaining a position on the labour market. The fact that such reductions are particularly strong (-12.13 pp) among the previously unemployed (who are the most “vulnerable” in terms of realization of working time preferences) confirms this idea. On the whole, it seems that part-time work in Italy is particularly effective in helping women with more continuous employment histories in articulating paid work and other activities, while in France it is more likely to be a work-life articulation instrument available to different categories.

Figure 9.1.2.3-2 Changes over time in the incidence of the category match not realized according to previous activity status, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

If we look at preferences for part-time work (Figure 9.1.2.3-3 and 9.1.2.3-4), we see that in the two countries and at the different points in times such preferences are higher among women of the group of the previously inactive. In particular, both in France and Italy preferences for part-time work decrease when passing from the previously inactive, to the previously employed and finally to the previously unemployed, and this pattern is relatively
stable over time. In view of that, it can be said that part-time work represents a “soft reinsertion mode” for those women who wish reintegrate the labour market while being invested in other outside-work life spheres.

**Figure 9.1.2.3-3 Incidence of preferences for part-time work according to previous activity status, France and Italy (%) by year**

![Graph showing incidence of preferences for part-time work](image1)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*  

**Figure 9.1.2.3-4 Changes over time in the incidence of preferences for part-time work according to previous activity status, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)**

![Graph showing changes over time](image2)

*Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010*
Changes over time regard mainly the previously unemployed in France, who manifest increasing preferences for part-time work (+8.19 pp). In Italy, important changes are reported among the previously employed, followed by the previously unemployed, who show decreasing preferences for part-time work (respectively – 7.72 pp and 6.48 pp). Since we have seen in chapter 8 that in France the previously unemployed are particularly concerned by part-time work due to market constraints, this increase over time may be the result of a discouragement effect, or to some sort of progressive adaptation to a marginal labour market position.

9.1.3 Working time adjustments and preferences according to different forms of part-time work

Different forms of part-time work offer different possibilities of realizing the match between actual and preferred working hours. As we have seen in chapter 8, long forms of part-time work such as substantial part-time favour integrative part-time paths given the fact that they are closer to standard full-time work. Accordingly, in France as in Italy, the category of substantial part-time work is the one that presents the lowest proportions of women who are not satisfied with their actual working time arrangements. In particular, as a general pattern, such proportions decrease when shifting from the category of marginal part-time, to moderated part-time and substantial part-time. Trends over time show that more consistent decreases in the share of women who do not realize their working time preferences refer to the category of substantial part-time work (-3.36 pp in France and -7.04 pp in Italy). These results are not surprising. Actually, we have seen that recent reforms on working time in France have promoted long forms of part-time work in order to harmonize this employment form to the new 35-hour full-time work regime. Likewise, the Italian labour market is increasingly more characterized by atypical forms of work connected to low levels of protection and poor working conditions where the figure of standard full-time work stands out as a model to follow. In other words, substantial part-time workers probably enjoy better working conditions and can more easily bargain working time arrangement that better fit their needs.
Figure 9.1.3-1 Incidence of the category match not realized according to working time arrangements, France and Italy (%) by year

![Bar chart showing incidence of category match not realized by year for France and Italy](chart1.png)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Figure 9.1.3-2 Changes over time in the incidence of the category match not realized according to working time arrangements, France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

![Bar chart showing changes over time for France and Italy](chart2.png)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
Figure 9.1.3-3 Incidence of preferences for part-time work according to working time arrangements, France and Italy (%) by year

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010

Figure 9.1.3-4 Changes over time in the incidence of preferences for part-time work according to working time arrangements France (2003-2009), Italy (2004-2010), (pp)

Source: Individual elaboration on Enquête Emploi, 2003 and 2009; Rilevazione Forze di Lavoro, 2004 and 2010
Results about preferences for part-time work go in the same and at the same time opposite direction, particularly in France. In this country, preferences for part-time work are substantially lower among substantial part-time workers (15.86% in 2003 and 10.68% in 2009) and even decrease over time (-5.18 pp). In Italy, preferences for part-time work among this group of workers decrease over time as well (-8.19 pp). In some way, these workers who are already close to full-time work patterns, wish to get even closer to full-time work. In other words, if on one hand the need to balance work and extra-work activities is the reason why they are working part-time, these women would like to invest themselves more extensively in paid-work.

Conversely, in the two countries the category of marginal part-time work is the one that registers the highest incidence of preferences for part-time work. A large majority among them (more than 50% of cases both in France and Italy) would like to continue working on a part-time basis. This can be seen, once more, as the result of a discouragement effect, or simply as the confirmation that people working under a marginal part-time work regime encounter more difficulties in getting the working time arrangements that fit their exigencies the most.

9.2 TENDENCIES AND CHANGES IN WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS ADJUSTMENTS AND PREFERENCES: THE ANALYSIS OF CORRELATES

The descriptive results presented above point out how part-time work globally represents a valuable work-life articulation strategy for women, and a working arrangement that reflects women’s preferences in those situations where they need to balance they participation in the labour force with a parallel engagement in other life spheres. Nevertheless, these differ according to various individual and work-related characteristics, which show that some groups of women are more advantaged at this regard than others, and that part-time work is a concrete and desirable work-life balance option under particular conditions. Moreover, if these results testify of a general acknowledgment of part-time work in the two countries, it is clear that the use of part-time work to respond to family responsibilities is the type of use which suits the most the realization of working time preferences and the election of part-time work as preferred working time arrangement.
This section reports the results of the logistic models used to estimate the probability for women to realize the match between actual and preferred working hours (Table 9.2.1.1 and 9.2.1.2) and of expressing preferences for part-time work in case an adjustment in current working time arrangements is wished (Table 9.2.1.3 and 9.2.1.4). They show what the relationships are between part-time uses, the individual and work-related factors selected in this study, and patterns of realization and elaboration of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work. What does really affect the realization and elaboration of strategies? Are there differences between types of part-time uses at this regard? Have these relationships changed over time? Has their incidence evolved? Do French and Italian women show different possibilities of successfully using part-time work as a generalized work-life balance instrument?

As in the case of analyses presented in chapter 8, in each case two models have been run: a model estimating the effects of main independent variables only (called model 1); a model estimating the effects of main independent variables and controlling factors jointly (called model 2), in order to detect the eventual influences of the latter type of variables on changes in the incidence of the former group of variables. Results are presented in terms of odds ratio.

9.2.1 Evidence about the effects of types of part-time work uses, main independent variables and selected controlling factors

The results from model 1 with reference to both France in 2003 and 2009 and Italy in 2004 and 2010 partially confirm the descriptive evidence presented in the previous sections and show that the extent to which women’s realize their working time preferences and express preferences for part-time work in the context of a wish for an adjustment in working time is significantly related to type of part-time work uses, cohort of birth, educational level, previous activity status and working time arrangements.

Starting with the effect of types of part-time uses, estimates observed for France show with no surprise that part-time work for family reasons and part-time work for multi-activity make women considerably less likely (between 80% and 90% less likely) to not realizing their working time preference as compared to women who are in a situation of constrained part-time work. The same is true for Italy, which presents similar estimates to those reported for France. It is interesting to notice that the categories of part-time work for family
responsibilities and part-time work for multi-activity display very similar estimates, indicating that in first place the fact of being working part-time in order to fulfil work-life balance needs, facilitate the possibilities of getting the wished working time arrangements. Nevertheless, the tiny differences that can be observed in the magnitude of such coefficients show that in the two countries the use of part-time work for family responsibilities is the one that implies higher reduction in the probabilities of not realizing working time preferences through current working time arrangements. In other words, this type of use is the more privileged in this sense.

These patterns are stable over time in the two countries, since only minor variations can be observed in the coefficients for this variable. In particular, in France the coefficients (negative odds) from model2 for 2003 and 2009 slightly decrease, meaning that differences between groups of women having recourse to different types of part-time work decrease as well, while in Italy coefficients slightly increases from 2004 to 2010, meaning that differences between groups slightly increased. Probably this is due to increases in part-time work for market constraints registered in Italy at the end of the decade, while in France involuntary part-time work decreased, accordingly these dynamics may have triggered small adjustments, which remain in any case very marginal.

In correspondence of these results, it is expected to observe that results about preferences for part-time work show that women who work part-time for family reasons are much more likely to prefer to remain under a part-time work regime rather than to move to full-time work as compared to women who work part-time because of market constraints. This is true for both the French and the Italian case, but while in France the odds of preferring part-time work decrease over time among this group of women, in Italy they increase. It means that in France differences between the two categories (part-time work for family reasons and part-time work due to market constraints) decrease over time, while in Italy they increase. Both in France and Italy, the category of part-time work for multi-activity present similar patterns as the category of part-time for family reasons, just with coefficients who show an inferior magnitude. These results confirms the fact that part-time work responds to the expectations of those women who have recourse to it in order to juggle their simultaneous involvement in paid work and in other life spheres, since even when they wish to get an adjustment in their current working time arrangements, they still wish to do so while remaining under a part-time work regime. Moreover, the use of part-time work to balance work and family is confirmed to be the most acknowledged at this regard.
Table 9.2.1.1 Logistic regression models, probability of match not realized, France

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<th>model 1 2009</th>
<th>model 2 2003</th>
<th>model 2 2009</th>
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<td>0.573***</td>
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The effect of the variable cohort on the probability of not realizing rather than realizing working time preferences through current working time arrangements is similar for the cohorts 1940-1949 and 1950-1959 in both France and Italy. In the two countries, the two cohorts are less likely of being not realizing the match between actual and preferred working hours as compared to the cohort 1960-1969. In particular, the gap is larger between the oldest cohort and the reference one (1960-1969) (i.e. inferior negative odds). Once more, estimates for France and Italy are very similar, and in both countries coefficients for the category 1940-1949 decreases over the period under review, meaning that differences between such category and the reference one are more accentuated at the end of the decade (i.e decreasing negative odds), and the same is true for coefficients for the cohort 1950-1959, with the only difference that in this case estimates for Italy decrease only slightly. It means that the Italian cohort of older adults and the cohort of core adults are more similar with respect to patterns of realization of working time preferences than the French counterparts.

For what concerns the cohort of young adults, it is remarkable to notice that in both the French and Italian case the estimates for this category at the time points that correspond to the end of the decade (2009 in France, 2010 in Italy) are not statistically significant, meaning that no real difference can be observed between this cohort and the reference cohort of core adults with respect to the probability of not being realizing the match between actual and preferred working hours.
Table 9.2.1.1 Logistic regression models, probability of match not realized, Italy

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<td>2004 2010</td>
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<td>cohort 1950-1959</td>
<td>0.875** 0.847**</td>
<td>0.864* 0.815***</td>
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<td>0.849** 0.993</td>
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On the whole, these results confirm what already emerged through the analysis of descriptive results in the previous section: those women who have been on the labour market for longer enjoy a more consolidated employment position that helps them in better fitting out the optimal working time arrangements in relation to their work-life balance exigencies, which are likely to be specific to each of their life stages. Accordingly, there is a period effect of part-time work which is confirmed by such results, but also a sort of “modulated” integrative effect that emerges as a progressive ability of part-time work to respond to women’s work-life articulation necessity as long as women advance over their life-course.

Results about preferences for part-time work following up a wish to get an adjustment in working time reveal that in this case the French and the Italian situation do not converge. In fact, in France estimates for the cohort of older adults and particularly the cohort of seniors indicate a higher likelihood of expressing preferences for part-time work as compared to the cohort of core adults, and this is a situation that remains relatively stable over time despite the dramatic reduction in the odds for the cohort 1949-1949 and a slight increase in the odds for the cohort 1950-1959. As for the cohort 1970-1979, estimates are statistically not significant, which means that there is not difference between this cohort and the reference one with respect to preference for part-time work. This may be linked to the fact that, as we have seen in chapter 8, these two cohorts present similar patterns of part-time uses, especially with respect to the use of part-time work to respond to family responsibilities.

In the Italian case, differences between cohorts may be found in 2004 models which results detect the cohort 1940-1949 and the cohort 1970-1979 as the ones who are respectively more...
likely and less likely to express preferences for part-time work as compared to the cohort of reference. These results may be in line with what we have in several occasions called period effect: women belonging to the oldest cohort are preparing their exit from the labour market, hence they privilege reduced working time arrangements based on part-time work, while women in the youngest cohort are in the beginning of their labour market career and they probably wish to consolidate it through a full-time investment in paid work. However, what it is very noticeable is the fact that estimates for 2010 show that there is no more any statistically significant difference among cohorts. This finding is in line with what emerged in the section dedicated to descriptive evidence, where we have seen that preferences for part-time work cut across cohorts and this may be one of the effects of the economic crisis such as increasing levels of part-time work, especially involuntary part-time work.

Globally, it seems that preferences for part-time work are only partially related to life periods and work-life balance necessities related to this latter. This suggests that, in those cases where people express preferences for new working time arrangements as a consequence of a wish to adjust their current ones, if the preferred outcome of such an adjustment is not related to the specificities of work-life balance exigencies, then there are other factors that come into play.

The effect of education on the probability of not realizing working time preferences through current working time arrangements reveals to be significant in France, but not in Italy. Essentially, in France medium and high educated women working part-time are both less likely of being unsatisfied with their current working time arrangements as compared to low educated women. Moreover, coefficients for the two categories are very similar and they do not show substantial variations over time. In other words, as we have seen in the descriptive results section, higher levels of education offer more opportunity to women for successfully having recourse to part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument. This indicates the presence of an emancipation effect of part-time work in this country, since women who are more emancipated with respect to paid work and family roles on the basis of their level of education can better handle their recourse to part-time work.

This is not the case in Italy, where estimates for the variable education are not statistically significant. As a result, we can say that the positive recourse to part-time work to cope with work-life balance necessities cuts across level of education, and not just across cohorts. This suggests, once more, that other factors may play a role in this sense.
Table 9.2.1.3 Logistic regression models, probability of preferences for part-time work, France

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<tr>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium-high</td>
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<tr>
<td>contract</td>
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<tr>
<td>cdi a</td>
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</tr>
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<td>cdd or other atypical contract</td>
<td>0.969</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
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<td>farm size</td>
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<td><strong>individual variables</strong></td>
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<td>partnership status</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>not in a partnership a</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a partnership</td>
<td>1.754***</td>
<td>1.557***</td>
</tr>
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</table>
The same discourse applies to estimates for the variable education in the context of the estimation of the probability of preferring part-time work in case the match between actual and preferred working hours is realized. On the contrary, in the French case, education is once more statistically significant (model for 2009): medium and highly educated women are more likely than low educated women to express preferences for part-time work. As we have pointed out in the section dedicated to the illustration of descriptive results, this testifies of the value attached to part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument.

The variable previously activity status is significantly related to the probability of realizing the match between actual and preferred working hours both in the French and Italian case, but estimates reveal that this variable presents different patterns in the two countries. In France, those who were previously inactive show an inferior likelihood than those who were previously already in employment, while the contrary is true for the previously unemployed. Basically, this means that those who are back into employment after a period of inactivity are those who profit the most of the potentialities of part-time work as a work-life balance facility. In the section dedicated to descriptive results, we have defined part-time work as a “soft reinsertion mode”, and these results further validate such definition. In Italy, the previously unemployed and the previously employed are both more likely of not realizing the match between actual and preferred working hours as compared to those who were previously already employed. In other words, contrary to what happens in France, in Italy part-time work that serves the work-life balance exigencies of women who have more continuous employment histories, which are women who enjoy a more consolidated employment
position. Once more, these results confirm the patterns that have been highlighted in the descriptive evidence section.

If we look at preferences for part-time work, we observe a completely different situation. In France, only the category of previously inactive is statistically significant, and it is so only in 2009’s model. Essentially, the previously inactive are more likely than the previous employed of expressing preferences for part-time work in case of a wish for an adjustment in their current working time arrangements. In Italy, it is the category of the previously unemployed the only significant one, and it is so only in 2010’s model. In particular, those who were previously unemployed are less likely of preferring part-time work. On the whole, these findings support the idea that part-time work play a different role according to different profiles of employment histories and its role is differently perceived according to these latter. Finally, the realization of working time preferences is more difficult if the current working time arrangement is not the one which is the more closed to the standard full-time work (i.e. substantial part-time work, used as reference category). The more disadvantaged in this sense are those who work according to marginal part-time work arrangements (their odds are about 3,4 - in 2003 - and 2,5 - in 2009 - times the odds of the reference category). It is important to notice that values of the estimates decrease over the period under review (i.e. decreasing positive odds), but despite that differences between the three groups remain ample. Essentially, reductions in such differences may be related to declining levels of part-time work due to market constraints (cfr. chapter 8, section 8.1.1), while the fact that they remain ample may be the result of a steady persistence of this type of part-time work uses typically among the most marginal forms of part-time work (cfr. chapter 8, section 8.1.3). Moreover, as we have already pointed out in the descriptive evidence section, the maintaining of important differences may also derive from the strengthening of the 35-hour regime which, as shown in chapter 5, has mainly promoted integrative forms of part-time work based on long part-time work arrangements.

\[137\] In this case, the variable working time arrangements had to be recoded in two categories, marginal part-time and moderated/substantial part-time, in order to overcome estimations problems posed by low frequencies registered on the three categories version of this variable within the category of the dependent variable preferences for part-time work.
Table 9.2.1.4 Logistic regression models, probability of preferences for part-time work, Italy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>main independents</th>
<th>model 1</th>
<th>model 2</th>
<th>model 1</th>
<th>model 2</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>2010</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exp(B)</td>
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<tr>
<td>cohort 1940-1949</td>
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<td>1.933</td>
<td>1.787***</td>
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<td>0.926</td>
<td>0.792*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.970</td>
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<td>1.350*</td>
<td>1.074</td>
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<td>0.886</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0.204***</td>
<td>0.215***</td>
<td>0.175***</td>
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<td>4.005***</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><strong>industry</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>tertiay</td>
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<td>micro</td>
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<tr>
<td>grande</td>
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<tr>
<td>in a partnership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.029***</td>
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</table>
In Italy the situation is substantially the same, the only differences refer to the estimated values that increase under the period under review, meaning that differences among the three groups become larger over time. This confirms the argument developed in the descriptive evidence section, on the basis of which we assume that the process of “selective deregulation” which invested the Italian labour market particularly over the last ten years, has contributed to widen the gap between those employment profiles which mainly refer to a typical work and those who are closer to the standard model of full-time work.

In the end, it seems that in the two countries part-time work allows the achievement of successful work-life articulation strategies mainly for women strongly involved in the labour market in terms of working hours. In other words, it further helps the integration in the labour force of those women who present already a more consolidated employment position with regard to the standard employment model, while it penalizes women who are not considered as part of the group of “core workers”. Accordingly, and considering the fact that marginal and moderated part-time work represent about two thirds, and in some cases more, of part-time work patterns in terms of working time arrangements in France and Italy (cfr. chapter 8, section 8.1.3), we can argue that there is a scar effect of part-time work which derives from the influence of intrinsically work-related elements.

However, when looking at the effect of the type of working time arrangements on preferences for part-time work, we see that both in France and Italy women who work according to moderated/substantial part-time work arrangements are less likely to express preferences for part-time work as compared to women who work in marginal part-time work position.
Estimates for the two countries are very similar and show only slight changes over time which basically indicates that differences between groups according to the type of working time arrangements with respect to the probability of preferring part-time work as a way to adjust their current working time patterns increase over time (i.e. decreasing negative odds). This suggests that as long as standard full-time work remains the social norm, and as long as such a norm is reinforced, the employment conditions and the societal recognition associated to the model of full-time work drive women’s preferences towards the aspiration of integrating working time arrangements that stick to the model. This is particularly the case of those women whose current working time patterns are closer to full-time work. Conversely, women who occupy marginal part-time work positions are more inclined to remaining in part-time work, which, in the framework of our argument, means that they tend towards further maintaining a marginal position in the labour market.

For what concerns the influence of other controlling factors, results are less consistent than what we observed in the case of models presented in chapter 8. Essentially, for what concerns the realization of working time preferences the effects of individual variables and employment related variable are equally important in France and more or less consistent over time, while preferences for part-time work are more affected by individual variables, which effect remain consistent as well over time. Conversely, in the Italian case the effects of work-related factors become stronger and increasingly more consistent over time, particularly industry and farm-size, while for what concerns preferences for part-time work occupational status shows the most relevant effect. Regional differences are more incident in the realization of working time preferences, while preferences for part-time work are relatively unaffected.

The diverse prevalence in the two countries of individual and employment-related factors has to be framed in the examination of the interaction between the cultural and structural dimensions and the way it affects patterns of realization/elaboration of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work. We shall further argue on this point in the conclusive section of this chapter.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have focussed on the analysis of the role played by part-time work in the realization and elaboration of women’s work-life articulation strategies over the 2000s in France and Italy. In particular, we have examined how different types of part-time work use
are related to such strategies, and under the influence of what kinds of individual and employment-related factors their influence determine a range of possibilities for successfully having recourse to part-time work in order to manage a parallel involvement in paid work and other life spheres. The aim of such examination was to detect whether, according to specific part-time work profiles, different types of social uses imply diverse possibilities to realize and elaborate particular kinds of logics of social uses. Likewise, the examination was conceived in order to ultimately ascertain whether part-time work is really developing as a generalized option for the management of time between paid and unpaid work. This last point will be treated extensively in the conclusive part of this thesis. In this section we summarize and discuss the main findings illustrated over this chapter in order to provide coherent argumentations about the realization and elaboration of logics of part-time work social uses.

Does part-time work allow a full and adequate realization of work-life balance exigencies? Under what conditions do women select part-time work arrangements in order to fulfill such exigencies?

Findings about general patterns of working time adjustments and preferences reveal at a first sight that, both in France and Italy, individuals’ work-life balance requirements are largely realized through part-time work, and when this is not the case a great proportion of women estimate that such requirements can be realized through an adjustment in working time arrangements based on part-time work. In fact, evidence show that women who work part-time are for the majority and progressively more satisfied over time with their current working time arrangements, and when they are not still there is a part of them who show preferences for part-time work.

The effects of different types of part-time work uses confirm that part-time work allows women to realize their work-life articulation strategies in correspondence of those uses that are developed as concrete responses to the need of juggling their simultaneous involvement in paid work and in other life spheres (i.e. part-time work for family responsibilities and part-time work for multi-activity). In particular, results point out that in the two countries the use of part-time work to respond to family responsibilities is the use that the most represents a solid work-life articulation option for women. Moreover, preferences for part-time work are especially consistent in correspondence of this type of part-time work use, suggesting that the traditional use of part-time work is the most acknowledged by women’s patterns. In the light of these results, we can say that there is an integrative effect of part-time work both in France and Italy with respect to the realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time
work. Moreover, such an effect is found out to be stronger in Italy, where part-time work emerges as a solution to the difficulties that women, particularly those with family responsibilities, encounter in both entering the labour market and maintaining a continuous labour force participation, especially in presence of the necessity of conjugating paid work and family life. At the same time, if we focus on the elaboration of such strategies, these results show that there is also a scar effect of part-time work, since confirmed preferences or part-time work in the case of a wish for an adjustment in working time arrangements testify that for some women part-time work does not favour the maximization of the advantages that this forms of employment can possibly bring in terms of work-life articulation solution.

Finally, the presence of a scar effect is obviously highlighted by patterns reported for the types of use that refers to constrained part-time work. Actually, results show also that, both in France and Italy, there is an important and increasing proportion of women in a situation of constrained part-time work who are nevertheless satisfied with their working time arrangements. We interpreted this pattern as the consequence of the difficulties encountered by women in getting the type of job they want and that force them to adapt their individual preferences according to market constraints. This effect is probably stronger in Italy, since the proportions of unsatisfied decrease over time among those who work part-time because of market constraints, despite the fact that, as shown in chapter 8, this type of part-time work increased over the period under review. On the whole, these findings confirm our hypotheses about the relationship between types of part-time work uses and realization, as well as elaboration of work-life articulation patterns based on part-time work.

Results about the variable cohort of birth reveal that over the decade women have effectively more integrated part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument into their employment paths. Patterns by cohort suggest that the ability of better fitting out the optimal working time arrangements that correspond to the specificity of work-life balance exigencies proper to each cohort is related to length of individuals’ employment experience. In other words, women who have been on the labour market for longer enjoy a more consolidated employment position that supports them in this sense. Cross-national trends confirm this idea and show that changes over time are more consistent for the youngest cohort in France and for the oldest one in Italy. This means that French women, thanks to a more consolidated presence in the labour market, are better able to manage the use of part-time work for the articulation of paid work and other life spheres along their career since the earlier stages of their involvement in labour and family roles. By contrast, Italian women seem to acquire this ability as long as they progress over their life with respect to both work and family. In view of that, we detected
the presence of a period effect that supports a sort of “modulated” integrative effect. This latter consists in the progressive emergence of part-time work as a work-life balance facility that responds to period-specific work-life balance needs as long as women advance over their employment and life courses. Conversely, preferences for part-time work were found out to be only partially related to life periods and work-life balance necessities related to this latter. This suggest that in the elaboration of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work specific period-related work-life balance needs do not necessarily matter, and that there are rather other factors that come into play. In point of fact, findings confirm that in the Italian case preferences for part-time work cut across cohorts, while for France only some cohorts present significant difference in this sense. On the whole we can say that our hypotheses with respect to these aspects are not confirmed, since realization and elaboration of work-life articulation strategies in a cohort perspective are not related to the fact that women are more or less exigent about the development of their career, but rather to the fact of being more or less experienced in the management of the work-life balance issue.

The illustration of the results have highlighted the persistence of imbalanced part-time work opportunities linked to educational inequalities in the two countries, that is to say that higher levels of education offer wider opportunities to women of successfully having recourse to part-time work as a work-life balance purpose. This is especially the case in France, where the effect of education hand on an emancipation effect of part-time work with respect to the possibility of accommodating working time arrangements in line with outside-work engagements. Moreover, preferences for part-time work are also the prerogative of more educated women, and this pattern highlights the value that it is attached to part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument. Conversely, in the Italian case the possibility of successfully having recourse to part-time work in order to cope with work-life balance necessities cuts across level of education. The same applies to preferences for part-time work. This suggests, once more, that other factors may play a role in this sense.

At this regard, our hypotheses are fully supported by our results.

The realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work is also related to women’s different types of employment histories. In particular, results make evident that part-time work in Italy serves mainly the realization of work-life balance needs of women with continuous employment trajectories, which are women who enjoy a more consolidated employment position. In France, part-time work represents on the contrary a work-life articulation instrument available to all groups of women considered, the previously inactive
and unemployed, and the previously employed. Findings about preferences for part-time work support the idea that the role of this employment form is differently perceived according to different profiles of employment histories. In Italy and France part-time work represents a “soft reinsertion mode” for those women who wish to reintegrate paid work while being invested in other outside-work life spheres.

According to our results, different forms of part-time work offer different possibilities of successfully accomplish work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work. In particular, both in France and Italy, substantial part-time work is the form of part-time work that fosters the most the achievement of working time arrangement that better fit their individuals’ work-life balance needs. These patterns confirm the presence of an integrative effect of part-time work as a work-life articulation strategy for those groups of workers whose working patterns are close to the standard model of full-time work, but at the same time they highlight the presence of a scar effect for the other categories of part-time workers.

As for preferences for part-time work, findings go approximately in the same direction and reveal that the category of marginal part-time work is the most concerned, contrary to what happens to substantial part-time workers. These latter express lower preferences for part-time work as a sign of the fact that the need to balance work and extra-work activities is the reason why these women are working part-time, but actually they would like to invest themselves more extensively in paid-work. Conversely, the significant incidence of preferences for part-time work among the category of marginal part-time workers can be seen, once more, as the result of a scar effect that takes the form of discouragement, or simply as the confirmation that people working under a marginal part-time work regime encounter more difficulties in getting the working time arrangements that fit to their needs the most and for that reasons tend to maintain a marginal employment position.

Generally, our hypotheses are confirmed with respect to these aspects, with the exception of the fact that differences between countries are less incident than what we expected.

On the building of these findings, we shall now argue about the relationship between aspects related to the cultural dimension (i.e. individual aspects) and aspects related to the structural dimension (i.e. work-related factors), in order to test: first, whether the interaction of these aspects leave room to the realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work, and according to what kinds of part-time work uses and logics; then, whether differences in the use of part-time work and in individual’s part-time work profiles explain eventual dissimilarities in the elaboration of the logics which constitutes work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work.
Broadly speaking, the patterns that emerged from the analyses presented in this chapter are very similar in the French and Italian case. In the two countries the use of part-time work to respond to family responsibilities is the use that the most acknowledged women and it emerges as a solid work-life articulation option for women. Then, as a main indicator of employment-related aspects, the results for the variable working time arrangements go to some extent in the opposite sense with respect to the findings for the variables that we have chosen as main indicator of individual-related aspects (cohort, education etc). Basically, this means that the structural dimension affects part-time work patterns in a contrasting way as compared to the cultural dimension. In line with our conceptual scheme, we can say that there is a discrepancy between these two dimensions that is likely to be reproduced in a discrepancy between logics of social uses and logics of development of part-time work.

In particular, for what concerns the question “realization”, results about main individual-related variables such as cohort and education point out the presence of a period effect and of an emancipation effect of part-time work, that in some cases contribute in favouring a sort of “modulated” integrative effect of this employment form on women’s work-life articulation strategies. Yet, the results for the intersection variable (i.e. previous activity status) reveal contrasting patterns about the presence of an integrative effect in some cases, and of a scar in some others, according to the extent to which individuals employment histories incorporate the effect of more or less marginalizing labour market dynamics. Then, findings for the main employment-related variable (i.e. working time arrangements) show mainly a scar effect for all those part-time work arrangements that are less close to the standard full-time model.

As for the question “elaboration”, results go more or less in the same direction and confirm such a discrepancy between cultural dimension (part-time work emerges as particularly valued by more emancipated women, as a soft reinsertion mode, and as reinforcement of marginalization for others than substantial working time arrangements).

On the whole, considering that education and employment histories are in some cases the least influential factors, it seems that the main incongruity is between realization/elaboration according to work-life period-related exigencies, hence on the basis of a period effect, and realization/elaboration according to type of working time arrangements, hence under the constraints posed by a scar effect. How this scenario relate to the patterns of types of part-time work uses? Our answer is: through traditional logics of social uses. Essentially, we conclude that the main outcome of the contrast between the cultural and the structural dimension is the reinforcement of traditional logics of part-time uses and the consequent fading of room to strengthen innovative logics. In fact, part-time work is used to arrange work-life balance
needs that are period-oriented, and it is somehow successful and highly-valued in this sense, especially in correspondence of traditional use of part-time work to manage family responsibilities. Likewise, in this context the full accomplishment as well as the elaboration of work-life articulation strategies depend on labour market dynamics that constraints the development of a process of diversification of such strategies in terms of realization and elaboration patterns. In other words, only part-time work arrangements that are close to the standard full-time work are valorised and favoured in this sense, cutting across diversity in needs and work-life balance needs.

As we said, these dynamics can be similarly found in France and Italy. Nonetheless, in order to grasp the shades that are behind such similarities, it is important to bear in mind that results show that in Italy women appear globally more inclined to part-time work than French women, both with respect to realization and elaboration patterns, and that differences between groups of women at this regard are even more less related to the effect of individual factors as compared to France. This major inclination towards part-time work can be seen as an indicator of a further reinforcement of traditional logics and of a less acute discrepancy between the cultural and the structural dimensions that derive from the fact that in Italy the main dynamics in female employment take place within a societal framework that is still characterized by traditional norms and practices as compared to what can be observed in the French case. Actually, as we have pointed out in this chapter, Italian women still encounter several difficulties in integrating paid work, and in doing it on the basis of continuous employment paths, while this is not the case in France. In other words, Italian women enjoy a less consolidated position in the labour market, which means that to some extent they are “one step behind” their French counterpart. It is possible to imagine that, once the Italian scenario will have evolved in this sense, societal differences will be canalized in new type of patterns of realization/elaboration of work-life articulation strategies.
CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to develop a comparative analysis on changes in women’s part-time work profiles and uses over the 2000s in France and Italy. The main issue consisted in examining the patterns of development in the logics behind the high feminization of part-time work and the social uses of this latter over the period under review, as well as the patterns of elaboration and realization of such logics.

Since part-time work represents a particularly thorny issue for cross-national comparison, given the fact that it highlights many of the controversies in comparative research with respect to theoretical, methodological and technical aspects, we opened our investigation with the topic of the international comparability of part-time work. In line with our decision of adopting the societal effect approach at the analytical level and combining it with the case-study approach at the technical level, we pointed out how such issue does not matter in the sense of finding a technical or statistical standard definition of what constitutes internationally comparable part-time work. Actually, what matters is the understanding and the exploration of part-time work as a social construct that is contextually defined and that, hence, needs to be contextualized with respect to each specific national background in order to be analysed in comparative perspective.

Accordingly, we reviewed the existing sociological debate on part-time work in order to illustrate the process of social conception of the “part-time work construct”, the way it has developed and eventually its future perspectives. Through such review we showed that the debate on women’s part-time work developed on the basis of a dualistic scheme that has mainly brought to the elaboration of an incomplete perspective on this topic, and that has produced a construct that it characterized by a high level of ambiguity and theoretical uncertainty. As a result, we suggested that such debate needs to be reoriented in order to respond to the concrete reality of the problems that it has been trying to study and explain. In other words, social changes currently undergoing in our societies ask for a new stream of researches attempting to produce innovative empirical categories and theoretical arguments capable of widening the research perspectives on the future developments of part-time work and the relationship between part-time work and women’s labour force participation.

On the building of that, we argued about the importance in practical and theoretical terms of considering the relationship between part-time work and women’s employment patterns as the main indicator of the changes occurring in the development of this employment form. In particular, we suggested studying such relationship in the framework of an eventual transition.
to a new form of part-time work from a gendered to gender-neutral employment form, where part-time work social uses are emblematic in this sense. In this transition, part-time work uses are not reduced to the accommodation of women’s work-family balance needs (in traditional terms), but they become generalized in order to respond to the needs of all the individuals wishing to manage periods of multi-activity (within the paid-work sphere, or between paid and unpaid work) over the life-course. From a conceptual point of view, we proposed to structure the studying of this eventual process of transition around four main points: the path through which the relation between women’s employment patterns and part-time work moves forward along the cultural and structural dimensions; the dynamics of interaction between these two dimensions; the direct and indirect outcomes through which such an interaction take an explicit form; the concrete direction of the transition and the way it proceeds along its development path between the cultural and the structural dimensions.

The last aspect is more specifically the object of this conclusive section. In any case, before treating this point in details, we shall briefly resume the main findings illustrated in the two main parts of the thesis, which provided with arguments and evidence about the three first points.

Part II consisted in a country-specific speculative analysis focusing on the national context description of part-time work dynamics and patterns over the 2000s. It revealed that the situation appears mainly in the negative both in France and Italy, since in both countries institutions and employers have validated primarily the economic dimension of part-time work, meaning that individuals’ well-being in terms of work-life articulation has not become yet a priority in the regulation and organization of part-time work. This resulted in the adoption of measures and practices that favoured mainly traditional logics of part-time work use, and triggered principally negative effects with respect to concrete part-time work patterns. Nonetheless, in France and Italy women seem to be the real drive behind the development of part-time work. Moreover, in the specific societal context of each country women seem to develop different kinds of practices and to encounter different types of effects for their part-time work patterns. In France, women show a strong willing as well as degree of involvement in paid work and, accordingly, a deeper awareness in their recourse to part-time work. Essentially, according to differences in opportunities, resources and conditions (in terms of qualification, social status, etc.) they use part-time work somehow to develop articulated employment profiles through which consolidate their position in the labour market. However, the fact that part-time work expands among French women despite a general negative connotation of this employment form is worrying. Actually, this indicates that
women engage progressively more in part-time work without a concrete change in social practices of the other actors (i.e. institutions, employers, social partners) that also contribute in determining a certain characterization of part-time work in the specific national employment context. In Italy, part-time work is not yet an affirmed work-life balance instrument, and it is not a way to manage a more personalized work-life balance, neither it is an exemplification of women’s labour market involvement at different stages of life, but it is above all the way through which women try to obtain a position in the labour market. Accordingly, the question is whether the situation of Italian women with respect to their part-time work practices can be defined as “one generation behind” French women to the extent to which the modalities and the individual conditions upon which such practices are developed depends on the degree of consolidation of women’s participation into the labour force.

Part III illustrated the result of the empirical analyses, which focused on the aspects of the evolution in part-time work profiles and uses, and the type of use related to the elaboration and realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work. As for the evolution of part-time work profiles and uses, according to our findings a process of diversification of part-time uses has primarily developed in France as the result of changes in individual profiles of women working part-time. Women’s employment patterns have changed in the sense of increased possibilities of having recourse to part-time work in correspondence of specific work-life balance exigencies proper of each stage of life, and a progressive generalization of the taking up of part-time work and of its use as a work-life articulation instrument among women with different socio-economic profile. Nevertheless, women face other consequences that are the result of the effects of conditions imposed by labour market dynamics, which constraint and negatively affect the process of diversification of part-time uses. Such conditions reinforce the traditional use of part-time work in traditional terms, and they risk penalizing those forms of part-time work that are less close to standard full-time work arrangements, turning them into marginalized and constrained forms of part-time work. In view of that, we can say that in the French context the structural dimension, related to employment-related factors, prevails over the cultural dimension, related to individual factors, and obstructs the full accomplishment of the process of evolution of the logics of social uses, which has its sources in individuals’ part-time work profiles and patterns of uses. In the framework of our analyses, these patterns are interpreted as the sign of discrepancy between logics of development and logics of social uses. In the case of Italy, an important polarization concerning part-time work profiles and uses emerged in correspondence of the significant growth of part-time work. Accordingly, there are few signs
that indicate the progress of a process of diversification in part-time work uses and the logics behind these latter. The most evident consequence consists in limited possibilities of having recourse to part-time work in order to respond to varied work-life articulation needs. Actually, the most recurrent part-time work uses in this country are part-time work as a work-family balance instrument and, in the great majority of the other cases, constrained part-time work. Likewise, the progressive generalization of part-time work is not accompanied by the “universalization” of the use of part-time work as a work-life balance instrument among women with different socio-economic profiles, but by a global extreme incidence of constrained part-time work. As a result, the effects of conditions imposed by labour market dynamics are stronger in this country and favour mainly a generalized marginalization of the various forms of part-time work and somehow they obstruct any opportunity to develop the use of part-time work as a work-life articulation instrument at all. In the end, in the Italian case the effect of employment-related factors linked to the structural dimension prevails over the cultural dimension and individual factors, just as in the French case but accordingly to stronger dynamics.

As for the type of use related to the elaboration and realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work, the results of the analyses are very similar in the French and Italian case. In the two countries the use of part-time work to respond to family responsibilities is the most acknowledged use and it emerges as a solid work-life articulation option for women. Nevertheless, the realization and elaboration of work-life articulation strategies depend on labour market dynamics that constraint the development of a process of diversification of such strategies. In other words, only part-time work arrangements that are close to standard full-time work are valorised and favoured in this sense, cutting across diversity in needs and work-life articulation exigencies. It means that the elaboration and realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work rely upon the reinforcement of traditional logics of part-time work use. It is crucial to underline that results show that in Italy women appear globally more inclined to part-time work than French women, and that differences between groups of women at this regard are less related to the effect of individual factors. Essentially, this major inclination towards part-time work can be seen as an indicator of a further reinforcement of traditional logics in this country, that derives from the fact that in Italy the main dynamics in female employment take place within a societal framework that is still characterized by largely traditional norms and practices as compared to what can be observed in the French case.
evolved in this sense, societal differences will be probably canalized in new patterns of realization/elaboration of work-life articulation strategies.

On the basis of main arguments and finding resumed so far, we shall now argue about how all these pieces of information provide with some understandings on the future development of part-time work in the terms of a transition currently undergoing with respect to the social uses of this form of employment and the logics upon which they rely. Is part-time work “lost in transition” in France and Italy?

In the two countries the current part-time work scenario emerges as characterized by changing dynamics that are not completely addressed at the structural level, where at the same time individual factors play an important role in influencing patterns of part-time work social uses in societal contexts differently determined by constraints and opportunities. This implies negative consequences related to the gender-specific use of part-time work, the most important of which is the reinforcement of traditional logics of part-time use and the consequent fading of room to develop and strengthen innovative logics. In fact, the examination of women practices with respect to part-time work profiles and uses, and to patterns of elaboration and realization of work-life articulation strategies based on part-time work, revealed that such practices are an important drive behind the changes that take place within institutional and socio-economic backgrounds incapable of framing and fasten new logics in part-time work development.

France is the country that appears most in the positive, but it must be bear in mind that the comparison between only two countries is limited in the sense that differences and similarities do not have to be interpreted in absolute terms. In fact, despite an interesting process of diversification in part-time work uses and a more affirmed capacity of integrating part-time work around life period-related needs in a way that allow them developing articulated employment profiles through which consolidating their position in the labour market, French women are affected by the negative aspects related to part-time work as much as Italian women do. Moreover, the incidence of these aspects depends on differences in individual characteristics and resources which can be seen as an indicator of imbalances and contradictions at the basis of growing forms of inequalities within the part-time labour force. Likewise, as already pointed out, the extent to which French women engage progressively more in part-time work without a complementary substantial change in institutional and societal dynamics may trigger path dependency mechanisms in the recourse to part-time work based on the strong and enduring presence of women themselves in the labour market. As a result, the French case present contrasting and ambiguous signals that can be considered the
indicator of a process of transition of the social uses of part-time work that is stuck between old and new logics. Essentially, in this country the development of part-time work needs to be addressed in its structural dimension and with more attention to its gender dimension in order to create new and more egalitarian spaces for the evolution, elaboration and above all realization of innovative logics of part-time work social uses.

In the Italian case, part-time work does not emerge as a substantive way of articulating women’s employment paths, and represents more the way of accessing a labour market that offers very limited opportunities for entry. In this country, inequalities within the part-time work female labour force take another form. In fact, for Italian women the most difficult struggle does not concern principally the kind of working conditions a woman can get and the way she integrates these factors in the advancement of her employment trajectory, but the possibility of getting and maintaining a position on the labour market. The strong quantitative growth that has characterized part-time work during the 2000s and the progressive generalization of it to groups of women with different individual characteristics has not been accompanied by institutional measures and societal practices aimed at developing new forms of integrative part-time work. Such measures and practices are crucial to the diversification of part-time work social uses in the sense of their capacity of opening new ways to the consolidation of women’s position on the labour market and of crumbling the traditional logics that still heavily affect such uses. Accordingly, the Italian case show limited signals of a process of transition of the social uses of part-time work capable of fasten the development of this latter as an integrative employment form, which mainly indicates the persistence and the prevalence of old logics. In view of that, what is needed in this context is a quantitative growth addressed in a more gender sensitive perspective at the structural level in order to bring some progress in the qualitative development of part-time work, its social uses and the logics behind these latter, which would probably produce more integrative and equilibrated effects.

Even if the limited number of countries involved in the comparison may induce to frame these result in a “winner-looser” perspective, we shall insist on the necessity of not interpreting these facts in absolute terms. At this regard, we shall recall that such comparison was based on the principles of the societal approach, which aim is showing the specificity of each country and relate it to the interrelation of mechanisms and dynamics proper to its societal context. The introduction in the analysis of a third country such as Germany could help in further highlighting and contrasting these aspects, but this would have demanded an amount of time and space that was not compatible with the characteristics of this PhD research.
project. Nonetheless, this may represent the objective of a more extensive research. In fact, the inclusion of the German case in the comparison is particularly interesting since the development of part-time work in this country has taken place in completely different societal and normative conditions, especially with respect to the relationship between part-time work and women’s employment patterns. In Germany, the expansion of part-time work was favoured on the basis of the idea of encouraging females labour force participation in a moment of labour shortage, and in this context an increasing number of women chose to integrate the labour market on a part-time basis by alternating periods of inactivity and periods of employment. However, various researches have pointed out how females labour force participation patterns are progressively more characterized by continuity and returns to full-time work after the maternity period (Blossfeld and Rohwer 1997; Uunk et al 2005; Kristen et al 2007; Anxo et al.2007). This may indicate that a process of evolution in the logics of part-time work social uses has taken place: once women have gained access to paid work through part-time work used mainly for family reasons, they have started to gain control over it through their emancipation on the labour market. Nonetheless, even if research has shown an increasing acceptance of extra-familiar role for women in the terms of women’s participation in paid work, as well as decreasing concerns about the negative consequences of women’s employment for children and family (Kristen et al 2007), the social norm is still represented by part-time work as a privileged mean to integrate women into the labour force (Matysiak and Steinmetz 2008). Accordingly, the policy reforms that have been recently initiated in this country and that are apparently trying to promote new logics of part-time work use (i.e. Hartz reform, reform of the parental leave regulation) may encounter difficulties in overcoming the limits and the rigidities of the traditional “female part-time carer model” both at the socio-institutional and individual level. It is uncertain whether these reforms will favour the transition of part-time work to an instrument for the generalized management of periods of multi-activity over the life-course. The most consistent obstacle consists in the emergence of a path dependency mechanism that affects women’s recourse to part-time work. As it has been done in this research on the French and Italian case, the solicitation of part-time work uses as an empirical category of analysis may provide with interesting insights in this sense. In fact, the category of part-time work uses allows exiting the dualistic perspective on part-time work which conceives it as a constrained employment form that is imposed to women by the structural and normative background. It goes beyond that by allowing taking into account the complexity of practices that are behind the recourse to part-time work, which are situated in a specific societal context with respect to several institutional, socio-economic and
individual dimensions. Accordingly, the introduction of this category has the advantage of developing a more multi-dimensional perspective on part-time work rather than a univocal perspective that focuses on the idea of subjects at the micro-level (i.e. women) suffering the consequences of the action undertaken by the actors at the macro level (i.e. institutions, policy, employers). Likewise, the societal analysis of part-time work helps in identifying the dynamics and mechanisms that are behind the complex articulation of action and structure. As we have seen, women are the drive behind changes in part-time work profiles and uses, and this is the crucial element that has to be addressed in order to exit from the dynamics of a lost transition, and begin to move towards a real transition from a gendered to a gender-neutral employment form.

The main policy suggestion that can be derived from this work consists in urging institutions and employers to grasp the complexity that is behind part-time work uses and favour the accomplishment of innovative logics, adopting measures and practices capable of adapting part-time work to the diversity in needs and profiles of the workers concerned by this employment form. Actually, reforms as well as management practices that make it easier for employment to be combined with the time demands of other types of extra-work activities presented by a vast diversity of subjects would have a key role in redressing gender equality in employment and unpaid work, and in making part-time work a key element in this sense. We would like to close this section by highlighting some additional future research perspectives that may enrich as well as remedy to the shortcomings of this work. In particular, this thesis aimed at framing an extensive large-scale cross-country comparative research and in its empirical analyses part it relied heavily on quantitative methods for the depiction of general trends, dynamics, and patterns of development. As pointed out before, quantitative methods are essential for international comparative analysis exactly for this reason. Anyway, an interesting way of following up this research project would be to complement it with qualitative methods with the aim of addressing the comparison on a reduced scale, such as the regional one, and of providing with a more detailed description of the individual and employment profiles that are behind the different types of part-time work use. This would allow considering and bringing into the investigation the variety of regional policy, and the diversity of part-time work practices and patterns related to the specificity of the local rather than national context on a more detailed basis. Therefore, this research can be considered as a first step in the representation of part-time work social uses as a category of analysis and in its articulation around the examination of two national realities, which perspective can be enhanced by further research in this sense based on qualitative methods.
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## ANNEX

Table A1 - Definition and coding of the variables used in the empirical analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Coding and values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time/part-time work distinction</td>
<td>Type of job</td>
<td>0 Full-time (&gt;35h) (ref.cat) 1 Part-time (up to 34h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time work uses</td>
<td>Type of part-time work uses according to the main reasons for working part-time</td>
<td>1 Family responsibilities 2 Multi-activity 3 Market constraints (ref. cat.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match between actual and preferred working hours</td>
<td>Achievement of working time preferences through actual working time arrangements</td>
<td>0 Match realized (ref. cat.) 1 Match not realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wished working time arrangements</td>
<td>Type of preferred working time arrangements on the basis of how many hours per week an individual ideally wish to work</td>
<td>0 Full-time (&gt;35h) (ref.cat) 1 Part-time (up to 34h)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational level</td>
<td>Respondent’s educational level according to the highest level of education attained (ES-ISCED)</td>
<td>1 Low (up to low secondary) 2- Medium (upper or post-secondary) (ref.cat) 3 High (tertiary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous activity status</td>
<td>Activity status previous to current job</td>
<td>1 Inactive 2 Active employed (ref.cat) 3 Active unemployed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working time arrangements (part-time work only)</td>
<td>Actual working time arrangement on the basis of average weekly working hours</td>
<td>1 Marginal pt (up to 15h) 2 Moderated pt (16-29h) 3 Substantial pt (30-34h) (ref.cat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational status</td>
<td>Social status and prestige associated with the professional position occupied in actual job</td>
<td>1 Low-medium (ref.cat) 2 Medium-high</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of work contract</td>
<td>Work contract, typical/atypical distinction</td>
<td>1 open-end contract (typical) (ref.cat) 2 atypical contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic sector of activity</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>1 Tertiary (ref.cat) 2 Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm size</td>
<td>Number of workers employed in an establishment</td>
<td>1 Micro (up to 10) 2 PME (ref.cat) (11-249) 3 Big (&gt;250)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership status</td>
<td>Living in a union (legally recognized or not)</td>
<td>1 Not in a partnership (ref.cat) 2 In a partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence of dependent children in the household</td>
<td>A woman lives in a household where there are her children up to 18 years old</td>
<td>1 No (ref.cat) 2 Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Region (France) | Region of residence                        | 1 Parisian region and *bassin parisien* (ref.cat)  
|                |                                           | 2 North, East and Centre-East  
|                |                                           | 3 West, South-West and *Mediterranée*  
| Region (Italy) | Region of residence                        | 1 North (ref.cat)  
|                |                                           | 2 Centre  
|                |                                           | 3 *Mezzogiorno*  

Ref. cat. = reference category
Table A2 Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables, sample of all employed women, France

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>variable</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>(N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>main dependent and main independent variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ft//pt distinction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>full-time</td>
<td>70,85</td>
<td>38307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>part-time</td>
<td>29,15</td>
<td>16107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>54414</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cohort</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940-49</td>
<td>13,32</td>
<td>8436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-59</td>
<td>29,86</td>
<td>18464</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-69</td>
<td>30,49</td>
<td>18069</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-79</td>
<td>26,33</td>
<td>14741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>59710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>educational level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low</td>
<td>51,62</td>
<td>31358</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium</td>
<td>33,36</td>
<td>19562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high</td>
<td>15,02</td>
<td>8790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>59710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>previous activity status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inactive</td>
<td>38,96</td>
<td>22101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>active employed</td>
<td>43,28</td>
<td>24009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unemployed</td>
<td>17,76</td>
<td>9985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>56095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>occupational status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low-medium</td>
<td>71,14</td>
<td>34710</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>medium-high</td>
<td>28,86</td>
<td>14042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>48752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>contract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cdi</td>
<td>84,71</td>
<td>33471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cdd or other atypical contract</td>
<td>15,29</td>
<td>6151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100,00</td>
<td>39622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tertiai</td>
<td>85,13</td>
<td>50901</td>
</tr>
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Table A3 Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables, sample of all employed women, Italy

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Table A3 Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables, sample of women working part-time, France

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452
Table A4 Descriptive statistics for the dependent and independent variables, sample of women working part-time, Italy

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