

BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

PART-TIME WORK AMONG WOMEN IN ROMANIA AND HUNGARY

SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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SYNTHESIS

The dissertation aims to further micro and macro-level sociological knowledge of part-time employment and to extend it to the social reality of Central and Eastern Europe where the relative low reliance on flexible time arrangements in employment has prevented scientific research from looking into its contexts and social meanings. Our focus on part-time work has been motivated by the repeated referral by economists and policy makers to this form of atypical employment as a potential solution for both low female employment and declining fertility rates. While answering questions of ‘what-ifs’ and ‘would-haves’ are beyond the scope of the present thesis, the deep insight into theories of flexible employment and collected empirical data enable us to formulate several theses and observations regarding the Romanian and Hungarian conceptions and practices of part-time work.

First, the analysis of 2011 Labour Force Survey data of Hungary and Romania reveals that the Hungarian labour market, although characterised by slowly rising part-time rates shows signs of convergence with the European pattern of part-time work in terms of the sociological and demographic characteristics of part-time employees. Small companies operating in the service sector are increasingly relying on flexible time arrangements, though the motivations might differ to a certain extent from similar European firms’ motivations. In Romania, although part-time rates have been and are higher than in Hungary, the agricultural sector was found to be almost exclusively responsible for part-time employment which renders the theoretical and conceptual tools used to describe European tendencies of part-time employment irrelevant for the Romanian case. Nevertheless, in both countries part-time work is highly associated with precarious labour market positions.

Second, semi-structured interviews conducted with women working as part-timers revealed the terms of the trade-off they adopt as a framework of interpretation of their labour market status: while acknowledging the disadvantages stemming from working shorter hours they consider it a rare and valuable opportunity to preserve their traditional roles and secondary earner statuses. Discourses and interpretive frames of part-time work do not aim at challenging patriarchal divisions of labour. On the other hand, as almost all part-time working women reflect on it, especially highly skilled white collar employees, definitions and practices related to working time allocation are highly consequential for judging employees’ work commitment: the choice for voluntary shorter hours is incompatible with the neoliberal idea of the loyal, dedicated and self-disciplined employees.

Keywords: atypical employment, part-time employment, female employment, flexible time arrangements, Romania, Hungary, labour market

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Introduction

Women's work – their access to paid work, as well as the quality and status of the work women are carrying out – has been a core issue to several schools of thought and social movements for the past century. For each particular scientific or policy perspective the analysis or the attempts to improve conditions and outcomes of female labour have gained different stakes. Feminist movements, especially starting with the second wave were among the first agents of change who placed women's access to wage labour high on their agenda (Whelehan, 1995). After struggling for the consolidation of the idea of women as autonomous political entities the two world wars and the subsequent entry of women in the labour market represented an impetus for women's movements to question previously taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the division of women's and men's labour by the walls separating the private from the public sphere. However, Marxist influences were decisive for the feminist theoretisation of gendered patterns of work. Using Engels' conception of women's proletarianisation through their confinement to the private sphere feminist thinkers advanced the idea of emancipating women through wage labour. Replacing unpaid work with an income was seen as a *sine qua non* condition of liberating women from the subordination of male family members' domination (Moore 2005).

Women's integration into the labour market was subject to analysis by a wide range of sociological paradigms. The basic and common assumption of these approaches was the fact that work constitutes the crucial and defining element of social identity, while at the same it ascribes different positions in the social structure to individuals. Most analysts group the theories tackling and addressing the issue of female work in two categories. Supply side theoretical models focus on the conditions under which social actors decide and act as labourers, whereas demand side theories concentrate on employers, emphasizing the structural level determinants of varying employment outcomes. Within the conceptual and theoretical diversity addressing the relationship between gender and work and implicitly the labour market inequalities the most well-known models are that of Becker's individual level rational choice theory, while on the demand side beyond Marxist and feminist approaches the theory of labour market segmentation provides valid explanations for the mechanisms of ascribing differential positions to members of different social groups. Nevertheless, in the very specific topic of the sexual division of labour the differential social positions occupied by men and women cannot be understood without referring to the concept of gender order. Meant to create a link between individual agency and the constraints emerging from the social structure

gender order – termed as gender arrangements or gender relations by several authors – captures the complex relationship between gender ideologies and discourses reinforced by social and normative institutions and the scope of individual action aiming at accepting or negotiating these frameworks. In most feminist approaches gender orders appear as power relations that are responsible for creating and perpetuating gender inequalities (Magyari-Vincze 2006).

Women's massive influx into the labour market is considered to be one of the most decisive processes of social change throughout the 20th century. Motivated primarily by the industrial and service sector demand generated in the context of the two world wars several factors from demographic changes to economic restructuring and transformations in the normative system of gender values and norms have contributed to the growing participation of women in the world of paid work. However, this seemingly commonplace affirmation has been debated from at least two perspectives. On the one hand based the calculations of feminist economics used as a point of departure it was shown that women's entrance to the formal labour market has in fact replaced their previous contribution to small family businesses and crafts, just as valuable in economic terms as later earned incomes (Hakim 1996). Moreover, especially in the period following the oil crisis of the seventies women's labour market participation in Western Europe was limited for the most part to part-time work which was arguably able to radically re-shape the sexual distribution of work in society (Hakim 1993).

The contexts and conditions of women's entry to the labour market were radically different in the two parts of Europe in the post-war period. Concentrated especially in the white collar and semi-skilled lower status part-time jobs created in the enlarging service sector women did not in fact reshape the fundamental structures of the labour market. As women did not compete for the same jobs as men the emerging division of work on the labour market termed 'public patriarchy' came only as a slight modification of the previous 'private patriarchy' (Walby 2001). By the end of the century most market economies were characterised by a relatively high degree of gender based job and sectoral segregation and gender pay gaps. Contrary to the capitalist model of integrating women into the world of wage labour in Central and Eastern European socialist countries both women's emancipation as an entire project and the rising female participation in the labour market in particular were centrally planned and followed the official state ideology instead of the logic of the market. Nevertheless, this is not to say that all social transformations initiated from above were subordinated to the Marxist idea of dissolving gender, class and other forms of social

inequalities (Kligman 2000). On the contrary, the overarching project of socialist modernisation to which improving gender equality was integral was simultaneously driven by the labour force needs of the accelerated urbanisation and industrialisation processes carried out by the socialist regime. Moreover, as women were concerned their emancipation was basically limited to the obligation of taking up full-time paid work, while most other aspects of gender inequalities remained unchallenged. While the official political discourse defined men as producers, women's double role of producers and reproducers has created the conditions of perpetuating their double and triple burdens (Einhorn 1993). Overall, however, in spite of the deepest involvement of the state in shaping the gender division of labour by the fall of the socialist regimes labour markets have been characterised by the same patterns of inequalities as in the Western capitalist countries.

Following the regime change of the early 1990s women's labour market positions and their social status in general was subject to many transformations. Analysts have advanced several scenarios of women's changing labour market opportunities among which the unemployment scenario, the theory of revalued resources and the scenario of increasing vulnerability are the most influential (Fodor 1997). Economic restructuring, de-industrialisation and the reduced labour force needs of previously considerable state administrations were some of the most significant economic forces leading to restricting employment opportunities for women. Additionally, however, the growing salience of gender in the social distribution of material and symbolic goods, as well as accentuating traditional and patriarchal value systems have similarly contributed to the exclusion of women from work or from decent conditions and forms of employment (Glass & Fodor 2011).

The decline in female employment and the subsequent rise of inactivity among women were paralleled by a range of other social processes among which falling fertility rates are the most significant (Rotariu 2006, Spéder 2003). This resulted in a very specific convergence of the social discourses concerning women's 'proper' forms of work with those regarding changed fertility behaviour and their culmination into a continuous reference to part-time work. Part-time rates in most Central and Eastern European countries have been rather low throughout the past two decades and although its reasons are highly debated by specialists they most certainly include the lack of any 'tradition' of part-time employment, labour market regulations that are considered to inhibit the spread of flexible employment, as well as the generally low wage levels which discourage workers from considering part-time work (Hárs 2012). The two dominant thematic contexts out of which the topic of part-time generally emerges from is that of improving female employment rates and fertility outcomes (del Boca

2002). Nevertheless, employers are rather reluctant to consider flexible working time arrangement, not even in the case of women with young children, seen the most typical beneficiaries of such employment forms.

In our research we focused on describing and understanding the status-quo of part-time work in two selected Central and Eastern European societies – Romania and Hungary. Our choice for the problem studied and for the two case studies was motivated by the following reasons. First, to our knowledge the lack of popularity of part-time employment has generated a fairly low scientific interest – especially in terms of qualitative studies – in the social meaning of atypical employment. While statistical analyses have tackled the issue of propelling factors of part-time employment (Hárs 2012, Laky 2005) in Hungary, there have been very scattered analyses – if any – of the individual level motivations and impact part-time work has on female career paths and private lives (Oborni 2009).

Second, while most studies carried out in Western European societies concentrate on particular aspects of the employment relations – employers’ motivations and use of atypical work or the impact of part-time work on employees’ family status, income situation or career perspectives – our research set out to offer a holistic view of the way part-time work is integrated into female working lives in the two selected countries.

Lastly, the selection of the case studies was based besides familiarity with the two countries on the diverging paths these countries followed since the beginning of the post-socialist period. Economic and sociological approaches to modelling ‘transition scenarios’ have built typologies in which Romania and Hungary belonged to distinct types. As opposed to Cernat’s label of ‘cocktail capitalism’ (Cernat 2006) used to describe the Romanian model of implementing capitalist institutions and practices Nölke and Vliegenthart (2009) propose a third category to be added to the varieties of capitalism model and call it dependent market economies in order to capture the high contingency on foreign direct investment of the Hungarian (and three other Central European economies’) ‘success stories’. While evolutions of the two states’ GDP per capita reflect the differences also signalled by King and Szelényi (2005) labour market indicators only partially reflect differences in the level of successful implementation of neoliberal capitalist institutions. Throughout the period analysed part-time rates have been higher in Romania than in Hungary.

Our study unfolds on two levels. On the one hand it focuses on the macro-level statistical understanding of the (absence) of part-time work, concentrating on the characteristics of part-time employment where it occurs and the social and economic factors that explain the emergence of flexible employment. Statistical investigation was carried out on the two

anonymised datasets of the 2011 Labour Force Surveys collected in Romania and Hungary and made available by the Eurostat. This approach is complemented by a qualitative sociological study carried out in the two countries among women who work or have worked as part-time employees. The interviews with the women affected by part-time work were complemented by several expert interviews conducted in order to understand the context of atypical employment practices. The aim of the qualitative study was to reveal the set of social and cultural meanings attached to part-time work among working women and the role it plays in shaping individual working careers.

The thesis is structured into five chapters. The first chapter sets the general conceptual and theoretical framework of analysing the complex relationship between gender and work. Before, however, presenting the most significant supply and demand side theoretical models explaining gender differences in the labour market we define core concepts as gender, gender order and patriarchy. The second chapter concentrates on the general trends of female employment in the two parts of Europe, gradually narrowing the focus of the analysis to the socialist and post-socialist realities of female employment in Hungary and Romania. In order to draw upon the normative changes regulating conceptions of women's work a case study of the values and norms among the Magyars living in Transylvania was included. The third chapter is exclusively dedicated to part-time labour, but it is limited to the presentation of the already existing empirical and theoretical body of knowledge concerning flexible employment. The definition of the concept is followed by a statistical overview of the spread of part-time work in the second half of the 20th century in Europe, as well as by a description of the factors considered to be responsible for its spread. Finally, the chapter presents the most significant empirical results of previous studies carried out in order to address the conditions under which part-time work leads to integration or marginalisation. Lastly, the fourth and the fifth chapters present the results of the statistical and qualitative research carried out within the past two years in Hungary and Romania.

Chapter 1

Concepts and theories of gender and work

Gender is one of the most important and at the same time meaningful and universal criterion of social stratification: the social norms and values attached to the two sexes work either in a manifest or more commonly in a latent manner as lines along which the opportunities of access to material and symbolic goods are distributed. While on the global level there are significant differences between gender regimes in terms of unequal opportunities of the two sexes, gender based social inequalities may be rendered universal. Most theories addressing the universal character of gender inequalities and that of female subordination emphasise the deep cultural embeddedness of conceptions regarding “proper female and male behaviour”, however these cultural ideas impact men’s and women’s unequal access to material and non-material resources, having a direct consequence both in terms of material welfare, as well as for (especially) women’s ability to perceive themselves as social agents shaping their own lives. While gender inequalities exist and are being perpetuated in multiple spheres, women’s and men’s labour, the sexual division of labour has become of utmost importance, as one of the principal roots of the hierarchy of the two sexes. Access to material resources has been therefore regarded as crucial for women’s emancipatory aspirations, bringing the role of *paid work* to the centre of feminists’ concerns: while wage labour has only become a dominant and widespread form of providing for families’ subsistence starting with the dawn of industrialisation and modernity, creating at the same time a clear cut separation between women’s and men’s place of work, throughout the 20th century women’s access to paid work has been one of the pivotal goals of feminist movements. Marxist thinkers and representatives of Marxist feminism go as far as considering wage work as the most important means of women’s emancipation under the patriarchal (and capitalist) subordination (Whelehan, 1995:47).

In one of her famous papers addressing the issue of women’s employment Catherine Hakim argued for the replacement of standard measures of employment with indicators measuring attachment to work. With this she called for the re-evaluation of the presupposition according to which all women are equally motivated for work and suggested instead much methodologically informative ways of conceptualising “work-commitment” and “family-centeredness” (Hakim 1993: 113). Placing the emphasis upon individual women’s and men’s professional motivations and aspirations in explaining social level trends in employment does not lead to the disregarding of socially and culturally defined macro factors and processes that

shape people's economic participation. On the contrary, it ought to recognise the very social and cultural determination of people's choices: neither the individual goals and actions, nor social, and indeed external forces that enhance or limit individual agency are to be understood without the underlying gender order that characterises society or a particular social group. Gender order is a particular form of a set of power relations within every society that is created and perpetuated by social institutions, discourses and practices, that on the one hand constructs and maintains culturally normative gender classification systems which on the other hand are the basis of overarching systems of inequality (Magyari-Vincze 2006:33). The present chapter presents sociological and economic theories that explain the variability of female employment across societies and social groups. Before, however, turning to the detailed description of these models, the chapter starts by revealing how the concepts of *gender* and *gender order* is of help in understanding social and cultural determination of work and attitudes to work.

The first section of the first chapter is dedicated to the concept of gender and gender regimes. After exploring the evolution of the concept and its meanings we present the two most widely known interpretations of the universality of women's domination by men. On the one hand Ortner argues that the subordination of nature to culture is equivalent to the subordination of women to men in every culture and this analogy is responsible for perpetuating gendered power relations cross-culturally (Ortner 1974). On the other hand in Bourdieu's conception of the universal male dominance he emphasises that violence over women is symbolic, as it is hardly noticeable, exerted mainly within the communication channels of the everyday practices. Its efficiency is, therefore, granted by the way the social constructions of male and female gender become integrated into the 'doxa experiences' of individuals: differences between men and women are on the one hand socially constructed and 'naturalised', but on the other they become strongly imprinted in bodies and their socially accepted use (Bourdieu 2000).

The section dedicated to theories of women's employment enumerates and describes the most significant paradigms attempting to explain the gendered (and unequal) outcomes of women's and men's participation in several forms of work. The section is opened by an account of the statistical biases affecting both historically and in the present the analysis of women's work, drawing upon the issue of invisibility of several forms of women's work. The conceptual history of the private and public dichotomy is outlined as an attempt to demonstrate that the confinement of women's work to the private sphere is mostly a product

of the modern bourgeoisie separation of men's public from women's private roles (Habermas 1971).

Of the individual level theoretical models tackling women's and men's different patterns of labour market participation we begin by presenting Goldberg's thesis of the inevitability of patriarchy, however, the theory of 'New Home Economics' inspired by Becker (1981) and reshaped several times was considered much more relevant in informing our own empirical study. Individual level theories explaining the opportunity structures enhancing or limiting women's (and men's) access to labour place the most important determinant factor either with individual rational choice or the person's value options. Whether they emphasise the rational element or on the contrary, non-rational adherence to a set of values, the bottom line of this kind of approach is that the source of work related gender differences and inequalities is not society or large scale social mechanisms, but the choice and the strategies of the individual. Critics often accuse this paradigm that is 'blames the victim'. According to rational choice theorists every human action targets the increasing of utility, whether the decision and the action concern education, work or child bearing. Becker's basic assumption following the main directions of rational choice theory is that all individuals can be considered rational maximisers and act accordingly, that is make use of their capital and resources in such a way as to maximise utility. The pattern of division of labour between men and women living in the same household is subject to the same logic: it aims to secure the highest level of efficiency and productivity in the functioning of the household. Therefore, women's and men's options for certain types of work are completely free and unforced, and the only rationality they are subordinated to is that of increasing efficiency through specialisation.

The demand side of theories explaining gender inequalities in the labour market is represented by the Marxist, the feminist approaches and the model of labour market segmentation. According to the Marxist conception of female proletarianisation women are being systematically excluded from prestigious jobs, significant resources or from labour market altogether by the concerted action of men, irrespective of women's human capital investment or value preferences. This is either done for the sake of securing the maintenance of monogamous patriarchal families, the guarantees of private property, or in the name of public patriarchy justifying men's positions by their assumed fitness for certain types of work. On the other hand feminism's central concept is patriarchy which describes and explains not only private reproductive, but also public productive processes. Women's and men's differential access to paid work and to such labour market resources as positions within the organisational hierarchy, prestige or benefits is the result of the workings of patriarchal social

processes. Patriarchy is a rather conflictual concept, as it refers to women's domination by men, and it includes the control of women's work by men, heterosexual marriage, women's confinement to household and caring work, their general economic dependency, as well as social institutions dominated by men (Hakim, 1996:9–10).

Lastly, the representatives of the theory of labour market segmentation argue that the creation of segments both at labour market and at firm level is an employer-strategy to improve the company's competitiveness, to gain in productivity and to retain managerial control over employees (Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998:7–8). Many authors have considered that the secondary labour market is generally feminised because women's general level of education, their discontinuous career patterns or higher level availability for 'decorative' jobs makes them likely candidates for flexible and thus less rewarding jobs. Nevertheless, there is only limited evidence for the hypothesis according to which labour market segmentation is to a large extent overlapping sectoral and other types of segregation, and as such it can provide satisfactory explanation for the gender pay gap.

Chapter 2

The trends and context of women's employment in Europe in the past half century

The 20th century witnessed an unprecedented shift in women's social status, as a result of several closely interconnected processes, among which women's immersion in the labour market was of primary importance. Following extended struggles for political participation rights to vote, as well as rights to be elected have been gradually granted to women over the first decades of the 20th century, although in many cases women's suffrage preceded universal rights to vote. That is to say that in many countries some privileged socio-economic groups of women had already received the right to vote before the entire society succeeded in accomplishing this level of political participation. The gains in economic rights show an even more complex picture with strong regional and national cleavages in improving women's social and economic status. Although there is a wide array of indicators of social and economic well-being and their enactment as rights given to women – the right to own a property without the permission of the father or the husband, the right to enter a guild, the right to pursue tertiary level studies and so on – had been accomplished at a differential pace, it can be hardly debated that of all these the right to take up paid work (if possible without being

compelled to ask for the husband's consent and without any marital status-related restrictions) is central to enhancing women's social and economic status.

The role of the two world wars, but especially that of World War II is inarguable as a powerful momentum of women's access to the labour market. Women's contribution was first called for as workers-producers within the war industry, but their labour was necessary in the post-war period, too, especially as replacement of the male work force. Nevertheless, the growing female presence is arguably an uncontested success story, especially not for theorists belonging to the feminist perspectives. Neither does it show unitary evolution on the global level, but on the contrary, it witnessed significant regional differences. Women's increasing labour market participation has been riddled with contradictions, because as most statistical level analyses show their stepping-in into the world of paid work did not occur on identical terms with men, but they gradually populated mainly low status 'labour market enclaves' especially in the part-time segment of the labour market. This means that women's engagement in paid work did not really challenge the relation of gendered subordination in the public sphere (Hakim 1993). Other authors argue that throughout the first seven decades of the 20th century women's contribution to the overall economic output has not in fact grown, only its nature and more importantly, the methods of statistical recording has changed. Women represented an important workforce within the family enterprises and small crafts usually led by the male heads of the household, without for this input to be valued in economic terms. Women's part-time employment could hardly be interpreted as a significantly increased contribution to either household or national level economic output than their former involvement in domestic work, sustained after even taking up paid labour (Hakim, 1993). A third factor strengthening the contradictory character of women's growing employment – whether full-time or part-time – is its inability to challenge traditional gender roles and the rigid confinement of women to the private sphere. In this respect it is also questionable to what extent did paid work succeed in accomplishing women's emancipation from the male dominance, as Marxists would have expected if wage work carried out in the public sphere only came as an additional burden to the chores they needed to take care of within the household. In any case, there are several studies showing how women's entrance to the labour market, especially as a part-timer did not lead to a re-evaluation and a re-negotiation of their exclusive domestic roles (Webber and William 2008).

In the Western world the main forces propelling women's increasing participation on the labour market were located at different levels and invested in different actors along an East-West demarcation line. While in Western Europe and the United States feminist movements

and employers' demand for the female work force were alike conducive to their involvement in paid work, the party state as the major and central actor of the socialist economies of plan was controlling women's labour participation directly. In the Western democracies coupled with the Fordist organisation of economy thus female employment was both demand and supply led, demanded from the bottom and at the same time taking advantage of the opportunities created at the corporate level. But its growing followed a fundamental economic rationale. In the Eastern part of the continent ruled by the single socialist party there was neither a demand on the part of economic actors, nor women's grass-root endeavour to engage in paid work. In fact economic actors were substituted for by the socialist state and the capitalist rule of profitability was replaced by a double interest to grow women's public work. On the one hand it followed the ideology of the 'new socialist man (person)' which was ought to be an apogee of the socialist equalisation project, while on the other hand Eastern European and Soviet communist countries' integration within the COMECON system, as well as the overarching industrialisation project these embarked upon was unconceivable and unaccomplishable without the massive input of women workforce. Against the more organic, bottom-up character of the Western evolution of women's labour market participation, carried out within a competitive environment, the socialist top-down control of the female employment was embedded within a larger social engineering based modernisation project which was meant to fundamentally change social relations. However, although of different origin basic trends and features of women's work were rather similar in the two regions of the continent.

The second chapter explores the major trends and characteristics of women's labour in 20th century-Europe in a Western-Eastern comparative perspective. The first section summarises the most significant social, economic, demographic and ideological forces behind women's increasing motivation to engage in paid labour and those driving employers' attention towards what constituted the most important reserve army of labour: (married) women. The larger economic context of women's massive engagement in paid work – at least in the first period of their growing participation – was set by the Fordist period of accumulation in the first seven decades of the 20th century in Europe and in the United States. Later, as Fordism gave way to the post-Fordist regime of flexibility, the growing share of the service sector accelerated women's participation. In spite of what Fordism is commonly taken for – a direct implementer of the Taylorist ideals of scientific management – Ford's conceptions of mass production and mass consumption exceed the mere organisation of capitalist corporations, serving as models of rationality and industriousness for the entire

society and economy (Harvey 1989:125–126). Women workers were especially affected by the post-Fordist transition that led to the flexibilisation of the labour market. As a response to the rigidity of Fordist financial and labour allocation mechanisms, most economies experienced a growing segmentation of the labour market into more privileged and unionised (male) core workers on one side and a peripheral, flexible, self-employed or subcontracted and at the same time easily disposable (female and ethnic minority) labour force on the other. The segmentation of the labour market was itself a reaction to the growing economic competition and a way to tackle market fluctuations. By creating a marginal labour market segment characterised by a low level of job security, wage and fringe benefits employers provide a means of securing the positions of core workers (Harvey 1989:141–145).

Within the same section this description is followed by the revealing of some core features of women's employment along the most widely used economic indicators of work as it evolved in Western Europe and the United States. One of the most significant changes affecting women's labour market participation was the gradual weakening of the salience of marriage and child birth in determining women's attachment to paid work (Walby, 2001:50–55). In parallel, vertical sexual segregation gradually replaced horizontal segregation (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990:24, Hakim, 1996:152–153). The growth of women's employment did not decrease, but on the contrary it accentuated job segregation, mainly as a result of their concentration in semi-skilled manual, as well as lower routine white collar work jobs and sectors. For the interpretation of women's concentration in low-skilled and unskilled manual jobs three theoretical models were developed: the theory of women as a spatial reserve army of labour, the theory of 'rigid sex typing' and the theory of women as 'green labour'. As neither of the models received sufficient empirical support Walby claimed that women's changing labour market participation should be analysed not by recurring to mechanisms induced by the capital but at the intersection between gender, class and the spatial and temporal context (Walby, 2001:99).

The second section moves the focus of the analysis towards the opposite end of the continent, describing first the socialist policy of improving women's social and economic status and the way gender was conceived of and how it structured social transformations throughout the almost five decades of socialist rule. Improving women's positions on the labour market was crucial for at least three reasons. First of all, its weight originated from the Marxist ideology of empowering women, second equality between the sexes was integrated within the overall modernisation processes the socialist regime embarked upon, and third, female labour force was indispensable in the development of the industrial sector. While the

socialist regime's accomplishments were indubitable with respect to the mass inclusion of women and men in school education their participation especially in the higher levels of education remained segregated. Labour force participation has become a norm for women all over the Central and Eastern European region (Einhorn, 1993:113), entering labour market sometimes even before their Western counterparts (Wolchik, 1985:189). Traditionally, societies in the region had been characterised by a patriarchal and rigid division of labour before the instauration of the socialist power, therefore the previously non active female labour force – that is, not having carried out paid work in the public space – constituted an immense reserve of labour for the industrial endeavour these countries were looking ahead. By the end of the period women made up almost the half of the economically active and employed population in the entire region (Völgyes, 1985:222).

By the time we reach the post-socialist transformations the geographical focus will have narrowed down to the two sites of our case studies: Romania and Hungary. Therefore the second section also investigates in a comparative light the economic restructuring these two societies experienced, with a special emphasis upon the process of reshaping and/or perpetuating the former gender order.

Lastly, in the last part of the section dealing with the post-1989 evolution of women's employment we simultaneously test the Western-Eastern convergence thesis and attempt to contribute to the scholarly debate concerning the post-socialist changes' impact upon women social and economic status. In section three the chapter is closed by an overview of the normative-ideational context of changing gender regimes, the transformations it underwent and the way it affected women's conception of their social roles as producers and reproducers. This issue is illustrated through a case study conducted among the Hungarian population living in Romania.

Chapter 3

The spread of working time flexibility in Europe

Part-time work as a particular and increasingly widespread form of atypical employment has been regarded from a variety of perspectives and consequently assessed in so many contradictory ways. Carrying out paid work in alternative – reduced – working-time schedules has emerged as an increasingly popular way of gainful employment by the time women entered the labour market in the post-war period in Western Europe. As we described earlier in the first section of the second chapter women's high concentration in usually lower status

part-time jobs was conducive to creating and maintaining vertical sex segregation between men and women, perpetuating at the same time all the disadvantages that a part-time employee accumulates during his/her working career. Women's influx into the labour market in Central and Eastern European socialist regimes led to similar sex differences in working life patterns with the notable exception of part-time employment. As all other forms of atypical work part-time was virtually non-existent in the state controlled labour market of the socialist countries.

Working in less hours than the standard schedule, just as the opportunity to carry out work from one's home has not significantly grown in popularity ever since the collapse of socialism in Central and Eastern Europe. More precisely, in spite of the scattered and not so powerful supply of (mostly female and student) part-time labour neither employers or the states have recognised these forms of atypical work as particularly advantageous for either increasing companies' competitiveness or improving national level employment rates. The desirability and benefits attributed to working part-time have been highlighted from time to time by several groups of labour market actors and states as well as employers have been urged to facilitate and encourage employees' access to working reduced hours. Flexibility was being missed and praised by most actors of the labour market and part-time employment was regarded as (possibly) serving so many objectives.

Part-time work has been primarily praised and thrived for by employees struggling transitorily or indefinitely with reconciling two or more social roles and duties. The most significant social groups having showed high willingness to take up part-time work have been full-time or irregular students seeking a source of income and possibly preliminary contacts with and experience regarding the world of work. A second category prone to commit to working part-time is usually that of women engaged in caring either for children or one or more elderly members of their families. Typically women in these cases regard themselves as primary caretakers who might be motivated by a wide range of reasons – from the need for additional income to searching for peers' company – to take up work in reduced hours. Lastly, the third life stage increasing availability for part-time work is the period of exit from the labour market or alternatively transitory or permanent illness: in the former case reduced hours of work is meant to buffer the shock of leaving employment permanently both in terms of the disappearing income and of accommodating oneself to idleness. In the latter case several types of illnesses and conditions can make it possible for people to carry out limited amount of paid work. In all ideal typical cases enumerated so far the individually defined objective attached to the demand for part-time employment is forging or preserving one's

economic activity while at the same time being able to commit to other roles. People struggling with an illness or a disability consider part-time along with other forms of atypical employment as a crucial and indispensable condition for maintaining one's economic and social pursuits.

Part-time work is expected to serve the objective of social and economic integration in the discourse of economists and social policy makers. This approach views mostly marginal labour market groups: the economically inactive, the unemployed and among these women, the low skilled, immigrants or members of an ethnic community, the young or people with disability. Part-time employment along with other forms of non-standard work is defined as a potential means of integrating in the labour market the members of the social groups enumerated above. The state is often called for to provide special incentives for employers to create such jobs and accommodate the needs of these 'special' employees. Within this category actors striving for increasing the availability of part-time jobs those referring to working mothers represent an important sub-category. The desirability of part-time work offered to women raising children can serve both a conservative and a progressive-feminist objective. In the first instance work carried out with a reduced schedule is instrumental to securing women's primary attachment to the private sphere and their compliance with conservative gender roles. On the other hand, however, there have been attempts to reconsider the role of part-time employment as an empowerment of women through facilitating their access to paid work and consequently through contributing to the rethinking of traditional gender division of work in the household.

The third chapter examines the conditions under which part-time employment is indeed able to fulfil the objectives described above, that is integration into the labour market, the ability to pursue paid work while conserving traditional gender roles and empowerment. Before doing that, however, we begin the chapter by defining the concept of part-time employment and by highlighting the methodological issue raised by attempts to measure and compare the incidence of part-time work. The second section is dedicated to the describing of the most significant trends of part-time employment, focusing more on Western European labour markets and to a lesser extent on other market economies. This statistical account offers the possibility of drawing the profile of typical part-time employees throughout the countries during the past decades. The following section deals with the individual and structural level conditions that favour the development of the part-time segment, emphasising however not only factors that encourage individual decision to take up part-time work, but also those incentive structures that have been developed at the firm level and by the state to

encourage the spread of part-time employment. Lastly, the chapter is closed by a section which sums up the most important empirical results of research conducted so far that aim to answer the central dilemma of part-time work: is it a means of integration or on the contrary, it perpetuates marginalisation?

Chapter 4

Part-time work in Romania and Hungary: a view from above

Following the third chapter dedicated to understanding the world wide emergence and spread of flexible employment, as well as to the setting up of the conceptual and theoretical framework used in the present research the fourth part of the thesis narrows the focus to the two Central and Eastern European countries selected as case studies: Romania and Hungary. The central objective of the present chapter is to explore the basic characteristics of the two labour markets and to situate atypical employment – and within it, part-time work – within its structure. The chapter is made up of two main parts. The first one deals with the presentation of the temporal evolution of employment relations in the two countries, focusing on the similarities and differences between the two. As the agricultural sector has been for the past two decades and still is a major component of Romanian employment much of the analysis within the chapter is focalised on exploring its internal structure.

However, the part receiving the most emphasis within the fourth chapter is the one dedicated to explore signs and features of flexibilisation in the two labour markets. Eastern European countries are well known for their reluctance to incorporate most forms of atypical employment (Eurofound 2007). The general lack of non-standard employment which is also translated as a reluctance to flexibilise employment relations is the primary departure point of our study. As we already showed at the beginning of the study the Hungarian economy exhibits quite a high rate of temporary employment, whereas in Romania, especially the agrarian sector is heavily relying both on self-employment and family work. Nevertheless, the focus of our research, part-time employment is indeed rare compared to European averages, albeit somewhat higher in Romania, than in Hungary.

The fourth chapter of our thesis relies upon statistical data provided by data collected and made available by the Labour Force Survey programme of EUROSTAT. Both the synchronic and the diachronic approaches towards the issues under study are based on the anonymised Microdata provided by EUROSTAT comprising all surveys conducted in European countries

(within and outside the European Union) starting with its inception in 1983. As the statistical analysis defined both descriptive and explanatory objectives, we built our study on *research questions and hypotheses* alike. These were the following:

1. The description of the temporal evolution of the two labour markets was organised around key economic indicators as: employment, unemployment and the labour market status of the young.
2. The second aim of our analysis was to reveal the major characteristics of atypical employment, focusing on the labour market conditions under which several of its forms occur. Beyond part-time employment we focused on self-employment, family work, temporary work and homeworking.
3. In the next step we set out to build the social, demographic and professional profile of Romanian and Hungarian part-time workers. The investigation was guided by the hypothesis according to which the social characteristics of the population involved in part-time employment is radically different from the European patterns in terms of age, gender, occupation, level of education.
4. Lastly, our study culminates in a multivariate analysis modelling the factors that shape the occurrence of part-time employment in the two countries. As a departure point we set out a hypothesis saying that due to the wide gap existing between Western and Eastern patterns of labour market flexibility none of the explaining variables contributing to the spread of part-time employment in Western Europe will be significant in Romania and Hungary.

The central conclusion of our quantitative study is that in spite of the general statistical representation of the Romanian part-time employment as higher than the Hungarian the two countries exhibit very different elements of flexibilisation. While in Romania it is almost exclusively confined to the agrarian sector, in Hungary the European pattern can be detected in terms of the service sector relying more heavily on flexible employment. Part-time work can be considered as almost inexistent outside the agricultural sector in Romania. Women and men having either primary level or vocational education, in their active ages with an over-representation of the age groups above 40, 'retreated' to agriculture finding part-time self-employment in men's case and part-time family work in women's case the best or last employment framework to formalise their labour market status. Their statuses and positions are excluded from the standard processes of the labour market. These 'jobs' are subject to informal negotiations and are in their large majority considered an involuntary outcome of their endeavours they would be willing to change anytime.

In Hungary, on the other hand, while it is impossible to predict the future evolution of the past and present tendencies, some of the features and signs of a gradually flexibilising labour market may be detected. Especially small firms rely on atypical employment – though prioritising temporary employment over time flexibility – in order to provide the means for economic competitiveness. The social and demographic characteristics of part-time employees are converging toward what we call the European pattern: especially lower educated, older women working in some branches of the service sector are involved in part-time employment. In its large majority part-time work is being carried out in marginal positions of the labour market, however, the Hungarian labour market, as opposed to Romania grants this opportunity as a transitory or permanent solution to those who are impeded from taking up full-time work due to a wide range of personal reasons.

Chapter 5

Social representations of part-time work in Romania and Hungary

According to the statistical data analysed and presented in the fourth chapter neither in Romania, nor in Hungary does the share of those part-time employees who would ‘wish to take up full-time work instead of part-time’ reach the ratio of involuntary part-time workers. Only around 60 per cent of involuntary part-time workers in the two countries expressed their desire to work longer hours. This means that there is at least 40 per cent gap between the rate of involuntary part-timers and those who would actually wish to switch to full-time. Moreover, in both countries, ‘other reasons’ and ‘other personal reasons’ are significant, albeit unknown motivations for working part-time. These are just a few instances of the questions and dilemmas regarding the motivations and the larger context of people’s decisions to engage in part-time work that are not sufficiently covered and explored by the survey. Nevertheless, the variety of motivations and the statistical contradictions between the self-assessment and aspirations of working individuals are not the only issues to be solved and explored by semi-structured interviews.

The last chapter of the thesis offers a view from below of the conditions and outcomes of labour market flexibility in the two countries as they appear in women’s experiences. At most levels – in the European Union or at the national level economic and social policy thinking – part-time employment has been praised more like any other form of atypical work for improving women’s economic activity (del Boca 2002). Part-time work is often seen –

especially in countries where this form of atypical employment is rather rare – that work in reduced hours would make a more equilibrated division of effort possible between child care and working tasks for women, translated eventually in improved economic independence and welfare. Additionally, especially demographers claim that part-time work would inarguably improve not only female employment rates and women's economic situation, but their propensity for childbearing, too (Frey, 2009:33, Blaskó, 2006:91–92). It is characteristic to such approaches that it leaves the traditional patriarchal division of labour between men and women unquestioned, and does not address the issue of the social and economic status emerging out of part-time employment either. It is not typical in the Central and Eastern European political, economic and social policy discourses to mention part-time work for its supposed benefices of improving the employment of other labour market groups. This, in our opinion is mainly due to the fact that in the context of low average income level that characterises most former socialist countries reduced wages (or half wages for that matter) are only a viable solution for those who receive financial support from other sources, be it a family member, pension, social allowance or others (Smith et al. 1998). Moreover, in many cases public urge to encourage or offer state support to the spread of part-time work envisages middle class white collar women and families where the transitory loss of a half wage is a smaller threat than the woman's longer time or permanent incapacity to regain employment. All these aspects were crucial in motivating us to focus exclusively on woman part-time employees in order to understand their experience of atypical employment.

The fifth chapter analyses the interviews carried out during the fieldwork. It is comprised of three sections. The first one presents the most common and typical representations of part-time work. Common perceptions of part-time employment are centred on its transitory character both in cases in which the lack of alternatives is recognised by the interviewee and when employees regard it as the best possible option for them. Interviews have revealed that part-time workers regard the flexible time arrangements they are benefiting from as *contrary to or at least incompatible with the shared norms of full-time standard work*. The degree to which respondents saw working fewer hours as incompatible with expectations to 'acceptable' work was among others contingent upon the role work occupied in their self-representation. Those perceiving work as providing only a secondary and complementary status to their primary status of retired, carer or student were less likely to refer to any feeling of contradiction. Likewise, *discontent* with this type of work was most likely to occur among women whose part-time wage was the primary or at least constitutive income in the family. As a rule, part-time jobs are chosen by and they also reinforce secondary earner statuses

within families and households. The first section deals with the presentation of two ideal types of part-time work: as granting primary and secondary status. All women whom we conducted interviews with referred to their work as not only providing an income, but satisfying other needs, too. On the other hand, pensioners and full-time students regarded work as only secondary compared to their first status.

The second section offers a critique of the oversimplifying statistical distinction between voluntary and involuntary part-time work, revealing those coercive factors that are concealed by statistical accounts but which limit people's choices in terms of working time arrangements. Lastly, the third section aims at identifying mechanisms through which time use and the definition of working time becomes a means of disciplining workers and conveying messages of work commitment towards employers. Social conceptions and practices related to part-time work (especially in its voluntary forms) are deeply embedded in larger negotiations of meanings of time as an indicator of employee motivation.