

TRADE UNION STRATEGIES TOWARDS ATYPICAL WORKERS

-Emma Cerviño-

Center for Advanced Studies in Social Science

Juan March Institute

Madrid. Spain

Working group:

Technology and employment, new ways of organising production and labour.

Over the last three decades the European countries have undergone important changes in their labour markets and forms of production. This has fuelled an interest in analysing the effects of these changes on trade union organisations. The aim of this paper is to contribute to this area of research by examining: 1) the impact of the rise of atypical jobs on trade unions' capacity of representation; and 2) trade union strategies toward atypical workers. This paper does not constitute completed research, but rather offers an analytical framework for the study of trade unions' strategies towards groups of workers other than their traditional constituency.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present theoretical thinking and empirical data on 1) the effects of the rise of atypical jobs on trade unions' capacity of representation and 2) and the strategies of these unions toward workers with atypical jobs in Europe. What are atypical jobs? As Rogers has noted, "*atypical work is more easily defined by what is not than by what it is; it covers a host of forms of work which deviate from the standard*"¹ (1989:1), including temporary jobs, part-time jobs, self-employment, work in the black economy, etc.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first part, I offer a critical review of the recent literature on the effects that atypical jobs have for the capacity of representation of European trade unions. Much of the literature maintains that the rise of this type of employment has been responsible for the crisis of the European trade unions, due to the difficulties that trade unions have faced in attracting the support of workers other than their traditional constituencies. However, I consider that this literature is excessively generalist and deterministic. In order to understand the real consequences of this type of employment for trade unions a number of variables must be studied in rather more depth than has generally been the case.

¹ Standard work refers to the full-time and permanent jobs.

In the second part of paper, I focus on the strategies that trade unions have adopted towards atypical workers. More specifically, I propose a theoretical framework for analysing such strategies. In function of a number of different variables, I suggest that unions can adopt three possible strategies with respect to atypical workers: a totally inclusive strategy, a partial inclusive strategy, and an exclusive strategy.

The final part of the paper brings together the two key issues discussed in this paper in a case study of the Spanish trade unions. I first analyse the effects of the rise of temporary job on union membership rates and the level of participation in union elections. Then, and following the theoretical framework I proposed in the second part of the paper, I consider the strategies these unions implement with respect to temporary workers.

I. The effects of the rise of atypical jobs on trade unions' capacity of representation: a critical review

The objective of working class unions is the defence of the working class as a whole². According to the literature on trade unions, during the decades prior to the economic crisis of the 1970s the economic and political context made it easier for unions to achieve this objective. In this respect, one of the economic factors emphasised by the literature is the role played by the fordist system of production. This system essentially consisted of the mass production of standardised products through the division of labour into very simple tasks. Unskilled workers worked in large numbers in big factories. The homogeneity of working conditions among workers made it easier for unions to implement policies for the workforce as a whole and facilitated the development of a sense of collective class consciousness and solidarity among workers (Piore and Sabel, 1985; Sabel, 1987).

Until the 1970s, economic growth was the overall tendency in most developed countries. This also made it easier for the unions to reconcile conflicting interests through a positive-sum distributive process. The best-paid workers could increase their salaries without worsening the salaries or working condition of other workers (Hyman, 1987:152).

Moreover, the political context was also favourable to the unions. During that period, trade unions enjoyed the public recognition of the state, and were seen as crucial elements in the maintenance of Keynesian economic policies. For all these

² Corporatist unions exclusively represent the interests of a particular group of workers. However, these types of unions are not analysed in this paper.

reasons, trade unions benefited from a positive context in which to advance policies favouring the working class as a whole.

Nonetheless, the new economic situation that developed in the wake of the oil crisis in the seventies made it much more difficult for unions to defend the whole of the working class. The fordist model reached a crisis point. This system of production and the neocorporatist policies produced rigidities in the labour markets that made it difficult for firms to adapt to changes in the market (Olson, 1982). Accordingly, since then there appears to be an urgent need to develop alternative forms of production that allow firms to adapt to economic fluctuations. Flexibility established itself as the principal characteristic demanded from the production system, understood as the *“general capacity of enterprises to reorganise in close response to fluctuations in their environment”* (Streeck, 1987:66)³. Throughout history firms have always had to adapt to the changing context, but *“the particular experience of the 1980s seems to have given rise to a widely shared expectation that strong turbulences and uncertainties will become a permanent feature of economic life for the foreseeable future”* (Streeck, 1986: 141).

The significance of this new situation is that the different measures developed to establish flexible systems of production are making it harder for unions to fulfil their function of representing workers. Some authors argue that the new forms of production have reduced the influence of unions in firms and have generated an anti-union culture among entrepreneurs (Beamont, 1987). However, the trade unions' power has also declined as a result of the changes in the composition of the labour force brought by flexibility. As is well known, the trade unions' traditional constituency comprises male, blue-collar workers in standard employment (full-time and permanent jobs). However, there has been a general rise in Europe of atypical jobs, such as temporary or part-time work. These new jobs imply the rise of workers with new working condition, new demands and new needs; that is, workers who differ from the unions' traditional constituency. Likewise, the decentralisation of production from big firms to small firms has favoured the segmentation of workers. Normally, the most insecure jobs are concentrated in the small firms, while the workers with better working conditions are employed in the big firms. This makes it much more difficult for unions to represent

³ There is an immense literature on the concept of flexibility. The most influential approach is that found in classical economic literature. This maintains that a labour market is flexible when, in the face of a variation in the demand or the supply of employment, wages and employment adjust to achieve the equilibrium point. Therefore, advocates of this approach defend the introduction of systems of production that allow wages and employment to fluctuate in harmony with the market.

Other, alternative approaches to the concept of flexibility include: regulation theory, as exemplified by Boyer, 1988; flexible specialisation theory developed by Piore and Sabel, 1984 and post-Fordist theory . For a comparison of these theories see: Hirst and Zeiling, 1991.

workers, especially because in some countries unions have very limited power in small firms.

Atypical employment principally affects women and young workers. This complicates the capacity of trade unions to win their support, as both groups show low levels of union membership. Considerable research has demonstrated that women are less likely than men to join a trade union (Visser, 1992; Beamont, 1987; Regini, 1992; Vilorkx, 1996)⁴, while young workers represent the cultural and ideological change that has taken place during the last decades. According to some authors, the former collective consciousness of workers has been replaced by a more individualistic mentality. The result has been the loss of the ideological identification with unions and the emergence of an instrumentalist attitude toward these organisations (Zoll, 1996; Valkenbrug, 1996; Regini, 1987, Pérez Díaz, 1987). This change in workers' mentality does not imply, *per-se*, a reduction in their support for unions, but rather a change in the meaning of such support. Nonetheless, trade unions are in danger of losing members if they do not adapt to workers' new types of demands.

Moreover, most European countries have suffered from high unemployment and inflation rates. In such a context of economic recession it is much more difficult for unions to develop policies for workers as a whole. This is because, in many cases, their defence of their members' immediate interests makes it more difficult for the unemployed to get a job, or leads to a worsening of the working condition of other groups of workers⁵.

As a result of all these changes, there is a widespread consensus in the literature on one point: trade unions' capacity of representation is in crisis. This crisis is reflected in: 1) the generalised fall in the membership rates of European unions; and 2) the fact that their constituency principally consists of male-industrial-worker rather than other different groups of workers. Trade unions, therefore, are turning into organisations of a particular type of workers, and not of the working class as a whole, as they used to be.

In common with a number of other authors, I consider that this argument is "*oversimplified, overgeneralised, and overdeterministic*" (Hyman, 1992: 158). Firstly, this interpretation of trade unions' capacity to represent the working class as a whole

⁴ According to some research, the limited female participation in trade unions is explained by many women's lack of interest in staying in the labour market (Bell, 1984:146). Other authors, however, consider that the trade unions' inability to attract the support of women is explained by the type of jobs women normally have (temporary jobs and part-time jobs) (Sewel and Penn, 1996).

⁵ We see the appearance of what Goldthorpe calls a "dualistic" system: "*Which would entail offsetting the increased power of organised interests by the creation or expansion of collectivities of economic actors, within the sphere of production, who lack effective organisation and indeed the basic resources and perhaps motivations from which such organisation might be developed*". (Goldthorpe, 1984:p329).

during the decades prior to the 1970s is based on an idealised vision of the past, in which workers had homogeneous interests and a sense belonging to a single class (Hyman, 1994). Nonetheless, the working class has always been divided (Offe and Wisenthal, 1985). Therefore, the task of harmonising the distinct interests of workers has always been present in the strategies of trade unions. As Hyman has written:

The task of unions has always been to harmonise and reconcile a multiplicity of particularistic interests: the generation of solidarity has always been a project at best incompletely realised. Often, indeed, strategic unity within trade union movements has been achieved only by imposing the priorities of one segment of the work-force upon all other groups" (1994:112).

In this light, the changes that have taken place over the last three decades have not generated new problems of representation for unions, but rather have made them much more difficult to resolve⁶.

Secondly, the particular contexts in which unions operate have not been studied sufficiently. The institutional variables, the organisational factors, and changes in the labour markets, vary across countries, regions or sectors of production. Therefore, in order to understand how the new economic context is affecting the capacity of representation of trade unions, it is necessary to develop studies that take these variables into account. Let us consider what are the relevant factors in more detail.

- Variety of the changes.

Normally, the analysis of the effects that changes in employment have for trade unions are very generalist. They do not pay sufficient attention to the variability of these changes, their scope and evolution in different European countries. Measures to make labour markets more flexible, for example, have varied considerably in different countries. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom, these measures have been very profound. However in other countries, such as Spain, there is still only a low level of flexibility. However, the types of measures introduced have also been very different. Some countries have implemented measures that facilitate the adjustment of employment inside the firm to the needs of production, such as flexible working time or functional and geographical mobility⁷. Other countries, in contrast, have attempted to facilitate the adjustment of employment by changing regulations governing hiring and

⁶ Women, immigrants, and white-collar workers have long constituted a challenge to the unions' capacity of representation. Some examples are given in Crouch and Pizzorno, 1978, particularly Baudouin's article to that volume.

⁷ This is the case of Germany (Streeck, 1991. Cited in Ferner and Hyman, 1992:xxvi).

firing⁸. Consequently, the effects on employment and type of employment of the measures introduced to make labour markets more flexible vary according to the scope and the nature of these measures.

Likewise, atypical or non-standard employment can take a variety of different forms: temporary jobs, part-time jobs, self-employment, work in the black economy, etc. All these type of jobs have had evolved differently and had a distinct impact on employment in the various European countries. In the same way, working conditions also vary.

Thus, the analysis of the evolution of part-time and temporary jobs shows variations among the European countries⁹. In terms of part-time jobs, there has been a general increase since the mid-1980s in all European countries. However, the level of part-time employment as a proportion of the total still varies considerably from one country to another. It is especially high in the Netherlands (38.1%), the United Kingdom (24.6%), Sweden (24.5%), and Denmark (21.5%), but very low in Greece (5.3%), Spain (8%), Italy (6.6%), and Portugal (8.7%) (see table 1 in Appendix). As for the temporary jobs, although there has also been a general increase across Europe, in some countries the proportion of temporary work has fallen. The decline has been particularly sizeable in Greece (see Table 2 in Appendix).

At the same time, atypical jobs can take a variety of contractual forms. Part-time employment embraces a variety of different situations: working part of the day, part of the week, part of the month, or even a number of hours a year. The job may be permanent or temporary. The same is true with respect to temporary jobs, which may involve a variety of situations such as fixed-term contracts, interim employment, or casual work¹⁰. Clearly, the particular characteristics and working condition of such jobs also differ.

In order to understand the effects of these jobs on union's capacity of representation, it is also very important to analyse the way in which they differ from those of standard jobs of union members. And in this respect too, considerable variations exist. Normally, in comparison to standard jobs, atypical jobs are associated with precarious working conditions: low wages, uncertainty with respect to the duration

⁸ Spain is a good example of this. The main policy implemented to flexibilise the labour market has been to promote temporary employment.

⁹ I focus on these two types of atypical jobs because they are the best researched.

¹⁰ *Fixed-term* contracts refer to a job agreed by an employer and employee for a set period of time. Normally, the duration is linked to completion of the task, and fixed term contracts usually involve wage earners. *Interim employment* consists of that contracted through an employment labour. This type of job normally involves wage earners. And *casual work* is that for occasional periods, related to increases in the level of activity in particular sectors. The workers involved are normally wage earners or self-employed (Meulders and Tytgat, 1989: 182).

of the work, exclusion from the social protection, etc. However, this is not always the case. In some countries, legislation guarantees these workers protection and the same rights as the rest of workers. Thus, *“atypical does not necessarily mean precarious”* (Rodgers, 19189:1).

However the meaning of precariousness also varies for part-time and temporary jobs. Part-time jobs are generally held by women, the majority of whom prefer this type of work¹¹. Their working conditions are normally worse than those of standard jobs because of low wages, and because they are generally excluded from entitlement to social benefits (Marshall, 1989). As for temporary work, although this affects women more than man, its main distinguishing feature involves age. Young workers are those most affected by this type of employment. In general, workers with this type of work would prefer a permanent job, but have been unable to find one. Moreover, normally they are over-qualified for the job in question. Moreover, most temporary workers rotate from one job to another, or between employment and unemployment. This is because employers do not give temporary contracts for works of a temporary nature, but rather to reduce dismissal costs. This makes workers feel uncertain as to the continuity of their work. It is clear, therefore, that the working conditions of part-time and temporary workers are very different. Although in general they share poor working conditions, their precise needs and demands are not the same (Rodgers, 1989; Marshall, 1989; Rubery, 1989; Bettio, 1989; Caire, 1989; Meulders, 1989).

As Rubery has noted: *“the diversity of factors which influence the level and pattern of non-standard and precarious employment forms must cast doubt on simplistic notions concerning the presence of universal trends towards flexible employment. There are major differences even between advanced EEC countries, in their industrial systems, in their systems of labour market regulation, and in their systems of social reproduction and income maintenance. These differences influence the incidence and significance of non-standard and precarious jobs”* (1989:70). Consequently, the scope, nature, and causes of the effects of atypical jobs on unions’ capacity of representation will vary according to the particular characteristics of such jobs. It is reasonable to assume that temporary workers are less likely than part-time workers¹² to support unions because the time they spend in a given firm is normally short, thereby reducing their interest in joining or supporting a union; and because this type of jobs predominate where the

¹¹ Part-time workers are not always happy to be so. The number of workers (men and women) that accept part-time jobs because they have not been able to find a full-time job is increasing (Meulders and Tytgat, 1989: 181).

¹² In this example I am assuming that part-time jobs are permanent jobs.

presence of unions is limited. But it is also reasonable to believe that the type of support for unions of temporary workers will be different from that of part-time workers. Probably, temporary workers who decide to join a union will do so with only a weak commitment, and they are unlikely to be active members of the union. This is because, as they have more insecure employment, the fear of being dismissed by the employer for supporting a union is greater among temporary workers¹³. These are merely untested hypotheses, but they do serve to show the variety of possible effects that atypical jobs may have for trade unions. Still too little research has been done on this field.

- Institutional Factors¹⁴ and the organisational structure of unions

These two variables have hardly been taken into account in analysing the effects of atypical jobs on union's capacity of representation. However, even if the extent and evolution of atypical jobs were similar in the European countries, their effects on trade unions would differ because of the impact of institutional and organisational factors.

Firstly, the indicator normally used to analyse the trade unions' level of representation is their membership rate. However, this is not always the best indicator. In countries such as Spain or France, the power of trade unions principally comes from union elections (Ferner and Hyman, 1992:xxiv; Jordana, 1994). Therefore, in order to really understand the consequences of atypical jobs on unions' power of representation in these countries, it is necessary to consider not just their affiliation rates, but above, all the turnout and vote in union elections.

Secondly, the meaning of supporting a union varies in different countries. Membership in France and Italy implies a higher level of activism and militancy than in other countries (Pontusson, 1992). The way the union's power of representation is affected by the rise of atypical workers in these countries will probably also differ from other countries. Thus, a comparative analysis of this issue should take into account the different meanings of the various types of support for unions in each country.

The capacity of representation of trade unions is also strongly related to the unions' organisational structure. Those trade unions that play an important role at both the national and firm level are in a better position to get support from workers. On the

¹³ In this case I am taking into account only the way working conditions might affect the support for unions. However, the intensity of the support of part-time workers, who are principally women, may also be undermined by other factors such as their obligations to carry out childcare or domestic-work.

contrary, where trade union power is highly concentrated at the centre or at the firm level, workers' support is more difficult to obtain (Ferner and Hyman, 1992; Ken and Sabel, 1992)¹⁵. Therefore, the effects of the rise of atypical workers will be related to the organisational structure of trade unions in each country.

- Strategic Action

The body of research that emphasises the crisis of representation of trade unions is, in many cases, highly deterministic. Some authors, however, consider that trade unions still have room for manoeuvre (Regini, 1992; Streeck, 1987, 1992; Leisink., et al. 1996; Sabel, 1987; Kern and Sabel, 1992; Hyman and Ferner, 1992; Gallie, 1996). As Leisink et al., said has argued *“whatever the constraints on trade union action, some scope for strategic action is always left. Union action may be largely a response to external pressures, yet this response may be innovative in terms, for instance, of the objectives that are set or the methods which are chosen to pursue them”* (1996:2).

According to these authors, therefore, trade unions capacity to represent workers outside their traditional constituency depends on their ability to develop new strategies. Several studies have shown that this is indeed possible. Thus, in some cases, trade unions have been able to obtain the support of white-collar workers, women, and part-time workers, by the provision of the services demanded by these workers (Waddington and Whiston 1996; Sewel and Penn, 1996). This confirms, therefore, that *“strategy can make a difference”* (Hyman, 1996).

The aim of this section of the paper has been to highlight some of the problems found in research that analyses the effects of the rise of atypical jobs on the union's capacity of representation. In my opinion, many of these works have not taken sufficient account of the influence of: the particular characteristics of this type of jobs, the institutional context, the organisational structure and the strategic action of trade unions.

2. TRADE UNION STRATEGIES TOWARD ATYPICAL WORKERS: AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

¹⁴ Institutional factors refer to the group of rules that determine the functioning of the industrial relation systems.

¹⁵ The comparatively high membership rates of Austrian and German unions is explained, in part at least, by their ability to maintain their power at both the confederation and firm level. In contrast, the high level of decentralisation of British unions and the pronounced centralisation of French unions has had a negative impact on their membership rates (Ferner and Hyman, 1992; Kern and Sabel, 1992).

What strategies have trade unions developed toward atypical workers? The aim of this part of the paper is to establish a framework for the analysis of these strategies. I will begin by proposing three hypothetical types of strategies, before outlining the variables that I consider most important for the development of each type of strategy.

- **TYPES OF STRATEGIES**

1. *TOTAL INCLUSION STRATEGY.*

In this case, the trade unions' strategy would be directed to the defence of the interests of atypical workers with the same intensity and strength as the interests of their traditional constituency. Trade unions' policies, therefore, would give the same importance to both groups of workers. The defence of the general welfare of the working class would predominate over the short-term interests of standard workers. Moreover, in periods of economic crisis, unions would accept reductions in the benefits of their traditional constituency in favour of atypical workers.

2. *PARTIAL INCLUSION STRATEGY*

In this case, the defence of atypical workers would occupy a secondary place in the unions' policies. The main priority of trade unions would be the defence of their core constituency. The defence of the interest of atypical workers would not be total, but limited to concrete issues.

3. *EXCLUSION STRATEGY*

The defence of the atypical workers would be excluded from the unions' policies or would occupy a strictly residual place in them.

What explains the development of one these strategies by trade union organisations? I believe that trade unions' strategies depend on the incentives that they have to represent atypical workers, on the one hand, and on the institutional and organisational context, on the other hand. The analysis of trade unions' strategies must consider both factors simultaneously, otherwise such analysis would be incomplete. Hence, it could be the case that trade unions have sufficient incentives to defend atypical workers but not the appropriated institutional and organisational contexts in which to do so. Or, in contrast, while such contexts may be favourable, trade unions may have no incentives to represent them.

When, however, is a trade union interested in representing atypical workers? What factors boost or diminish such incentives? Likewise, what are the institutional and organisational factors that affect trade unions' strategies toward atypical workers?

- INCENTIVES TO REPRESENT ATYPICAL WORKERS

Work in different fields of research has maintained that trade unions' policies are directed, exclusively, towards defending the interests of their members, rather than those of other groups of workers.¹⁶ However, this perspective does not consider the possibility that trade union leaders may have interests other than the defence of their members¹⁷. These interests could be of both ideological or organisational in kind.

The stated objective of class based orientated unions is the defence of the entire class. Therefore, the adherence to this ideological objective may be an important incentive for unions to represent atypical workers, as otherwise, trade unions would be betraying one of their basic principles.

Moreover, unions also seek to their organisational growth and consolidation. Therefore, the trade unions will have greater interest in representing atypical workers if this would serve to boost their power, or at least, prevent this from declining. This could be the case: 1) if the number of atypical workers is large enough to strongly increase the trade unions' power if such workers support these organisations; 2) if, while atypical workers represent only a relatively small group, their support could give a union a comparative advantage with respect to another rival union; 3) if these worker challenge the role played by unions in the industrial relation system¹⁸; or 4) if the exclusion of these workers from the unions' policies threatens to lead to a loss of support of the most ideologically committed members of the unions.

However, incentives, *per se*, do not explain trade union strategies toward atypical workers. The representation of these workers is possible when the incentives (ideological and organisational) are greater than the costs, and when appropriate

¹⁶ See for instance, from the classical economics (the works of Milton and Friedman); from the economic institutionalist approach of the "Cambridge School" in explaining the dualisation of labour markets; from political economy explanations for unemployment and inflation in the seventies (Olson, 1982); and from insider-outsider theory for explaining the labour precariousness of particular type of workers (Lindbeck and Snower, 1988).

¹⁷ Corporatism theory also criticised this perspective. According to this theory, trade unions, in some cases, were able to forsake short-term benefits for their members in favour of long-term benefits for the general welfare of the economy. This was possible where unions were strongly centralised and there were social democratic governments.

¹⁸ This could be the case when, for example, unions consider their power is under threat because atypical workers have organised in a new union. For examples of this situation see Crouch and Pizzorno, 1978.

contexts exist to develop such a strategy. These costs and contexts are directly related to the institutional and organisational factors, which I outline below.

Before finishing this section I should mention the following question: what happens when unions have ideological but not organisational incentives to represent atypical workers? My hypothesis is that unions may develop strategies to represent these workers only for ideological reasons when, although it does not increment their power, it does not suppose a lost of it.

- INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

As noted above, the institutional and organisational contexts are also very important to understand trade unions' strategies toward atypical workers. Here, therefore, I will highlight those factors that I consider to be most important in this respect. In order to facilitate the exposition, I have divided these factors into two categories: internal factors, which stem from union organisation, and external factors, which derive from institutions or organisations other than the unions.

Internal factors:

The strategies of trade unions toward atypical workers will depend on how they affect the interest of the members of the trade union. The representation of atypical workers will be difficult if union members see that strategy as a threat to their own working conditions. This could happen if the defence of atypical workers implies sacrifices from union members. On the contrary, the representation of atypical workers will be easier for unions if it compatible with the defence of their members.

The internal organisation of trade unions may also affect their strategy toward atypical workers. It may be the case that the organisational structure of trade unions is not appropriate for the representation of these workers, because they are not strong enough in the sectors or firms where these workers are found, or because the different levels of union organization not co-ordinated enough to carry out this task ¹⁹.

External factors

The existence of competition among unions may also influence their strategies toward atypical workers. According to some authors, competition among unions leads these organisations to concentrate on the defence of the interests of their members (Golden, 1993). Thus, the possibilities for representing atypical workers would be reduced in context of union competition. However, in some cases, union competition

appears to have favoured the defence of atypical workers (Iriso, 1993: 353)²⁰. The influence of union competition in the strategies of unions toward atypical workers needs to be studied more in depth.

The willingness of employers to negotiate with trade unions is another factor to be considered. The representation of atypical workers will be easier when entrepreneurs are more disposed to negotiate with unions. On the contrary, if employers are unwilling to negotiate the working conditions of atypical workers, then it would be more difficult for unions to represent these workers²¹.

Finally, the economic context also affects trade union's capacity of representation. A favourable economic climate makes it easier for unions to defend the conflicting interests of workers.

The strategies of trade unions toward atypical workers, therefore, depend on the combination of incentives, on the one hand, and on the institutional and organisational contexts. Thus, the *inclusive strategy* would be found when trade unions have incentives to represent atypical workers and when institutional and organisational factors makes such a strategy possible. A *partial inclusive* strategy would be developed when unions have incentives to defend the interests of atypical workers, but institutional and organisational contexts prevent this defence from being total. In this case, their representation of these workers would be only partial. And an *exclusive strategy* would occur when trade unions have no incentive at all to represent atypical workers; or, alternatively, when trade unions have incentives to represent these workers but the appropriate institutional and organisational factors do not exist.

III. SPANISH TRADE UNIONS AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT

The atypical form of work that has become most important in Spain since the mid-1980s is temporary employment. In just eight years (1987-1995), this form of employment rose as proportion of total employment from 15% to 35% (see Table 3 and Graphic 1 in Appendix). Which factors explain why the highest temporary employment rate in the European Union is found in Spain? The reason for such a huge increase has been *that "fix-term contracts provide increased flexibility essentially by lowering firing*

¹⁹ According to Soskice, wages cuts for the increment of employment is possible where collective agreements is done in a co-ordinated way among the different level of union organisation (1990).

²⁰ The research of Iriso shows how the strategy developed by a union for obtaining more support than the rival union, was to defence the interest of the temporary workers.

²¹ An example of influence of this variable in the capacity of representation of trade unions is given in Iriso's research. In one of the firms analysed by this author, the entrepreneurs did not want to negotiate with unions a reduction of wages for transforming temporary jobs in permanent jobs. The reason was that the firm had foreseen a surplus of labour in the short term (1993:342).

costs". This facilitates the adaptation of firms to economic fluctuations (Bentolila and Dolado, 1994:62)^{22 23}.

The aim of this final section of the paper is, firstly, to analyse the effects of temporary employment on the Spanish unions' capacity of representation, and secondly to determine the contextual factors that may have influenced the development of the strategies that these unions have adopted towards temporary workers²⁴. In order to respond to these questions, it is necessary to know who the temporary workers are, who are union members, and what are the differences between the two groups.

- *Who form the constituency of Spanish trade unions?*

The indicators of the power of representation of Spanish trade unions are the membership rates and the results of union elections²⁵. There are important differences between these two indicators. Union membership implies affinity and commitment to the union organisation. The union vote, however, only implies casting a vote every four years for the union of the worker's choice. Membership provides unions with important source of funding. The results of union elections, however, give unions the right to participate in collective bargaining with employers. The union affiliation rate in Spain is low, in fact, at around 15%, it is one of the lowest in Europe. However, the level of participation, in union elections is very high, with a turnout of around 75-80% of the working population. Thus, Spanish unions are considered to be organisations not of members but of voters (Jordana, 1994:139).

The constituency of trade unions in Spain is formed, therefore, by their members and voters in union elections. The affiliates are a very homogeneous group. They are, principally, male workers aged between 30 and 40 years old, and employed in sector (Toboadela, 1993; Bouza, 1989). Voters in trade union elections, however, form a much more heterogeneous group. Electoral participation is high among women as well as men, in all sectors of the economy, and in all the firms in which elections are

²² The firing costs of permanent workers is about 20-45 days of salary for each year of work. The firing costs of temporary workers are 12 days of salary for each year of work, or in many cases, none cost at all.

²³ According to some authors, the rapid increase in temporary employment in Spain has been due to the high dismissal costs of permanent workers. The maintenance of the working conditions of permanent workers has been permitted by reducing the job security of temporary workers. This is what Bentolila and Dolado call "flexibility on the edges": the impact of economic fluctuations hit temporary workers, rather than their permanent colleagues (1993-1994). The result has been the segmentation of the Spanish labour market into these two groups of workers (Bentolila and Dolado, 1994; Polavieja, 1998).

²⁴ The Spanish trade unions referred to in this paper are CCOO (*Comisiones Obreras*) and UGT (*Unión General de Trabajadores*), the two most important unions in Spain.

²⁵ Union elections take place ever four years for the election of workplace union representatives.

actually held (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1986, 1990). Therefore, it impossible to say that there is an archetypical union voter.

The main characteristic of union members and voters is that both groups consist of permanent workers. According to the "Structure, Biography, and Working Class Consciousness" survey, in 1991 the 88% of union members were civil servants (52.2%) or wage earners with permanent jobs (35.6%). As for union voters, about 85% of them were permanent workers (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1990).

Who are the temporary workers?

Temporary employment principally affects manual workers, especially women and young people, with few qualifications. It has spread in the private sector more than in the public sector. And, although there has been a generalised increase throughout the economy, temporary employment is particularly common in agriculture and the building and construction industry (Segura et al., 1991).

The employment conditions of these workers are very precarious. Temporary jobs usually last a very short time and rarely lead to a permanent job. This produces high levels of rotation from one temporary job to another, with workers condemned to remaining permanently in temporary employment (Dolado et al, 1997; Bentolila y Dolado, 1993; Polavieja, 1998).

Temporary jobs normally also imply low wages. Some studies estimate that temporary workers earn between 8.5 and 11% less than permanent workers (Jimeno and Toharia, 1993, cited in Bentolila and Dolado, 1993-1994)²⁶.

Moreover, temporary jobs are related to worse working conditions. These workers' limited capacity to protest, and their interest in obtaining permanent employment, leads them to accept worse working conditions than their permanently counterparts (Recio, 1991:112). This also explains why most work accidents involve temporary workers²⁷.

Having outlined the characteristics of union members and temporary workers, It can be seen that they constitute two very different groups of workers. The cleavage between temporary workers and the trade union's core constituents stems from their distinct employment and working conditions. The importance of this can be seen to be considerable when we consider that different working conditions imply different, and even opposing, demands from each group of workers. Permanent workers' priorities

²⁶ Wage discrimination is illegal in Spain. However, it is possible through the classification of temporary workers in lower occupational categories to those that they really deserve (Bentolila y Dolado, 1994:71).

²⁷ 60% of job accident in 1998 involved temporary workers (*El País*, 1999).

are job security and higher wages. In contrast, the principal objective of temporary workers is to obtain a permanent job (Iriso, 1993). The interests of both types of workers conflict, especially in periods of economic crisis.

- **The effects of temporary employment on the Spanish trade unions' capacity of representation.**

The rise of a group of workers other than the unions' core constituency may have affected the unions' capacity of representation in two ways:

- *Hypothesis 1: Quantitative effects.* The rise of temporary jobs has reduced the union membership and voting rates.
- *Hypothesis 2: Qualitative effects.* The capacity of representation of unions has been reduced because of their inability to obtain the support of workers other than their traditional constituents.

As for the first hypothesis, the data suggests that the support for unions has not fallen, but has in fact increased. Membership rates have risen in all productive sectors, especially in the agriculture sector, industry, and the service sector (see table 4 in Appendix). As for participation in union elections, this increased from 75.4% in 1986 to 80.7% in 1990 (Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1986;1990). Therefore, it cannot be argued that the rise of temporary jobs has reduced the support for unions among workers in Spain. It could only be suggested that support for unions might have been higher if trade unions had obtained more support from temporary workers²⁸.

However, the data does verify the second hypothesis. Temporary workers show very low levels support for trade unions. In 1986, only 12% of union members were temporary workers. And in 1990 only 15% of who voted in union election were temporary workers (see table 5 in Appendix) .

Spanish trade unions, therefore, have not been able to obtain the support of temporary workers. This fact poses a challenge to these organisations capacity of representation because: 1) temporary workers represent a large proportion of the

²⁸ According to Jordana, this increase of union support has been produced by the economic growth of the second half of the 80s, and by a closer approach of unions to workers due to the decentralisation process of collective agreements of the last years (1996).

active population; and 2) the demands and needs of these workers differ from those of the traditional core constituency of trade unions.

The limited support for unions among temporary workers can be explained by the working condition these workers face. On the one hand, temporary employment is highest in sectors and firms in which trade unions have a very limited presence²⁹. On the other, temporary workers are afraid of dismissal, which in most cases reduces their tendency to join or vote for unions (Iriso, 1993:324). However, this is only part of the problem. If working conditions were the only reason for not affiliating or participating in union elections, temporary workers should have similar attitudes to trade unions as other workers. However, this is not the case. Polavieja's work shows that temporary workers have more negative attitude toward unions than the permanent workers (1997). Therefore, temporary workers not only do not join, or vote for, unions, but also do not positive attitude these organisations.

- **Strategies of Spanish trade unions toward temporary workers**

The aim of this final section of the paper is to outline the ideological and organisational incentives that Spanish unions have to represent temporary workers, on the one hand, and the institutional and organisational context of trade unionism in Spain, on the other.

Do trade unions have incentives to represent temporary workers? This is the first question to be answered. I consider that Spanish trade unions have both, ideological and organisational incentives to do so. CCOO and UGT have always identified themselves as organisations defending the working class as a whole. Therefore, in ideological terms, these unions have incentives to represent temporary workers.

But there are also organisational incentives. In the first place, temporary workers account for a large proportion of the total workforce (35% in 1995). The support of these workers would boost, quite significantly, the unions' power of representation. Moreover, over the last fifteen years, permanent employment has been replaced by temporary employment (Bentolila y Dolado, 1993; Alba Ramírez, 1997)³⁰. The quantitative importance of temporary jobs and the partial reduction of permanent employment constitute organisational incentives for representing temporary workers.

²⁹ Temporary employment is especially high in small firms where trade unions have hardly presence. And part of this employment comes from job agencies where access of unions is very complicated.

³⁰ This substitution process has affected low skilled permanent workers above all (Alonso Borrego, cited in Alba-Ramírez, 1997:239).

As for the institutional and organisational contexts, I consider that there some factors that could have facilitated the defence of temporary workers. On the one hand, since the end of the 1980s, CCOO and UGT have co-operated on the development of joint policies. The virtual end of union competition at the national level might have facilitated the effectiveness of union strategies. On the other hand, the high rate of temporary employment has produced a general consensus in the social and economic spheres regarding the need to reduce this rate. In this context it would be easier for unions to negotiate better working conditions for temporary workers.

However, there are two factors that might have complicated the representation of temporary workers. The conflict of interest between union members and temporary workers is one of them. The trade unions' fear of losing the support of their members if the defence of temporary workers implied a worsening of their conditions, might have prevented unions from developing an inclusive strategy.

The organisational structure of trade unions represents another obstacle to the representation of temporary workers. The union presence is very limited in small firms and job agencies, where temporary employment is mainly located.

Taking into account all these factors, the strategy developed by Spanish trade unions toward temporary workers might have been as a partial inclusive strategy. Unions have ideological and organisational incentives to represent these workers, but the risk of losing support from their traditional constituency, and the difficulties involved in accessing the firms of where temporary workers are found, might have impeded a fuller defence of these workers. However, this is merely a hypothesis that has yet to be verified.

CONCLUSION

The paper has not sought to offer definitive results of research into the effects of atypical jobs on trade unions, or into the strategies developed by unions towards atypical workers. Rather, it is intended to offer some theoretical reflections on these two issues. In particular, it has identified the institutional and organisational variables that I believe must be taken into account in any analysis of these crucial problems in the world of work in contemporary Europe.

APENDIX

TABLE 1. Part-Time Job in Europe

	1985	1990	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996
Belgium	8,6	10,9	11,8	12,8	12,8	13,6	14
Denmark	24,3	23,3	23,1	23,3	21,2	21,6	21,5
Germany	12,8	15,2	15,5	15,1	15,8	16,3	16,5
Greece	5,3	4,1	3,8	4,3	4,8	4,8	5,3
Spain	5,8	5,0	4,7	6,6	6,9	7,5	8,0
France	10,9	11,9	12,9	13,1	14,9	15,6	16,0
Ireland	6,5	8,1	8,4	10,8	11,4	12,1	11,6
Italy	5,3	4,9	55,5	5,4	6,2	6,4	6,6
Luxembourg	7,2	6,9	7,4	7,3	7,9	8,0	7,9
Netherlands	22,7	31,8	32,7	35,0	36,4	37,4	38,1
Austria	7,0	8,4	8,2	8,7		13,9	14,9
Portugal	6,0	6,0	7,0	7,4	8,0	7,5	8,7
Finland	8,2	6,7	7,3	8,4	8,4	11,8	11,6
Sweden	25,4	23,5	23,7	24,9		25,8	24,5
U.Kingdom	21,2	21,7	22,2	23,4	23,8	24,1	24,6

Source: Employment in Europe, 1997. European Commission.

TABLE 2. Temporary Job in Europe

	1985	1990	1991	1993	1994	1995	1996
Belgium	6,9	5,3	5,1	5,1	5,1	5,3	5,9
Denmark	12,3	10,8	11,9	10,7	12	12,1	11,2
Germany	10	10,5	10,1	10,3	10,3	10,4	11,1
Greece	21,1	16,5	14,17	10,4	10,3	10,2	11
Spain	15,6	29,8	32,2	32,2	33,7	35,0	33,6
France	4,7	10,5	10,2	10,9	11,0	12,3	12,6
Ireland	7,3	8,5	8,3	9,4	9,5	10,2	9,2
Italy	4,8	5,2	5,4	6,0	7,3	7,2	7,5
Luxembourg	4,7	3,4	33,3	3,0	2,9		2,6
Netherlands	7,5	7,6	7,7	10,0	10,9	10,9	12,0
Austria						6,0	8,0
Portugal	14,4	18,3	16,4	9,8	9,4	10,0	10,6
Finland	10,5	11,5	12,0	12,7	12,9	16,5	17,3
Sweden	11,9	10,0	9,8	11,5		12,5	11,8

U. Kingdom	7,0	5,2	5,3	5,9	6,5	7,0	7,1
------------	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Source: Employment in Europe, 1997. European Commission.

TABLE 3. TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT RATE. 1987-1995

1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
15,60%	22,40%	26,60%	29,80%	32,20%	33,50%	32,20%	33,70%	35,00%

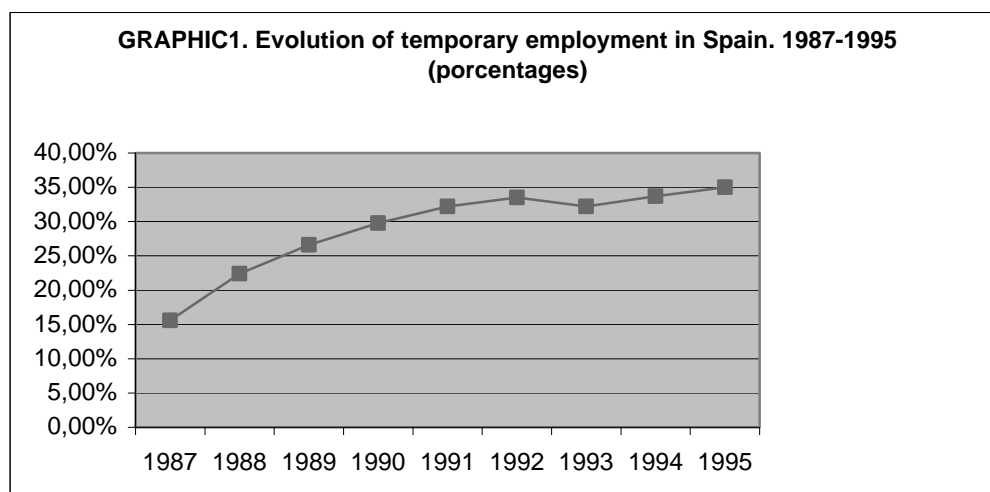


TABLE 4. Affiliation rate of CCOO and UGT by economic sector (1985-1994)

	1985	1990	1994	Variation
Agriculture	4,3%	5,8%	13,0%	+ 8,7
Industry	14,2%	15,6%	21,0%	+ 6,8
Building	10,6%	6,3%	11,2%	+ 0,6
Services	5,6%	9,0%	12,6%	+ 7

Source: Van der Meer, 1997.

TABLE 5. Union vote by type of contract

	1986	1990
Permanent	90,5%	84,7%
Temporary	9,5%	15,3%

Source: INE, 1986;1990.

REFERENCES

- Alba-Ramírez, Alfonso. 1997. Tipo de contrato y empleo en el ciclo económico 1987-1996. Papeles de Economía nº72, p:231-250
- Beaumont, P.B. 1987. The Decline of Trade Union Organisation. Croom Helm.
- Bettio and Villa. 1989. Non-wage work and disguised wage employment in Italy, in Rodgers et al. Precarious Jobs and Labour Market Regulation. 1989. International Institute for labour Studies.
- Boyer, Robert. 1986. *La Flexibilidad del Trabajo en Europa*. Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social.
- Bell, Daniel. 1974. The coming of post-industrial society. London.
- Bentolila, Samuel y Dolado, José. 1993. La contratación temporal y sus efectos sobre la competitividad. Papeles de Economía nº56, p: 112-127.
- ----- . 1994. Spanish labour market. Economic Policy nº18, p: 55-99.
- Bouza, Fermín. 1989. Perfil, actitudes y demandas del delegado y afiliado a UGT. Fundación Largo Caballero.
- Boyer, Robert. 1986. La flexibilidad del trabajo en Europa. MTSS.
- Garie, G. 1989. Atypical wage employment in France, in Rodgers et al. Precarious Jobs and Labour Market Regulation. 1989. International Institute for labour Studies.
- Crouch, Colin y Pizzorno, Alessandro. 1978. El resurgimiento del conflicto de clases en Europa Occidental a partir de 1968. MTSS.
- Ferner, A & Hyman, R. 1992. Intruducción, en Industrial Relations in the New Europe. Blackwell.
- Golden, Miriam. 1993. The dynamics of trade unionism and national economic performance. American Political Science Review, Vol 87, nº2.
- Goldthorpe, J. 1984. The end of convergence: corporatist and dualist tendencies in modern Western societies. En *Order and conflict in cotemporary capitalism*. Oxford, Clarenton Press.

- Hirst and Zeitlin. 1991. Flexible Specialization versus post-fordism: theory, evidence and policy implication. *Economy and Society*, Vol:20, nº1.
- Hyman, R. 1992. Trade unions and the disaggregation of the working class. En Regini, M *The future of labour movement*. Sage Studies.
- Hyman, R. 1994. Changing Trade Union Identities and Strategies. En R. Hyman *New frontiers in european industrial relations*. Blackwell Bussines.
- Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social.1986. Resultados de las Elecciones Sindicales.
- ----- . 1990. Resultados de las Elecciones Sindicales.
- Iriso Napal, Pedro Luís. 1993. Sistemas de Negociación Colectiva y Acción Sindical. Sindicatos y Trabajadores en la Empresa. *Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales*.
- Jordana, Jacint. 1994. Sindicatos y políticas en España: la influencia de las condiciones organizativas en las estrategias sindicales. *Revista Internacional de Sociología*, nº 8 y 9, p:137-186.
- ----- . 1996. Reconsidering union membership in Spain, 1977-1994. *Industrial Relations Journal* nº 27, p:211-224.
- Kern, Horst y Sabel, Charles. 1992. Trade unions and the decentralised production: a sketch of strategic problems in the German Labour Movement, en Regini, Marino *The future of labour movements*. SAGE.
- Leisink, Peter, et al,. 1996. Introducción. The challenges of trade unions in Europe. Edwar Elgar.
- Lindbeck, A y Snower, D. 1988. The insider/outsider theory of employment and unemployment. The MIT press. Boston.
- Malo de Molina, José Luís. 1985. Coherencia del sistema de relaciones industriales y eficiencia del mercado de trabajo. *Papeles de Economía Española*, 22, pp 244-265.
- Malo de Molina, José Luís. 1988. Política de Empleo y Mercado de Trabajo. En *El Debate sobre la Flexibilidad del Mercado de Trabajo*. Estudios de la Fundación Fondo para la Investigación Económica y Social.
- Marshall, a. 1989. The sequel of unemployment: the changing role of part-time and temporary work in Western Europe, in Rodgers et al. *Precarious Jobs and Labour Market Regulation*. 1989. International Institute for labour Studies.
- Meulders and Tytgat. 1989. The emergence of atypical employment in the European Community, in Rodgers et al. *Precarious Jobs and Labour Market Regulation*. 1989. International Institute for labour Studies.
- Olson, Mancur. 1982. *The Rise and Decline of Nations. Economic Growth, Stagflation and Social Rigidities*. Yale University Press.

- Offe, C and Wiesensthal, H. 1980. Two logics of collective action: theoretical notes on social class and organizational form. *Political Power and Social Theory*, Vol 1, 67, 115.
- Pérez Díaz, Víctor. 1987. *International Journal of Political Economy*, Vol.17 No. 3. PP: 27-56.
- Pontusson, Jonas y Miriam Golden 1992. Bargaining for Change.
- Polavieja, Javier y Richards, Andrew. 1997. Trade unions, unemployment and working class fragmentation in Spain. Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales. Estudio/working Paper 199/112.
- Polavieja, Javier. 1998. The dualisation of unemployment risks class and insider/outsider patterns in the Spanish labour market. Centro de Estudios Avanzados en Ciencias Sociales. Estudio/working Paper 1998/128.
- Recio, A. 1991. La segmentación del mercado de trabajo en España. En Miguélez y Prieto, *Las Relaciones Laborales en España*. Siglo XXI.
- Regini, Marino. 1992. Introducción, en *The Future of Labour Movements*. SAGE Studies.
- Rodgers, G. 1989. Precarious work in Western Europe: the state of the debate, in Rodgers et al. *Precarious Jobs and Labour Market Regulation*. 1989. International Institute for labour Studies.
- Rubery. J. 1989. Precarious forms of work in the United Kingdom, in Rodgers et al. *Precarious Jobs and Labour Market Regulation*. 1989. International Institute for labour Studies.
- Sabel, Charles and Piore, F. 1984. *The Second Industrial Divide. Possibilities for Prosperity*. New York: Basic Books
- Sabel, Charles.1987. A Fighting Chance. *International Journal of Political Economy*, Vol.17 No. 3. PP: 27-56.
- Segura, Julio et al. 1991. *Análisis de la Contratación Temporal en España*. Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social.
- Sewel, John y Penn, Roger. 1996. Trade unionism in a hostile environment, en Gallie, et al. *Trade unionism in recession*. Oxford University Press.
- Soskice, D. 1990. Wage determination: the changing role of institution in advanced industrialized countries. *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Vol:6, nº4.
- Soto Carmona, A. 1993. *Comisiones Obreras en la Transición y Consolidación Democrática. De la Asamblea de Barcelona a la Huelga General del 14-D*, en Ruíz, David, *Historia de Comisiones Obreras*. Siglo Veintiuno Editores.
- Streeck, Wolfgang. 1986. Management de la Incertidumbre e Incertidumbre del Management: los Empresarios, las Relaciones Industriales y el Ajuste Industrial durante la Crisis. *Papeles de Economía*, Nº27, PP: 138.151.
- Streeck, Wolfgang. 1987. The Uncertainties of Management in the Management of Uncertainty. *International Journal of Political Economy*, Vol.17 No. 3. PP: 57-87.

- Toboadela, O. 1993. *La afiliación sindical: una aproximación del sistema de representación de intereses en el sindicalismo Español contemporáneo*. Madrid, Universidad Complutense.

- Valdés Dal-Re, Fernando. 1985. Flexibilidad en el mercado de trabajo y ordenamiento laboral. *Papeles de Economía Española*, 22, pp 302-315.

- Van der Meer, Marc. 1997. Trade union development in Spain. Mannheim center for European Studies. Workin Papers, nº18.

- Valkenbrug, Ben. 1996. Individualization and solidarity: the challenge of modernization, en Leisink, et al.,. *The challenges of trade unions in Europe*.

- Vilroxx, Jacques. 1996. Trade unions in postrepresentative society, en Leisink, et al.,. *The challenges of trade unions in Europe*.

- Visser, Jelle. 1992. The strength of union movements in advanced capitalists democracies: social and organizational variations, en Regini, Marino *The future of labour movements*. SAGE.

- Waddington, Jeremy y Whitston, Colin. 1996. Collectivism in a changing context: union joining and bargaining preferences among white-collar staff, en Leisink, et al.,. *The challenges of trade unions in Europe*.

- Zoll, Rainer. 1996. Modernization, trade unions and solidarity, en Leisink, et al.,. *The challenges of trade unions in Europe*.