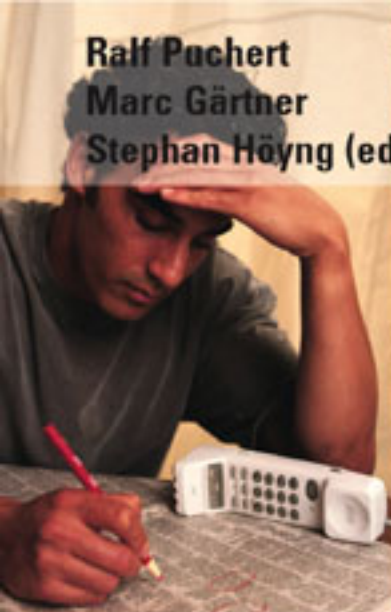


Ralf Puchert  
Marc Gärtner  
Stephan Höyng (eds.)



## **Work Changes Gender**

### Men and Equality in the Transition of Labour Forms

Barbara Budrich Publishers



# Work Changes Gender

## **Results of the Research Project**

*Work Changes Gender –*

*New Forms of Work, New Orientations for Men's Lives,*

*Opportunities for Gender Equality*

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# Work Changes Gender

Men and Equality in the Transition  
of Labour Forms

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# Preface

*Michael Kimmel*

“No man on his deathbed ever said he wished he’d spent less time with his family.” It’s a cliché, of course, but one that reveals an important insight. For decades, we’ve listened to men – and women! – complain that men work too hard, too long, and spend too little time with their families. Men say they want to spend more time with their families, if only they could. But it’s hard to find the time. And who can afford the loss of income?

What is interesting these days is the increasing number of men who are “walking their talk,” who are actually doing something different in their working lives to better accommodate their family lives.

A recent survey published in *Newsweek* found that while 21% of American men would sacrifice family time for a more exciting job opportunity and higher pay, more than three times as many (72%) said they would sacrifice those exciting job opportunities and higher pay for more time with their family. By far the single most common way for men to spend free time was hanging out with their family – more than hanging out with friends, working around the house, and playing golf combined. And another recent survey found that younger fathers are spending far more time with their families than in earlier generations and are increasingly opting for “Daddy Track” jobs.

While these and other data are encouraging, they provide only the broadest of outlines. The significant questions are not whether or not men are changing, but how they are changing? Which groups of men are changing, and in what directions? What are the variations among men in the scope of these changes? What is the relationship of these behavioural changes to attitudinal changes among men, especially in their relationships with women? And why would men be changing in the first place?

If men’s family lives are changing so significantly, what relationship does that have with men’s working lives – and, indeed, with the structure of the workplace? What is the impact on the workplace of these changes in men’s family lives? And what is the impact on men’s family lives of significant changes in the workplace?



The present volume is significant in many ways. It deepens studies carried out by the network CROME,<sup>1</sup> sponsored by the European Union, taking the reader inside the broad trends noted by that initial study. Like the CROME project, this report gathers a veritable “dream team” of empirical researchers from several different European countries who have begun to disentangle the strands of change in men’s lives, examining the mutually reinforcing, or contradictory, strands of attitudes, behaviours, relationships and working situations. They offer the most comprehensive and sophisticated assessment to date of the ways contemporary European men are struggling to balance work and family commitments, and the consequent stresses and satisfaction that such a struggle inevitably brings.

A core insight in this project is that the changes in individual life patterns among men are as much a response to changing working conditions as they are the result of some shift in ideology about involved fatherhood. These workplace shifts – shorter working hours, less secure employment, more sporadic work biographies, and part-time working lives, and the like – are constraining to men’s aspirations, but they also potentially free men up to spend more time with their families. As a result, the project engages in a difficult but illuminating dialectic: the impact of changing workplaces on masculinity, and the impact of a changing masculinity on the workplace.

Among some of the key empirical findings are:

- Men are becoming more receptive to women working, but that receptivity is greater in principle than in reality. Men continue to be ambivalent about women working.
- Men’s concerns about work-family balance are driven at least as much by structural and institutional forces as they are by new attitudinal or ideological commitments.
- Part-time work among men is not a solution to the problem of men balancing work and family; indeed, it may be part of the problem of workplace inflexibility. The greater participation in part-time work does not necessarily lead to greater participation in child care. While part-time work may yield more flexibility, it requires active state policies to really enable healthy and satisfying work-life balance.
- “Men change when women change.” It is largely the changing experiences and expectations of women that are the prime mover in changes among men. At the same time, there is some movement among men on their own, in response to their changing work environments, in addition to their relationships.
- “Men’s caring relationships form the centres of change.” Often children are central, but it may be other family members or partners. Men are

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1 Critical Research on Men in Europe: The Social Problem and Societal Problematisation of Men and Masculinities. Research Network funded by the European Union Framework V.

more embedded in family and intimate life than we initially may have thought.

- Despite this, the “new man” model of masculinity fails to resonate for a sizeable majority of men. They are looking for flexibility, not transformation. They are looking for/developing “strategies to shape their own lives.”
- There are “hidden structures” preventing equality by a male-bound work culture. Even if all the men in Europe awoke suddenly to find themselves fully committed to gender equality, egalitarian family lives and better balance between work and family, the structure of working life – its institutions, norms, cultures – would make such a transition particularly difficult.
- One of the chief problems with workplace culture is the centrality of overwork. There is widespread corporate/organisational rigidity laced with ever-expanding demands.
- Changes among men in this direction are not institutionally supported anywhere. The problem of change is individualised. If that is true, this is almost sure to stymie it. Individuation is a primary force to resist change, and it cleverly masquerades as exactly what change-seekers want: individual freedom, choices, flexibility.
- There are fairly easily discerned stages of institutional transformation. In the first stage, individual change (such as taking parental leave) is risky for male workers; in a second phase, increased numbers of men do so; and finally, the institution may begin to transform itself to even expect this behaviour.

Predictably, there are variations between different countries, among different economic sectors, and among men in different class locations. While predictable, some are revealing of the ways in which class, sector or national origin may over-determine individual efforts by men for social transformation.

However, two major findings stand out:

First, all the time-use studies suggest a convergence between women and men’s wage work and family work patterns. There is far less gender division either in paid work or family work than at any previous time. This is critical. Not only does it disprove the notion that women and men are from different planets, but it also illustrates how women and men are actually capable of being allies in the struggles to find a coherent balance between work and family.

Second, this convergence is as likely to be because “work changes gender” as because “gender changes work.” That is, despite the initiative of the study to observe how work changes gender, it is just as often the case that gender changes work.

This is, in part, a reflection of the inflexibility of workplaces, but it also suggests the partial success of the gender transformation signalled by the

women's movement. Women have changed dramatically, in both attitudes and behaviours; and a "new woman" has been around so long that she is hardly even "new" anymore. But not only has the "new man" not emerged – he continues to lag behind women in the efforts to fully be transformed by new structural opportunities offered by the gender revolution among women (increased opportunities for part-time work, flexible hours, parental leave).

Structural workplace inflexibility is matched by an ideological inflexibility. Men who do seek to better balance work and family are still re-imagined as more "feminine" – weaker, less manly. They are accorded less respect, fewer opportunities, and lower status.

Yet there is hope. This research offers important evidence about how change can be achieved – indeed, it suggests that there are seams in an edifice that is already undergoing important changes. Family-friendly workplace policies need to be specifically designed to include men (like the "Daddy Days" of Nordic parental leave schemes). Where state actors and bureaucracies are disinclined to change, many private sector organisations have jumped into the breach.

Change in our working lives will not come easily or quickly. But if men truly want to live the lives they say they want to live – lives animated by close and intimate family experiences, with close relationships to their partners and their children – then they will continue to push up against the structural limits of workplace culture. Perhaps, when enough of us push, the door will begin to open a little wider.

*New York, December 2004*

## Editors' Preface

*Ralf Puchert, Marc Gärtner and Stephan Höyng*

“Crisis can be a productive state. One has only to take the smack of catastrophe from it.”

Max Frisch

Labour has become increasingly differentiated. In every European country, employment patterns have become very different from the traditional, normal labour conditions. In fact, less than 50% of the workforce in Europe now have a full-time, long-term job with a traditional employment contract: patterns of employment vary widely across Europe, but the same trends are visible everywhere. It is noteworthy that this development has, to a large extent, resulted in changes in the characteristics of the male labour force. Up to now it has clearly been more common for men than for women to work under traditional, standard conditions of employment. But in recent years, the number of men facing discontinuities in their working career or working part-time is constantly increasing, as does the number of women working full time.

Labour is a core part of masculinity and therefore changes in masculinities are connected to or dependent upon changes in working life. This link itself is in a period of transition and is possibly becoming less direct than before. In fact, two social processes are at work here: a dynamic of working life and a process of change in terms of inter-gender arrangements.

The guiding idea of this research was that in a process where economic structures and values are changing, one can also expect a modification of the relations between the genders. This should, sooner or later, lead to a redefinition of the position of men in society as well as of the perceptions men have of themselves. These developments offer an opportunity for improving the quality of life for both men and women. The “smack of catastrophe”, however, can only be taken away, if insecurities and risks are not simply individualised, but embedded in a new social debate about equality and solidarity.

Gender studies and gender research have been going on now for about thirty years, yet the history of men's studies is even shorter. The social analysis of men and masculinities tends to be rather idealist if not morally coloured when the conditions of working life are not taken into account. To treat all of the mentioned connections, this research project combines economic, sociological and psychological approaches. The empirical analysis focuses on the individual and institutional conditions under which men are dealing with these new trends.

In some way, the initiative for carrying out this project was inspired by a survey conducted in the early 1990s, in which Dissens Institute analysed men's reactions to equality measures in Berlin public administration, asking under which conditions men put up with or even supported equality measures. One of the answers was that men who do not work full-time contribute structurally and individually to gender equality (Höyng et al. 1995, Höyng and Puchert 1998). Thus, part-time employment and non-standard contracts, which have increased in the past 20 years, assumed significant meaning for us, especially from the perspective of promoting gender equality.

“A life-enhancing time-culture” (*Lebensvolle Zeitkultur*) became the working title of the proposal that later turned into “Work Changes Gender.” We wanted to clarify which conditions give rise to a situation where men could benefit from working less. We regarded the shift away from professional work as an equality-oriented step, which also offered personal opportunities. Furthermore, this shift was accompanied by the possibility of men assuming more non-professional responsibility.

We first looked outside the employment sphere for the resources in this increasing precariousness, namely at the expansion of the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and personal opportunities of men. But we also had to recognise the increasing flexibility of working conditions for men mainly as a process of increasing uncertainty and an increasing reduction of social security. In the operating process in our international consortium it turned out, however, that in an international context there are also chances and opportunities for individuals amidst the risks of deregulation and neo-liberal cut-backs. Although risks are distributed to different degrees according to social positions, there are also new opportunities for self-determination arising from new forms of employment. Without ignoring the risks men face, this report aims to convey the structural and individual pre-conditions that facilitate good practise changes in gender-work relations.

Our study explores the area of Europe, which due to its cultural-historical differences, is economically and socially rather heterogeneous. The research consortium was constructed in full view of these social and gender-related differences in (and beyond) Europe:

- Norway, as a Scandinavian welfare state with a very high level of corporate structure and a comparatively rich tradition of gender equality, is an example of a trend in the material where new gender relations have a more independent impact both on working life and on men's personal relations. At The Work Research Institute in Oslo, Øystein G. Holter, Sigtona Halrynjo and Selma Therese Lyng focused on new results from organisation development and research, and especially on work partnership/domestic partnership reconciliation.
- Austria and Germany both show a high level of corporatist labour agreements and, with the exception of the former GDR, a tradition of male breadwinner family arrangements. Christian Scambor (Männerberatung/ Men's

Counselling Centre, Graz) and Klaus Schwerma (Dissens, Berlin) carried out the socio-psychological study, while Elli Scambor (Männerberatung) and Vera Riesenfeld (Dissens) focussed on organisational research, and Margareta Kreimer (University of Graz) on gender and economy. Stephan Höyng (Catholic University of Applied Sciences, Berlin); Ralf Puchert and Marc Gärtner (Dissens) coordinated different areas of the project.

- Spain has a deep Roman-Catholic background, relatively late industrialisation and ongoing Mediterranean traditional family arrangements. The former south-western periphery has been taking big steps forward toward modernisation in the last decades and features some “booming” regions, the most advanced of which is perhaps Catalonian Barcelona. Research for Spain was carried out at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Xavier Ramos Morilla conducting the economic part, and Paco Abril Morales, the sociological part.
- Eastern European transformation out of centralised socialism is presented by our Bulgarian partner. The research was undertaken by the University of National and World Economy, Sofia, specifically by Margarita Atanassova (economy), and Violeta Velkova (sociology). We find a tension between recent economic problems, a socialist gender equality tradition in terms of labour and a very low discursive support of gender issues.
- Israel, lying outside of Europe but closely linked to it, is a bridge between the West and the Middle East. The Jewish culture within Israel is also very differentiated. From Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Shoshana Neumann and Jacques Silber contributed to the economic research. Yair Amichai-Hamburger did the socio-psychological part of the research.

This composition has turned out to be a good starting point for studying differences and the homogeneity/continuity of gender arrangements and models of masculinity between different cultures, as well as policies either aimed at or affecting gender relations.

In addition to being international, the consortium was also interdisciplinary, representing at least three focuses: economic (first stage), sociological (second stage) and psychological (third stage). These three ways of “looking at the world” were dealt with in regular joint meetings, because only such an interdisciplinary approach might allow the authors of this study to grasp the essence of the fundamental changes. The qualitative approach allows an access to the world of the attitudes, habitudes and feelings of men.

As coordinators, we strongly believe in the positive effect of this diversity. Competencies and resources from very different cultural, economic and academic backgrounds flowed together into a cooperation and synergy on the level of work structure and discussion.

## Acknowledgements

The collaboration in the research consortium was determined by a highly collective process of planning, data collection and analysis. Thus, the texts finally written by the authors would not have been possible without the cooperation of all partners. In this respect, we had to strike a balance between the pragmatic, academic standard of personalised editor- and authorship and the rendition of collectivity and cooperation.

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The study was built on contributions, encouragement and support of many helping hands, friends and institutions.

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Dissens Institute provided a relaxed work atmosphere for the coordination group, including discussions on many practical components of gender and masculinity topics. Ludger Jungnitz was a vital contributor to the writing of the research proposal, and without the support of Andrea von Marschall, many of our jobs would not have received co-funding. Wladimir Boger, Andreas Sander, Rachel Herweg, Mart Busche, Dag Schölper and Dirk Stöckigt were engaged in various important aspects of the project.

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Most of all, we thank the men and the experts who participated in the interviews and were interested in our study. Considering that our topics were often new, sometimes surprising, one project finding stands out: the great interest and openness shown by those we contacted.

*Berlin, December 2004*

# 1. Introduction

*Marc Gärtner and Stephan Höyng*

“In times of rapid change, men are hit in their Achilles heel: The central definition of a male life loses its basis when labour is more and more socially devalued or vanishes all together. The social cleavage between winners and losers of this process intensifies.”

Hans-Joachim Lenz (2001: 384, translated by the editors)

## 1.1 Basic Ideas and Objectives

The rapidity of change and its unpredictability are among the most important characteristics of contemporary production systems. As a consequence, the forms of employment in Europe are also experiencing radical changes. Current European work regimes are characterised, on the one hand, by a richer variety of lifestyles and by economically and socially beneficial developments; but on the other hand, there is growing insecurity, inconsistency and the risk of increased social marginalisation. Economically active individuals experience adverse pressures and uncertain outcomes. This has been accompanied by many changes in private life and gender relations. Therefore in working life as well as in the private sphere, men face demands which are more complex and less foreseeable than some years ago.

This research project explored the main features of the changes that are taking place at work in order to see the different ways male and female workers are affected and hence how these changes will ultimately have an impact on equality between the genders.

### *Standard Work is no Longer Normal*

Labour is becoming increasingly heterogeneous, and types of employment, more and more diversified. There is a profound modification in the way individuals – in particular men – live.

Up to now, it has definitely been more common for men than for women to work under traditional conditions of employment: the standard employee has been male, had an unlimited labour contract, social security and worked full time. But in recent decades, two main developments have taken place that challenge this model: the end of Fordist regime of industrial economy and women's claims for economic and political power. The traditional patriarchal model of masculinity was thus confronted by the same crisis affecting the predominant model of work. (cf. Holter 2003a, Höyng and Puchert 1998).



As a consequence, the number of men facing discontinuities in their careers (or working part-time) is constantly increasing, while the number of women working full time is increasing. The inactivity rate of men and women is converging, as will be shown in the following chapter, and a large number of European males who are fit to work are now active in short term, fixed term, reduced or precarious forms of labour – or have no jobs at all. The male self-concept used to be based on labour (“the capacity to fill the breadwinner role was the key to masculinity”) (Holter 2003a: 79), but a growing number of working biographies of men show discontinuity, insecurity, parallel jobs and unemployment. A good illustration is the city of Berlin, which in this respect, may lead the way in the Federal Republic of Germany: here one can notice a 15.1% decrease in the number of men in standard work between 1991 and 1998. Only 40.3% males fit for work<sup>2</sup> aged 15 to 65 in Berlin are now employed in standard jobs. The corresponding percentage for women in Berlin is 31.4%, with a decrease of 7.4% in the same period (cf. Oschmiansky and Schmid 2000: 20ff).

### *Changes in Work-life Balance*

Men’s working lives cannot be adequately understood unless the job/home-relationship is addressed, with changes in the sphere of reproduction having a separate impact on working life. Analyses must relate changes in households of choice<sup>3</sup> and utilisation of domestic time and family “time culture” to new ways of adapting to working life. In Western Europe, women’s participation in wage labour increased from a low level, but their rising share of the household income and the general societal and cultural impact of feminism and equal status policies have changed many men’s views. The co-habitation/marriage sphere, like the sphere of wage labour, is in transition, and some changes have arguably occurred more rapidly here than in wage labour. New institutional patterns are emerging, containing more diverse forms of masculinity.<sup>4</sup> This is associated with increasing equality in private life which affects couples of either sexual orientation, parental duties, and rights following divorce. There is a growing emphasis on gender equality among men, especially in the area of caring and relational competence. These developments suggest that men are developing a new culture in dealing with work and private life.

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2 We prefer this calculation base, because it – in contrast to other studies – does not only assume the male work force, but also includes unemployed men or students. This more comprehensive approach shows that the concept of the full-time working breadwinner does not represent the whole social reality.

3 The term is used as an alternative to “family” or the heterosexual norm of partnership. It takes the multitude and diversity of partnership and household models or lifestyles into account, which have become more visible in the last three decades (cf. Adam 2004).

4 Cf. Connell (1995), who conceptualises masculinities as alternatives that construct the masculine gender.

In terms of gender equality, these developments involve risks but they may also open the way for an improved quality of life. There is a need for change among men in many areas of society, yet it is mainly practical behaviour where this change has so far been most evident: the increased amount of time fathers spend caring for their children. The lack of men in caring roles, while less evident in the home and family sphere, has not changed much in working life, and today this is the primary reason for the continued segregation of working life in some parts of Europe.

Although new forms of work may seem to have beneficial economic and social repercussions, one cannot ignore the fact that at the same time there is a growing risk of social marginalisation and insecurity. Thus, if economic forces result in new patterns of behaviour, one has to be aware of the fact that not all these changes are welcome by individuals in general, men in particular. There is likely to be a conflict between novelty and traditional stereotypes, whether they refer to the position of men at work or their role at home.

### *Male Change Patterns*

One may expect to observe a modification of the relations between the genders and this should, sooner or later, lead to “new types of masculinity,” i.e., to a redefinition of the position of men in society as well as of the image they have of themselves. These developments include many risks for a social polarisation in terms of their participation in the work sphere, but there is also the opportunity for improving the quality of life for both men and women.

Masculinities are based on gender relations, in particular the gendered division of labour (cf. Connell 1995). With respect to men, the pre-eminent ideological role within gender relations has been the role of “men as breadwinners.” What is the concept of masculinity men have themselves? The “ability to deal with disequilibria” is more and more considered by economists as the essence of human capital in the modern world. We ask whether all men are able to take an active attitude towards pervasive change or whether some, if not many of them, are content to passively react to pressures. And if different types of responses exist, what are the determinants of this variety of reactions and what should be done to promote such an “ability to deal with disequilibria?” How do changing labour markets affect the self image of males?

## **1.2 Current State of Research on Masculinities**

Gender is on the verge of becoming a mainstream focus in the humanities and social sciences. It is a category describing social inequality and is thus similar

to ethnicity/race and class. It is a vitally important organising phenomenon in the logic and structures of society and culture (Kroll 2002: V). Masculinity in the sense of gender is not a biological destiny, but refers to an identity lived out within complex social relations. Research on masculinity nowadays is part of an open, relational gender research. It is less a discipline than a cross sectional task, which reflects the seemingly gender neutral assumptions in every science. Thus, it offers a part of the picture of gendered social relations.

The following theoretical approaches and studies strongly influenced our project – at least the background of discussions and main focus, but sometimes also in detail. Since the single subprojects of this volume address the topic of work and masculinity from different angles and with methodological variety, theoretical frameworks are introduced in the respective chapters.

Internationally, the most striking and perhaps ground-breaking approach has been that of Australian sociologist Robert W. Connell (1995). Looking for the connection between gender, power and action, he identifies a two-pronged strategy of male oppression: power over women and competing masculinities, which are various.<sup>5</sup> Anthropologists and ethnologists have contributed to this approach by describing the variety of masculinities in comparing different cultures (Völger and Welck 1990, Gilmore 1990).

Building on Bourdieu's habitus concept,<sup>6</sup> the German social scientist Michael Meuser (1998) has investigated the cultural patterns of masculinity as they are interpreted by men themselves. Male gender habitus refers to a pre-modern kind of identity, which seems to be non-reflexive and non-reflectable. Meuser discerns the highest potential for gender equality practice in the milieu of skilled workers.

In a church-funded representative survey in Germany, Paul Zulehner and Rainer Volz (1998) compared the attitudes of a large number of men. They distinguish between four types of men: 19% traditional, 37% insecure, 25% pragmatic, and 20% new men (who differ from traditional patterns, are open to gender equality in their attitudes and practice).

The first European representative surveys on men and gender equality appeared in Scandinavia: Jalmert (1984) in Sweden and Holter (1989) in Norway explored such topics as male friendships, work, family and social life. British researchers on masculinity in the tradition of the Anglo-American “(new) men's studies” have produced organisational studies (Witz and Savage 1992, Hearn 1998, Cockburn 1991). In Germany, Ralf Puchert and

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5 Further important inputs for research on masculinity arose from queer theory and the deconstructionist debate (see Butler 1990, Maihofer 1995). One consequence was the subjection of both the dualistic gender order and the monolithic understanding of each of the genders to close scrutiny. Indisputable attributions to men and women now seem antiquated and are more and more replaced by a focus on gender diversity.

6 Pierre Bourdieu's (e.g., 2000) concept of habitus tries to describe the interrelations between a power-related social framework and the social sense of the subject, his or her actions and long-lasting habits. Gender and power relations play a central role here.

Stephan Höyng (1998) followed this direction with research on men's reaction to the process of equality in working life and discovered that it is seldom the attitudes, but rather the informal behaviour of men within a male-encoded labour culture, which prevents women from achieving equal opportunities.

Strong impulses and trends come from Anglo-American and Scandinavian countries, but also from the Netherlands, where research on masculinities has traditionally been connected with effective equality-bolstering policies, particularly in terms of family and the labour market. Regarding Scandinavia, Øystein Holter (2003a) has recently discussed a change of male role models based on new work-life relations and a new caregiving-model.

Since the concept of gender mainstreaming is established in the European Union, an increasing number of socio-economic surveys about the labour market are published from a gender specific perspective. The first international European research project on men, CROME, did explorative international research exchange on men and masculinity, emphasising the topics home and work, social exclusion, violence and health.

In the area of European labour market research, gender specific differentiations are relatively usual, but the focus here lies on women, while men are used as the standard. Although feminist labour researchers show established networks, a deeper analysis of male behaviour and strategies seldom appears.

### **1.3 Structure of the Project**

By carrying out research on men in the context of changes in their working conditions, this study attempts to determine the main features of the new forms of work. We try to show to what extent discontinuities have become central in contemporary labour markets and whether they refer to part-time employment or temporary job contracts. This study examines the implications of such innovations for all aspects of men's individual life, including the images men have of themselves. On the basis of such an investigation, recommendations will be made concerning "best practices," that is the ways that seem best to cope with such transformations and foster an improved quality of life.

The project's examination of male work and life conditions was divided into three sub-projects:

- Subproject 1 constitutes an examination on an socio-economic level. Data from panel surveys, European and national labour market and household statistics on gender aspects of labour markets and men's work life have been analysed.

Here, main tasks concerned the labour force participation rates of men and women, the distribution between part-time and full-time work, between temporary and permanent work-contracts.