Rethinking labour protection

Building Back Better: Forging a post-pandemic social contract that works for all

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Most jobs are pretty ordinary

Share of STEM jobs is predicted to stay small

2018

6.4%

- STEM occupations
- Non-STEM occupations

2028

6.7%

Top 10 occupations in the US

- Retail Salespersons: 4,448,120
- Food prep and serving, incl. fast food: 3,876,180
- Cashiers: 3,635,550
- Office Clerks, General: 2,972,930
- Registered Nurses: 2,951,960
- Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand: 2,893,180
- Customer Service Representatives: 2,871,400
- Waiters and Waitresses: 2,582,410
- General and Operations Managers: 2,289,770
- Personal Care Aides: 2,211,950

Source: BLS.
Decades long rise in non-standard employment – «fissured» workforce

- Temporary employment
- Multi-party employment relationship
- Part-time and on-call work
- Disguised employment/dependent self-employment
Digital labour platforms as latest manifestation…
Tech revolution *displacing* labour, not *replacing* it

- Accelerating the trend that began decades ago of growth in precarious work
- Important effects on job quality that have received scant attention.
- This is a political debate rather than a technological one.
Temporary employment as % of total employment, OECD

Source: OECD, latest year available.
Growth in non-standard employment most pronounced in low-skilled professions

U.S. occupations with highest concentration of temporary agency workers

- Production helpers, entry-level: 29.20%
- Laborers and freight, stock and material movers by hand: 18.4%
- Assemblers who work in a team: 17.6%
- Human resources specialists: 16.2%
- Packers and packagers by hand: 16.2%
- Packaging and filling machine operators: 16.1%
- Demonstrators and product promoters: 11.5%
- Data entry keyers: 15.1%
- Construction laborers: 9.4%
- Metal and plastic cutting, punching and press machine setters, operators, tenders: 10.1%

Source: BLS, OES, 2012
And workers in non-standard employment have been most affected by the COVID-19 labour market crisis and are less likely to be covered – or not as well covered – from social security.

Source: Covid Inequality Project, A. Adams et al.
Moving forward: How can we ensure decent work for all
Working conditions in low-wage sectors differ vastly across countries

Retail Job Characteristics across Six Industrialized Countries, mid-2000s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage that are low-wage (&lt;2/3 median)</th>
<th>Annual labour turnover (%)</th>
<th>Part-time workers (%)</th>
<th>Value-added per hour worked, 2005 euros, PPP</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>United States</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>25.41</td>
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</tbody>
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--Plus differences in leave/rest policies, scheduling, whether they can sit...
Part-time work can be of high quality, if policy design supports it

Box 4. The Netherlands: Good quality part-time employment

In the Netherlands – “the first part-time economy in the world” – nearly half of wage employees work part time. In 2014, this was the case for 65 per cent of women and 28 per cent of men. Part-time work is not limited to marginal jobs but is found in nearly all occupations. Most part-time employees are on permanent employment contracts, and the average wage gap between full-timers and part-timers is negligible or non-existent. Several studies have shown that Dutch women are not only satisfied with part-time work, but also prefer it over full time, and in some instances wish to work fewer hours. How did the Netherlands arrive at this model?

The Netherlands grew into a part-time economy steadily but surely over the past 50 years, buoyed by the growing participation of women in the labour market, and the use of part-time work by employers as an alternative to union demands for a collective reduction of working hours and to fill the gap between shorter working hours and the longer operating time required to respond to increased demand. In the Wassenaar Agreement, concluded in 1982, unions agreed to moderate their wage demands in exchange for policies to combat unemployment, including the development of part-time employment.

Policy actions that were instituted to support good-quality part-time employment included the diffusion of part-time work into higher occupational levels and organizational hierarchies and, most importantly, the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for part-time workers – one year before the adoption of the EU Directive on Part-Time Work. In 2000, the Working Hours Adjustment Act, adopted in the framework of the “work and care” policy, allowed employees to request, under certain circumstances, a reduction (or an increase) in their working hours, with employers allowed to refuse such requests only on the grounds of specific conflicting business interests.
Universal Labour Guarantee: “nothing inevitable about precarious work”

- Extending protections to all workers regardless of contractual arrangement:
  - FoA and CB rights
  - OSH as a fundamental right
  - Adequate living wage
  - Time sovereignty
  - Wage protection, dispute resolution systems
“The concept of the employee is a legal construct. We do not find out who or what an employee (legally speaking) is. It is open for us as a society to decide.”

- G. Davidov, 2006, p. 144
Thank you!