Who Works, Who Cares: Gendered Redistribution in Dutch Parliamentary Debates on Paid and Unpaid Labor in the 1970s

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1. Introduction

Like many other Western states, the Netherlands embraced a one-income family model after the Second World War, which assigned men the primary role as breadwinner and women the role of housewife. Low unemployment rates and rising prosperity allowed many households to live on a single income, leaving women's labor participation in the 1960s almost as low as it had been at the start of the twentieth century.[1] Yet this 'traditional breadwinner model' was never truly universally attainable. Estimates suggest it only became accessible to lower-income households between 1955 and 1965, while for others it remained out of reach altogether.[2] Neither would its dominance last long. By the 1970s, economic stagnation had rendered the breadwinner ideal increasingly untenable, while a cultural transformation was reshaping social norms and expectations regarding gender roles and family life. As feminist demands for equality became more prominent, women became more present in many aspects of society, most notably in paid employment. By the 1980s, the term 'housewifery' was predominantly associated with single mothers of young children and women from low socio-economic classes.[3]

Across Europe, the increase in women's labor participation has had various effects on standard work-family arrangements. While Scandinavian states predominantly adopted a 'full-time dual-earner' model, in which both partners in a couple are employed full-time, many Western European states adopted a 'one-and-a-half-earner' model, in which one partner works full-time and the other part-time. Southern Europe has shown a more pronounced internal division, with dual-earner families (usually higher educated) and male-breadwinner families largely divided along class lines.[4] It should be noted that these highly generalized patterns, only

[1] Margriet Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows: Domestic Workers in the Netherlands," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* 17, no. 1 (2016): 40–41, https://doi.org/10.1515/til-2016-0013.

[2] Mireille Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers: De Consequenties van Individualisering van Inkomensvorming Voor de Economische Positie van Vrouwen (1950-1990), Een Sociologische Analyse*, 2010, 294; Anja Meulenbelt, *Alle Moeders Werken al: Pleidooi Voor Een Zorgzame Samenleving* (Amsterdam University Press, 2022), 141–42.

[3] Joyce Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," *Leidschrift : Nederlanders En Hun Gezagsdragers. Politieke Cultuur in Nederland 1950-1990* 17, no. September (2002): 35–52; Esther De Ruijter, "Trends in the Outsourcing of Domestic Work and Childcare in the Netherlands: Compositional or Behavioral Change?," *Acta Sociologica* 47, no. 3 (2004): 219, https://doi.org/10.1177/0001699304046247; Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows," 2016, 40–46; Sjoukje Johanna Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken: De Troebele Arbeidsrelaties in Betaald Huishoudelijk Werk* (Universiteit van Amsterdam [Host], 2011), 45–47.

[4] Giulia Maria Dotti Sani, "The Economic Crisis and Changes in Work–Family Arrangements in Six European Countries," *Journal of European Social Policy* 28, no. 2 (2018): 178, https://doi.org/10.1177/0958928717700566.

consider states where the majority of the population has had the option of adopting a single-earner family model in the first place.

While there has been a notable increase in the number of women entering the labor force in Europe, this participation remains organized along heavily gendered lines. As of 2024, women in heterosexual couples remain far more likely than men to be employed part-time. The Netherlands, Austria, and Germany exhibit some of the highest rates of partnered women working part-time, with rates exceeding 50%. In contrast, part-time employment among partnered men remains below 20% (see Figure 2 in the Appendix). These divisions become even starker when looking at families with children (see Figure 3 in the Appendix).[5] These gendered patterns in paid labor reflect enduring traditional gender roles, in which men are the primary wage earners and women remain primarily responsible for domestic tasks. Research suggests that same-sex couples exhibit more balanced divisions of domestic tasks, although the presence of children tends to reinforce more traditional household patterns.[6]

With the highest rates of women's part-time employment in Europe, the Netherlands has long been one of the most striking examples of the 'one-and-a-half-earner' norm.[7] Although the gendered work division gap within families seem to be narrowing, this process is slow.[8] The rise of part-time work in the Netherlands is rooted in a complex history of shifting ideas on women's labor, labor regulation, and feminist activism. For feminist action groups that emerged in the late 1960s, paid employment was a crucial point of concern. Since women were excluded from many full-time employment protections, denied equal pay, and confined to marginal work sectors, it was essential in the fight for (financial) independence and the deconstruction of stereotypical gender roles.[9] In this context, enhancing part-time employment opportunities was identified as a means to provide women with care responsibilities easier access to the labor market.[10] For policymakers and other stakeholders, part-time work simultaneously advanced different objectives, such as increasing labor force participation and

[5] Eurostat, "Percentage of Part-Time Employment by Sex, Age Groups and Household Composition," versions 12-06-2025, Eurostat, 2022, https://doi.org/10.2908/LFST_HHPTETY.
[6] Gerrit Bauer, "Gender Roles, Comparative Advantages and the Life Course: The Division of Domestic Labor in Same-Sex and Different-Sex Couples," *European Journal of Population* 32, no. 1 (2016): 1116–17.
[7] Wouter van Gils and Gerbert Kraaykamp, "The Emergence of Dual-Earner Couples," *International Sociology*, ahead of print, SAGE PublicationsSage UK: London, England, May 1, 2008, 346, Sage UK: London, England, https://doi.org/10.1177/0268580908088894.
[8] See Figures 4 and 5 in the Appendix for data on part-time employment trends from 2006 to 2024 in the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and the European Union.
[9] Anna Tijsseling, *De tweede feministische golf in Nederland. Een historiografische inleiding*, n.d., 9–11.
[10] Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows," 2016, 47.

boosting productivity.[11] Eventually, part-time work developed into a well-established institution that would make the Dutch system stand out internationally for its equal treatment of part-time employment alongside full-time employment.[12]

Yet while part-time work was promoted as a way to provide women easier access to work outside the home, it simultaneously reinforced existing gendered labor divisions. Essentially, the rise of part-time work was structured around the assumption that women were primarily responsible for unpaid household labor. As it was designed to accommodate this labor division, part-time work did not free women from their domestic responsibilities, despite granting them access to the labor market. For that reason, those aiming for greater gender equality tended to regard part-time work for women as a temporary compromise, rather than a long-term solution.[13]

For many, part-time arrangements formed an intermediate step toward the ultimate goal of achieving a more equal division of unpaid and paid labor between men and women. In the 1970s, there were notable proposals for such a labor redistribution, including ideas to reduce the total number of working hours per week or per day.[14] In *Het Onbehagen van de Vrouw*, published in 1967 and regarded by many as the starting point of the 'second wave' of feminism in the Netherlands, Joke Kool-Smit advocated for the implementation of a 30-hour workweek (instead of the 40-hour standard) for everyone. Kool-Smit regarded such a collective working-hour reduction as one of the most fruitful means to allow men and women to divide unpaid domestic tasks and paid employment tasks more equally.[15] That more radical shift, however, never materialized. Instead, these ideas disappeared into a less drastic working-hour reduction in the 1980s (to a 38-hour standard) aimed to combat unemployment. At the same time, part-time work became increasingly institutionalized, primarily as a form of women's employment.[16]

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[11] T. J. de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era: Dutch Employers' Initiatives to Control Female Labor Force Participation, 1945–1970," *Enterprise & Society* (New York, USA) 24, no. 3 (2023): 784–810, https://doi.org/10.1017/eso.2022.12.

[12] Timon de Groot, "Making Part-Time Work a Fully-Fledged Alternative: How the Dutch Social Partners Responded to a Dual Labour Market, 1966–1993," *Labor History* 62, nos. 5–6 (2021): 776, https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2021.1994533.

[13] Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows," 2016, 353–60; Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken*, 45–50.

[14] Kea Tijdens, *Een Wereld van Verschil: Arbeidsparticipatie van Vrouwen 1945-2005*, 2006, 4; J.C.A.P. Ribberink, "De Aanval Op Het Kostwinner-Huisvrouwmodel. De Tweede Feministische Golf En de Arbeidstijdverkorting," *Historica*, no. 24, nr.2 (2001): 15.

[15] Joke Kool-Smit, "Het onbehagen bij de vrouw," *De Gids* 130, no. 9/10 (1967): 41.

[16] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 296.

This thesis departs from the idea that what counted as a fair or desirable redistribution of labor was never self-evident. Rather, the current labor division is the product of a convergence of political decisions, feminist mobilization, and economic interests, each responding to different pressures. In the Netherlands, these forces resulted in a norm of women's labor market participation that favored part-time employment alongside unpaid care responsibilities. This model institutionalized a particular compromise in the redistribution of unpaid and paid labor. In the process, it defined not only what counted as 'work' but also what was meant by 'emancipation,' which was neither neutral nor inevitable.

In light of these considerations, this study poses the following research question: **What do Dutch 1970s parliamentary debates on unpaid and paid labor reveal about the conceptualization of gendered labor redistribution?** To answer this question, this thesis examines parliamentary debates on domestic work and part-time employment. It traces how conceptual framings, gender bias, and political interests constrained a more equitable distribution of unpaid and paid labor. In doing so, it examines how these debates articulated the boundaries of ideas of gendered labor redistribution. The following sections of this chapter outline the relevance of this research question, situate it in existing historiography, and elaborate on the methodological approach and source selection of this study.

1.1. Relevance

Up until today, part-time work arrangements have left men's working lives virtually untouched. For women, on the other hand, its dominance has had structural consequences. The impact of part-time employment on income goes beyond lower pay for fewer working hours, as it tends to have a significant impact on wage development and career advancement.[17] Therefore, financial independence – a key feminist concern – continues to remain out of reach for many women.[18] More fundamentally, however, the persistence of part-time work as women's work

[17] Additionally, it has been argued that prerequisite of full-time presence in top positions contributes to the underrepresentation of women in these roles. Critics of women's part-time work patterns highlight broader societal costs, including the economic sustainability of the welfare state, and the waste of talent and capital investment. See: W. Portegijs and Saskia Keuzenkamp, *Nederland deeltijdland: vrouwen en deeltijdwerk*, SCP-publicatie, 2008/4 (Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2008); Johanna Gesina Fredrica Merens, "Een Lange Weg: De Ondervertegenwoordiging van Vrouwen in Management En Top Nader Verklaard" (Doctoral thesis, Utrecht University, 2022), https://doi.org/10.33540/1202.

[18] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 296; Portegijs and Keuzenkamp, *Nederland deeltijdland*.; Merens, "Een Lange Weg."

signals how strongly women remain structurally bound to gendered expectations of (unpaid) care work.

Women's part-time work has therefore become an increasingly problematized aspect of the labor market. In *Weg met deeltijdfeminisme! Over vrouwen, ambitie en carriere*, published in 2007, Heleen Mees condemns the 'one-and-a-half-earner' model "a treacherous concoction of traditional gender roles with a hint of feminism."[19] She states that "part-time feminists," that is women who do not aspire to pursue full-time careers, not only harm themselves and society but also "squander the position of all other women, including their daughters, and their daughters' daughters." In her provocative essays, Mees calls on women to step out of their designated roles as mothers and/or mistresses and let others take over the caregiving tasks they are predominantly assigned to – whether that is men or paid domestic workers. For Mees, full-time work is the key to women's emancipation, as she asserts "It is time women finally *really* get to work."[20]

While Mees and others like her recognize the impact of caring tasks on women's abilities to control their personal lives, careers and independence, they put forward a treacherous argument.[21] Assuming the full-time working man to be an undisputed norm, they suggest that women can only attain 'emancipation' by becoming like these men. The underlying motivations of women to work part-time, or the presumptions regarding what it means to be emancipated, remain unquestioned. Mees' reading of "lazy choice feminism" reinforces a particular narrative of emancipation that explicitly idealizes (American) capitalism without considering alternative life and work structures.[22] In this reasoning, the burden of 'emancipation' is placed solely on women, while the fundamental question of why paid work is considered the only road to liberation is neglected. Even more so, women are framed as traitors to their own cause for their failure to 'emancipate' themselves while the sacrifices such 'emancipation' entails are entirely ignored.

Early thinkers like Angela Davis demonstrate how the possibility for some women to 'emancipate' themselves has historically depended on the labor of other women. For example, the domestic worker Mees suggests should take over the working woman's caring tasks. By illustrating the history of Black and working-class women in the United States, Davis

[19] Heleen Mees, *Weg met het deeltijdfeminisme!: over vrouwen, ambitie en carrière* (Amsterdam: Nieuw Amsterdam Uitgevers, 2007), p128.
[20] Mees, *Weg met het deeltijdfeminisme!*, 7-8.
[21] Mees, *Weg met het deeltijdfeminisme!*, 114; Elma Drayer, *Verwende Prinsesjes* (Bezige Bij bv, Uitgeverij De, 2011).
[22] Mees, *Weg met het deeltijdfeminisme!*, 128–32.

emphasizes how the double burden of wage work and domestic work has long been a structural condition rather than an exception. Davis argues that the gender inequality associated with the privatization and naturalization of care work as women's responsibility cannot be dismantled within a capitalist framework, where wage labor is regarded as the only path to autonomy. She asserts that the burdens of domestic labor will continue to be distributed along gendered, classed and racialized dimensions as long as the perception of this work remains unchanged.[23]

Building on this analytical lens, Anja Meulenbent provides a thorough critique of the claim that Dutch women must "*really* get to work" in *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, published in 2022. Meulenbelt emphasizes that the majority of Dutch women continue to bear the primary responsibilities for care work. Since many no longer solely do this as housewives but often alongside paid (part-time) employment, she argues it to be misguided to suggest there is a lack of commitment to the labor market among women.[24] Instead, Meulenbelt critically reflects on the historical evolution of the concept of emancipation itself. With its increased focus on paid work, careers and women in top positions, the value of unpaid care work is largely overlooked.[25] Meulenbelt therefore pleads for a 'caring society,' in which care work is revalued and redistributed more fairly across all genders.[26] Rather than a novel concept, this proposal echoes calls for social change that emerged decades prior, highlighting the enduring tensions around the division of paid and unpaid work.

It is precisely in this context, where a critical historical analysis can provide valuable insights. It can reveal how developments surrounding the concept of 'emancipation' are embedded in broader structural patterns and conceptual shifts. This can help us understand how ideas about the value of labor have transformed over time, which tensions surrounding emancipation continue to resurface, and how contemporary proposals can be situated within a much longer history.

1.2. Historiography

Although there is extensive research on the topics of women's labor participation, the institutionalization of part-time work, and gendered labor divisions in the Netherlands, this research is fragmented across disciplines and is often outdated. Two approaches dominate the

[23] Angela Y. Davis, "The Approaching Obsolescence of Housework: A Working-Class Perspective," in *Women, Race, and Class* (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011).
[24] Meulenbelt, *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, 147.
[25] Meulenbelt, *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, 17–18.
[26] Meulenbelt, *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, 17–18.

debate: one focuses on the material conditions of economic and political institutions, while the other focuses on underlying socio-cultural norms and (gender) ideology. [27] While the former tend to take underlying ideological notions for granted, the latter often focus narrowly on cultural or institutional factors. While these studies reveal important aspects of the issue, few bring together structural, policy-oriented, and critical perspectives extensively, much less so from a historical perspective.

This pattern reflects a broader tendency to separate the material from the abstract, a distinction that similarly emerges within historiography. According to Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, economists and economic historians often present male-centered research perspectives as 'neutral,' while women's and gender historians often neglect to relate their insights to broader economic questions or theories. This lack of integration results in the loss of many important aspects essential to finding answers both fields seek. A complete understanding of historical developments of economies cannot exclude half the population; nor can an understanding of the impact of gender constructs exclude its economic consequences for individuals.[28]

The thesis posits that an integrated approach is essential for understanding why the rise of women's labor market participation within the context of 'emancipation' did not result in an extensive redistribution of unpaid work. The following paragraphs discuss works that offer partial answers to the research question outlined above, showing how historiography engages with the policy, gender, economic, and legislative dimensions of this topic.

[27] Alison L. Booth and Jan C. van Ours, "Part-Time Jobs: What Women Want?," *Journal of Population Economics* 26, no. 1 (2013): 263–83, https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-012-0417-9; Portegijs and Keuzenkamp, *Nederland deeltijdland*; van Engen M.L. et al., "Carrièresucces van Vaders En Moeders: De Rol van Moederschapsideologie, Werk-Thuis-Cultuur En Werk-Thuis-Arrangementen," *Gedrag En Organisatie* 22, no. 2 (2009): 146–71; Guillerme Paugam, "The Inequality Trade-off? Employment Inequalities across and within Couples in the Rise of Dual Earning," *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 97 (June 2025): 101035, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rssm.2025.101035; Jelle Visser, "De Sociologie van Het Halve Werk," *Mens En Maatschappij* 74, no. 4 (1999): 333–59; Jelle Visser, "The First Part-Time Economy in the World: A Model to Be Followed?," *Journal of European Social Policy* 12, no. 1 (2002): 23–42, https://doi.org/10.1177/0952872002012001561.

[28] Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, "Gender and Economic History. The Story of a Complicated Marriage," *TSEG - The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 11, no. 2 (2014): 2, https://doi.org/10.18352/tseg.137.

1.2.1. Emancipation Policy

In "De emancipatieparadox: Emancipatiebeleid als vrouwenprobleem" Mark van Ostaijen and Eva Wolf analyze the normative, ordering, and evaluative potential of the term 'emancipation' as a policy category. Building on Reinhart Koselleck, the authors study emancipation as a projection or construct, questioning that which is generally considered self-explanatory.[29] In doing so, they historicize the very meaning of the term emancipation. Generally, this term refers to the legal establishment of equality, the resolution of a problem of social inequality, or even a general progression in human history. While not exclusively applicable to women, Van Ostaijen and Wolf demonstrate how it has increasingly been applied as such since the Second World War. [30] From the mid-1970s onwards, the term gained widespread use in Dutch policy, politics, media, and science. Since the 1990s, it has been increasing linked to women's position in the labor market.[31]

Through critical observations, Van Ostaijen and Wolf observe how government policy aimed at promoting emancipation has reinforced binary categories of emancipated men and unemancipated women. By using men as a reference point or a supposed 'neutral,' men have been granted exemption from emancipation policy. Women, instead, have been framed as the ones needing to prove their own emancipation. Placing this burden on individuals creates an illusion of free choice that ignores structural disadvantages. Even more so, it perpetuates dependence by definition because it presupposes the dependence of a group (women) on an emancipator (men). Thus, they argue, the paradox of emancipation lies in its legitimation of the inequality it ultimately aims to combat.[32]

This radical conceptual history offers an important reinterpretation of the history of women's emancipation policy in the Netherlands. While the authors call for further research into the establishment of this policy and the parties involved, there is an opportunity to expand on their research as they only touch on the role of work in the conceptualization of emancipation in passing.[33]

[29] Mark van Ostaijen and Eva Wolf, "De Emancipatieparadox," *Beleid En Maatschappij* 51, no. 1 (2024): 7–9.
[30] van Ostaijen and Wolf, "De Emancipatieparadox," 6–7.
[31] van Ostaijen and Wolf, "De Emancipatieparadox," 9–15.
[32] van Ostaijen and Wolf, "De Emancipatieparadox," 17–18.
[33] van Ostaijen and Wolf, "De Emancipatieparadox," 17–18.

1.2.2. Work and Women's Movement

The study of Van Ostaijen and Wolf is situated within an extensive body of research by feminist historians and gender theorists who have provided critical readings of emancipation policies. One such work that explicitly connects emancipation to the concept of work in the Netherlands, is Joyce Outshoorn's "Half werk. Vrouwenbeweging, emancipatie en politiek in Nederland, 1950-1990." In this work, Outshoorn investigates the transformation of women's employment from something that was to be avoided as much as possible in the 1950s, to becoming a universal obligation for women by the end of the 1990s. She does this by reconstructing the impact of the women's movement on Dutch politics throughout this period.

Outshoorn illustrates how post-war economic policy effectively enforced a rigid ideal of a gendered division of labor. The flourishing of the male breadwinner model, along with welfare state expansion, reinforced women's domestic roles within the family. Nevertheless, the issue of married women's work outside the home was never fully abandoned as a political concern. Concerns regarding the international competitiveness of the Dutch labor market in the 1950s, as well as subsequent labor shortages, reignited discussions about women's employment.[34] When the feminist movement experienced a resurge in activity by the late 1960s, work had become a prominent focal point as a growing group of women wanted to work but had limited ability to do. These feminist voices were first incorporated into national politics with the establishment of the leftist Den Uyl cabinet in 1973 because of the close ties between the movement and the social-democratic Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA). In 1974 an Emancipation Commission was installed and feminist voices directly entered Parliament.[35]

Initially, emancipation policy had predominantly focused on 'changing mindsets' and avoided controversial topics, such as the breadwinner or abortion, allowing for a general consensus. However, feminist activism adopted an increasingly socio-economic orientation in the 1980s, focusing on issues as the male breadwinner model and independent rights to social benefits.[36] According to Outshoorn, the new center-right Lubbers cabinet put an increasingly strong emphasis on the importance of paid work as a key route for women to achieve independence. Paradoxically, the facilities that would enable such independence, such as public childcare, elderly care, and individual entitlements to social benefits, were increasingly undercut. The transfer of these responsibilities to the private sphere, imposed a disproportionate

[34] Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," 36–42.
[35] Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," 42–45.
[36] Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," 42–45.

burden on women. Outshoorn illustrates how this contradictory policy was upheld until 1994, when the social-democratic and liberal collaboration of the Kok cabinet established working outside the home as the new norm for all women. In this process, feminist ideas of equality were absorbed into mainstream policy and emancipation seemed 'complete,' as it had seemed many times before.[37]

Throughout her text, Outshoorn demonstrates how emancipation appeared to be 'complete' at various points, only to prove incomplete in hindsight. Despite her compelling presentation of the historical intertwining of emancipation and work, it leaves important questions unanswered. It does not offer a comprehensive explanation of why policy's interpretation of women's emancipation became increasingly tied to work. Nor does it explain precisely which actors were the motor behind this development. To answer these questions, it is necessary to trace how part-time work itself became the dominant form of women's employment in the Netherlands.

1.2.3. The Institutionalization of Part-time Work Arrangements

In "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era: Dutch Employer's Initiatives to Control Female Labor Force Participation, 1945-1970." Timon de Groot shows how part-time work was reframed from a model deemed incompatible with the Dutch corporatist welfare state into an acceptable form of women's employment. Part-time work arrangement emerged on a large scale outside of the Netherlands in the 1950s. Initially, Dutch policymakers and employers considered these developments unfit for Dutch society, whose welfare principles rested on the moral and economic ideal of the male breadwinner.[38] This stance shifted when the globalizing economy put increased pressure on the Dutch labor market. Concerns about international competitiveness heightened the demand for women's paid labor. Full-time women's employment, however, was deemed a threat to the breadwinner family model. Consequently, some women were considered to be working too much (those employed full-time), while others were considered to be working too little (housewives outside of the labor market).[39] In this context, part-time employment was deliberately positioned as a compromise that allowed women to contribute economically without destabilizing family norms.[40]

[37] Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," 45–51.
[38] de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era." 784-6.
[39] de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era," 793–96.
[40] de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era." 784-6.

De Groot examines how part-time work became fully institutionalized in the ensuing decades in "Making part-time work a fully-fledged alternative: How the Dutch social partners responded to a dual labor market, 1966-1993." Rising female labor participation in the 1970s produced a dual labor market in which flexible part-time jobs remained low-paid and weakly protected, while full-time positions were much more stable and enjoyed stronger rights. De Groot shows that stakeholders had strategic reasons to address this imbalance. Employers benefitted from a stable and workable supply of part-time labor, particularly in the retail sector, while unions sought to prevent the undermining of collectively agreed standards. The institutionalization of part-time work emerged from a coordinated effort to turn part-time work into a fully-fledged option. In this process, part-time work shifted from a temporary solution or marginal arrangement into a recognized form of employment with stable rights.[41]

De Groot's work stands out from other studies on part-time work in his incorporation of stakeholders in this development.[42] Nevertheless, these analyses leave the question of what could motivate women in very different positions to embrace part-time work largely unexplored. The perspectives of the women who stand at the center of these arguments remain sidetracked. While De Groot notes the tension between necessity and choice in women's motivations for employment in the 1950s, the implication of this tension is consumed by broader economic and political arguments.[43] Alone, this insight does not explain how this institutional transition could motivate a very large group of women to participate in part-time work. Neither does it say much about the implications of these work arrangements on women's social and economic position.

1.2.4. Individualization and Women's Economic Position

In *Kostwinners en verliezers: De consequenties van individualisering van inkomensvorming voor de economische positie van vrouwen (1950-1990), een sociologische analyse* Mireille Hellendoorn addresses these developments through the lens of women's economic positions. She analyzes the historical transition of Dutch society from the dominant male breadwinner model to an individualized model and identifies a crucial paradox in this transition. Although

[41] de Groot, "Making Part-Time Work a Fully-Fledged Alternative," 2021, 776–77.
[42] Earlier works, for instance, argue that the rapid expansion of part-time work was largely an unintended consequence of pressure from below: the late but rapid entry of married women into the labor market, combined with a lack of childcare institutions. See: de Groot, "Making Part-Time Work a Fully-Fledged Alternative," 2021, 763.
[43] de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era," 797.

the male breadwinner model imposed rigid gendered roles, it indirectly provided social and economic protections for women performing unpaid care work that were lost in the rapid process of individualization. Consequently, the period of strongest individualization actually had the strongest negative effect on women's economic position.[44]

Hellendoorn shows how policy decision and economic reform produced contradictory effects in this complicated history of legal and societal transformation. 1965 to 1990 formed a period of gradual individualization and the breakdown of hybrid social rights. These, however, were not replaced by new social rights for caregivers. While a norm developed in which paid labor participation was increasingly promoted as the primary route to emancipation, various proposals were made to acknowledge and compensate for the unpaid care. These included efforts to determine its economic value, integrating this work within family law, and more far-reaching plans such as the five-hour workday to redistribute unpaid and paid labor. Yet none of these initiatives made it beyond proposal phases. So, while protections disappeared, women's responsibilities for care work persisted.[45]

In this analysis, Hellendoorn underscores important questions that remain unanswered in the history of women's emancipation. One such question is why branches of the feminist movement placed such strong emphasis on labor participation, while alternative routes to emancipation remained unexplored – a question Hellendoorn emphasizes deserves further historical inquiry.[46] While identifying important blind spots, her study focuses primarily on the consequences of policy changes. This thesis shifts this focus from policy outcomes to their underlying political logic to understand why specific emancipatory goals, such as redistribution, never materialized. By analyzing the underlying political and discursive assumptions that structurally formed conceptualizations of redistribution, it aims to offer an explanatory perspective on the institutional dynamics Hellendoorn observes.

1.2.5. Position in Historiography

Both de Groot and Outshoorn provide a thorough analysis of the logic of developments in the second half of the twentieth century regarding the increasingly prominent role of women in the labor market. They emphasize how labor market concerns shaped political debates on women's paid employment, which was strongly connected to emancipation policy that developed in the

[44] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 293–301.
[45] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 293–97.
[46] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 300–301.

1970s. However, both works offer only partial explanations for the rise of the one-and-a-half model, in which women primarily assumed responsibility for unpaid caring tasks. Literature leaves unanswered why developments in women's employment did not result in a labor redistribution that provided a more genuine gender equality. By addressing this issue, this thesis builds on the works of authors like Van Ostaijen, Wolf, and Hellendoorn, who critically reflect on matters that remain otherwise generally unquestioned. It adds an important layer by directly examining both unpaid and paid work to understand how these shaped a gendered division of labor that remained structurally unequal, defining both what counted as 'work' and 'emancipation. Rather than focusing on outcomes, this thesis analyzes the ideas that shaped these policies in the first place.

1.3. Method

The methodological approach of this thesis is grounded in the history of ideas. Following Quentin Skinner, I assume that words are not mere manifestations of ideas but constitute reality by persuading, legitimizing, resisting, and defining. According to Skinner, the way in which historical events are framed, problems are defined, and meaning is ascribed to concepts, has the power to influence the course of history. As he emphasizes that the constitutive power of words depends on temporal conventions, he asserts it is the historian's task to place these in their appropriate linguistic and intellectual contexts to understand the intended meaning. For Skinner, historical context is not merely a background for interpretation but the place where interpretation itself starts.[47] Its ultimate aim is to gain awareness of the unconscious ideas that shape our present.[48]

Nevertheless, I diverge from Skinner in his definition of the political. While Skinner's understanding is rooted in a more conventional understanding of politics, emphasizing texts by political thinkers, I adopt a more expansive understanding of this concept. Drawing inspiration from later works of Michel Foucault, I assume that the constitutive power of concepts extends well beyond their articulations in political texts. Whereas the history of ideas strives to comprehend the rationality behind certain ideas – why they exist, how they came to be, and with what intention – Foucault incorporates the material implications of these rationalities into

[47] Claudio Remeseira, *Particularism and Universalism in the Work of Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner: A Descriptive and Normative Approach*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.7916/d8-mtdf-7357.
[48] Naja Vucina et al., "Histories and Freedom of the Present: Foucault and Skinner," *History of the Human Sciences* 24, no. 5 (2011): 129, https://doi.org/10.1177/0952695111415176.

his analysis. By focusing on power's many manifestations, he understands power as something that passes through individuals, shaping governance, social norms, and individual self-understanding.[49] The emphasis on how larger structures of inequality reverberate into the mundane allows for an examination of power through discourses, norms, and policy frameworks rather than through coercive institutions alone.[50] Adopting a Foucauldian understanding of the political, I shift focus from Skinner's emphasis on speech-acts of political authors to broader rationalities and practices through problem definitions, policy justifications, and gendered constructs.[51]

In her influential essay "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," Joan Scott shows why a gendered lens is crucial in historical approaches such as those promoted by these authors. She underscores that gender is not an autonomous sphere pertaining solely to sex or the family (an idea that easily dismisses the importance of women's history), but a constitutive element of human relations that influences broader social, economic, and political structures. As such, she defines gender as both a defining part of social relationships rooted in perceived differences in sex, and a fundamental method of expressing hierarchies of power.[52] Gender is an indispensable category of analysis because it is not only constructed through multiple domains (kinship, education, the economy, the polity, etc.) but also gives shape to the meaning and relations of power among these domains.[53] In other words, Scott emphasizes the importance of analyzing not only the use of concepts, but also how their meanings become normalized through conflict, repression, or institutional embedding.[54]

Ultimately, this thesis adapts a history of ideas approach that incorporates methodological insights from ideas beyond this field. Building on Skinner, it focuses on the situated use of concepts by political actors. To understand how concepts as 'emancipation,' 'work,' or 'redistribution' were defined, contested, and mobilized in discussions, they are placed within broader social, cultural, and economic contexts. Drawing from Foucault's later

[49] Vucina et al., "Histories and Freedom of the Present," 132–33; Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-79*, with Michel Senellart et al., Michel Foucault: Lectures at the College de France (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
[50] Heidi Karlsen, "Foucault's Archeological Discourse Analysis with Digital Methodology—Discourse on Women Prior to the First Wave Women's Movement," *Digital Scholarship in the Humanities* 38, no. 1 (2023): 202, https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqac022.
[51] Vucina et al., "Histories and Freedom of the Present," 137–39.
[52] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1055–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/1864376.
[53] Scott, "Gender," 1067.
[54] Scott, "Gender," 1074.

work, this thesis uses Foucauldian analytical tools to understand how governing rationalities and discursive norms structured the field of political action. Building on Scott, it treats gender as a constitutive dimension of these processes, shaping how particular understandings of paid and unpaid labor became institutionalized, normalized and generated inequalities. Together, these tools allow for an examination of how conceptualizations of paid and unpaid work shaped the boundaries of gendered labor redistribution in the Netherlands during the 1970s.

1.4. Sources

House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) debates form the primary source basis for this thesis. These parliamentary debates, as recorded in digitized official reports of parliamentary proceedings (Handelingen van de Staten-Generaal), provide a consistent, well-documented, and accessible base for analysis. The House of Representatives forms a particular site of political negotiation where governmental, societal, and ideological pressures converge. While they do not constitute a bottom-up perspective, they are not fully top-down either. This makes them a useful starting point in its consistency for understanding how particular conceptualizations gained authority over time, and which ones were lost in the process. This foundation can facilitate further research on the issue at hand from more concealed perspectives.

To ensure focus in analyzing these debates, this study focuses on what is sometimes referred to as 'the long 1970s,' here defined as roughly stretching from 1967 to 1982. The choice for these temporal boundaries is based on two relevant events: the publication of Kool-Smit's "Het onbehagen van de vrouw," which explicitly mentioned the idea of redistributing unpaid and paid labor through a collective working-hour reduction, and the official implementation of a working-hour reduction in the Wassenaar Agreement. This period was marked by disputes over prevailing socio-economic rationalities, a gradual erosion of Keynesian policy paradigms, and growing tensions around labor market participation, unemployment, and social welfare. The economic recession of 1973-1974 introduced a phase of economic regression and increased instability and societal unrest. The late 1970s and early 1980s saw these pressures morph into major political realignments.[55] The 1982 Wassenaar Agreement symbolizes this shift. Employer and employee unions agreed on a wage restraint in exchange for limited working-time reduction (from 40 to 38 hours) after years of conflict. While

[55] Duco Hellema, "De lange jaren zeventig," *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 123, no. 1 (2010): 79–83, https://doi.org/10.5117/TVGESCH2010.1.HELL.

presented as a redistribution of labor, it solidified a new policy that was oriented towards an emerging neoliberal and neoconservative current.[56]

The selected research timeframe ensures manageability and focus on a period marked by significant legislative and cultural shifts, without losing sight of developments preceding and following this period. From these sources, discussions on the redistribution of unpaid and paid labor are traced by examining the themes through which these were most actively contested. Two themes are central: domestic work and part-time work. These represent principal sites where redistribution is negotiated, determining who performs unpaid care and who gains access to paid work. Through these deliberations, the concepts of work and emancipation are examined, along with their intricate conceptual entanglements. This presents a deliberate departure from the approach of Van Ostaijen and Wolf, who search for the term 'emancipation' in official documentation. Instead, this thesis analyzes conceptualizations indirectly, through debates that touched the core of how 'women's work' and 'gender equality' were understood.

Domestic work forms a central lens for the examination of the redistribution of unpaid labor. While 'work' is often equated with paid employment, it is essential to understand unpaid work as its counterpart. Women's reproductive labor, including domestic work, has historically been one of the most significant forms of such work, shaping gendered divisions of labor and expectations surrounding care. Shifts in the meaning of 'women's work' are therefore inseparable from broader questions of how unpaid work was to be redistributed – within the family, by the state, and between paid and unpaid spheres.

Part-time work, on the other hand, forms a central lens for the examination of the redistribution of paid labor and its entanglement with unpaid work. Initially promoted as a form of employment that allowed women to combine paid work with unpaid responsibilities, part-time work was deeply embedded in gendered role expectations. A study of its framing within the context of emancipation demonstrates how gender was institutionalized within the Dutch labor market. Questions about the role part-time work in the redistribution of labor and the negotiation of men's relationship to part-time work stand at the core of this analysis.

A set of key search terms was used to identify relevant debates on these themes.[57] Efforts were made to identify euphemisms to minimize the risk of overlooking relevant discussions.

[56] Paul de Beer, *De arbeidstijdverkorting die niet doorging en andere lessen uit de jaren tachtig*, n.d., 45–46.
[57] For domestic work, these included "huishoudelijke arbeid," "huishoudelijk werk," "huishoudelijke taken," "huishoudelijke hulp," and "huishoudelijke dienst" (domestic labour, domestic work, domestic duties, domestic

Discussions were scanned thoroughly in search of relevant material, toggling between close and distant reading to set the boundaries of a manageable and analytically sound dataset.[58] This analysis takes into consideration that some of the statements made in these debates were performative or strategic, rather than reflecting actual policy or lived experiences. It acknowledges that many experiences were not directly articulated in Parliament and thus remain absent from this analysis. As the limited scope of this research prevents it from fully capturing all the nuances of these developments, it presents a necessarily selective analysis of how particular conceptualizations of labor gained authority in Parliament. As such, it aims to present a foundation that may serve as a basis for future research on this topic.

This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter 2, "The Foundations for Discussions on Redistribution (1945-1967)," situates the question of redistribution within historical context to understand the conditions that allowed for its emergence in the 1970s. Chapter 3, "The Redistribution of Unpaid Work: The Value of Domestic Work in Transition," analyzes the framing of domestic labor in relation to questions of redistribution of unpaid labor. Chapter 4, "The Redistribution of Paid Work: Part-Time Solutions," examines the framing of part-time employment within debates on the broader redistribution of labor. Chapter 5 concludes with an evaluation of how parliamentary ideas surrounding unpaid and paid labor shaped the limits of gendered redistribution in the Netherlands.

help, and domestic service). For part-time work, these included "deeltijd arbeid," "deelarbeid," "part-time arbeid," "part-time werk," deeltijd werk," and "halftime" (all translating as part-time work or part-time labor).

[58] Karlsen, "Foucault's Archeological Discourse Analysis with Digital Methodology—Discourse on Women Prior to the First Wave Women's Movement."

2. The Foundations for Discussions on Redistribution (1945-1967)

The history of the 1970s in the Netherlands can be characterized in many ways. Some regard it as a period of increased radicalism on the political left, while others see it as a turn to conservatism and increasing neoliberal influence. Many call it the end of an era, though not all agree on what era was ended. For some, it marks the end of a period of reconstruction, growth, and prosperity. For others, it marks the end of a much longer trend of government-led economic growth and the expansion of the welfare state that had already begun at the end of the nineteenth century. Overall, the decade is defined by economic recession, discontent, and radical visions. The atmosphere of recession and malaise harshly contrasted the circumstances that had enabled the progressive and rebellious atmosphere of the 1960s.[59]

The latter had a crucial impact on ideas regarding sexuality, pleasure, and freedom, which are essential for understanding changing gender dynamics that allowed for the ideas that would challenge traditional gender divisions of labor. This cultural move toward liberation took place within a specific political-economic order that both enabled and constrained it. In the Netherlands, this was characterized by an export-oriented recovery policy, cautious welfare expansion, and a technocratic economic philosophy that came to carry distinct neoliberal features, though rarely acknowledged as such. This context is an essential part of the policy infrastructures in which discussions on redistribution would form.

This chapter covers the years preceding the 'long 1970s,' which ultimately laid the cultural, economic, and institutional groundwork for later debates on redistribution. These debates responded to shifting ideas of freedom, individuality, and gender expectations, as well as shifting expectations of government intervention and competing economic convictions. Together, these forces shaped the conditions under which later questions of equality and work distribution would be formulated. Because simplistic divisions into decades do not adequately capture the complexity of the developments that occurred during this period, this chapter explains how the preceding developments culminated into this turning point. It traces how post-war prosperity, welfare policy, and cultural transformation gradually redefined the meaning of redistribution into something that was not merely an economic instrument but a social question about equality.

[59] Hellema, "De lange jaren zeventig," 79–82.

2.1. The Order of Recovery

In the aftermath of the Second World War, Europe was in a state of disarray. The challenges posed by postwar chaos, trauma, and economic adversity made it difficult for many to resume their pre-war lives. The war had a notable impact on gender dynamics, particularly within marriages. Many women had grown accustomed to surviving independently in the absence of men and found it challenging to submit to traditional hierarchies once peace was restored. Moreover, the war had opened space for sexual experimentation, both premarital and extramarital, blurring rigid sexual norms. In the immediate post-war years, war-time experiences were discussed in relative openness – publications often urged couples to forgive one another to rebuild trust and stability. Yet, this initial openness gave way to a gradual tendency to suppress the memory of war, gradually morphing into an increased sexual conservatism.[60]

Across Europe, the complex legacy of the violent past led to a revival of the appeal of domestic life. Traditional family structures, paternal authority, and strict moral values were actively promoted as antidotes to disruption. In Western Europe, this coincided with an increased prestige of Christian Democratic parties. Christianity was able to regain moral authority as the rise of National Socialism was often attributed to the growing secularization of society.[61] The Cold War environment was used as an additional framework that further substantiated the ideological renaissance of the domestic ideal. Western governments and opinion makers eagerly portrayed Eastern European socialism as an unappealing system that forced women to work outside the home, illustrating how housewives and mothers in the West were much better off. Efforts were therefore put in reviving the institution of marriage and making domestic life more appealing for all, including men. This was done through promoting affordable housing, prospects of full-time employment, and upward social mobility, and establishing a welfare state that stabilized post-war society.[62]

In the Netherlands, the pursuit of stability and moderation translated into concrete economic policies that prioritized recovery over material expansion. In the immediate post-war years, this led to a guided market-oriented industry policy. Through wage restraints and tax breaks for businesses, the government sought to suppress production costs and boost export.

[60] Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History*, New Approaches to European History 45 (University Press, 2011), 98–99.
[61] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 99–103.
[62] Dagmar Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth-Century History*, New Approaches to European History 45 (University Press, 2011), 104–5.

Following a supply-side economics path, the export market was prioritized over the domestic market. Indirectly, this was meant to create a higher demand for labor, which would eventually restore economic stability. To ensure this, a compromise was struck between social partners and the government. The implementation of strict wage controls that restricted wage increases was accepted in exchange for the expansion of the export industry. This promotion of restraint for the purpose of long-term benefits is also referred to as the 'Calvinist compromise.'[63]

While the Netherlands had long opposed expansive welfare regulation, a gradual process of welfare expansion began in this period.[64] The desire for increased national unity encouraged cooperation across ideological divides. The tightly organized ideological blocs that had structured society gradually reconfigured, as the government assumed a growing overarching role in shaping welfare policy.[65] The family, meanwhile, came to function as a societal and institutional cornerstone in the welfare state that emerged. Building on the male breadwinner principle, welfare legislation formalized the husband's income as the baseline for social security entitlements. Social rights were not assigned to individuals but to the breadwinner, through which they were indirectly meant to cover all family members. As such, they were set up as "collective individual rights" that were intended to cover the family members under his care.[66]

By law, this enforced women's dependence on men. Married women were excluded from various rights, such as old age or disability pensions, and unemployment benefits, building on the idea that they were protected through their husband within the family unit. Unmarried women were structurally disadvantaged in this system, particularly those without children, as they were legally required to pay social premiums but were excluded from many benefits.[67] As women's access to social protection was dependent on family status, the system's expressed a strong bias toward married households.

Women's roles within the family were further institutionalized as welfare regulation enforced gendered labor divisions. A new family ideal arose in which women would not have to work outside of the home and could solely focus on their domestic responsibilities.[68] Rather

[63] Bram Mellink and Merijn Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme: een Nederlandse geschiedenis*, with Naomi Woltring (Boom, 2022), 67–75.
[64] Dennie Oude Nijhuis, *Religion, Class, and the Postwar Development of the Dutch Welfare State* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 23–24, https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048537648.
[65] Peter van Dam, *Voorbij verzuiling en ontzuiling als kader in de religiegeschiedenis*, n.d., 5–11.
[66] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 293–95.
[67] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 181.
[68] Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," 36–40.

than a return to a traditional family ideal, this was a distinctive post-war construction that intricately aimed to fuse prosperity and social stability.[69] This 'traditional breadwinner model,' however, remained more attainable for some households than for others. As many continued to rely on women's paid labor, or simply did not fit this ideal, this model should be understood as a normative ideal rather than a universally lived reality.[70] Nevertheless, even at the height of this ideal, political discussions on women's employment resurfaced whenever economic pressures demanded additional labor.

2.2. The Dutch Welfare Paradox

The Dutch economy recovered very quickly from the war to the extent that the labor market had trouble keeping up.[71] To address extreme labor shortages, solutions were sought in attracting foreign laborers and discussing the potential of women's labor participation.[72] Tensions arose when many employers began paying their employees additional wages that exceeded the legally regulated wage. Employers used these illegal bonuses to maintain their workforce. One of the biggest political concerns at the time was the threat of a wage-price spiral. Higher wages could lead to increased production costs, higher prices, and renewed wage demands. An endless inflation loop like this would threaten the competitive position of the Dutch market, which had been so carefully built up after the Second World War.[73] Political parties were internally divided on how to address this pressing issue. Many parties had left-oriented union wings, which favored a guided economy with an expanded public sector, and right-oriented employer wings, which primarily advocated free-market restoration and individual responsibility. Essentially, this conflict boiled down to an opposition between supporters of Keynesian and neoliberal theories.[74]

As the system of guided wage policy became increasingly unsustainable, it was abandoned at the end of the 1950s. As several wage explosions occurred in the years that

[69] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 129–31.
[70] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 294; Meulenbelt, *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, 141–42.
[71] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 79.
[72] Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken*, 79; de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era"; Leo Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie: een verhaal van winnaars en verliezers*, with Jan Lucassen (Uitgeverij Atlas Contact, 2018), 94.
[73] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 79–84.
[74] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 79–84.

followed, this change had failed to restore economic stability.[75] In 1963, the unions NVV (Nederlands Verbond van Vakverenigingen) and NKV (Nederlands Katholiek Vakverbond) therefore proposed a compromise: wage restraint in exchange for expanded social welfare, including higher social assistance (Bijstand) and state pensions (AOW), alongside investments in housing, education, and healthcare. As one of the few measures that offered a possible solution to the disruptive consequences of the widely feared wage-price spiral, the proposal was accepted. This resulted in a rapid extension of the welfare state.[76]

In the Netherlands, consumption levels had lagged behind those of other Western states due to artificially low wages, but prosperity rose rapidly by the mid-1960s. Yet political tensions also mounted. The fall of the center-left Cals cabinet (1965-1966), which stemmed from disputes over the loss of control over public finances marked a shift towards heightened political polarization between the political left and right. Growing demands for democratization and reform led to the establishment of new political movements and parties. These included the progressive party D'66, the 'New Left' faction within the social-democratic PvdA that advocated a more radical approach to social progress, and the PPR (Politieke Partij Radikalen), a radical party with roots in Christian parties. Together, these forces formed a strong leftist front against the new center-right cabinet de Jong (1967-1971).[77]

Under this new cabinet, the wage dispute remained a pressing issue. While the political right warned for "union dictatorship," it offered few direct solutions for the persistent threat of the wage-price spiral. Out of fear of broad left-wing criticism, the cabinet exercised caution and oversaw a further expansion of the social welfare system. This included the introduction of the statutory minimum wage, the Disability Insurance Act (WAO), and the Exceptional Medical Expenses act (AWBZ). Ironically, this center-right government implemented the largest welfare expansion in Dutch history.[78] However, when it became clear that welfare expansion was not a solution to the wage-price spiral either by the early 1970s, its support on the political right quickly eroded. Criticism on the unions intensified, as they were increasingly deemed the source of problems rather than their solutions. By the time the leftist cabinet Den Uyl (1973-1977) took office, the same issues that had plagued policymakers in the 1950s remained unresolved.[79]

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[75] Sjaak van der Velden, *Loonstrijd En Loonontwikkeling in Nederland.: Moet de Vakbeweging Zich Bezinnen Op Het Gevolgde Beleid?* (De Burcht, 2016), 34–36; Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 87–89.
[76] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 89–102.
[77] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 92–104.
[78] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 97–104.
[79] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 105–11.

2.3. Consumer Culture and New Domesticity

Although the 1950s started with widespread moral conservatism in the West, the 1950s and '60s witnessed a rapid transformation toward a more liberal cultural atmosphere. Post-war conservatism enforced a restrictive ideal of heterosexual domesticity rooted in a strict gender hierarchy. However, it was also accompanied by a new ideal of romance as the foundation of marriage, with passion and camaraderie as its basis. According to Dagmar Herzog, the renaissance of female domesticity that arose in this context was an eroticized version of what had existed before. From the outset, it was built on higher expectations and standards of pleasure.[80]

After many Western states had economically recovered from the war in the 1950s, the family became not just a moral but also a consumerist ideal. Stable economic growth, full-time employment, and the greater access to private housing fostered new possibilities of comfort. These included a stronger pursuit of pleasure in its broadest sense, including everyday comfort and quality of life, as well as a less authoritarian approach to marriage, and greater acceptance of premarital sex. Rather than a mere possibility, the notion of pleasure was increasingly seen as a social right.[81]

By the 1960s, Europe's sexual landscape had changed drastically. The medical invention of 'the pill' was undeniably of crucial importance in this development. While premarital sex had been on the rise since the Second World War, the increasing normalization of contraceptives opened doors for sexual experimentation, particularly for women, as it removed fears of unwanted pregnancy. Female sexuality became increasingly detached from reproduction, which had significant consequences for women's economic and emotional dependence on men.[82]

Consumer capitalism and the media and advertising industries similarly played a crucial role in bringing about transformation. As nudity, infidelity, and erotic imagery became more prevalent in public media, sexuality became both more openly discussed and more obsessively consumed. The line between what had previously remained private and what was now being discussed publicly became increasingly blurred. An important consequence of this

[80] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 106.
[81] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 129–31.
[82] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 114–16.

increased visibility was that it brought to light significant discrepancies between legislation and official norms and the evolving expectations of a substantial part of the population.[83]

Dutch marriage legislation exemplified this discrepancy. Prior to 1971, husbands were the legal heads of their family. Wives were legally obliged to obey them. Although this law held little authority, in practice, married women were legally prohibited from opening bank accounts or entering into contracts independently without their husband's permission until 1956.[84] In 1971, marriage regulation was liberalized, making divorce easier and possible at the request of one partner.[85] This caused an explosive growth in the number of divorces in the ensuing years, which coincided with a rise in the number of single-parent families.[86] At the same time, cohabitation among unmarried couples had became more common, and the number of children born out of marriage had increased significantly increased.[87] As such, family configurations beyond the traditional breadwinner model became more and more prevalent.

2.4. Counterculture and Activism

The intensification of social activism in the 1960s played a decisive role in enabling many of these structural transformations. In Europe's post-war era, the more liberal ideas that had flourished in the 1920s and 30s had been severely suppressed, as sexual freedom had become increasingly associated with promiscuity and excess.[88] One of the ways this manifested itself was the public opposition and persecution of male homosexuality (female sexuality was taken less seriously, as it was deemed more pitiful than dangerous). In the Netherlands, this persecution had increased, compared to the pre-war years.[89] A small group of activists began to act against this repression in the aftermath of the war. By the 1960s, activism had evolved into a much broader struggle for various freedoms, including gay rights and women's rights. This expansion of activism both reflected and contributed to a growing culture of

[83] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 133–34.
[84] It is important to note that this legal incapacity (handelingsonbekwaamheid) was introduced only in 1924, and thus was not a long-standing institution. See: Meulenbelt, *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, 75.
[85] Bas Hengstmengel, "Ontwikkelingen in het personen- en familierecht (1950 - heden)," *Radix* 45, no. 4 (2019): 311, https://doi.org/10.5117/RAD2019.4.007.HENG.
[86] Hengstmengel, "Ontwikkelingen in het personen- en familierecht (1950 - heden)," 309; Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 295.
[87] Hengstmengel, "Ontwikkelingen in het personen- en familierecht (1950 - heden)," 311.
[88] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 98–99.
[89] In the Netherlands, sexual acts between men older than 21 and younger than 21 remained criminalized after the war, punishable by imprisonment and even castration. See: Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 116–22.

permissiveness, in which the conservative values of previous generations were increasingly deemed immoral.

Growing levels of consumption from the 1950s onwards gave rise to distinct youth cultures, which often rebelled against established norms. The first of the era's distinct youth cultures in the Netherlands were the 'nozems,' who represented working-class rebellion, akin to the British Teddy Boys and American greasers.[90] By the 1960s, youth cultures had become increasingly politicized. Anti-nuclear movements and student organizations began to acknowledge the downsides of endless economic growth, challenging industrialization, environmental destruction, and the threat of nuclear war. Out of this milieu arose the anarchist movement Provo, which gained international attention for its disturbances during the 1966 wedding of Princess Beatrix and Claus von Amsberg (the latter's association with the Nazi past made this union controversial, especially in circles where anti-fascism prevailed). By the late 1960s, youth resistance to authority had intensified.[91]

Alongside these movements, feminist calls for action became increasingly prominent. Internationally, activists campaigned for the decriminalization of contraception and abortion, while demanding stricter laws against sexual violence.[92] In the Netherlands, different feminist action groups arose, placing women's emancipation on the social and political agenda.[93] Kool-Smit's "Het onbehagen bij de vrouw," pointed to how many women felt deprived of autonomy, self-development, and societal participation, which reignited public feminist discourse.[94] Together with Hedy d'Ancona, Kool-Smit established Man-Vrouw-Maatschappij (MVM) in 1968. This organization campaigned for women's rights through lobbying, publications, and petitions, and maintained close ties to parties such as the PvdA and D'66.[95] Dolle Mina emerged shortly thereafter. As a younger, student-oriented movement, it placed greater emphasis on acquiring public attention through provocative campaigns. Even though Dolle Mina criticized MVM for not being radical enough, both movement's demands for equal pay, job opportunities, education, promotion, and access to part-time employment, in addition to childcare and reproductive rights, were virtually the same.[96]

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[90] Leonor Jonker, *No Future Nu: punk in Nederland 1977-2012* (Overamstel Uitgevers, 2011), 25–39.
[91] Jonker, *No Future Nu*, 25–39.
[92] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 136.
[93] Tijsseling, *De tweede feministische golf in Nederland. Een historiografische inleiding*, 9–11..
[94] Agnes van Steen, "De Vergeten Actiegroep Man Vrouw Maatschappij," Leidschrift, 2015, 32.
[95] Steen, "De Vergeten Actiegroep Man Vrouw Maatschappij," 33–40.
[96] Outshoorn, "Half Werk. Vrouwenbeweging, Emancipatie En Politiek, 1950-1990," 40–45.

Despite emerging alongside new critical voices, the feminist movement at the time was also characteristically critical of the 'New Left.' Many feminists denounced the paternalistic and misogynistic attitudes within leftist groups themselves. Lesbian and gay activists, in turn, criticized the feminist movement for its heteronormativity, even though these struggles began to converge in the early 1970s.[97] Nevertheless, marginalized perspectives, such as those of black and migrant women, remained largely excluded from much of dominant feminist discourse, as articulated explicitly in critical intersectional perspectives that became more prevalent in the 1980s.[98]

Public support for feminist causes varied greatly depending on the cause. Contraception and abortion rights quickly gained widespread public support, but broader feminist campaigns, such as demands for intellectual respect, equal pay, and government-subsidized childcare, were met with much more resistance. At the same time, it had become increasingly clear how paradoxical it was that it was specifically capitalism that had enabled much of the newfound freedoms, which were undeniably deeply entangled with market forces.[99] Therefore, by the end of the 1970s, much of the initial optimism that had characterized the movement was gone.[100]

Nevertheless, the socio-cultural movement that arose in the preceding years had allowed for the questioning of the existing social order through increasingly critical attitudes towards authorities. By exposing the unequal distribution of freedom along gendered, sexual, as well as classed lines, the stage was set for a broader redefinition of what 'redistribution' was meant to entail.

2.5. Conclusion

The Dutch post-war period started with conservatism and material restraint but gradually transformed into a new cultural, economic, and political environment. Economic prosperity, welfare expansion, and a growing culture of permissiveness opened up space for renewal. Critical voices increasingly challenged the legitimacy of traditional hierarchies. At the same time, the political environment intensified. The same forces that had allowed for this transformation also revealed its limits. The breadwinner model, for instance, which had been

[97] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 136.
[98] Maayke Botman and Nancy Jouwe, *Caleidoscopische visies: de zwarte, migranten- en vluchtelingen-vrouwenbeweging in Nederland* (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, 2001), 12–16.
[99] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 145–53.
[100] Herzog, *Sexuality in Europe* (University Press, 2011), 161.

the foundation of welfare state expansion, was increasingly clashing with new ideas about gender equality and individual freedom.

It was within this particular environment that discussions on redistribution could arise. While expanding welfare provision raised questions about the scope and responsibility of government, it simultaneously became clear just how much legislation was lagging behind social reality. Within an environment that was critical of authority, demands for equality were becoming stronger, and increasingly entered politics. What began as struggles over wages, welfare and freedom, eventually evolved into questions about the distribution of time, care, and dependency. By the early 1970s, it had become clear that prosperity alone could not deliver equality. This realization marked a transition into a new era of contestation over what equality itself should mean and what the role of work was to be in achieving it.

3. The Redistribution of Unpaid Work: The Value of Domestic Work in Transition

Work is a crucial aspect of our lives – it defines us as individuals, as societies, and for many of us it also plainly forms a large part of our daily lives. Yet what we understand as 'work' is subject to constant change, carrying substantial political and economic consequences. Domestic work, part of what has often been coined 'reproductive labor,' has long been, and arguably still is, often dismissed as 'real' work. Its association with the 'private sphere' has perpetuated unpaid and largely invisible conditions, distinguishing it from the kinds of labor usually rewarded with wages. Historically portrayed as natural, unavoidable, or fulfilling work for women, domestic work has tied women to expected household roles and functioned as a barrier to their access to the 'public sphere.' For the feminist movement, rejecting these expected roles therefore became essential to breaking free from gender suppression. Gaining access to paid employment formed an important route out of these confines.

As women increasingly entered the labor market in growing numbers during the 1970s, the assumption that domestic labor would simply be provided by women became less tenable. This shift gave rise to a deceptively simple yet politically charged question: if not women, then who was to perform the unpaid domestic work on which households depended? Domestic work thus came at a conceptual crossroads. As attempts were made to loosen the assumed link between women and unpaid domestic labor, activists, families, and policymakers were forced to consider which forms of redistribution they were willing to imagine. Some changes concerning the performance of domestic tasks were already underway through evolving standards of domestic order and the growing efficiency of household technologies. Nevertheless, many household tasks would remain unavoidable. Proposed solutions ranged from the outsourcing of domestic tasks to the market, to the redistribution of tasks within the household, to women's part-time employment that would enable them to maintain most of their domestic responsibilities.[101]

Today's circumstances show that the latter became the most prevalent pattern in heteronormative households, especially those with children.[102] Despite women's increased labor participation, they continue to carry the majority of households tasks as the participation

[101] Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken*, 45–47, 76–79; De Ruijter, "Trends in the Outsourcing of Domestic Work and Childcare in the Netherlands," 231–32.
[102] Eurostat, "Percentage of Part-Time Employment by Sex, Age Groups and Household Composition."

of men in domestic work is only slowly increasing.[103] Margriet Kraamwinkel argues that the Dutch system builds on the idea that women are responsible for their 'own' domestic work. As such, society continues to rely on women's unpaid domestic labor, justifying discriminatory paid domestic work legislation, and effectively disregarding the role of men in this dynamic.[104]

Rather than focusing on women's paid work, this chapter addresses how the more silent question of how to distribute unpaid labor as assumptions regarding women's responsibilities were being challenged. Parliamentary debates on domestic work from the 1970s reveal how alternatives were proposed, which were acknowledged, and where politicians drew the limits of what counted as a realistic or legitimate redistribution of labor. The following question therefore central to this chapter: What do 1970s parliamentary discussions about domestic work reveal about conceptualizations of gendered labor redistribution?

This chapter is structured as follows. First, it presents a theoretical foundation for domestic work. Second, it examines the embedded value of domestic work within the breadwinner model, as well as the pressures that forced it into transition. Third, it analyzes the paradoxical treatment of paid domestic work to understand perceptions of domestic work itself, as well as the underlying tension between the struggle for recognition of the value of domestic work and the desire to escape it. Finally, it discusses the proposed forms of redistribution that were debated in this period.

3.1. Domestic Work as Concept

Dispelling the notion that women are defined by their reproductive labor has been a primary objective of the feminist movement. In Marxist terms, reproductive labor is defined as work oriented toward maintaining the present and future population of society and, consequently, its workforce. Domestic work forms a substantial part of reproductive labor, consisting of tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and caring for children, as well as disabled and elderly individuals. It is therefore typically characterized as inseparable from the 'private sphere' and specifically distinguished from 'productive labor,' which directly generates monetary value.[105] Historically,

[103] Dimitri Mortelmans et al., "Een longitudinale kijk op de gender-verdeling van huishoudelijke taken," *Tijdschrift voor Sociologie* 24, nos. 2–3 (2003): 237, https://doi.org/10.21825/sociologos.86581; Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows," 2016, 356; Ignace Glorieux et al., "De (on) Evenwichtige Verdeling van Arbeids- En Gezinstaken Tussen Mannen En Vrouwen. Evolutie En Een Stand van Zaken," *Overheidsbeleid Inzake Combinatie Arbeid En Gezin in Vlaanderen* 45 (2015): 52–53.

[104] Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows," 2016, 353.

[105] Charles Prusik and Sarah E. Vitale, "Marxist Feminism, Reproductive Labor, and the Question of Value," *Constellations* n/a, no. n/a (n.d.): 4, https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8675.70016.

biological determinist arguments have been used to assert that women are particularly well-suited for this unpaid, invisible labor. The failure to acknowledge the culturally constructed nature of gendered role patterns has even led to arguments that efforts to improve women's conditions are futile.[106]

Feminist scholars demonstrate that housekeeping is not inherent to women's DNA, but an outcome of long-standing historical processes that have been presented as natural givens. According to Silvia Federici, women's oppression is a fundamental aspect of the system of Western global dominance that emerged in the fifteenth century. Federici asserts that racist and sexist exploitation were core mechanisms, not byproducts, of this system. She argues that the unwaged condition of domestic labor is one of the most subtle forms of violence enacted by Western capitalist powers because it normalizes and justifies the invisibility and lack of compensation for this labor.[107]

Federici was part of the Wages for Housework (WfH) movement that emerged in Italy in the early 1970s. This movement campaigned for wages for domestic work as a political instrument to refuse the unpaid condition under which women were expected to perform this work.[108] Rather than entering capitalist relations, wages were meant to expose the already integral role of women's labor within these relations.[109] A common misconception is that the WfH movement aimed to reward the housewife within her role as housewife. Instead, it aimed to expose how that role was a product of capitalist and heteronormative organization of social reproduction. In this view, the household was never neutral or private but a political-economic arena that regulated gendered, racialized, and sexual labor.[110] Wages were intended as an instrument toward a radical restructuring of social relations through a redistribution of both paid and unpaid work.[111]

Yet wages formed a controversial solution to the structural exploitation of women's labor. Beyond the perceived paradox of using monetization to combat a problem rooted in capitalist accumulation, critics argued that this approach overlooked the many different forms of inequality tied to the performance of domestic tasks. Angela Davis argued that efforts to

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[106] Carla Fehr, "Feminist Philosophy of Biology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy of Biology*, ed. Michael Ruse (Oxford University Press, 2008), https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195182057.003.0025.
[107] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch*, Second revised edition. (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2014), 1-12.
[108] Prusik and Vitale, "Marxist Feminism, Reproductive Labor, and the Question of Value," 3–5.
[109] Silvia Federici, "Wages against Housework," *For Work / Against Work*, 1975,74-5.
[110] Beth Capper and Arlen Austin, "'Wages for Housework Means Wages against Heterosexuality': On the Archives of Black Women for Wages for Housework and Wages Due Lesbians," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 24, no. 4 (2018): 446.
[111] Federici, "Wages against Housework," 76-81.

liberate some from the restraints of the domestic sphere risked merely shifting the burden to others. She points to the fact that the attempts of some to escape domestic tasks often depend on the work of others, usually women with less social, economic, or racialized privileges. Without transforming underlying social relations, wages for housework would merely reproduce inequality in new forms. Davis therefore emphasized the need for collective transformation in which caring is recognized as a shared responsibility.[112] Meulenbelt's later call for a caring society in *Alle Moeders Werken Al*, briefly addressed in the introduction, is anchored in this very notion.

A vast body of literature on domestic work underscores the systemic undervaluation of this labor and how its marginalization intersects with gendered, classed, and racialized structures of inequality. The high demand for domestic work, coupled with the undesirability of performing this work, has contributed to the formation of what scholars have called 'global care chains.' This refers to patterns in which women from the Global South perform care work in households in the Global North, often leaving their own families behind. In countries with a colonial past, such as the Netherlands, these patterns often intersect with historical relations of power.[113] Research on the Dutch paid domestic work sector shows that domestic work continues to operate in a gray area of informal employment and legal exclusion. Its deep entrenching in economic and cultural devaluation shows how little political urgency there has historically existed to recognize this work as full-fledged labor.[114]

These insights are crucial in understanding the far-reaching consequences of dominant conceptualization of domestic work. Yet alone, they cannot explain why domestic work was not more radically redefined in political contexts in which alternatives were articulated. Moreover, they offer little insight into the political negotiations that pushed these proposals to the margins. The analysis that follows therefore shifts the focus from outcomes to political deliberations and tensions that actively defined and constrained redistributive possibilities.

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[112] Marchetti, Sabrina. Migration and Domestic Work. Springer International Publishing, 2022: 5-7.

[113] Marchetti, Sabrina. Migration and Domestic Work. Springer International Publishing, 2022: 5-7; Franca J Van Hooren, "Intersecting Social Divisions and the Politics of Differentiation: Understanding Exclusionary Domestic Work Policy in the Netherlands," *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society* 25, no. 1 (March 1, 2018): 93.

[114] Margriet Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows: Domestic Workers in the Netherlands," *Theoretical Inquiries in Law* (Tel Aviv) 17, no. 1 (2016): 351–67, https://doi.org/10.1515/til-2016-0013; Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken*.

3.2. The Embedded Value of Domestic Work in the Breadwinner Model

In essence, the feminist movement demanded recognition for the productive value of domestic work and challenged the way women's unpaid labor was taken for granted. Yet, in a sense, its value was already institutionally embedded in the very structure of the Dutch breadwinner model. Men's wages were intended to sustain the entire household and were anchored in the social security and fiscal system as such. In effect, women's domestic labor can be considered to have functioned as an integral component of the husband's income, as this income secured women's positions at home.[115] This logic was reflected in welfare arrangements, which excluded from entitlements such as old-age, disability, and unemployment benefits, but assigned them an individual right to the widow's pension. This pension was designed to allow women to continue in their roles as housewives after their husband's death. The premise that men and women occupied distinct positions within the family justified this asymmetry in the social security as well as the fiscal regulation.[116]

3.2.1. Care and the Incomplete Family

The embedded value of women's domestic labor within this system becomes particularly evident when it is absent. Debates on the position of widowers in the late 1960s and early 1970s illustrate this clearly. Since 1970, widowers could deduct domestic help costs as an extraordinary expense (*buitengewone last*) for three months after the death of a wife.[117] This provision was applied within the framework for extraordinary expenses that had been in place since 1941, which allowed reductions in taxable income for costs related to the maintenance of children, illness, or death.[118] This measure was implemented in response to concerns about the difficulties faced by widowers with young children.[119] However, after its implementation, concerns about adjusting within this short period persisted.[120] The issue of widower's household

[115] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 293–95.
[116] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1979-1980, 27 November 1979, 148–49; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 6 September 1976, 1177–79.
[117] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1973-1974, 21 November 1973, 1127.
[118] Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, "Onderzoek 'Naar integratie van buitengewone uitgaven en zorgtoeslag?,'" officiële publicatie, September 11, 2006, 7, https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29689-112-b1.
[119] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 24 November 1970, 1212–13; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 21 November 1974, 1445.
[120] Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 21 November 1973, 0000205023, Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal (1973); Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 21 November 1974; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1973-1974, 22 November 1973.

costs quickly expanded into broader discussions about the position of other households facing similar costs. As such, it exposed what usually remained an implicit part of the breadwinner model: the costs involved in replacing a wife's domestic labor.

When Garmt Kieft, member of the protestant conservative Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP), drew attention to the difficulties faced by widowers with children once more, other members of Parliament emphasized that this situation was not separate from the financial situation of widows, divorced women, and unmarried mothers with young children. That same year, a motion was adopted that declared that widowers were not an exceptional category but part of a broader group of "incomplete families" that demanded further attention. The costs of domestic help were subsequently incorporated into the *aftrek onvolledig gezin* (deduction for incomplete families) regulation.[121] In the years that followed, this issue would return repeatedly, as the underlying problem appeared to have by no means disappeared.[122]

These arrangements reveal an internal logic of a system in which domestic work was assumed to be a natural component of the family. When this labor was unavailable, exceptions emerged that prompted debate about where private responsibility ended and public support should begin. Whether this was through a wife's death, disability, or, increasingly, her participation in paid employment. The very notion of the 'incomplete family' reflects an idealized family form built on the presence of a caretaker within the family.

3.2.2. Domestic Work and Fiscal Frictions

This norm was reflected in the logic of the fiscal system. Couples living together received a lower tax-free allowance than single households, based on the idea of so-called 'cost-saving factors.' These factors, such as cohabitation and the performance of domestic work by a spouse, were assumed to reduce a couple's living expenses. [123] By labelling domestic work as a 'cost-saving factor,' its economic value was implicitly recognized, while it was simultaneously framed as a self-evident household component. In practice, this fiscal construction implied a relatively heavier taxation for cohabiting households.

Indirectly, this construction penalized the employment of a second earner within the family. When both partners were employed, their earnings were combined for tax purposes,

[121] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 24 November 1970, 1220–32.
[122] Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 21 November 1973, 212121; Handelingen Tweede Kamer 1973-1974 21 November 1973; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 21 November 1974, 1445.
[123] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980–1981, 16 Maart 1981, 49–19.

automatically pushing the second earner's income into higher tax brackets (only one-third of these earnings were partially deductible to mitigate this effect). This was seen by many as an unfair burden on women's paid employment, as they were usually not the primary earners in the household. As such, this framework was deemed an unwelcome negative effect on the promotion of women's labor participation.[124] As more women entered the labor market and gendered roles within the family became more widely questioned, these principles began to increasingly clash with social reality.

An unmistakable shift had already begun to take shape in Parliament by the end of the 1960s. Within the breadwinner model, husbands were legally expected to provide their wives with a household allowance – a provision intended to protect housewives. In 1968, Ko Wierenga (PvdA) proposed extending this obligation to wives, so that they would have to pay their husbands an allowance if family roles were reversed. Although this proposal was rejected on the argument that these arrangements were too exceptional to warrant specific legislation, it reveals that non-normative domestic arrangements were conceivable and up for discussion in Parliament.[125] This occurred in a societal climate that increasingly challenged the self-evident nature of the breadwinner structure, raising political awareness of its shortcomings.

Tax issues related to this structure gradually began to receive more attention. During the discussion of the national budget for 1969, Piet Jongeling of the protestant Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (GPV) declared his strong opposition to an individualization of the tax system, arguing that it would undermine the philosophical foundation of the family. While individualized taxation would remove the heavier taxation on the second earners' employment, Jongeling argued that the material benefits this revision would bring would not necessarily outweigh the costs it would bring to children and family. The government, he argued, should not use fiscal regulation to promote certain behaviors, such as women's labor participation. Regardless of this stance, he did not in principle object the idea of extending tax-deduction for domestic help costs to alleviate the burden on households where women worked outside the home.[126] His position illustrates how even defenders of the system in place recognized shortcomings, but that in practice these tensions were mainly dealt with by adding exception rather than revising the foundation.

[124] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1969-1970, 18 Juni 1970.
[125] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1968-1969, 24 September 1968.
[126] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1968-1969, 12 Maart 1969, 2247–48.

By the mid-1970s, these issues had become more pronounced as discussions continued but implementation of change remained rare. Increasingly, the costs of domestic work emerged as a point of contention. In 1974, Arend Vermaat (ARP) expressed criticism for the lack of reform that was pushed despite evident structural issues. He argued that widowers, non-normative families, and married working women, all faced unavoidable and permanent costs for domestic help. Emphasizing the structural nature of these 'exceptions,' Vermaat questioned why the government did not implement permanent regulations for these households.[127] Two years later, Meiny Epema-Brugman (PvdA) expanded on this argument by arguing that costs for domestic help should qualify as work-related tax-deductible expenses, because they were directly linked to women's access to paid employment. State Secretary M.J. van Rooijen (KVP) dismissed these costs as being work-related. For Epema-Brugman, however, this highlighted precisely the problematic male-centeredness of the system. As housework was deemed a 'private' responsibility, and, thus, women's responsibility, it continued to hinder women's access to the labor market.[128] Framing these costs as a labor market requirement justified intervention.

These examples illustrate how the tax system, like the social security system to which it was directly tied, continued to rely on a model in which domestic work was treated as a natural, cost-free component of the household. As soon as households deviated from this norm, which became an increasingly frequent occurrence due to changing family patterns and the growing participation of women in the labor force, they directly clashed with the logic of the fiscal system. Domestic work thus emerged as one of the most acute symptoms of how this model had become disconnected from reality. In this context, the pressing question was whether the state should take responsibility for the structural challenges faced by certain groups where this labor was not available. In an effort to address these concerns, politicians introduced and discussed fiscal exceptions, but these only served to highlight the disparity between the system's structure and social reality. When the self-evidence of the breadwinner model eroded, the focus eventually shifted from addressing exceptions to adjusting the system itself.

3.2.3. The Genderless Breadwinner Alternative

Over the course of the 1970s, focus shifted from questions about the necessity of change to questions about how it was to be implemented. The individualization of tax and social security

[127] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 21 November 1974, 1485–86.
[128] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 6 September 1976, 1191–94.

frameworks was increasingly put forward as the most logical route to change because it would strengthen women's independence. Yet while the removal of the breadwinner construct from policy language was advocated for in this process, others defended its persistence.

An alternative vision emerged in proposals for a genderless breadwinner model. In 1979, amid rising unemployment (which will return more prominently in the next chapter), Bart Verburgh (GPV) argued that retaining to the concept of the breadwinner was essential in fostering an equal division of labor. He argued that its importance was not so much in the male identity of the breadwinner as in the underlying one-earner structure behind it.[129] A key concern regarding the removal of breadwinner terminology was that these measures could create greater inequality between families. Verburgh warned of social tensions when "[…] without any logical reason, both the man and woman in one family have a full-time job, while in another family neither the man nor the woman can find paid employment." Verburgh articulated a broader societal fear of growing gaps between single- and dual-income households.

Moreover, Verburgh argued that the removal of the term 'breadwinner' from policy was not necessarily in favor of gender equality. He criticized the way that paid employment was taken for granted as the primary benchmark for emancipation and instead centered his stance on a 'gender-neutral breadwinner model.'[130] While it should be noted that such a gender-neutral framing of the breadwinner model might obscure the structural effects of gender on work and earning opportunities, it presents an alternative perspective on what an equal division of labor might imply. This could entail a gender-neutral breadwinner and a gender-neutral house partner.

This perspective fit within a broader pattern among Christian parties, in which the value of housework was consistently emphasized. The Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP), known for its stringent confessional principles, emphasized the value of domestic work and called out the materialistic and monetary approach to domestic labor of other parties.[131] The ARP, although much less regressive in its ideals than the SGP, expressed similar concerns. In 1976, Jeltien Kraaijeveld-Wouters (ARP) had warned against reducing emancipation solely to paid labor, stating:

> When the emancipation of women is translated almost exclusively into women's participation in the financially rewarded labor process, we believe this not only degrades the concept of 'emancipation'

[129] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 26 Juni 1979, 5768.
[130] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 26 Juni 1979, 5766–68.
[131] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980–1981, 18 Februari 1981, No. 0000158403 (1981), 49-42-49–43.

> but also misinterprets it. This places women solely within a performance-based society, in which a person's status is derived solely from their economic value. The broader narrative of women as human beings is then unacceptably narrowed down to women in relation to wage labor. Of course, the same narrative can be applied to men. This also requires the recognition that the emancipation of women is entirely linked to the emancipation of men, and that this must lead to the emancipation of humanity.[132]

Therefore, she advocated for an emancipation policy that incorporated the entirety of the social, economic, and political domain and questioned the way the government positioned emancipation within its broader policy.

It is striking that while some of these perspectives were rooted in conservative values, they added a critical dimension to prevailing assumptions about the role of paid work in emancipation policy. This led to remarkably progressive and anti-capitalist critique. By underscoring the notion that human value cannot be solely derived from paid employment, a conceptual framework for rethinking emancipation was advanced. Verburgh's gender-neutral breadwinner and Kraaijeveld-Wouter's insistence on the equal emancipation of men show how this perspective opened the door for inclusive notions of an emancipated society. These notions are addressed in more detail in section 3.4, which delves into the discussion of alternative forms of redistribution.

3.2.4. Accounting for Domestic Work

By the late 1970s, both the tax system and social security were increasingly confronted with the structural limit of the breadwinner model. It was increasingly recognized that financial independence demanded individual taxation and social security entitlements. Ideas defending this model were therefore increasingly overshadowed by perspectives that emphasized the need for individualization and independence, particularly through paid employment. This development formed the background against which debates on domestic work intensified.

In debates on fiscal equality in 1981, Len Rempt-Halmmans de Jongh, member of the liberal VVD, condemned the cost-saving definition of domestic work as degrading. She argued that for millions of Dutch women domestic work effectively functioned as "the main source of income," despite not generating a wage.[133] Her criticism carried an implicit critique of the system failing to acknowledge this work as 'real' labor. She posed that the supposed 'saving'

[132] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 21 Juni 1976, 1131.
[133] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 16 Maart 1981, 49–11.

aspect of this labor was largely offset by the wage sacrifice made by the stay-at-home partner and argued that removing institutional barriers would encourage more women to partake in the labor market. Eventually, this would render the single-earner phenomenon decreasingly significant.[134]

That existing fiscal structures were increasingly perceived as remnants of an outdated model is evident from the views on this matter by State Secretary Jeltien Kraaijeveld-Wouters (mentioned in the previous section), by then a member of the Christian Democratic CDA, a merger of the Christian parties ARP, CHU, and KVP. She emphasized that "We all know that housework is extremely valuable. When a housewife is no longer present in a family, everyone experiences firsthand what it means when she can no longer perform those tasks," even though this value was not incorporated in the systems as such.[135] Her statement encapsulated a pervasive sentiment that the prevailing model had become untenable. However, there was no consensus on how this value of this labor was to be incorporated into the system.

In this discussion, the argument for tax-refundable domestic help reoccurred. Some argued for its significance in encouraging women's labor participation, while others expressed reservations about using taxes as a means to achieve emancipatory goals. At that point, this discussion had been going on for over a decade. Besides arguing that outsourcing domestic work was a voluntary choice that could be absorbed by the higher income of the dual earning family, Hans Kombrink (PvdA) pointed to a paradox in this debate. While debates on emancipation strongly opposed the way domestic work was treated as a self-evident component of the household, incorporating paid domestic work as a tax-refundable feature suggested precisely that: that domestic work was an implicit resource to which existed a certain right. Even more so, Kombrink argued that outsourcing conflicted with emancipatory ideals, stating that "[…] from an emancipatory perspective, it is not entirely clear why both working partners should not be able to share household chores to a certain extent."[136] In his argument, Kombrink exposed the tension between opposing models of emancipation: those that were grounded in the redistribution of unpaid labor within households, and those that focused on economic recognition of this work and sought to redistribute it beyond the household.

Attempts to gain recognition of the economic value of domestic work raised practical and legal dilemmas, as well as fundamental questions about the role of the state, market, and family

[134] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 16 Maart 1981, 49–12.
[135] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 16 Maart 1981, 49–42.
[136] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 16 Maart 1981, 49-6-49–7.

in shaping labor divisions. As demonstrated in the aforementioned examples, outsourcing of domestic labor to the market formed a recurring theme in discussions on gender equality and women's work. This approach, however, was continually met with criticism.

3.3. Market Outsourcing

With women's growing participation in the labor market, the perception of both unpaid and paid domestic work underwent a transformation. Hiring domestic help, once a privilege largely confined to higher-class households, was increasingly seen as a practical response to increasing pressures of combining household tasks with paid work. Sjoukje Botman argues that the increased emphasis on paid employment in emancipation policy contributed to a cultural downgrading of domestic work, reinforcing the framing of domestic work as a burden to be minimized as much as possible.[137] One of the ways this undervaluation of domestic work has manifested itself is the regulation and reward for paid domestic work. In most European states, the domestic service sector is not treated as a regular economic sector but is characterized by a lack of labor protections, limited social mobility, and a high amount of undeclared work.[138] Much like unpaid domestic work, the paid domestic work sector is characterized by a 'private,' unregulated, and largely invisible nature, making it a challenging object of study. Yet the peculiar position of this form of work and its explicit monetary reward offer insight into how domestic work – whether paid or unpaid – is considered different from other forms of work. Even more, it provides insight into whose perspectives are not addressed when talking about emancipation from domestic work.[139]

Although empirical evidence on the paid domestic work sector is hard to acquire due to the sector's invisible nature, research suggests that the demand for domestic services in the Netherlands began to expand from the 1970s onward.[140] By the 1980s, shortages in the supply

[137] Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken*, 45–47.
[138] Numbers from the EU estimate that 6,8 million out of the estimated 12,8 million workers active within the personal and household services (PHS) sector work undeclared. A significant difference can be observed between care work (i.e. direct care), such as child or elderly, and non-care work (i.e. indirect care), including household tasks such as cleaning. While an estimated 34% of direct care takes place undeclared, this is estimated to be as high as 70% for indirect care work. See: Martin Guzi et al., "Tackling Undeclared Work in the Personal and Household Services Sector," International Labour Organization, September 2021, 2.
[139] Angélica Morán-Castañeda, "Theorizing the Value of Work through the Eyes of Latin American Domestic Workers in the Netherlands" (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2022), 5; Guzi et al., "Tackling Undeclared Work in the Personal and Household Services Sector."
[140] Botman, *Gewoon Schoonmaken*, 42.

of domestic help had become a recurring trend in many Western states.[141] However, this high demand seems to have hardly translated into better wages or labor conditions in the sector. On the contrary, the domestic work sector has always occupied a marginalized position in the Dutch post-war welfare state. Personal household staff was initially excluded from labor protections due to the supposed private nature of their work. Starting in 1967, this exclusion was modified to account for the scale of employment. Domestic staff employed by a private household for three days a week was now included in these labor protections. However, since most employment was of a small scale and for multiple employers, the majority of domestic workers remained excluded.[142]

3.3.1. Politics of Undervaluation

As discussed in Chapter 2, wages formed a continuous high-stakes political affair from the 1950s until the early 1980s.[143] During the early 1970s, the domestic work sector emerged repeatedly in discussions on wage regulation. These discussions were continuations of the debates surrounding minimum wage law that was in force since 1969.[144] While minimum wage law had been implemented, domestic personnel was a prominent exception to this new law. A motion to end this exemption was filed in 1971 by Nel Barendregt (PvdA), demanding the inclusion of domestic personnel under this minimum wage by 1973. She based this motion on advice from the Labor Foundation (Stichting van de Arbeid). Nevertheless, the proposal was met with much resistance from other members of Parliament.[145]

Primary objections to the motion concerned the state of the sector, which was presented as backward, fragmented, and informal. This led Minister of Social Affairs and Public Health Bauke Roolvink (ARP) to argue that ending the sector's exclusion status at that moment would not serve the interests of anyone involved. His motivation was the sector's significant lag behind other sectors and the difficult enforcement of any regulation due to its fragmented

[141] De Ruijter, 'Trends in the Outsourcing of Domestic Work and Childcare in the Netherlands,' 223; Angélica Morán-Castañeda. "Theorizing the Value of Work Through the Eyes of Latin American Domestic Workers in the Netherlands". *Social Policy for Development (SPD)*, 2022, 3.
[142] Eva Cremers-Hartman, "De (deeltijd) huishoudelijk werker en de particuliere zorgverlener," in *Arbeidsrechtelijke themata – Bijzondere arbeidsverhoudingen* (2021), 645–60.
[143] Mellink and Merijn Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 94-113.
[144] Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, "Wetstechnische informatie van Wet minimumloon en minimumvakantiebijslag," wet, accessed July 24, 2025, https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0002638/2019-01-01/0/informatie#tab-wijzigingenoverzicht.
[145] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 13 Januari 1971, 2215.

nature. Koos Rietkerk (VVD) advanced this argument by stating that rising costs of hiring domestic workers, due to direct implementation of minimum wage law, could only result in two scenarios: either domestic workers would suffer due to large-scale unemployment, or, alternatively, the law would be widely circumvented. The Minister stated he was not willing to take responsibility for either consequence. As the majority feared the difficulty of regulating the large amount of undeclared work, the motion was ultimately dismissed.[146]

Yet these statements were primarily rooted in speculation and sentiment, rather than evidence.[147] Barendregt highlighted the absence of empirical support for the arguments against the motion. Regardless, members spoke of the sector as self-evidently problematic. Rietkerk's response, "Certainly, you're familiar with the reality of domestic workers these days, aren't you?" serves to illustrate this. The minister subsequently framed this supposed reality as "completely backward," due to structural neglect in the past.[148] Rather than prompting intervention, the sector's disadvantaged position was continuously used to justify its exclusion.[149]

The repeated warning of possible destabilization led to arguments stating that denying minimum wage protections was ultimately in the best interests of domestic workers. This denial of a minimum wage, however, not only denied domestic workers labor rights but also symbolically devalued their labor. By failing to prioritize the inclusion of domestic work under minimum wage legislation, this labor was implicitly denied the recognition as "real" work.

3.3.2. The Irony of Undervaluation

While the historical context of wage concerns is important in understanding these arguments, they nevertheless reveal an ironic evaluation of domestic work. As part of the minimum wage debate in 1971, Fia van Veenendaal-van Meggelen of groep-Goedhart, a party that had split from the PvdA that deemed its new course too radical, emphasized the importance of domestic personnel for families with children, sick, or elderly. She stated:

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[146] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 13 Januari 1971, 2212–16.

[147] Recent research on South-Africa suggests that fears of unemployment resulting from minimum wage implementation are largely unfounded. The implementation of a minimum wage for domestic service workers has not led to a reduced demand for domestic work. See:
P. J. E. Fleurkens, *De Arbeidsrechtelijke En Socialezekerheidsrechtelijke Positie van de Dienstverlener Aan Huis* (Tilburg University. Sociaal Recht en Sociale Politiek, 2012), 37, http://arno.uvt.nl/show.cgi?fid=122364.

[148] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 13 Januari 1971, 2216.

[149] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 19 Januari 1971; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1971-1972, 21 December 1971; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1971-1972, 9 Maart 1972.

> If the compensations and wages for this service are set too high, we fear that we would be putting the cart before the horse, which would not serve the cause. If we force households to comply with [Barendregt's] motion's proposal, subsidy burdens will increase dramatically. That would be beyond our ability to control, which is why we will vote against the motion.[150]

In other words, the very importance of domestic workers' labor was used to justify its principal undervaluation. Because domestic work was considered indispensable for households, it was denied minimum wage entitlements and social protections. This prioritization of families' needs over workers' rights reveals a recurring paradox in parliamentary argumentation.

In a Senate debate on women's emancipation later that year, Irene Vorrink (PvdA) highlighted this paradox, stating:

> There is something strange happening with domestic work. As long as it is done by an unpaid worker (the married housewife) it is wonderful and important work: washing dishes, making beds, taking children to school, cooking, running errands, mopping the bathroom, cleaning, cleaning, and more cleaning. This is so incredibly valuable; it is worth more than gold. No sooner does a paid worker (the domestic help) take over part of this work, and the gilded carriage reverts to a pumpkin, the mice again take the place of the horses in front of the carriage, and the coachman turns back into a very large rat. In short, Cinderella a is back at the hearth. Her work is, speaking from this logic, just as priceless as gold, yet it is paid less than the minimum wage, so much less so that it cannot be immediately raised [to that minimum].[151]

So, while domestic labor was celebrated as invaluable when performed by housewives, it was devalued when monetized and performed by paid workers. Vorrink thus underscored a deeper problem with the general sentiment towards 'women's work.'

Arguments for facilitating the replacement of domestic tasks through market outsourcing to ease women's transition into the workforce concerned a specific group of women that had been free from some of the burdens others continued to deal with. Vorrink therefore advocated for attention to be paid not just to women wishing to work outside the home but also to those already doing so who remained much more invisible in these discussions.[152] Although she does not explicitly mention it as such, this is an important allusion to the women for who being a housewife, even in a time where that was a norm, remained a privilege.

[150] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 19 Januari 1971, 2289.
[151] Handelingen Eerste Kamer, 1970-1971, 2 Maart 1971, 749.
[152] Handelingen Eerste Kamer, 1970-1971, 2 Maart 1971, 749.

3.3.3. Emancipation Blind Spots

Contemporaries did not overlook this disparity. Regardless, in 1981, Secretary of State for Economic Affairs Piet van Zeil (KVP) argued that the exclusion of regulation existed "Not because of a lesser appreciation of this type of work, but because of the particular relationship that should exist when working in a private household."[153] It was precisely this argument on the nature of domestic work that was considered to be so problematic. From the examples in paragraph 3.2 it could already be concluded that the problem was not so much a matter of the denial of the value of housework, but rather of the lack of policies that implemented the explicit recognition of this value. Especially amongst progressive circles, it was pointed out how arguments on the nature of domestic work proved little justification for the continued exclusion of domestic labor from labor regulation. What was emphasized in these perspectives, was that domestic work was work too.[154]

This same logic, however, had been used in arguments to systematically facilitate outsourcing of this work to promote women's paid labor participation. The emphasis on women's paid labor, however, failed to address the fundamental undervaluation of domestic work itself. Ultimately, market-driven solutions perpetuated the invisibility of those who performed this work. 1970s parliamentary debates discuss the topic of domestic help extensively as a solution to new societal pressures but the work itself remained informal, unregulated, and undervalued. In the decades that followed the same arguments – that the sector was too private and fragmented, or too costly to regulate as a 'normal' economic sector – continued to be used to justify its exceptional treatment. This particular conceptualization of domestic labor was a strong indication of the types of labor redistribution conceivable in Parliament.

3.4. Household Labor Redistribution

What is striking about the extensive discussions surrounding domestic work in the 1970s, is just how little men were discussed. In debates on the fiscal compensation for domestic help, for example, the possibility of men performing part of this work remained virtually unaddressed. Yet in wider discussions on emancipation there were proposals to shift the division of domestic labor within the family itself. As the recognition for the value of domestic work was demanded,

[153] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 17 Juni 1982, 3769.
[154] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1971-1972, 9 Maart 1972, 19; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 17 Juni 1982, 3749–70.

and equal rights to labor participation became an increasingly prominent topic, discussions arose about how the burdens of domestic work might be shared more fairly within the household. This proposed redistribution would inevitably include men in the responsibility of emancipation, for they would have to take on a substantial share of unpaid domestic tasks. The following section reflects on discussions in which this idea of redistribution was mentioned explicitly.

3.4.1. Men's Emancipation

During the meeting of the Standing Committee on Education and Science in 1970, speakers emphasized the importance of the at-home situations in educational development. This was a reason for Piet Jongeling (GPV) to argue against government incentives for women to work outside the home. The important role that women were assigned in preparing children for education was used to argue that girls should be prepared for these teaching tasks in domestic education, to provide for the next generation. Minister of Education and Science Gerard Veringa (KVP) took a similar stance. In a remark about 'the emancipated woman,' he cited scientific findings that connected women's emancipation to compromises being made in the task of raising children. This framing thus presented the 'emancipation' of women as a domestic problem.[155]

Instead of accepting this premise, Henk Vonhoff (VVD) redirected attention to what he called "the lack of emancipated men." He stated:

> I wonder to what extent this is a consequence of the fact that emancipated women are not sufficiently matched by emancipated men. It is clear that if there is a social shift in women's roles, as they participate more actively in public life, but this is not simultaneously compensated by men taking on some of the traditional household tasks, a decline is inevitable.

Vonhoff is therefore critical of research findings like these, "however scientific and numerical they may be," as long as this element is not taken into consideration.[156] As such, his intervention presents a rare moment in which domestic responsibility shifted to men.

In a discussion on the Budget for the Ministry of Social Affairs in 1971 for the upcoming year, Barendregt (PvdA) had similarly suggested that research on the expansion of part-time work opportunities should not focus only on married women but should include men.

[155] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1969-1970, 9 April 1970, H13–14.
[156] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1969-1970, 9 April 1970, H23.

Encouraging men to take on part-time work too, she argued, could foster a more equal distribution of household responsibilities.[157] The need for a more equal distribution of labor between men and women was a reason for Barendregt to later reject the controversial 'domestic wage' (*huishoudloon*), which Man Vrouw Maatschappij had discussed in response to international developments. The PvdA rejected such a benefit for housewives, arguing that it would merely reinforce existing gendered labor divisions.[158]

While the feminist movement had gained political visibility with the establishment of the first Emancipation Council in 1974, the question of what emancipation entailed was critically assessed in the ensuing years. In a 1976 discussion on the topic of 'women's emancipation' Van der Lek, of the Pacifist Socialist Party (PSP) was very critical of the term 'emancipation' and argued instead for the use of 'liberation' or 'the pursuit of social equality.' He argued that speaking of 'women's emancipation' implied that women were the ones who needed to be emancipated from their 'backward' positions. Instead, he insisted that focus should be directed to what is actively repressing women.[159] This is a critical note that can also be read in Van Ostaijen and Wolf's later reflections on emancipation policy.

Van der Lek's radical criticism of emancipation policy included a critical note on the structural exploitation surrounding domestic work, which he argued was not only based on gendered prejudice but constituted an essential part of an exploitative economic system. An equal division of domestic tasks, he argued, would not solve the structural undervaluation of this labor itself, as the economic logic that devaluated domestic work remained intact. Whereas Barendregt had rejected the notion of wages for housework, Van der Lek defended the principle, stating that its recognition as productive labor was necessary to dismantle its exploitation.[160] From this perspective, he argued that:

> The emancipation—or liberation—of women is inextricably linked to the liberation of people from their dependence on wages, from their alienation, with a total change in the situations of dependence that currently exist for the majority of the population in an exploitative system.

From this anti-capitalist perspective, Van der Lek argued that the government should not only focus on dismantling discriminatory legislation but also actively create space for alternative divisions of labor. Like Barendregt, he saw part-time as a means of reorganizing labor, albeit

[157] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1971-1972, 8 December 1971, 1633.
[158] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1975, 9 September 1975, 5839.
[159] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 21 Juni 1976, 1129.
[160] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1975, 9 September 1975, 5839–40.

within a broader project of social and economic transformation; Chapter 4 explores this in more detail.[161]

Yet the idea of an inclusionary emancipation was not solely found amongst radicals. In the same debate on women's emancipation, Albert-Jan Evenhuis (VVD) argued that education could play an important role in shaping equal work opportunities for women. He problematized how gendered education models systematically directed girls towards roles traditionally deemed appropriate for women, while boys received broader preparation for the labor market. Although he expressed an underlying labor market-oriented focus, Evenhuis did not simply argue for ending domestic education. Instead, he advocated for its expansion and modernization, arguing that this education could benefit both men and women, as it responded to practical needs and promoted emancipation beyond the narrow frame of labor-market participation.[162] Given their later strong emphasis on the market, it is noteworthy that the liberal VVD in the mid-1970s emphasized the importance of the sphere beyond paid employment in the process towards emancipation.

In 1982, Pieter ter Veer (D'66) stated that emancipation could not be completed "without a deliberate knock on men's doors." While portraying emancipation as an ever-changing process, in need of constant questioning and adjustment, he asked the State Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment, Hedy d'Ancona (PvdA), how she would handle the discrepancy between the vanguard that understands this issue, the large group in the middle that follows, and the group that has not even started moving yet. For Ter Veer, men dominated this latter group.[163] On the role division in paid and unpaid work he noted:

> The fact that women are becoming more involved in society means a corresponding shift in household responsibilities to men. A role reversal leads to the working woman with a househusband. This should be possible, with all its in-between forms. Caring for each other, the right and the obligation to do so, has always been women's responsibility. This must change, because it's fair to the woman who is entering the economic labor process, and because it's fair to the man who is being allowed to descend from his pedestal.[164]

It is evident that Ter Veer's concept of 'emancipation' encompassed not just the liberation of women but also the broader dismantling of societal gender expectations. In this statement, the

[161] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 21 Juni 1976, 1129.
[162] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 6 September 1976, 1177–79.
[163] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 8 Februari 1982, 13-6-13–17.
[164] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 8 Februari 1982, 13-6-13–17.

cultural dimension of ideas on emancipation overtakes the economic aspects of labor redistribution.

3.4.2. Labor Redistribution

The idea of collective working-hour reduction, promoted by Kool-Smit and others, was reflected in critical visions of a gender-inclusive emancipation. Both Barendregt and Van der Lek named part-time work as a means through which to achieve unpaid and paid labor redistribution. Rather than seeing part-time work as a solution for one partner to continue carrying responsibility for caring tasks, it was part of a broader vision in which everyone would perform paid work for a shorter number of hours per day (or per week). This would not necessarily mean that less work would be performed but essentially implied that more time would become available for unpaid labor, particularly for men, while room was created for women's participation in paid labor. As such, a more gender equal distribution of labor could arise.

In 1978, Van der Doef (PvdA) submitted a motion advocating for a collective working-hour reduction. The motion argued that this would both create more job opportunities and made a fairer distribution of household responsibilities possible.[165] Van der Doef argued there was a genuine demand for this change, particularly among youth and women, who were strongly affected by rising unemployment rates. Simultaneously, it offered genuine opportunities for transforming gendered role divisions, which were a recurring point of discussion. Thus, he called on the government to implement active policy measures to promote this social development.[166] The idea was clear: reducing working hours was to redistribute *all* work more equally among society.

In its stance on this matter, the PvdA thus emphasized how paid labor participation in itself could not constitute emancipation. In 1982, Elske ter Veld (PvdA) stated:

> It's not participation in paid employment itself that is emancipating—if it were, almost all men would already be emancipated—however much it contributes to women's independent incomes. It is essential that all work, at home, in society, and in paid employment, is performed by people, without distinction based on gender.[167]

[165] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 22 November 1978, 1631–32.
[166] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 22 November 1978, 1632.
[167] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 8 Februari 1982, 17.

The role of part-time labor in these ideas of redistribution, and how it came to reinforce gendered divisions of labor rather than dismantle them, is explored in the next chapter.

3.5. Conclusion

Debates on domestic work in the 1970s illustrate how political actors continued to build on gendered assumptions about domestic work, even in debates on changing labor divisions. Although shifting family norms and ideas on women's labor participation evoked discussion, the underlying conceptualization of domestic work remained intact. This becomes clear in the fact that solutions were sought extensively in replacing women's unpaid domestic labor through market outsourcing, rather than, for example, redistributing it within the household.

The paid domestic work sector, in turn, was excluded from basis labor protections, justified by arguments that its connection to the private sphere made regulation impossible or even undesirable. This was not only to protect the users of the services of this sector, but also the workers themselves. Perspectives from domestic workers themselves, however, remain notably absent from discussions. Throughout the 1970s, the value of domestic work was more and more directly acknowledged in parliamentary discussions, in particular in the context of 'women's emancipation.' Regardless of this development, a structural revaluation of domestic work did not occur, thus confirming a recurring point made in research on the paid domestic work sphere.

Nevertheless, parliamentary debates from the 1970s demonstrate that ideas of a more expansive, gender-inclusive emancipation emerged across the political spectrum. Christian perspectives experimented with ideas of a genderless breadwinner, emphasizing the immaterial value of care work, while criticizing the overemphasis on paid labor as a means of emancipation. Different political parties noted on men's role in processes of emancipation, emphasizing their responsibility in unpaid domestic work. More radical visions emerged amongst progressives, who called upon a complete restructuring of societal labor divisions to come to a more equal redistribution of paid and unpaid labor. These visions demonstrate that critical views of redistribution were imaginable. Yet they remained largely theoretical. Their limited impact can only be understood when placing ideas about unpaid labor in the context of debates about paid labor, as these together determined which visions of labor redistribution were deemed feasible and which were not.

4. The Redistribution of Paid Work: Part-Time Solutions

By the late 1970s, paid work had gained increasing significance as a marker of women's emancipation. When briefly touching upon the topic of emancipation in 1979, Nell Ginjaar-Maas (VVD) mentioned how domestic responsibilities remained a barrier for many women to participate in paid employment. To grant women more freedom to work outside the home, Ginjaar-Maas proposed three solutions: redistributing domestic work within the family, outsourcing through domestic help, and insourcing through technological advancements. In response, Siepie Langedijk-de Jong (PvdA) suggested a fourth solution: part-time work. For Ginjaar-Maas, however, this was already an implicit part of the first solution.[168] This exchange is an intriguing example of the ambiguity of the meaning attributed to part-time work and its role in the redistribution of paid and unpaid work. Who part-time work was intended for and whether it was meant as a temporary or permanent solution cannot be derived from this fragment, reflecting how the topic remained a site of negotiation throughout the decade.

Today we see that part-time work has entrenched gendered expectations of unpaid labor rather than redistributed these tasks within the family. This raises the pivotal question of how the association of part-time work with gendered redistribution could evaporate when this promise of redistribution never materialized. This is related to broader questions concerning the position of part-time work in debates on emancipation and the interests and assumptions that shaped its institutionalization. To address these questions, this chapter centers on the following question: What do 1970s parliamentary discussions about part-time work reveal about conceptualizations of gendered labor redistribution?

Three broad themes can be traced back from this chapter's selection of sources, which form the structural foundation of this chapter. First, this chapter examines the position of part-time work in debates on emancipation. Second, it analyzes part-time work in system critical perspectives and visions for alternative organizations of society. Finally, it studies ideas of part-time work as a market instrument.

4.1. From Women's Emancipation to Work Redistribution

As De Groot has argued, growing pressure on the international competitive position of the post-war Dutch labor market changed the attitude of policy makers and employers on female labor participation. By the late 1950s, part-time work was promoted as an appropriate form of

[168] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1979-1980, 24 Oktober 1979, 554–55.

women's work, allowing women to continue caring responsibilities while safeguarding the breadwinner model. New policy was intended to create a balance between full-time working women, mainly working in industry, and full-time housewives, who did not participate in the labor market.[169] Although the demands of employer and policy makers were important in establishing a part-time labor market for women as a socially acceptable form of labor, women's demand for this labor soon increased. As an accessible entrance into the labor market, part-time work became an important feminist demand. While far from granting gender equality, it held potential as a first step toward broader equality in the labor market and at home. So, when labor shortages disappeared in the 1970s and demand for women's part-time labor declined, the number of women seeking part-time employment continued to grow.[170]

The limited supply of part-time jobs was a growing concern in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Feminist sociologist Hedy D'Ancona, co-founder of *Man Vrouw Maatschappij*, estimated that around 325.000 women were 'invisibly unemployed' in 1974. While these women were actively seeking part-time employment they were not registered as such and thus did not appear in official statistics. Structural discrimination contributed to this invisibility, as women's lack of individual entitlements to social protection provided little incentive to register officially as unemployed.[171] For those who did find employment, the dual labor market distinction between full-time and part-time workers added another layer of structural disadvantage to women's labor position. Part-time jobs were usually low-paid, marginalized positions, which offered little opportunities for career advancement. Whereas full-time workers were protected by welfare regulations such as unemployment insurance, pension rights, and minimum wage laws, part-time workers were granted no such protections.[172] As such, part-time work was a much-debated topic in the 1970s that closely responded to wider social transformations that occurred in this period, including rising women's labor participation, shifting family norms and ideas on gender equality.

The following section discusses some of these discussions and sheds light on the perceived barriers to 'women's emancipation' and the proposed solutions. As such, they offer insights into ideas about women's work, gendered divisions of labor, and what exactly

[169] de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era." 784-6.
[170] Tijdens, *Een Wereld van Verschil*, 11.
[171] de Groot, "Part-Time Employment in the Breadwinner Era," 765.
[172] Timon de Groot, "Making Part-Time Work a Fully-Fledged Alternative: How the Dutch Social Partners Responded to a Dual Labour Market, 1966-1993," *Labor History* (New York) 62, nos. 5–6 (2021): 762–80, https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2021.1994533.

emancipation was supposed to entail. As will become clear, the recurrence of certain themes reveals the extent to which these ideas were capable of effecting change.

4.1.1. Paid Employment and the Breakdown of Tradition

As Chapter 2 already alluded to, ideas about marriage and the family changed significantly over the twentieth century. Yet as the family had formed the fundamental principle on which welfare regulation was built, this brought its complications.[173] An increasingly pressing issue was the financial position of divorced women.[174] Not having worked for a long time, and often having to combine work with caring for young children, made it difficult for many to find employment that would allow them financial independence. In practice, a policy of tolerance had existed for years that allowed them to receive social assistance (Bijstand) without the obligation to be available to the labor market, which many women depended on.[175] While members of the House of Representatives agreed that the financial position of single mothers demanded government's attention, the solutions they proposed varied greatly. Improving part-time employment opportunities for women was one of them, but certainly not the only one.

The financial situation of single women was not just related to their access to the labor market but was closely tied to social structures surrounding the family. From this perspective, Anneke Goudsmit (D'66) problematized the legal concept of alimony. Rather than having to rely on an ex-husband for financial support after divorce, Goudsmit emphasized individual rights to paid employment, stating:

> Marriage is not a life insurance and should after divorce not be considered as such. We believe that every human being should be able to take care of their own livelihood. Society should be arranged in such a way that everyone is educated as such. Everyone, including married women, who want to, should be able to participate in the labor process.[176]

This example illustrates how Goudsmit explicitly links women's inequality to their systematic exclusion from the labor market, and, consequently, from financial self-sufficiency. For Goudsmit, alimony is another legal instrument that enforces women's financial dependence on men. Instead, she seeks a solution in the provision of labor market-oriented education, part-

[173] Hengstmengel, "Ontwikkelingen in het personen- en familierecht (1950 - heden)," 309; Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 295.
[174] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 10 Maart 1971.
[175] Hellendoorn, *Kostwinners En Verliezers*, 298.
[176] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 10 Maart 1971, 3279.

time employment, and childcare to create better work opportunities for women and overcome systematic suppression.[177]

A very different perspective emerged from a Christian-conservative angle. Representing the ARP, Hannie van Leeuwen emphasized a shared sentiment in the need to create "equal development opportunities" for women, endorsing means such as improved opportunities for vocational education and retraining. Nevertheless, she noted a difference with broader sentiment in the debate in the implications associated with this goal. This deviation did not so much stem from a difference in the importance attached to work itself, but more so from a difference in how work is defined.[178]

Like Goudsmit, Van Leeuwen offered a critical perspective on alimony, albeit for different reasons. Van Leeuwen problematized the centralization of women's labor participation as the highest goal of any possible successful emancipation. Feminist arguments framed alimony as compensation not only for children's living expenses but also as partial compensation for the care work performed for those children. The underlying assumption behind this was that the children's primary caretaker was unable to work full-time outside the home – or must make expensive childcare arrangements in order to do so. Van Leeuwen argued that many marriages were based on an intentional division of labor in which men were breadwinner and women were full-time caregiver. Therefore, she questioned whether a breadwinner's responsibilities should end upon divorce if a married couple voluntarily chose for this division during marriage.[179] By explicitly expressing support for the choice of women to solely focus on their roles as mothers, the ARP explicitly acknowledged that domestic work was work in itself.

While unmistakably coming from a conservative orientation (there is no suggestion of the possibility of stay-at-home fathers), Van Leeuwen irrefutably demands that ex-husbands take responsibility for their role in the financial problems of divorced women.[180] Goudsmit's reasoning, on the other hand, makes emancipation primarily women's responsibility. While undeniably addressing important factors in improving women's labor market opportunities, divorced men are released from any responsibilities in her argument. While the promotion of part-time work opportunities (as one of many measures to improve women's working opportunities) is presented as a liberating tool, in practice, it presented a vehicle through which

[177] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 10 Maart 1971, 3278–79.
[178] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 10 Maart 1971, 3310–11.
[179] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 10 Maart 1971, 3311.
[180] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1970-1971, 10 Maart 1971, 3311.

women alone had to adapt to an unequal system. This example illustrates the interconnection between ideas about family, work, care, independence, and the question of who is responsible for 'emancipation.'

The question of responsibility was directly reflected in discussions on labor policy. In 1971, a legal measure was discussed in Parliament that would prohibit the termination of employment for women on the basis of marriage or pregnancy. In this discussion, Minister Jaap Boersma (ARP) of Social Affairs emphasized that developments towards labor equality were still in their infancy, given that women were still systematically excluded from many work sectors, often being assigned roles with lower status and compensation than men, and facing unfavorable employment conditions.[181] Boersma asserted that the eradication of workplace inequality was to be achieved through the provision of legal protection against discriminatory practices and the facilitation of employment opportunities for married women. The latter was to be realized through initiatives such as part-time employment mediation and the provision of information services. However, he acknowledged that this approach was a mere pragmatic utilization of available resources, reflecting a prevailing traditional attitude toward the integration of married women into the Dutch labor market. Although the Minister articulated a progressive stance on women's labor participation, he demonstrated little willingness to pursue more ambitious reforms.

When Barendregt (PvdA) inquired about research initiatives on part-time employment for men, Boersma replied cautiously. He noted that, if research on "the part-time man, whatever this may be" indicated opportunities to expand part-time work for men, these opportunities should be pursued. Yet, he added that "we should not over-emancipate ourselves, of course, and I assume that this is not the intention of [Barendregt] either." By associating Barendregt's suggestion of part-time work as a gender-neutral form of employment with "over-emancipation," the minister illuminated his conception of ideal forms of employment, and its gendered implications.[182]

Boersma's response fits within the broader policy orientation of the early 1970s Christian-Democratic cabinet in which part-time work functioned primarily as a temporary solution for women within a traditionally organized labor market. By presenting it as a non-ideal form of labor, the minister indirectly reinforced an underlying view of women's role in the labor market as secondary. As a result, men were largely excluded from the discussion while

[181] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1971-1972, 14 December 1971.
[182] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1971-1972, 14 December 1971, 1763.

emancipation was framed as a women's issue once again. Over the course of the 1970s, this gendered framework increasingly drew criticism.

4.1.2. The Gendered Boundaries of Reform

Because it was mostly women who were employed in part-time arrangements, the structural undervaluation of part-time work effectively translated into an undervaluation of women's work. This was perpetuated by several factors, including the lack of social protections, the absence of minimum wage regulation, and even the lack of a legal definition of part-time employment.[183] This systemic exclusion was strongly criticized by the PvdA, with Barendregt as an outspoken representative on this matter.

In parliamentary debates on the revision of the Unemployment Act and Unemployment Benefit Act (Werkloosheidswet and Wet Werkloosheidsvoorziening) in 1973, Barendregt criticized the exclusion of part-time work from unemployment protections. She argued that many part-time workers were not employed on a part-time basis voluntarily, but rather due to a lack of alternative opportunities. Underscoring the structural constraints that shaped women's employment decisions, Barendregt underscored that denying part-time workers unemployment rights meant denying their work as 'real' work.[184] Excluding part-time work from social protections served the notion that part-time work was merely as a supplementary income rather than a primary income in and of itself. After all, its loss was not considered to require protection.

In a discussion on the same topic a year later, Barendregt emphasized how "For women – not by women – [paid] work is considered a nice bonus, both in terms of income and the value of the work itself." She emphasized how women remained excluded from unemployment benefits because they were not perceived as breadwinners. Thus, she underscored how this framing of women's work denied both their individual agency and the impact of these structures on their financial vulnerability.[185] This assumption reflected the lingering influence of the presumption that the male breadwinner's income was to be sufficient to cover a family's living costs. However, this framing ignored the growing group of individuals who neither fit nor wanted to fit within that system.

Through this argument, Barendregt exposed a key contradiction in government policy: while part-time work was increasingly promoted as a means to enhance women's labor

[183] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 15 Mei 1975, 4487–88.
[184] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1973-1974, 11 December 1973, 1494–95.
[185] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 25 November 1974, 154.

participation, it continued to be institutionally devalued and excluded from fundamental labor protections. Merely discussing part-time employment, she warned, was insufficient without structural reform.[186]

While women's labor market participation continued to grow, legal frameworks were lagging behind social developments. Although the legislative proposal to prohibit dismissal on the grounds of marriage or pregnancy had already been discussed in 1971, it would take until 1976 for this law to be implemented.[187] It was therefore once again a topic of parliamentary deliberation in 1975. While various parliamentary representatives debated the scope of protection and its potential economic consequences, Barendregt emphasized how legal dismissal protection could merely mark the beginning of a desired outcome of gender equality. She went on to state, "If this law is passed but opportunities for modified work for both women and men – I'll just note that in passing – and/or childcare remain scarce, then this little law will serve little purpose."[188] Rather than focusing narrowly on protection, Barendregt urged a shift toward "actualizing a future in which men and women both carry the responsibility of care for children equally."

One of her suggestions was to extend the possibilities for parental leave for both parents. While admitting that support for this idea was likely still a long way off, Barendregt suggested that part-time employment could function as a (temporal) opportunity following a period of extended parental leave to facilitate the organization of work and home life with one or more children. In her proposal, Barendregt drew attention to the inherent contradiction of this policy: while it pleaded for the involvement of mothers in their children's early development stages, it did not accommodate absences from employment obligations.[189] In 2022, Anja Meulenbelt still considered this one of the greatest contradictions of society's gendered expectations for women as they are expected to be emancipated and thus employed in work outside the home, but must not neglect their duties of being good mothers. Both Barendregt and Meulenbelt underscore the societal interest of reproductive labor and the absence of recognition for its value.

For Barendregt, part-time work for both parents presented a promising solution to this contradiction. The pursuit of gender equality, in this view, entailed not only the redistribution of paid employment but also of unpaid work. Critics such as Rietkerk (VVD) warned that

[186] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 25 November 1974, 153–54.
[187] Besluit van 12 juli 1976, houdende inwerkingtreding van de wet van 6 mei 1976, Stb. 295, tot wijziging van het Burgerlijk Wetboek in verband met een ontslagverbod bij huwelijk, zwangerschap en bevalling (1976), https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-1976-388.
[188] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 17 April 1975, 3930.
[189] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 17 April 1975, 3930–31.

expanding part-time employment could harm women's labor market position as employers would face higher costs when employing women. Barendregt did not deny these concerns but refused to let these be decisive, pointing out that similar arguments were long used to delay the implementation of the minimum wage. If no changes were made, she argued, one parent – likely the mother – would eventually be forced to withdraw from paid employment. This, in turn, would reproduce women's long-lasting disadvantages in re-entering the labor market after periods devoted solely to providing care work for children (and husband).[190]

Although emancipation remained a recurrent theme in parliamentary debates, the limited change these discussions brought forward was frequently noted. While the earliest sources analyzed for this chapter reveal calls to improve the conditions of part-time work, the same issues resurface year after year.[191] These frequently included insufficient education possibilities, lack of institutional support, and limited recognition. By 1975, the results of the study Barendregt had asked Minister Boersma about in 1971 concerning part-time work for men had been released. According to Barendregt, the aim of the research had been to elevate the status and substance of part-time work. Not only had this research come out much later than planned, but it had also resulted in seemingly little change.[192]

Nevertheless, debates surrounding the distribution of paid labor seemed be shifting in tone. Barendregt noted the increasingly important role of part-time work in ideas about collective working-hour reduction that were gaining popularity. Rather than "providing women some shelter," part-time work was to be applied on a much broader scope for the purpose of redistributing labor across society, for all its members. In this context, part-time work appeared not so much as the short-term solution it was first framed as in emancipatory context, but as a long-term solution towards a more equal distribution of both paid and unpaid labor.[193]

4.2. Demands for System Change

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the idea of a collective working-hour reduction had already been advocated in Joke Kool-Smit's *Het Onbehagen van de Vrouw*, published in 1967, generally denoted as the starting point of 'second wave' feminism in the Netherlands. A six-hour workday for everyone was to allow an equal division of unpaid and paid labor between men and

[190] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 17 April 1975, 3930–32.
[191] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1967-1968, 3 September 1968, 2820.
[192] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 25 Augustus 1975, 840.
[193] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 25 Augustus 1975, 840–41.

women.[194] In the mid-1970s, calls for a collective working-hour reduction had gained traction in Parliament amongst progressive circles. Not only was the gendered organization of labor challenged in these perspectives, but so was the very foundation of the economic order. Consequently, part-time work and collective working-hour reduction were no longer solely about women's emancipation; they became a means for broader system critique.

This room for radical criticism was shaped in a political environment of the leftist progressive Den Uyl cabinet, which governed from 1973 to 1977, characterized as the most left-leaning government in Dutch postwar history. When this cabinet was faced with the first oil crisis in 1973, it responded with expansionary policy in Keynesian fashion with expanded social spending and efforts to support employment even as broader macroeconomic pressures mounted. Its successor, the Van Agt I cabinet which governed from 1977 to 1981, a collaboration between the Christian Democratic CDA and liberal VVD, would shift course amid continuing economic difficulties with a much stricter policy on government spending.[195]

4.2.1. Radical Revisions of Labor Divisions

During discussions on general political and financial considerations in 1974, part-time work arose in a broader critique on the economic model in place rather than of women's position in society. Ed van Thijn (PvdA) pointed to the paradoxical results of the increasing scale of economic activity. While economic developments had resulted in higher levels of education and development, they had also led to alienation through the fragmentation of work tasks and decreased worker responsibility. In this system, there was little room for those who did not fit the model of the ideal worker. This usually concerned young people who wished to combine work with education, married women, or those otherwise unable to contribute to optimal productivity. For Van Thijn, this increasingly inhumane model was a failure of the economic order.[196]

Van Thijn's critique addressed the narrow focus among policymakers and others on the increasing costs of social security and premiums without addressing the social problems underlying these rising costs. Instead, he advocated for a new labor market policy that would enhance employee resilience through training, improve employee interest representation, and distribute existing employment more fairly. The latter would be achieved through shorter

[194] Tijdens, *Een Wereld van Verschil*, 4.
[195] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 110–35. 94-113, 145
[196] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 8 Oktober 1974, 307.

working hours, earlier retirement, longer compulsory education, and part-time work for both men and women.[197]

In this sentiment, the PvdA was supported by the PPR, who shared a similar call upon a fairer distribution of employment through reduced working hours, part-time work premiums, and early retirement.[198] Pier van Gorkum (PPR) argued that much of the suffering caused by unemployment could be alleviated by granting everyone who wanted to and could work the opportunity to do so. In practice, this would mean that the government should promote alternative forms of employment, part-time work being one of them, and must find ways to support early retirement.[199] According to this view, unemployment was not so much an issue of there not existing work as it was a matter of unequal distribution of the work that is available.

What stands out in these discussions on collectively shortening labor hours is how far-reaching criticism of the socio-economic system could go, expressing a radical imagination for alternative systems of societal organization. This is illustrated by Van der Lek's (PSP) criticism on the very concept of 'emancipation' in 1976, as discussed in Chapter 3. By condemning the distorting effect of this, Van der Lek explicitly connected women's repression to the capitalist organization of labor. This led Van der Lek to be critical of proposals that were limited to a redistribution of domestic work:

> Of course, one can aim to distribute these tasks equally among partners, but that does not change the economic disadvantage of this type of work. Emancipation – or rather, liberation – of women is inextricably linked to liberating people from their wage dependency and alienation, and completely transforming the dependencies that currently exist for the majority of the population in an exploitative system.[200]

For Van der Lek, removing discrimination was not limited to removing discriminatory law and prejudices at work and education but was fundamentally linked to creating space for a fundamentally different division of labor. Part-time labor was to play a key role in this development, as were experiments with alternative forms of cohabitation. In Van der Lek's view, these processes showed just how much women's liberation was connected to other processes of liberation.[201]

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[197] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 8 Oktober 1974, 307.
[198] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 8 Oktober 1974, 329.
[199] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1974-1975, 16 April 1975, 3882–83.
[200] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 21 Juni 1976, 1129.
[201] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 21 Juni 1976, 1129.

Nevertheless, it was primarily the radical and progressive parties, such as the PvdA, the PPR, and the PSP, that expressed this radical system critique. Other parties, such as the conservative Christian parties (KVP, ARP, CHU) or the liberals (VVD) remained much more focused on the idea of providing part-time employment opportunities to allow women equal development opportunities.[202] In their view, part-time work was a tool for individual development, rather than a tool for social transformation.

4.2.2. Frustration in the Absence of Reform

As these radical demands did not lead to much change optimism increasingly turned into frustration. When emancipation policy was discussed again one year later, Van der Lek noted on continued setbacks in the previously stated goals. These setbacks ranged from the rejection of abortion legislation to work policy that continued to work policies that continued to exclude women and hardly offered part-time employment, "which everyone says is so terribly important in deconstructing gender roles."[203] Frits Dragtstra (CPN) added to this concern of a backward development by highlighting the government's decision to cut funding for sectors that were previously deemed especially suitable for women, such as elder and family care. Langedijk-de Jong (PVDA) noted how the government made part-time work more accessible, but hardly improved (re)education without which part-time work seemed very much incomplete.[204] All of these points echoed discussions already held at the start of the decade. The tone of much of this criticism was that the government had to go further if it truly wanted to establish an equal distribution of both paid employment and caring responsibilities beyond gender boundaries.

In the 1978 debates on emancipation policy, Ineke Haas-Berger (PvdA) problematized the cabinet for focusing too much on women's individual choice in employment without taking sufficient structural measures to ensure equal employment opportunities. She highlighted how part-time arrangements remained largely confined to low-income and low-ranking sectors. Haas-Berger asked why collective working-hour reduction was not looked into as a more effective solution. Haas-Berger argued that, while perusing such a solution would be a political choice, it was preferable to a policy aimed at creating employment opportunities but relegated married non-breadwinners back into labor reserve.[205] In her argument, she exposed a

[202] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1975-1976, 21 Juni 1976.
[203] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1976-1977, 10 Februari 1977, 3164.
[204] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1976-1977, 10 Februari 1977, 3169–71.
[205] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1977-1978, 11 September 1978, 925.

contradiction in the government's emancipation rhetoric as opposed to its proposed instruments for achieving these goals. While part-time work was framed as an expression of individual freedom of choice, genuine freedom of choice required structural political commitment. Collective provisions were required to make such choices materially possible. Meanwhile, the government's praise of volunteer work in this process risked reaffirming the automatic assumption that women provide unpaid labor. To allow for true liberation, active intervention was required to redistribute both paid and unpaid labor amongst men and women.[206]

A similar call was expressed in the discussion of the national budget for the upcoming year in 1978. Although the debate was dominated by discussions on solutions for rising unemployment, Den Uyl (PvdA) emphasized the emancipatory dimensions of this issue. Arguing that "women's emancipation will not be realized without a restructuring of labor, that is, an incomparably larger space for part-time work," he noted that part-time work was to be a solution that would "not concern thousands or ten thousands but 1 to 1,5 million part-time laborers, both men and women.[207] In other words, part-time work was intended as a structural solution requiring adjustments from both men and women.

This focus on part-time work as a means to promote gender quality was not universally adopted. In fact, Den Uyl's point was criticism directed at *Bestek '81*, a note published in 1978 explicating cabinet Van Agt's plans for social-economic reform, which included a much more prominent place for the market in its economic policy.[208] He emphasized that this policy would reduce the prospect for emancipation, rather than bring equality. Den Uyl criticized the cabinet's expectation for the market as a solution to the issue of employment, while neglecting to provide any instruments to accomplish this. A one-sided approach to the market, he argued, would likely imply that women would be hit the hardest in the labor market due to their already marginalized position.[209]

Den Uyl noted that, apart from voluntary early retirement, the government neglected the solution of collective working hour reduction despite recommendations from the SER (Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands). Regardless of this advice, broader calls for systemic change and for large-scale redistribution of paid and unpaid work accompanying these proposals increasingly gave way to a vocabulary of flexibility, efficiency, and market rationality by the late 1970s. While this new vocabulary still allowed for a certain kind of

[206] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 25 September 1978, 40.
[207] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 5 Oktober 1978, 257–58.
[208] de Beer, *De arbeidstijdverkorting die niet doorging en andere lessen uit de jaren tachtig*, 46–47.
[209] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 5 Oktober 1978, 257–58.

redistribution, it did not entail the structural revaluation of paid and unpaid labor that earlier proposals had envisioned.

4.3. Part-time work as Market Instrument

The plans of *Bestek '81* emphasized a shift from government intervention to strengthening the private sector. Tax relief for businesses was intended to stimulate investment and employment, paving the way for the sentiment of "more market, less government" that would later strongly take hold.[210] This original plan largely failed due to a lack of political and public support, as well as the second oil crisis of 1979, which hit the Dutch economy harder than the first and caused rapidly rising unemployment. The short-lived Van Agt II cabinet (1981-1982), a fragile coalition between the CDA, PvdA, and D66, collapsed over internal disagreements on economic policy. Nevertheless, the underlying sentiment of *Bestek '81* re-emerged under the first Lubbers cabinet that governed from 1982 to 1986. This renewed collaboration between the CDA and VVD continued a trend of government downsizing characterizing policy by privatization and deregulation, marking a strong neoliberal turn in Dutch politics.[211] These shifts were reflected in the discussions on emancipation, women's labor market position, and part-time work.

4.3.1. Dual Considerations of Part-Time Work

By the end of the 1970s, there was widespread political support for improving part-time employment opportunities to strengthen women's labor market positions, even though this support was generally less radical than that of more progressive advocates. The liberal VVD, which had been critical of the economic consequences tied to the institutionalization of part-time employment in previous years, now expressed support for the expansion of part-time work arrangements despite the costs these could imply for employers (including costs related to retirement rights, career planning, and so forth). In 1978, Annelien Kappeyne van de Copello, for example, urged the government to determine its position on part-time employment more quickly to truly offer prospects for emancipation, while Evenhuis insisted on the government's responsibility in taking the leading institutional adjustments, which, though complex, were

[210] de Beer, *De arbeidstijdverkorting die niet doorging en andere lessen uit de jaren tachtig*, 46–47.
[211] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*, 110–35. 94-113, 145

feasible.[212] Similarly, Ed Nijpels (VVD) noted that the redistribution of labor could not be arranged overnight, but emphasized "the important consequences that a consistent implementation of part-time work may have for emancipation." While not intending this to mean that women were to exclusively take on part-time positions, he insisted it could be an important step in their access to the labor process.[213] In this process, part-time work increasingly appeared as a means to facilitate a broader redistribution of labor between men and women.

Nevertheless, part-time work simultaneously took on a dual focus. From the angle of redistribution, Theo Joekes (VVD) discussed the idea of collective working-hour reduction, stating:

> Alongside the already ongoing projects for early voluntary retirement and the promotion of part-time work, experiments with reduced working hours in exchange for lower or no wage increases for a number of years. […] Undoubtedly, there are people in our country willing to exchange lower income growth for extra free time, thereby freeing up jobs for the unemployed. In doing so, a significant collective financial benefit arises. This could allow the government and/or funds to mitigate the income sacrifice of employees who work fewer hours by helping to bridge this gap for a period of time.[214]

While emancipation was an important justification for part-time work, economic and labor-market considerations were equally central.

The CDA adopted a very similar tone. The same year, Ruud Lubbers insisted that the labor market would have to play an important role in the redistribution of labor in the near future. Loss of production and increasing costs for employers, however, demanded this issue to be handled with caution.[215] Martin van Rooijen argued that a shortening of working hours would be an acceptable way of redistributing labor on the condition that was that this would create job opportunities for others, preferring selective early retirement over other forms of labor hour reduction.

Yet, simultaneously, Van Rooijen drew attention to the dehumanizing effects of the increasingly harsh labor-market selection process, which disproportionately affected disadvantaged groups such as youth, the elderly, and women.[216] Regarding the growing desire among women to participate in paid employment, he noted:

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[212] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1977-1978, 11 September 1978, 925–34.
[213] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 25 September 1978, 34.
[214] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 5 Oktober 1978, 308.
[215] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 21 November 1978, 1527.
[216] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 21 November 1978, 1527.

> The great importance attached to labor is evident from the high demand for work performed by women. In my view, this demand will increase significantly, and this at a time of very high unemployment. A major social problem has emerged here. Women are experiencing significant difficulties in the labor market, particularly in the service sector, where growth has already slowed. Moreover, part-time work, which women often request, is precisely a submarket with high supply and low demand.[217]

This emphasis on women's part-time employment prompted Van der Doef (PvdA) to criticize the CDA's gendered framing, questioning why women's labor-market opportunities were treated as a separate issue rather than integrated into broader working-hour reduction. This exchange reveals a tension between the CDA and VVD's emphasis on the voluntariness and flexibility of working-hour reduction opposed to the more structural measure of collective working-hour reduction.

Earlier that year, Albeda (CDA), Minister of Social Affairs, had similarly warned against associating part-time work exclusively with women, as this would further marginalize them in the labor market. He stressed that part-time work was to be promoted as a free choice for both men and women. According to Albeda, emancipation in the labor market required a dual shift: women's labor was to no longer be considered merely a supplementary income, while men should no longer be socially pressured into full-time employment. As long as the norm that men should work remained unchallenged, he argued, it would be very difficult to overcome the idea that women's work held less value.[218] In his argument on part-time employment, Albeda referred to *Bestek '81*, in which part-time work was discussed as a means to redistribute employment and combat unemployment. In the debates on emancipation and the budget explanation of social affairs in 1978, the long-term potential of part-time work is linked to the redistribution of tasks within the family and to shifting gender roles. Within this framework, Albeda maintained that part-time work needed be lifted out of its marginal position and recognized as full-fledged employment with equal legal status.[219]

This is sentiment was generally shared across government. While figures like Abma (SGP) anticipated resistance to women's growing desire for development outside of the home may call upon resistance, the Minister argued that the improvement of part-time work

[217] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 21 November 1978, 1527.
[218] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 25 September 1978, 44.
[219] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 25 September 1978, 44.

arrangements were not only motivated by the growing desires of married women to work, but also by the desire to improve employment distribution.[220]

While part-time work was increasingly supported as a form of employment for all, it was simultaneously increasingly presented as a market instrument to tackle the growing problem of unemployment. The issue of redistribution gained prominence across the political spectrum. The term 'redistribution,' however, came to signify the redistribution of paid work between the employed and unemployed, more so than the redistribution of paid and unpaid work between men and women.

4.3.2. The Re-interpretation of Redistribution

In debates concerning the national budget in 1980, part-time employment acquired a prominent place. It was increasingly supported as the ultimate solution to the pressing issue of rising unemployment. Motivated by the question of whether there would be enough labor available for everyone who wanted to work, Lubbers posed part-time work as a solution that fit well into modern society, in which more and more individuals entered the workforce. He noted that the expansion of part-time labor possibilities, which he argued was "closely connected to increased emancipation," was to not only impact women's employment opportunities but should also open up the possibility for men to work part-time.[221] Simultaneously, expanding part-time work opportunities would benefit women, youth, and people with disabilities by providing them with suitable employment. As such, it would benefit society as a whole.[222] Even though the argument for part-time labor expansion had been made many times before, as evidenced throughout this thesis, Lubbers believed that the key to implement change was addressing this matter systematically. Rather than a sudden shift, this renewed emphasis on part-time work solidified an emerging reorientation of ideas of redistribution.

The redistributive effects of expanding part-time employment were aimed at addressing widespread unemployment, rather than gendered divisions of labor. In the reframing of redistribution as a solution to an economic problem, emancipation was presented as a contextual justification rather than its end goal. The incorporation of men into this narrative was motivated by the aim of solving the labor market problem of unemployment across society, not unequal

[220] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 20 December 1978, 2524; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1978-1979, 25 September 1978, 44.
[221] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 7 Oktober 1980, 123.
[222] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 10 Oktober 1980, 244.

distributions of unpaid and paid labor. While part-time work could redistribute paid labor between the employed and the unemployed, it did little to challenge the distribution of unpaid labor. As such, redistribution lost much of its gendered potential.[223]

That did not mean that unpaid work was not directly addressed. In fact, it was a point of criticism for Dries van Agt (CDA) against Den Uyl (PvdA), who was at that point in time Minister of Social Affairs and Employment.[224] During an earlier discussion about emancipation policy, Den Uyl had stated that "paid work appears to be the best expression, for both men and women, with its associated duties and rights, of their own place in society." This called upon a strong resistance of Van Agt, who argued that, in making this claim, Den Uyl undermined the value unpaid work. He stated:

> If we only consider people fully, humanly, and socially functioning once they participate in the labor market, we face a problem we won't solve for another decade, or perhaps longer. This instills in people the idea that unpaid work in service of society is inferior to paid work.[225]

In this statement, Van Agt argued that emphasizing the importance of paid work not only undermined the efforts of those performing unpaid work (a significant portion of them being women) but also failed to address contemporary societal issues. The most pressing issue being unemployment. This led to a confrontation about the value of paid and unpaid work, and the implications of how this value was expressed.

Den Uyl elaborated on his point, underscoring that his statement was in no way intended to devalue unpaid labor. Instead, it sought to address the issue of individuals in disadvantaged positions being unwillingly excluded from the paid labor process. He argued that the issue of the undervaluation of unpaid work was an entirely independent problem and rejected criticism directed at his statement. Den Uyl posed that his opponents were merely criticizing him because he called them out for their argument that, essentially, not everyone had a right to claim a place in the labor market. He warned of the dangers of such a perspective, as it essentially accepted the continued unemployment of a large number of people. This was particularly concerning since already disadvantaged groups in the labor market would be hit the hardest by these unemployment rates, women being a prominent example.[226] Thus, he argued that this rhetoric only used the supposed value of unpaid work to justify high unemployment rates.

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[223] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 7 Oktober 1980, 121–23.
[224] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 9 Oktober 1980, 200–203.
[225] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 9 Oktober 1980, 200.
[226] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 9 Oktober 1980, 199–203.

In this debate, however, Den Uyl seemed to be speaking a different language than his opponents. Lubbers argued that statements like Den Uyl's – which asserted that only paid employment granted individuals a meaningful place in society – reinforced rather than reversed "misconceptions about the value of unpaid services." Den Uyl's call was thus interpreted as an acceptance, or even confirmation, of existing values regarding paid and unpaid work. According to Lubbers, what was needed was a shift in this understanding, which he articulated within a broader emphasis on improving part-time work opportunities as a means of creating the 'choice' to work.[227]

Yet it was precisely the meaning of choice that marked the core tension between these two positions. For Den Uyl, merely creating better part-time work options was not enough to genuinely create equal opportunities for choice. He stated:

> The point is that women have the right to participate in the workforce, whether full-time or part-time, just like men. Of course, people can also enjoy unpaid work, but that doesn't absolve the government from doing everything possible to give men and women the opportunity to participate in the workforce.[228]

In other words, speaking of 'free choice' without creating the material conditions necessary to enable these choices was not only insufficient but also deceptive. The CDA's emphasis on the value of unpaid labor did little to challenge the gendered inequalities embedded in this labor. Instead, when mobilized as an economic response to unemployment, it was more likely to contribute to its stabilization.

As redistribution increasingly appeared as an economic strategy, questions of gender equality were displaced by labor market flexibility. Departing from the problem of unemployment, rather than unequal access to paid work, part-time work acquired an entirely different role in the process of 'emancipation.' On this matter, Lubbers stated:

> I am convinced that there is a fundamental link between the issue of equal employment rights for men and women and the promotion of part-time work. In a new type of society, where discrimination in employment is eliminated, the promotion of part-time work is fundamental. This brings me to the question of mentality. Opportunities must be offered to the younger generation. I certainly don't want to trivialize this issue. Neither Mr. Den Uyl nor I could bring ourselves to take on part-time

[227] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 9 Oktober 1980, 201.
[228] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 9 Oktober 1980, 201.

work. If we want to continue with this fair distribution of labor, opportunities must be offered to the younger generation. That is the only way to eliminate this sophistry.[229]

What is striking about this position is that demands for improving part-time work opportunities and labor redistribution had circulated in Parliament for years. Yet systemic reform only became politically feasible once these improvements took on a clearly economic purpose. In this process, those representatives who had previously been prominent advocates for such measures were now recast as its opponents.

Today, the overemphasis on paid work as the only road to emancipation is a topic of much discussion. However, when situated in the context of large-scale unemployment, at a moment when the government dealt with providing paid work, especially for its most disadvantaged groups, the motivation behind the romanticization of unpaid work becomes open to question. The irony of this framing is sharpened by the fact that the neoliberal turn, with which this period would later be associated, would reinforce the centrality of paid work in calls for emancipation (consider Mees' ideas on part-time feminism as mentioned in the introduction). Meanwhile, the redistribution of paid and unpaid labor increasingly faded into the background.

4.3.3. What Remained of Redistribution

That redistribution was less about 'emancipation' and more about economic considerations had not been denied by contemporaries. Nijpels (VVD) explicitly stated that, while part-time work was intended for both men and women, the primary reason for its implementation was economic rather than emancipatory.[230] Hans Wiegel (VVD) added to this by warning that part-time employment could even hinder emancipation, given demographic patterns of part-time workers.[231] Within parties, however, ideas on its effects differed.[232] The labor policy that was eventually implemented foregrounded the notion of choice in redistribution. Instead of a collective transformation, the idea working-hour reduction was implemented through means such as part-time work and voluntary early retirement. This pragmatic approach is illustrated by Suzanne Dekker's (D'66) statement on this matter in 1982. She emphasized voluntariness, flexibility, and adaptability over collective working-time reduction in her framing of

[229] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 9 Oktober 1980, 201.
[230] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 11 November 1980, 1149–50.
[231] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 10 Maart 1981, 15-24-15–25.
[232] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 10 Maart 1981, 15–30.

emancipation as an individual choice.[233] The Emancipation Council had warned that part-time work was more of a symptomatic treatment than a tool for fundamental labor redistribution. This advice, however, was sidelined as visions for a more extensive distribution of labor were postponed to an undetermined future.[234]

The increasingly market-oriented approach of the government in this development called for criticism. Its underlying neoliberal philosophy was criticized for its failure to address aspects outside the market that were nevertheless essential for creating a healthy labor market.[235] This criticism was expressed across a broad political spectrum.[236] Gert Schutte (GPV), for instance, argued that the redistribution policy placed too much emphasis on current employment issues, thereby risking creating the impression that the persistent job shortage was merely accepted, much like the warnings previously mentioned by Den Uyl.[237] Moor (PvdA) noted how women's emancipation was sidelined in this process, while Evenhuis-van Essen (CDA) stressed that labor policy remained male-centered, largely ignoring the role of men in the redistribution of unpaid labor.[238]

Despite these criticisms, the government pushed for a policy that focused on the redistribution of paid labor in order to deal with the ongoing issue of unemployment. This culminated in the Wassenaar Agreement, established in November 1982, which introduced only a limited reduction in working hours, from a weekly standard of 40 to 38. It has been argued that this implementation had minimal practical effect, as the average number of hours worked in practice remained unchanged.[239]

In the period that followed the Wassenaar Agreement, different voices would continue to call for the need of a genuine labor redistribution that incorporated unpaid labor.[240] Radically progressive parties, such as the PSP, CPN and PPR, strongly continued to emphasize the need

[233] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 22 Juni 1982, 3897.
[234] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 8 Februari 1982, 13–15; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 19 Januari 1982, 1276.
[235] See Den Uyl's statement: "That's a philosophy, of course, and it's not unfamiliar, as it can be found a l'outrance in today's England, with a governing party there." In Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 10 Oktober 1980, 239.
[236] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 19 Januari 1982, 1277–78; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 22 Juni 1982, 3892.
[237] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 22 Juni 1982, 3906.
[238] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 24 Juni 1982, 4077; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 8 Februari 1982, 13–19.
[239] de Beer, *De arbeidstijdverkorting die niet doorging en andere lessen uit de jaren tachtig*, 46.
[240] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1982-1983, 15 Maart 1983, 3045.

for a radical reduction of working hours to achieve true redistribution.[241] The labor market-oriented redistribution, which had emphasized the role of part-time work, had not fulfilled the longstanding demands of the women's' and workers' movements. This had led Wilbert Willems (PPR) to argue that the term 'part-time labor' had been "abused" in public discourse to suggest that a collective working-hour reduction had been implemented.[242] It was argued that there would be no true emancipation as long as paid and unpaid work would not be distributed more equally between men, women, the young, and the old.[243]

That persistence of visions for a collective working-hour reduction after 1982 is well illustrated by the protest image depicted in Figure 1. It was part of a brochure for a protest organized by the women's department of the labor union (FNV) in 1983. The brochure declares that "women demand REAL working-hour reduction," highlighting the continued pressure for meaningful measures for redistribution.[244] Ultimately, however, the Wassenaar Agreement went down in collective memory as the starting point of the Dutch 'polder model,' while working-hour reduction went down as a failed project.[245]

[241] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 22 Juni 1982, 3892; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 8 Februari 1982, 13-12-13–15; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1982-1983, 17 Mei 1983, 3937; Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 18 April 1983, 30–11.
[242] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1981-1982, 19 Januari 1982, 1277–78.
[243] Handelingen Tweede Kamer, 1980-1981, 18 April 1983, 30–11.
[244] Hans Boot, "Herverdeling van de Arbeid Is Meer Dan Arbeidstijdverkorting.," *Solidariteit: Blad Voor Vakbeweging En Socialisme*, May 1, 1983, 1st ed., https://solidariteit.nl/nummers/1/inhoud.html.
[245] de Beer, *De arbeidstijdverkorting die niet doorging en andere lessen uit de jaren tachtig*; Paul de Beer, "Taboe Op Arbeidstijdverkorting?," *Zeggenschap/Tijdschrift over Arbeidsverhoudingen* 24 (2013), https://dare.uva.nl/document/2/138652.

Figure 1: Brochure "women want REAL working-hour reduction" from 1983[246]

[246] Cilia Kortman and FNV, "Vrouwen Willen Echte Arbeidstijdverkorting," 1983.

4.4. Conclusion

Part-time work emerged as one of multiple necessary measures aimed at improving women's economic independence within existing structures. From the outset, however, it carried significant limitations. 1970s parliamentary debates reveal how part-time work focused primarily on women's flexibility, rather than a fundamental redistribution of work between men and women. By the late 1970s, a consensus arose that the position of part-time workers required improvement. While calls for improving part-time work securities and opportunities had been circulating in Parliament for years, they acquired a different tone once growing economic problems increasingly allowed part-time work to be framed as a solution to unemployment issues.

In the mid-1970s, part-time work had acquired close ties to visions of alternative social organization through collective working-hour reduction among the political left. By the end of the 1970s, however, part-time work was taken over by an increasingly market-oriented political right. As concerns over rising unemployment increased and a more neoliberal philosophy took hold in Parliament, the concept of redistribution lost much of its critical potential as a proposal for gender equality. Throughout this process, part-time work remained a heavily gendered issue. Women were more likely to be employed part-time, maintaining primary responsibility for unpaid work, while men continued to work full-time. Thus, despite the increasingly popular notion of redistribution, labor policies failed to challenge gendered assumptions about paid and unpaid labor.

5. Conclusion

This thesis starts with the question of what Dutch parliamentary debates on unpaid and paid labor in the 1970s reveal about the conceptualization of gendered labor redistribution. This study shows that the development of the lasting Dutch labor pattern of the 'one-and-a-half-earner' model was the product of a complex interaction between a selective political responsiveness to emancipatory goals, deeply ingrained gender norms, societal pressures, and economic interests.

With some of the highest rates of women's participation in part-time work, the Netherlands stands out in European context. Internationally, it is regarded as an example of a state where part-time work is not only widely institutionalized but also recognized and protected as a fully-fledged form of employment. Yet, these part-time work patterns are a testament to historical gender expectations regarding paid and unpaid labor. A significant amount of literature has reflected on the origins and effects of this phenomenon. Nevertheless, the reasons why this particular division of labor became the dominant model, instead of more equitable alternatives, remain insufficiently addressed. This study centers on the tension between the emergence of ideas aimed at attaining a more equitable distribution of unpaid and paid work in the 1970s, and the lack of structural implementation of these ideas.

The 1970s formed a pivotal moment of social and political change in which questions of redistribution could arise. The domestic model that emerged in the post-war context was not so much a return to traditional values of domesticity as it became a consumerist ideal in itself. As society recovered from war and the economy flourished, the normative ideal of the breadwinner family thrived. The Dutch welfare state, which expanded rapidly in the 1960s in response to fears of union conflicts over wages, anchored itself in this male breadwinner ideal. While the welfare system provided protection, it simultaneously solidified women's dependence on men as it further institutionalized their role within the family. Nevertheless, questions regarding women's employment never stopped being a political concern. Neither would this ideal hold for very long. By the 1970s, the rigid post-war moral order had crumbled under the influence of higher standards of welfare, a consumer culture, increasingly critical attituded towards authority, and growing demands for equality. In this context, a political stage emerged where various ideas about labor, care, and gender collided.

Domestic work formed a site of contention where underlying gendered conceptualizations of unpaid work became evident. Calls for gender equality gained considerable traction, while gender norms were increasingly questioned, and women resisted

societal expectations regarding their performance of domestic work in growing numbers. Discussions in the early 1970s concentrated on the question of government responsibility in supporting households where unpaid domestic labor was not available. However, as the number of families that did not fit the male breadwinner mold increased, it became clear that the social security and tax system in which it was embedded conflicted with this new social reality. By the end of the 1970s, the value of domestic work to society was generally acknowledged in principle, but legislation that would reflect this value failed to materialize.

The treatment of the paid domestic work sector exemplifies the paradoxical treatment of domestic work. Paid domestic work was often cited as a means to accommodate societal changes. However, the sector itself took on a remarkably passive position in these debates. Its supposed private, fragmented, and backward nature was used to justify its exclusion from labor protections that were expanded in this period, such as the minimum wage and employee insurance. Arguments emphasizing the importance of keeping domestic help affordable for dependent families, were used to maintain this exclusion. As paid domestic work was linked to the promotion of women's labor participation and their emancipation from the restraints of unpaid domestic labor, tensions arose over who precisely was to be relieved of domestic labor. Various authors have noted this contradictory treatment of the paid domestic work sector, which strongly reflects Davis's warnings that a revaluation of domestic work is necessary to break away from the inequalities it presents. Studies on the contemporary state of the paid domestic work sector in the Netherlands, such as the works of Kraamwinkel and Botman, reveal that the dynamics visible in parliamentary debates of the 1970s remain evident today.

A striking aspect of debates on domestic work in the 1970s is how little men were part of the conversation. Debates largely centered on women, whether it was the women who wanted to break free from the constraints of the domestic sphere or the women taking over their responsibilities through paid domestic work. Men themselves were much less prominent subjects in debates, except for their roles as discussants. Nevertheless, there were certainly progressive proposals for labor redistribution that implicitly demanded the emancipation of men in the 1970s. One of the most prominent proposals at the time was the idea of collective working-hour reduction, which envisioned a redistribution of both unpaid and paid labor within the household to achieve greater gender equality. Yet this idea, along with other perspectives that critically incorporated unpaid work in their rethinking of existing labor divisions, ultimately failed to gain traction.

In this context, part-time work serves as a critical juncture where redistributive ideals and the reality of policy decisions become apparent. Part-time work arrangements emerged in the Netherlands in the 1950s as a compromise to promote female labor participation without threatening the breadwinner model. Initially promoted by employers and policymakers, it became a feminist point of interest by the late 1960s. Better part-time work opportunities were seen as a means to provide women easier access to the labor market. However, many regarded this as only an intermediate step, as part-time work in itself did not provide a more equal division of labor. Nevertheless, part-time work gained radical potential within campaigns for collective working-hour reduction. These proposals reconceptualized part-time work as a solution for everyone, not just women, to ensure the possibility of more equal distribution of paid and unpaid labor.

However, by the end of the 1970s, the political right had adopted ideas for collective working-hour reduction in a way that had very little to do with gendered labor redistribution. Initially a proposal to provide men and women more equal roles in the household and in the labor market, it was reinterpreted as a market-oriented instrument to curb ongoing problems of unemployment. As such, it lost much of its emancipatory significance. This was conceptual shift was formalized in the Wassenaar Agreement of 1982, when employer and employee organizations agreed to reduce the average weekly work hours from 40 to 38. This agreement is sometimes characterized as the beginning of the flourishing of the Dutch consultation economy, or the 'polder model.' Yet it simultaneously symbolizes a policy shift that stripped the idea of collective working-hour reduction of its social ambitions to redistribute gendered labor divisions.

In the context of this development, it becomes clear that the institutionalization of part-time work occurred precisely when it became evident that it would serve the economic purpose of tackling unemployment problems, rather than merely respond to calls for emancipation. Demands for the improvement of part-time work arrangements had existed for years, underscoring just how dependent the incorporation of measures promoting gender equality remained on external political interests. In this development, however, ideas of redistribution lost much of their initial connection to unpaid work. This aligns with arguments suggesting that emancipation became more oriented toward paid employment, while care work was left to the sidelines.

This research demonstrates that redistribution proposals were not implemented structurally because aspects of these proposals, such as part-time work, were 'taken over' by

market-oriented policies that were supported in times of economic crisis. Examining the treatment of domestic work and the rise of part-time work arrangements together demonstrates how gender was an organizing principle that influenced policy outcomes. At the same time, economic motivations prove crucial in understanding why certain outcomes were never realized. Studying these factors together demonstrates how certain struggles for recognition were only achieved when it aligned with broader political or economic interests. As transformations in unpaid and paid labor are two sides of the same development, studying them together is a fruitful endeavor that confirms Van Nederveen Meerkerk's methodological argumentation on gender and economic history.

This insight contributes to existing literature, which largely leaves the reasons why ideas for the redistribution of paid and unpaid labor never materialized unexplored. This thesis elaborates on the findings of De Groot, who demonstrates how employers' and policymakers' interests shaped the emergence of part-time work as a form of women's labor. It does so by examining how this division was maintained, even when attempts were made to upset this order in the name of gender equality. Another foundation on which this thesis is built is Outshoorn's research on the influence of the feminist movement on Dutch politics. It elaborates on Outshoorn's work by exploring the implications of the adoption of feminist concepts into ideas that did not necessarily serve feminist causes. The research question for this thesis was guided by the findings of Hellendoorn's work on the consequences of government policies on women's socio-economic position. It offers a new perspective by exploring the underlying ideas that guided these policy developments. The value of a radical conceptual history approach in examining emancipation policy is demonstrated in the work of Van Ostaijen and Wolf. This thesis builds on their method by introducing a new perspective that centralizes the intricate relationship between unpaid and paid work to gain understanding of the conceptual entanglement between 'work' and 'emancipation.'

Recent publications about the political history of the market economy of the Netherlands are essential for understanding the political and ideological background of these insights. However, these publications often treat gender as a marginal aspect of the developments they describe.[247] This thesis places gender at the core of its analysis by examining the history of labor regimes in the Netherlands. It adds a critical perspective by questioning what exactly moved the pattern women's part-time work that came to characterize the gendered labor

[247] Mellink and Oudenampsen, *Neoliberalisme*; Naomi Woltring, *De marktconforme verzorgingsstaat: Nederlands neoliberalisme in de lange jaren negentig* (Boom, 2024).

division in the Netherlands. Ultimately, it concludes that rise of women's part-time work was not a pragmatic compromise but the product of a mutually reinforcing dynamic between emancipatory aims and market-driven institutional decisions that solidified a gendered division of labor.

Parliamentary sources provide crucial information for understanding how gendered labor redistribution was shaped and constrained. Nevertheless, they provide limited access to marginal perspectives. For instance, women who did not conform to the norm, for whom paid work was essential rather than optional, received significantly less attention in Parliament. Where they emerge, it is often through the representation of politicians that demand particular recognition for these groups. A similar blind spot concerns the self-evident manner in which parliamentary sources take heteronormative family structures as their starting point, particularly favoring married couples. While directly acknowledging this limitation, this study aims to instrumentalize these silences as a way to underscore what remains unspoken in parliamentary deliberations. This approach is intended to facilitate further research into the experiences that hide in the silences permitted by Parliament.

The application of diverse sources holds potential to foreground these voices and provide a more complete image of the interconnection of gender, unpaid labor, paid labor, and other intersectional factors such as class and racialization. Research on domestic work already employs innovative research methods to bring these perspectives to the forefront. Oral history could be an interesting method to expand upon.[248] An extension of the research timeframe can similarly prove an important addition because this research only highlights a particular time in which certain debates arose. The research period of this study concludes at a moment where a significant political decision is made. Further exploration of the responses to this decision provides a promising foundation for future research.

Ultimately, the results of this study indicate that the 1970s was a period of optimism in visions on the redistribution of paid and unpaid labor. Alternative models for divisions of paid employment and care work that would enable more gender equality were conceivable and a topic of discussion in Parliament. Yet they were not given institutional legitimation. By the end of the decade, redistribution had taken on a different meaning. No longer was it necessarily a

[248] See for example Sabrina Marchetti's research on the intersection of paid domestic work and colonial legacies, which studies the experiences of Afro-Surinamese women in the Netherlands, or the work of Margriet Kraamwinkel on migrant domestic workers in the Netherlands. See: Sabrina Marchetti, *Black Girls: Migrant Domestic Workers and Colonial Legacies*, 1st ed., vol. 16, Studies in Global Social History (Brill, 2014), https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004276932; Kraamwinkel, "Organizing in the Shadows," 2016.

path to gender equality, but rather a pragmatic solution to economic problems. With the loss of this radical potential, structural redistribution moved to the background. The result is an enduring labor pattern in which women continue to bear primary responsibility for a significant amount of unpaid domestic work, while men continue to embody the norm for full-time employment. Rather than implying that these alternative models were unfeasible, their rejection illustrates the hierarchies in problem definition and the influence of particular interests on policy change. The persistent inequality in the gendered redistribution of labor is therefore not a historical coincidence, but a structural consequence of priorities established in the past.

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7. Appendix

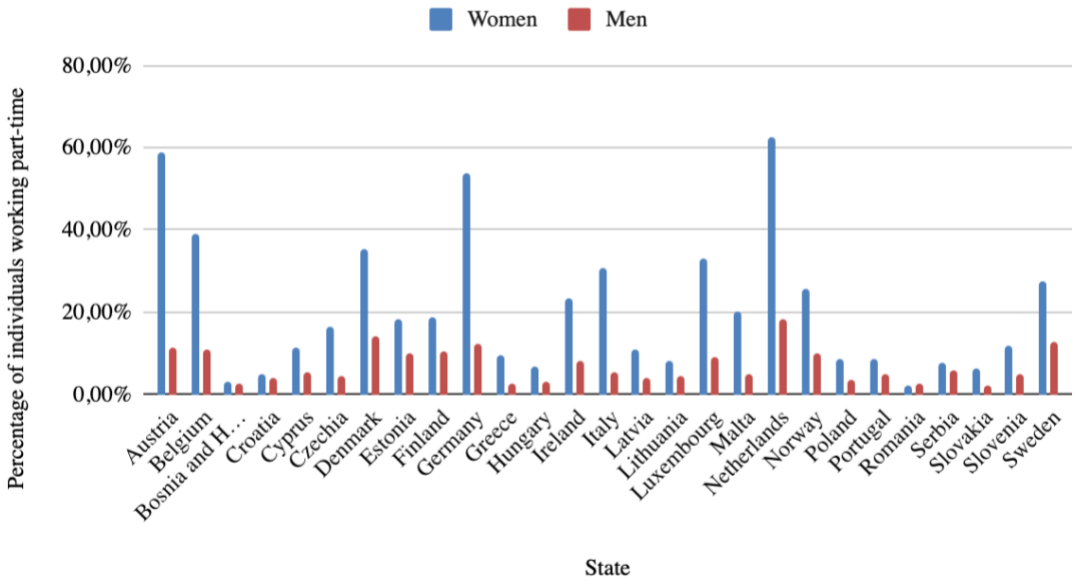

Figure 2: Part-time employment amongst adults living in a couple (2024)[249]

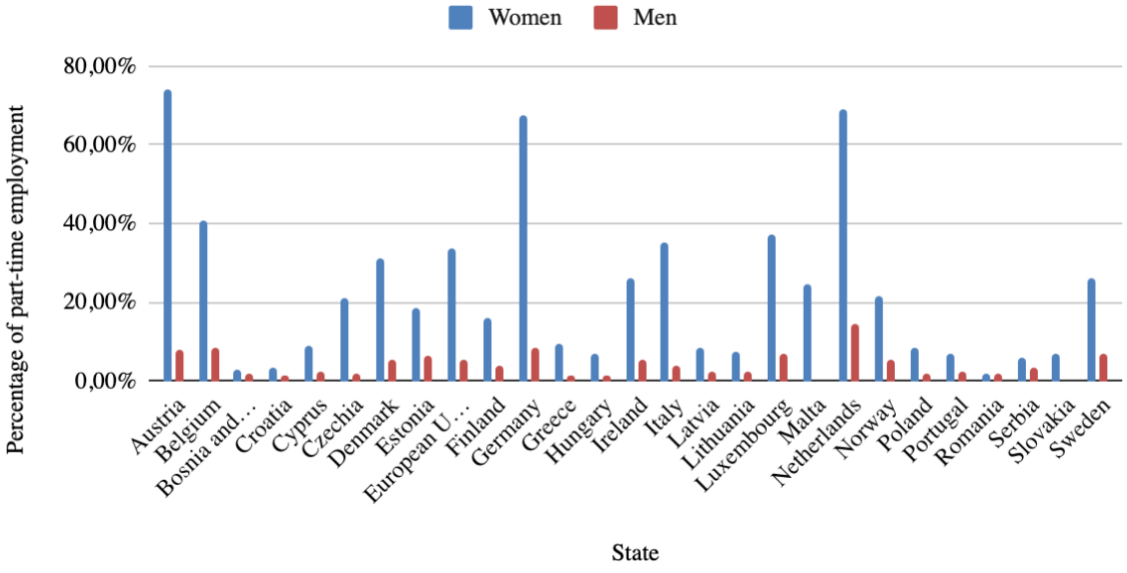

Figure 3: Part-time employment amongst adults living in a couple with children (2024) [250]

[249] Uncertain data, or national data using different definitions has been left out.
Eurostat, "Percentage of Part-Time Employment by Sex, Age Groups and Household Composition" (Eurostat, 2022).

[250] Data on male part-time employment is uncertain for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Latvia, Luxemburg, Malta, and Slovakia. Eurostat, "Percentage of Part-Time Employment by Sex, Age Groups and Household Composition" (Eurostat, 2022).

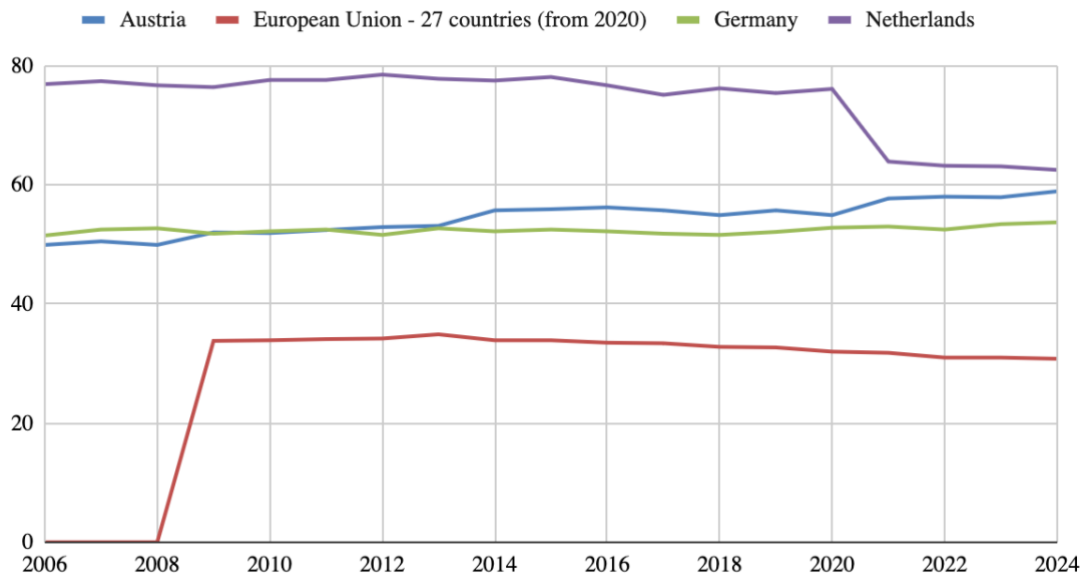

Figure 4: Percentage of part-time employment of women living in a couple[251]

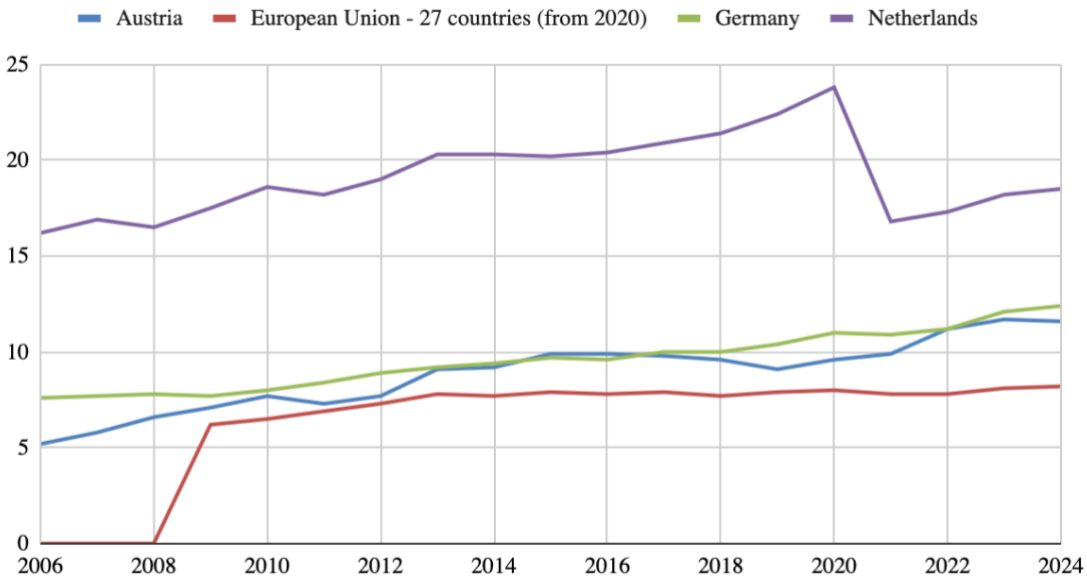

Figure 5: Percentage of part-time employment of men living in a couple[252]

[251] Eurostat, "Percentage of Part-Time Employment by Sex, Age Groups and Household Composition."
[252] Eurostat, "Percentage of Part-Time Employment by Sex, Age Groups and Household Composition."