

## **Work Norms in Contradiction? The Austrian Welfare State and the Rise of Part-Time Work**

### **Research Problem & Questions**

Part-time work has become the most prevalent form of non-standard employment in Europe (OECD, 2010). Austria has seen a tripling of part-time rates since the 1980s, which has led some to suggest that it can no longer be seen as non-standard (Hinterseer, 2013). Currently, part-time work makes up 28.2 percentage of total employment which is among the highest rates in Europe (Eurostat, 2019). The distribution of working time is very gendered: Almost half of all women in employment work part-time which accounts for more than two-thirds of all part-time workers (ibid). The emergence of non-standard work has caused some tensions between the empirical reality of work and the institutionalized normative SER, similarly to other insurance-based continental welfare states such as Germany (Hinrichs, 1991; Leibfried and Ostner, 1991; Rubery, 2010). Rubery et al. (2018)'s recent article on the SER characterizes adjustments to precarious work in social and labour law across Europe as non-linear and contradictory, meaning that precarious work has both been discouraged as well as encouraged in different policy areas. In the Austrian case, the regulation of part-time work seems to have developed in non-linear ways too: A mix of re-active adjustments such as equal treatment legislation introduced in the 1990s, pro-active encouragement of part-time work such as through the right to part-time work as well as a counter-active strengthening of the SER work norm in retirement reforms in the 2000s can be identified. This paper will use Austria as a case study for the analyzing normative working-time regulation in welfare institutions. It will pose the following research questions in order to better understand historical developments since the 1960s: Firstly, how have unemployment and retirement policies responded to the rise of part-time work? What regulatory and normative developments with regards to working-time can be identified? Secondly, what are possible explanations for these developments and their contradictions? Thirdly, what are future reform strategies in light of historical developments?

### **Theory**

Whilst most scholars on employment law and the welfare state seem to agree that there is a normative dimension to the way these institutions regulate work (Gottschall and Dingeldey, 2015), an explicitly exploration of the historical institutionalization and processes of de-institutionalization of the SER as a normative model of full-time continuous work in central welfare institutions remains largely absent. Tracing the nuanced development of working-time regulation with a focus on their normative orientations in different welfare institutions and studying the reasons for normative continuity and reform appears timely. This can build on three key strands of existing scholarship: Firstly, sociological perspectives on institutions have highlighted their role in establishing and cultivating norms (Goodin, 1996; Lessenich, 2003; Rothstein, 1998). Institutional work on the male breadwinner model represents a good example of nuanced analysis of institutional change (Daly, 2011; Gottfried and O'Reilly, 2002; Lewis, 2001). This work has shown that different policy areas often contain

## **MOMENTUM 2019**

### **Abstract**

**Larissa Nenning**

contradictory incentives and disincentives regarding women's financial independence and labour market participation. An in-depth comparison of developments in retirement and unemployment insurance however has not been conducted in this research area to the authors knowledge. Secondly, moral economy theory will be used to theorize the normative dimension of welfare institutions in the tradition of critical political economy (Bolton and Laaser, 2013; Kohli, 1987; Sayer, 2007). Thirdly, insights from legal feminist theorizing (Fudge and Owens, 2006) will be applied to social security research. Overall, these three theoretical perspectives will be used to conceptualize and understand normative and regulatory change in the Austrian welfare state with regards to the regulation of working-time in unemployment and retirement insurance.

A particular focus of the paper will lie on critically discussing future reform paths of the SER to resolve said tensions and contradictions that seem to have appeared. It will critically evaluate the three main models that have been proposed in the literature. These include (1) a tiered SER which stretches the employment norm and hence also social protection to some non-standard workers, (2) a flexible SER which aims to promote a dual breadwinner model and a new flexible bargain between employers and workers (Bosch, 2004; Rubery et al., 2018) or (3) a model moving beyond employment (Supiot and Meadows, 2001; Vosko, 2011). On the basis of the historical process tracing of regulatory and normative developments, it will aim to shed a light on possibilities and strategies for progressive reforms of unemployment and retirement insurance in Austria.

### **Methodology & Data**

This research is informed by qualitative, institutionalist work on welfare state development. Austria is chosen as a case study for analyzing the development of legal work norms since the 1960s, particularly in light of the rise of part-time work since the 1980s. Traditional historical research methods of documentary analysis will be used, treating documents as artefacts rather than as simply containers of information (Dibble, 1963). Available documentation of legislative changes will function as primary data. In order to contextualize and discuss developments, other literature on the Austrian welfare state and political economy of non-standard, and in particular part-time work will be critically reviewed.

### **Relevance & contribution**

In line with other critical political economy research (Jessop, 2010), the normative perspective proposed in this paper aims to uncover contradictions and inconsistencies in meaning systems, de-naturalize them by uncovering interests behind them and re-politicize taken-for-granted discourses and practices such as the standard male full-time employment norm.

This research presentation would best fit into 'Track #1: Sozialstaat zwischen Emanzipation und Fürsorge.', since it discusses the normative orientations of welfare policy regarding working-time and the potential for emancipatory reform.

This research is part of an ongoing historical comparative PhD research project on part-time work, SER work norms and welfare reforms in Austria and Germany. This project is carried out at the University of Edinburgh under the supervision of Dr. Daniel Clegg and Dr. Jochen Clasen.

**Bibliography**

- Atzmüller, R., 2009. Die Entwicklung der Arbeitsmarktpolitik in Österreich 11.
- Betthäuser, B., 2017. Protecting outsiders? Corporatism and the dualisation of unemployment protection in Germany and Austria. *European Journal of Social Security* 19, 209–224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1388262717724892>
- Bolton, S.C., Laaser, K., 2013. Work, employment and society through the lens of moral economy. *Work, Employment and Society* 27, 508–525. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017013479828>
- Bosch, G., 2004. Towards a New Standard Employment Relationship in Western Europe. *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 42, 617–636. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8543.2004.00333.x>
- Busemeyer, M.R., 2005. Pension Reform in Germany and Austria: System Change vs. Quantitative Retrenchment. *West European Politics* 28, 569–591. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380500085830>
- Daly, M., 2011. What Adult Worker Model? A Critical Look at Recent Social Policy Reform in Europe from a Gender and Family Perspective. *Soc Polit* 18, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/jxr002>
- Dibble, V.K., 1963. Four Types of Inference from Documents to Events. *History and Theory* 3, 203. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2504279>
- Esping-Andersen, G., 1990. The three worlds of welfare capitalism. Polity Press, Cambridge, UK.
- Eurostat, 2019. Part-time employment rate.
- Fudge, J., Owens, R., 2006. Precarious work, women, and the new economy: the challenge to legal norms. Hart Publishing, Oxford.
- Goodin, R.E., 1996. Institutions and Their Design, in: Goodin, R.E. (Ed.), *The Theory of Institutional Design*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1–53. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511558320.002>
- Gottfried, H., O'Reilly, J., 2002. Reregulating breadwinner models in socially conservative welfare systems: comparing Germany and Japan. *Soc Polit* 9, 29–59. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sp/9.1.29>
- Gottschall, K., Dingeldey, I., 2015. Work and Social Policy, in: *The SAGE Handbook of the Sociology of Work and Employment*. SAGE Publications Ltd, 55 City Road, pp. 541–554. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473915206>
- Hinrichs, K., 1991. Irregular Employment Patterns and the Loose Net of Social Security: Some Findings on the West German Development, in: Adler, M., Bell, C., Clasen, J., Sinfield, A. (Eds.), *The Sociology of Social Security*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, pp. 110–127.
- Hinterseer, T., 2013. Part-time work: Atypical? Precarious? Normal? *Eur J Futures Res* 1, 18. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40309-013-0018-1>
- Jessop, B., 2010. Cultural political economy and critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies* 3, 336–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19460171003619741>
- Kohli, M., 1987. Retirement and the moral economy: An historical interpretation of the German case. *Journal of Aging Studies* 1, 125–144. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0890-4065\(87\)90003-X](https://doi.org/10.1016/0890-4065(87)90003-X)
- Leibfried, S., Ostner, I., 1991. The Particularism of Western Welfare Capitalism: The Case of Women's Social Security, in: Adler, M., Bell, C., Clasen, J., Sinfield, A. (Eds.), *The Sociology of Social Security*, Edinburgh Education & Society. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh.
- Lessenich, S., 2003. *Dynamischer Immobilismus: Kontinuität und Wandel im deutschen Sozialmodell*. Campus, Frankfurt/Main ; New York.
- Lewis, J., 2001. The decline of the male breadwinner model: The implications for work and care. *Social Politics* 8, 152–170.

## **MOMENTUM 2019**

### **Abstract**

**Larissa Nenning**

Mairhuber, I., 2012. Geschlechtergerechtigkeit in der österreichischen Pensionsversicherung. *Kurswechsel* 4, 39–49.

Moen, P., 2016. Work Over the Gendered Life Course, in: Shanahan, M.J., Mortimer, J.T., Kirkpatrick Johnson, M. (Eds.), *Handbook of the Life Course*. Springer International Publishing, Cham, pp. 249–275. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20880-0\\_11](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20880-0_11)

OECD, 2010. How Good is Part-Time Work?, in: *Employment Outlook 2010: Moving Beyond the Jobs Crisis*. OECD Publishing, pp. 211–266.

Palomera, J., Vetta, T., 2016. Moral economy: Rethinking a radical concept. *Anthropological Theory* 16, 413–432. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1463499616678097>

Rothstein, B., 1998. Just institutions matter: The moral and political logic of the universal welfare state. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511598449>

Rubery, J., 2010. Institutionalizing the Employment Relationship, in: Morgan, G., Campbell, J.L., Crouch, C., Pedersen, O.K., Whitley, R. (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Institutional Analysis*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199233762.003.0018>

Rubery, J., Grimshaw, D., Keizer, A., Johnson, M., 2018. Challenges and Contradictions in the ‘Normalising’ of Precarious Work. *Work, Employment and Society* 32, 509–527. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0950017017751790>

Sayer, A., 2007. Moral Economy as Critique. *New Political Economy* 12, 261–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563460701303008>

Schmidt, V.A., 2010. Taking ideas and discourse seriously: explaining change through discursive institutionalism as the fourth ‘new institutionalism.’ *European Political Science Review* 2, 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S175577390999021X>

Supiot, A., Meadows, P., 2001. *Beyond employment: changes in work and the future of labour law in Europe*. Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York.

Vosko, L.F., 2011. *Managing the margins: gender, citizenship, and the international regulation of precarious employment*. Oxford University Press, Oxford ; New York.