

LABOUR MARKET CHANGE AND OCCUPATIONAL DIVERSITY

Few would disagree that European labor markets are in a process of deep transformation. An important element of this transformation is the twin-process of de-industrialization and growing non-standard work. Up to the 1980, most European countries were characterized by high shares of industrial employment and relatively standardized working conditions. This employment model, as if often argued, was characterized by stable career patterns in internal or occupational labor markets and relatively homogeneous wage levels. To what extent this stylized picture really mirrors the reality for the European workforce of the industrial age is questionable. However, it is safe to say that in the era of dominant manufacturing sectors, European labor markets tended to produce more egalitarian labour market outcomes than we observe them today.

Starting in the 1970s and 1980s, the decline of industrial employment (e.g. due to growing international competition) and the growth of structural unemployment in Europe led to a focus on the expansion of private sector jobs (Esping-Andersen 1996; Iversen and Wren 1998; Scharpf 1997; 2000). However, with growing shares of service sector employment, most European labour markets seemingly lost the ability to ensure standardisation of employment relationships (cf. Esping-Andersen, 1999). The symptoms in the form of growing wage inequality and non-standard employment have been described in the literature extensively (e.g. Barbieri, 2009; Boeri and Garibaldi, 2009; Bosch et al., 2009; Palier and Thelen, 2010). An important mechanism linking deindustrialization to growing inequality is the famous Baumol Effect: in labor-intensive service jobs, productivity cannot be increased easily. As opposed to the virtuous circle in the industrial era, in which productivity gains led to higher wages and increasing demand, the expansion of the service sector requires a wage structure mirroring productivity (Esping-Andersen, 1993; Iversen and Wren, 1998). If wages are, however, rigid countries may not respond with greater wage dispersion but with an increasing differentiation by employment contract, i.e. “dualisation” between permanent and temporary work (DiPrete, et al., 2006; Maurin and Postel-Vinay, 2005; King and Rueda, 2008). What this brief discussion implies is that, first, deindustrialisation and service sector growth are important factors driving changes towards more unequal labour market outcomes and that, second, we can expect to observe marked differences in the growth of ‘bad’ or ‘cheap’ jobs across sectors and occupations *within* countries (Eichhorst and Marx, 2012; Häusermann and Schwander, 2012).

This insight may appear trivial, as a reference to deindustrialization is commonly made when labor market change is discussed academically. We contend, however, that its implications have so far not been fully reflected upon in existing research. In the comparative welfare and labor market literature, the discussion of change (i.e. the growth of non-standard employment and wage dispersion) strongly focuses on the development of national averages over time (e.g. Auer and Cazes, 2003; Boeri and Garibaldi, 2009; Bosch et al., 2009; Eichhorst et al. 2011; Hinrichs and Jessoula 2012;

Nunziata and Staffolani, 2007; Schmid, 2010). As we argue, this dominant approach focusing on national data tends to neglect crucial differences in labor market patterns across sectors and occupations. Although various contributions have shed light on developments in selected low-skill occupations (e.g. Bosch and Lehndorff, 2005 and Gautié and Schmitt, 2010), we still lack a systematic research agenda for the study of within-country variation in the process of labor market change.

A similar point can be made regarding cross-country differences in patterns of labour market inequality. In the comparative literature, cross-country variance in inequality and non-standard work are mainly attributed to institutional differences (e.g. Boeri, 2011; Cahuc and Postel-Vinay, 2002; Freeman, 2007; Kahn, 2007; King and Rueda, 2008; Lucifora 2000; Nunziata and Staffolani, 2007). While institutions have an undeniable effect on labour market outcomes their explanatory power is limited. For instance, labour market institutions may explain why employment characteristics differ between a German and a British manufacturing worker but tell us less about why workers in the hotel sector from both countries have similarly unfavourable job characteristics. Labour market institutions have not the same effect on each occupation. The reasons why quite different employment practices within a given institutional framework can emerge are manifold. Institutions may have a limited legal coverage and their enforceability is typically low (...), which is why behavioral patterns should be expected to depend on various additional factors. We return to this point below.

To study within-country variation in employment patterns, it is crucial to go beyond popular dichotomies like industry vs. service sector or skilled vs. unskilled labor. One does not have to be a labor market expert to realize that large segments of the service economy are characterized by decent working conditions, which do not fall short of those in golden-age manufacturing jobs. Banking and insurance jobs or public sector employment are a cases in point. By the same token, outsourcing and other flexibility enhancing practices have substantially altered working conditions for large shares of the industrial workforce to the negative. Hence, a simple sectoral distinction is unlikely to capture the diverging labor market

trends within countries. The same holds for skill divides. Whereas education used to be translated into a favourable labour market position, this mechanism is weakened in post-industrial societies. Temporary employment, for instance, is by now prevalent among university graduates in many European labor markets.

The starting point for the present volume is therefore that we need a more fine-grained occupational distinction to capture unequal employment patterns and trends within European labour markets. However, such occupational differences are under-theorized and under-researched and we have little systematic knowledge about why bad jobs are distributed unequally across occupations. We therefore begin this book by addressing a seemingly simple question: why does the share of flexible and/or cheap employment differ across occupations?

THE UNEQUAL INCIDENCE OF NON-STANDARD WORK

A good starting point for our occupational model explaining the use of non-standard work is understanding employer preferences for different types of employment when making a hiring decision. Hence, we need to ask how employers seek to optimize the use of labor within a given institutional framework. Generally, we assume that employers try to establish employment relationships with “the lowest bill for a given set of technological choices and labor market conditions” (Osterman, 1987: 54). Such choices and conditions vary across occupations.

In general, we could assume that employers facing uncertainty always try to maximize flexibility. So why don't they give temporary contracts to all workers? It is important to acknowledge that flexibility has costs for employers as well. In particular permanent contracts are argued to be key in nurturing a *psychological contract*, i.e. “a set of unwritten reciprocal expectations between an individual employee and the organization” (Schein, 1978: ??). This contract can be desirable from an employers' perspective as it commits workers to the goals of an organization and leads to extra effort and productivity. Temporary workers, however, are found to have a more limited psychological contract (Guest and Clinton, 2005; Rousseau, 1995; Silla et al. 2005; Schalk et al. 2009; Van Dyne and Ang, 1998). In other words, temporary workers invest less in building an employment relationship going beyond a short-term economic transaction. This certainly is undesirable for employers having an interest in reducing staff turnover. Whether lower organisational commitment also leads to lower productivity is disputed in the literature (see De Cuyper et al. 2008 for a review). This arguably depends strongly on the nature of the temporary job (e.g. its duration) and prospects

for making a transition into a permanent contract within the firm. If the current job is seen as a stepping stone in an internal career ladder, temporary workers should be even extra motivated and productive. The findings by De Cuyper et al. (2009) support this intuition. .

One important additional source of ‘flexibility costs’ for employers is that the extensive use of non-standard work may have a negative effect on work relations with permanent staff. Guest and Clinton (2009) find that there is a negative relationship between the share of temporary staff in a firm and workers’ trust in the management as well as with perceptions of organisational fairness and fulfillment of psychological contracts. This can, for instance, lead to increased turnover intentions among permanent workers (see also Broschak and Davis-Blake, 2006).

Hence, employment flexibility has potential costs for employers and it is important to understand under which conditions they prevail over its advantages. While there are numerous factors which will influence employers’ hiring choices in reality, the human resource literature typically highlights a key set of factors, which we argue can be summarized in two main elements: the *replaceability of workers* and the *flexibility of hiring practices*.

Replaceability refers to the costs of the employer in case he needs to replace a worker by recruiting from the external labour market. The higher these costs, the more we expect employers to offer favorable working conditions which bind workers to the firm. This would include permanent contracts, working time corresponding to the worker’s preferences and decent wages. The second aspect is the flexibility of hiring practices, i.e. the absence of restrictions on the management’s prerogative to hire and fire at will or to freely negotiate wage levels. However, such restrictions may also encourage employers to exploit loopholes to regain their flexibility as long as workers can be replaced.

The important point for our argument is that both the replaceability of workers and the flexibility of hiring practices are not homogeneous within the institutional setting of a national labour market. Rather, they differ across sectors, occupations and individuals. For the purpose of our analysis four causal factors are deemed relevant here:

1. labour supply and demand conditions,
2. the type of skills mainly required,
3. the power of unions expressed by collective bargaining and co-determination,
4. the extent to which labor market institutions constrain management decisions,

The first two points affect the replaceability of workers, while the latter two affect the flexibility of hiring practices. The first factor explaining occupational heterogeneity is the balance of labour supply and demand. The link to the costs of replacing a worker is straightforward. If there is a shortage in the supply of a particular type of work, recruitment costs go up. This should encourage more stability-oriented human resource practices in the respective occupation. Beyond this general point, labour supply can constrain employers in other ways. For instance, a production model based on part-time work is only feasible if a sufficient number of people (usually women) are willing to accept such work. Hence, whether employers can rely on flexible work depends on whether there is a sufficient supply of labour in the respective occupation. In practical terms, this means the availability of typical 'risk groups' (i.e. groups available for flexible jobs) such as the young, women, or migrants (Kahn, 2007).

The second factor influencing the replaceability of workers is the prevailing skill profile in an occupation. First and foremost, this refers to the *skill level*, i.e. the marginal productivity of a typical worker in the occupation. The lower this is, the higher the incentives to offer (and the pressure to accept) atypical contracts or low wages. Usually, low skilled workers are easier to replace than medium and highly skilled people, since no or little training investments are necessary. At the same time, many jobs requiring limited and basic skills can also be replaced by higher capital intensity or offshoring. This limits both employer demand for low skilled workers and the bargaining power of such workers.

Moreover, the *type of skill* (general vs. firm-specific) should matter. The concept of skill specificity has been used in very different ways (Streeck, 2012). Here, specific skills simply refer to qualifications which are more valuable in one firm than in another. Since such qualifications cannot be 'bought' in the market, but have to be developed within the firm, employers cannot easily replace specifically qualified workers (Busemeyer, 2009; Emmenegger, 2009; Goldthorpe, 2000). To the extent that jobs involve specific skills, employers should be interested in stable employment relationships rather than temporary contracts (Autor, 2003). In contrast, generally skilled workers are by definition easier to replace since there are sunk costs of specific training investments. Skill specificity confines the use of temporary workers to support or peripheral tasks within the company as they cannot be integrated effectively into core activities (Lautsch, 2002; Lepak and Snell, 1999). Hence, the role of flexible employment is expected to be smaller in occupations which are strongly characterised by firm-specific skills. It is noteworthy that skill specificity may explain why some academic occupations feature high shares of flexible work as well (e.g. Polavieja, 2005).

Arguably, in highly individualized and autonomous service sector jobs, in which the personal interaction with the client dominates, firm-specific knowledge is relatively scarce. However, a big chunk of service sector jobs is located in large companies with idiosyncratic organizational procedures, products and technologies. Marx (2011) argues that this leads to rather specific skills in service occupations for instance in banking, insurance and the public sector. To the extent that service sector employers rely on firm-specific knowledge, employment patterns should converge to those of specifically trained workers in manufacturing.

Replaceability of workers is not the only relevant factor. As a second step constraints on employers' flexibility (as imposed by industrial relations and legal requirements) are included into our framework.

The diverging patterns of *industrial relations* across occupations are an obvious explanation for heterogeneity in labour market outcomes. High unionisation and collective bargaining coverage are the historical foundation of relatively standardised employment models which typically developed around manufacturing and the public sector. While unions are often still strong in this segment, in many countries they have difficulties in gaining ground in the service sector (e.g. Brady, 2007; Ebbinghaus, 2006; Palier and Thelen, 2010; Visser, 2007). The most extreme form of individualization is freelance work which is frequently performed in a quasi-dependent manner. In such a work setting, effective interest representation is difficult to achieve. Therefore, working conditions are expected to be more standardised in occupations in which workers are organized effectively. *Collective bargaining coverage* (or the lack thereof) should have an effect on wage compression and the scope of low-wage employment. The absence of either collective agreements in certain sectors or statutory minimum wages tends to be associated with higher wage dispersion and larger segments of low pay. Here, only statutory minimum wages or the extension of collective agreements can set a generally applicable wage floor.

Industrial relations are also important in monitoring compliance to labour market regulation. Where unions are weak on the firm level, employers have more leeway to bend existing regulation. Such a behavior can cover exploiting legal grey areas or bold breach of regulation, e.g. in the case of "dependent" self-employment. In any case, the strength of unions and the related enforceability of labour market regulation are important to understand employment patterns on the occupational level.

Labour market regulation, finally, do not only vary in the extent to which they can be enforced. In principle they should apply to the entire economy and they are often used to

explain cross-national differences in employment outcomes. However, also the *de jure* coverage of labour market institutions is not complete. First the public and the private sector usually differ with regard to the regulation of dismissals and remuneration. But also in the private sector, co-determination via works councils and statutory dismissal protection are a cases in point. Strict dismissal protection makes redundancies of workers on open-ended contracts costly and arguably makes employers reluctant to hire on a permanent basis (Bentolila and Bertola, 1990). Strong plant-level co-determination further strengthens the role of ‘insiders’.

However, in most countries the coverage of dismissal protection and co-determination is not universal. If an occupation is characterised by small-batch production, there may, for instance, be no obligation to accept a works council, which could constrain management’s prerogative to hire on atypical contracts. The same is true for dismissal protection, which typically only applies to firms above a size threshold (Boeri and Jimeno, 2005). Hence, incentives for the use of fixed-term contracts or agency work should be significantly stronger in occupations characterised by larger firm size.

The interplay of replaceability and flexibility is summarized in Table 1. Assuming that both dimensions can be either high or low we create a 2x2 table with different combinations of the two dimensions. What are the consequences for job quality (good jobs are loosely defined here as those with wages contract type and working time in line with workers’ preferences)? Generally, as explained above low replaceability should be to the advantage of workers. Under this condition, we would expect relatively good jobs irrespective of labour market regulation and industrial relations (i.e. flexibility). Here, working conditions are merely explained by employers’ incentive structure as it can be derived from labour market conditions and skill requirements. If replaceability is however high (i.e. if required skills are either low or highly general and if there is a sufficient supply of these skills in the external labour market) flexibility matters. In such a case, the employer faces no incentives to curb his or her desire for flexible employment arrangement. In order to provide good jobs, external constraints in the form of unions or state regulations have to be imposed. One should note that such constraints are seen as the source of negative externalities which affect job seekers (in the form of lower employment opportunities) or future generations (in the form of higher accumulated debt) (Iversen and Wren, 1998).

Table 1: Replaceability, flexibility and expected job quality (wage and contract type)

		Replaceability	
		High	Low
Flexibility	High	Precarious jobs	Mostly „good jobs“
	Low	“Good jobs” (potentially side-effects on labor market performance / public debt)	Very „good jobs“

The framework presented in Table 1 can be applied as a heuristic tool to capture both within-country differences across occupations and changes of specific occupations over time. Skilled manufacturing jobs are typically assumed to feature high levels of skill specificity (Seeleib-Kaiser et al. 2011) and remain a stronghold of unions (Palier and Thelen 2010). Accordingly, they should be stably located in the upper right quadrant of the table. Other jobs have moved over time. Descriptive examples are auxiliary services such as catering or cleaning which used to be integrated into large industrial organizations. Outsourcing has significantly limited the possibility for unions to affect working conditions in these services, implying a shift from the lower to the upper left quadrant.

Finally, it should be noted that there is at least one important occupational characteristic determining the use of non-standard and cheap labour which we have not touched upon so far, namely product market conditions. If occupations are exposed to demand fluctuations or pressure for price-competitiveness, incentives for employers to rely on non-standard/cheap jobs should increase. Within our framework, both product market conditions can be conceived of as moderators for the importance of replaceability and flexibility.

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