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# East Germany: Changes in Temporal Structures in Women's Work After the Unification

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*Irene Dölling*

# East Germany: Changes in Temporal Structures in Women's Work After the Unification

## 1. Time As a Social and Gendered Construct

What is time? Common experience tells us that time is a precious commodity – we always seem to have too little of it or we are subject to schedules and pressures that leave little room for our own concerns. Common knowledge tells us that time is not an empty, indeterminate magnitude, but is always determined by its content. It tells us that there are different times, and that during these times our actions are assessed differently in cultural terms and accorded different degrees of social recognition. Our experience also tells us that time has a distinctly different meaning for women and for men.

In sociology, therefore, time is viewed first of all in very general terms as a social construct. We have the French sociologist Emile Durkheim to thank for the notion of "social time." His basic assumption is that all human activities that are established to endure, i.e. are institutionalized, "are dependant on and also express reality" (Durkheim, 1988: 19). He includes the social structure of time among these enduring institutions. Divisions of time and their incorporation in temporal cultures grant a rhythm and synchronicity to social life. For all societies, generating a common time is a fundamental prerequisite if social life is to display regularities. This is true of communities – families, neighborhoods, and associations – as well as for the social integration of modern societies as nation states (cf. Garhammer 199: 36ff).

For the German sociologist Norbert Elias, "time is bound to the society because it fulfils functions" (cited in Maurer 1992: 49). With its respective temporal units, social time is the expression of certain social realities and a form of their reproduction. A homologous relation exists between temporal structures and the forms in which a society organizes its production and exchange processes, and also assigns them meaning and value in cultural classification systems. Because socially regulated exchange processes only exist in and by means of the actual action of individuals, time, as Elias emphasizes, should be construed not only as an institutionalized construct but also as a human activity. The acquisition and incorporation of temporal structures and units, as well as the norms and value judgments associated with them, is thus an important aspect of socialization.

Social structures of time are always power structures as well, which reflect not least of all the power relations between the sexes. Temporal structures are power structures in a number of ways. First of all, they provide the rules, in the words of Oskar Negt from the university of Hanover , "that govern how people are compelled to divide their time and in which spaces they are to move" (Negt 1984: 21). Second, both individual and collective control over time reflect the social structure of a society, as well as the hierarchies, inequalities, and unequal distribution of power among the actors of a social sphere. And third, temporal structures are the expression of cultural interpretive and definitional power. In modern societies in particular, the control and normative interpretation of time have always been areas of conflict and negotiation – manifested over long periods as the struggle between capital and labor over limits to working hours and the right to free time and leisure. Social movements too, not least among them the women's movement, have joined these concrete/political and symbolic struggles, an example of the latter being the issue of social recognition accorded to housework.

In light of the above very general remarks on time as a social construct, I will now focus in more detail on modern societies, and in this context also explain why time is not only a social but also a gendered construct.

When modern structures of time are described in sociological literature, one often finds a standard idealized comparison to the so-called "pre-modern" temporal structures. According to this view, modern temporal structures are linear, i.e. associated with a normative view of progress that is open, unlimited, and determinable. In contrast, "pre-modern" temporal structures are described as "cyclical" or also as "natural," because the rhythms of social life and especially of labor corresponded to natural cycles such as day and night, the rotation of the seasons and the heavenly bodies, high and low tides, rainy and dry periods, and this was associated with the normative view of a given world order. Studies of European culture and daily life reveal that abstract units played only a minor role in the rhythms of "pre-modern" daily life. Unlike today, one didn't get up "at six in the morning" but rather "at dawn"; and well into the seventeenth century, only few people in Europe could name the year in which they were born (cf. Geißler1999: 5ff). By the time of the so-called Renaissance, however, temporal structures were beginning to crystallize. Merchants, for example, began to treat time as a limited resource in their commercial activities, and the new temporal structures became conspicuous and widespread with clocks being built into church towers, for example. As industrialization progressed and nation states were established, the modern structure of time in Europe took on an especially prominent role in the nineteenth century. Factory-like wage labor and the working schedules associated with it replaced the notion of time as "naturally" cyclical with the rhythms of individual achievement (over days, weeks, years, the working life). Above and beyond this, the notion of time as an abstract unit

became pronounced, enabling Marx to state that "all economy is subsumed in the temporal economy" (Marx 1953: 89). In parallel to this, the formation of nation states led to a synchronization of life for the majority of the population: for example, set times for schools, factories, offices, and universities, also shop opening hours, regular intervals for elections and the Olympic Games, the introduction of international time with its different zones at the end of the nineteenth century, and today's European Union regulations on daylight savings time. Not only in the sphere of employment do modern societies demand that life proceed by the clock and display a rational temporal discipline; also and perhaps even more so, a number of other organizations and institutions (from the educational system to the military/conscription, from transportation networks to opening hours for agencies, health and leisure facilities) all predetermine individual time in more or less set or compelling ways.

Modern societies are characterized in structural terms by a division into subsystems which are relatively differentiated from each other and which tend to develop their own logic. The subsystem economics has played a dominant role with respect to all the other subsystems (politics, law, education, family, etc.) and more or less limited – at least thus far – their relative autonomy and independent logic. The dominance of the economic subsystem has also been institutionalized in modern temporal structures – the influence of employment schedules on temporal regimes in other social areas or organizations, for example, is considerably stronger and more compelling than the reverse. In essence, modern societies are based in organizational, legal, and normative terms on a separation between production and reproduction, between the public (political) and the private. Women's and gender studies in particular have demonstrated that these divisions lead to the labor market and (paid) employment acquiring dominance over and a higher social value than the household and (unpaid) housework and reproductive labor, and also to hierarchies among social fields and activities. This corresponds to a pattern of gender relations that places women and men in numerous hierarchical and unequal relations to each other, and locates them both normatively and institutionally in different social arenas. This in turn has far-reaching consequences for their capacities to act and make decisions as well as for how their activities and achievements are valued and recognized in social terms. These divisions and hierarchies both reflect and are generated by modern temporal structures, which in specific ways are also gendered constructs.

a. Modern temporal structures are dominated by the rational and abstract conceptions of time taken from the sphere of employment and/or the market. "Time-consuming" work or work that does not fit efficiency and performance criteria, such as caring for children or the sick, is considered "unproductive" or ranges toward the lower end of the professional scale, depending on whether it is performed at home or under employment conditions.

b. Opposing conceptions of time are used to transform social hierarchies and power inequalities into a temporal dimension: effective and "productive" use of time is used to distinguish areas and activities from those that use time "unproductively"; the sovereign use of and control over time in the service of individual needs indicates a higher level of power and social status than does "dispossessed" (or "alienated") time, which is subject to external determination and suggests dependencies, the same being true for time that is determined by the needs of others (e.g. children or husband). Over a virtually uninterrupted continuum to the present day, the modern division between production and reproduction has gone hand in hand with a normative localization and responsibility on the part of men for gainful employment and women for housework and children, resulting in a gendered division of labor, which means that the temporal structures, too, are gendered that categorize time spent in gainful employment as "productive" and time spent doing housework as "unproductive." In its different forms, time is unequally divided between women and men and is linked with discrimination and disadvantages for those – usually women – who perform their activities primarily or largely in temporal forms that are deemed by society to be "unproductive." Temporal structures not only of the labor market but also of many organizations within modern society are also gendered in so far as they more or less compel the unequal division of time to be replicated for the two sexes, leading the majority of women, for example, to continue assuming the reproductive housework and care-taking activities normatively assigned to them.

c. The effect that the hierarchical temporal structure has on replicating hierarchical modern gender relations is achieved or intensified not least of all by the homologous relation at the cultural level between the classification of time on the one hand and gender on the other. The distinction between "modern" linear and abstract time and "pre-modern" cyclical or "natural" time also serves to classify different forms of time and action even in modern societies. Time is especially linear in the sphere of production, which is also classified as "male" in the sense of "creative, rational, performance-oriented, progressive, and a social space for men." In contrast, time spent in areas associated with reproduction, circulation, regeneration or renewed production (e.g. of life) are classified as "female" in the sense of "life-oriented, nature-oriented, repetitive, and a social space for women."

d. Gendered modern temporal structures exhibit their discriminatory effect not only by the fact of their institutionalization in various organizations and cultural classifications. They possess not only an "objective" (institutionalized) but also a "subjective" (individual) dimension and mode of existence. They are kept alive and reproduced in the actual action of women and men, by means of the individual patterns of spending time which give rhythm and meaning to their activities. Individual patterns of spending time do not nec-

essarily cover the same ground as institutionalized structures of time and their normative prescriptions, but the former are predetermined by the latter. By means of the temporal patterns that they cultivate, women and men tend to contribute to replicating gendered temporal structures and to an unequal division of time. An example is when women, having identified with the normative assignment of responsibility for reproduction despite their professional responsibilities, "take it upon themselves" to do the housework. Or when women, even when they too are gainfully employed, do all the housework before their husbands come home from work, thus meeting the normative conception that time outside gainful employment should serve to reproduce (male) working energy or working force.

With the above in mind, we can summarize and move on to our actual topic: temporal structures in European industrial societies are marked by the structural division between industrial production and private reproduction. This is associated with a cultural gender order, which assigns men and women in normative terms to one field or the other. These normative delineations have striking results in the form of gendered divisions of labor as well as in hierarchical and gendered temporal structures that contribute to replicating gender hierarchies and inequalities. Gainful employment on the part of women which is characteristic today does not significantly change the hierarchical qualities of these temporal structures; women must now develop strategies for dealing with the normative and actual demands of different temporal structures.

At the same time, however, social pressure is intensifying to find institutional ways of regulating how women can be integrated into the labor market while also performing their traditional reproductive duties. As comparative feminist studies on European welfare states have shown, these institutional regulations can assume very different concrete forms, depending on historical and especially on cultural traditions. This is precisely why a look at the temporal structures of East German women is so interesting and fruitful, because the unification of Germany led to a clash between two different models encompassing gender arrangements, the inclusion of women in the workforce, and cultural images and their corresponding temporal structures. The results of this clash are still felt today by East German women, and I will reconstruct them in the next two parts along the lines of the following questions:

a. What access to which temporal structures did East German women have and what do they have today? Was there an unequal division of time between women and men in the GDR, although almost all women of working age were employed; what did this look like and what changes in this (unequal) division have taken place since 1990?
b. How and with the help of what processes of institutionalization was and is the time spent on reproductive tasks socially recognized and women's ac-

cess to activities in "productive" areas and temporal forms assisted or promoted? What cultural images of the "role of women" are these based on?

c. What patterns of spending time did women develop to deal with the temporal structures of the GDR; what type of self-image is reflected in these patterns, and what effect do they continue to have under changed conditions?

## 2. Temporal Structures of Women in the GDR

Let me begin with a look at West Germany and a phenomenon that can be observed in the united Germany.

Since the mid-seventies, (West) Germany has found itself in a structural economic crisis, one of whose expressions is a high rate of unemployment. Although the total number of working hours that is needed to generate the (increased) gross national product has dropped since then, the number of employed women has increased over this period and the number of employed mothers has also risen (cf. Senghaas-Knobloch 2000: 136ff). An examination of female employment figures in the united Germany in the nineties, however, reveals surprising differences between East and West Germany.

a. The activity rate (rate of working population) for East German women is significantly higher than for West German women – regardless of marital status and children [table 1];

b. The full-time employment rate for East German women is significantly higher than for West German women; part-time employment does not correlate with the presence of children [tables 2 and 3];

c. Like West German men, almost all East German men work full-time, but a far higher percentage of the latter live with women who are gainfully employed, including a considerable proportion who are also employed full-time.

These observed differences have numerous causes. They include, for example, different cultural images in the GDR and the (former) FRG with respect to gainful employment for women, different forms of the welfare state that influence the integration of women in the labor market, and also different cultural conceptions of where and by whom children (especially babies and pre-schoolers) should be cared for and raised.

So, in order to elucidate the current temporal structures of East German women, we need to look at the temporal structures and associated gender arrangements of the GDR.

## 2.1

The socialist GDR was in existence for 40 years. It was a labor society with the right and obligation to work for both sexes inscribed in the constitution. At the end of its existence, in 1989, almost 80% of women of employable age (from 15 to 60) were working [table 4]. Among European countries, the GDR had one of the longest working days, working years, and working lives. From 1968 on, the standard working week consisted of 43 3/4 hours. More than 70% of women were employed full-time; the majority of women employed part-time worked between 25 and 35 hours a week. One can say that women in the GDR were integrated into the employment sphere to a degree comparable to that for men. A large part of their individual lifetimes was associated with a time that was accorded a high degree of societal respect. Both the cultural status and the material rewards from the work performed during this time were decisive factors influencing the social positions of women as well as men.

The inclusion of both sexes in the employment sphere, however, did not mean that women's and men's work had equal status and value. There was a clear division/segregation between women's and men's jobs, corresponding differences in compensation, and gender-specific job hierarchies. Nevertheless, the GDR did not display the division between unqualified women's work (primarily part-time) and qualified men's work (full-time). By the eighties, women under the age of 40 had professional qualifications comparable to those of men [table 5].

The inclusion of both sexes in the sphere of employment had economic as well as political and ideological causes. For various reasons that changed over time, the GDR never had enough workers, which made it essential to recruit women into the workforce. In political terms, the GDR viewed itself as a society that strove for the equality of all; equality of the sexes was a basic principle of the constitution. In accordance with Marxist ideological tradition, the main way to achieve equality of the sexes was for everyone to participate in "productive" labor. According to this tradition, housework was a menial routine lacking in emancipatory potential; childcare was viewed as both an individual and societal responsibility. One can say, there were three levels of work which were differentiated and hierarchically valued: first, gainful employment, second, childbearing and -caring and third, housework. These economic constraints and cultural/normative conceptions had two consequences for gender relations in the GDR.

First of all, this socialist variant of modern society did not question the structural division between production and reproduction. "Productive" labor in terms of gainful employment dominated reproductive work done at home and the hierarchy of professions or jobs as well, the normative assignment of reproductive work to women was retained, and temporal structures remained hierar-

chical and "gendered." Second, this led to a "gender contract" which in turn resulted in concrete instances of institutionalization (e.g. in law and in the temporal structures of organizations) that tended to "flatten" the hierarchies in the actual relations between the sexes. What means "gender contract" and what are the characteristics of the gender contract practiced in the GDR?

## 2.2

Following Gösta Esping-Andersens work on "Three Types of Capitalist Welfare System" there has been in the last years a discussion among feminist Social Scientists on the concept of "gender contract." The basic assumption of this approach is that – trying to explain observable differences in which women in Western European Countries are included into the labor market – you have to look at varied cultural traditions and respective forms of communication and exchange between the sexes. Gender contract means that "(I)n every modern society there exists an historically developed socio-cultural consensus jointly supported by both men and women regarding a given pattern of interactions between the sexes, a guide and model as to the 'correct' gender-specific division of labor, family form and way of integrating both sexes into society via the labor market and/or the family." (Schenk, 1995, p.478)

Pfau-Effinger (1998) differentiates two paths of modernization of European gender arrangements following different gender contracts. One is the modernization of the traditional male provider/breadwinner – housewife-model via part time work of the women. This model is widely practiced in West Germany and it is connected with the cultural norm of private forms of care taking especially for very young children and of women's or mother's responsibility for this care taking.

The second paths of modernization of European gender arrangements is characterized by integrating both sexes full time into the labor market (dual earner model), combined with the cultural norm and respective institutionalized forms of a mixed private and public care taking for children.

Based on the assumption that socialism can be understood as a special type of modern society (Wagner 1995), the GDR gender contract can be interpreted as a version of the second paths. The gender contract practiced in the GDR was based on the dual-earner model, that is, both sexes were integrated into society primarily through their participation in the employment system. This gender contract led to gender arrangements in the GDR characterized by the disappearance of the male breadwinner role, by a trend toward female economic independence and a correspondingly strong position of women in the family. This position was bolstered by the contribution of women to household income of 43% on average (compared to 18% in the Federal Republic of Germany in

1988). The GDR gender contract was accompanied by a flattening of gender hierarchies. This was caused not only by the disappearance of the male breadwinner-housewife-model. This gender contract functioned in the GDR in part because social differences were generally not as strongly defined, so "gender" as a factor of social differentiation thus played a subordinate role.

It should, however, be noted that the GDR-type gender contract was based on the structural split between the productive and the reproductive social sphere and therefore always assumed that women bore the main responsibility for housework and child-raising and that the great majority of East German women had internalized this norm as well.

This had contradictory effects on the temporal structures pertaining to women. On the one hand, time was divided unequally between women and men to the extent that in addition to the lengthy periods of time they spent at their jobs, women performed a disproportionate share of the housework and childcare [table 6]. This led to the well-known phenomenon of the "double burden," which in temporal terms can be described thus: the lives of women in the GDR were structured to a large degree by periods over which they themselves exercised little disposal – the decisive factors were either work obligations or the needs of others (e.g. of dependent children, old, sick or disabled family members, but of husbands, too). If one subtracts the time spent every day for their own regeneration, little time remained for women to pursue their own interests and satisfy their own needs. So-called leisure time was an extremely limited commodity for women.

On the other hand, the GDR gender contract implied that social policies [table 7] combined with the temporal structures of institutions could make employment and housework and/or especially maternity possible in practice. The social policy measures directed mostly to mothers included in fact the majority of women in the GDR. While the fertility level tended to fall in the GDR as – in all industrialized countries – the rate of motherhood (Mütterrate), i.e. the percentage of women who had borne at least one child during their lifetime rose. In 1989 it stood at 90% (cf. Winkler 1990: 27). The gender contract was normative and linked to a gender-specific image: the working woman or mother corresponded to the male worker. The cultural image of the working mother was also associated with a normative dimension, namely that childcare is not only an individual duty to be performed mostly by the mother, but also a societal responsibility to be implemented by the state. The GDR had an extended network of childcare facilities which included programs for schoolchildren up to ten years of age [table 8]. One should not overlook the fact, however, that the temporal regime of these facilities was structured and determined by that of the employment sphere. The opening hours of the childcare facilities were based on the employment schedules of the parents or the mother; outside the time spent in the

"productive" sphere, it was the "work-free" time of the mother, in particular, that was used to perform reproductive activities.

The arrangements that allowed or helped women to combine work and housework/childcare included some measures that accorded societal recognition to and granted privileges at the workplace for the labor performed by women in "unproductive" temporal structures. In addition to the shorter working week for mothers with two or more children under 16 years of age (reduced from 43 3/4 to 40 hours a week – see table 7), these included the so-called "housework day" and the inclusion of maternity leave in calculating retirement benefits. I would like to add here some information about this "housework-day." The monthly paid housework day has its origin in the Third Reich when after the beginning of World War II women had to be forced in the economy.

After the war, for a certain time the paid housework day continued to be in operation in several federal Länder due to the fact that women again had to bear the main burden of the reconstruction of the economy and the everyday life.

In the GDR, several attempts were made by the state or the ruling party respectively to cut this measure – according to the communist aim to socialize housework, not to strengthen the private sphere.

But every time these attempts were made, they were almost immediately accompanied by protests of women and after several modifications the paid housework day was guaranteed for all married women, mothers with children under 16 and all women over 40 in the Labor Law of 1977. By the way, the housework day could also be taken by single fathers and men who took care for elder or disabled family members.

So, the monthly paid housework day can be understood as a public acceptance and estimation of necessary work mostly done by women in the household or private sphere.

## 2.3

All in all, the temporal structures of women in the GDR were marked by a number of ambivalent factors.

On the one hand, women put a high percentage of their time into gainful employment; on the other hand, this is gendered or "feminized" by the fact that the employment sphere was segregated along gender lines, i.e. displayed a division between women's and men's jobs with the corresponding different levels of compensation, and women were seldom found in the upper echelons.

On the one hand, part-time work in the GDR was almost exclusively women's work; on the other hand, part-time work did not mean unqualified, underpaid work without benefits. Part-time workers were entitled to the same so-

cial security and retirement benefits as were full-time workers, and it was usually possible to switch at any time to full-time employment.

On the one hand, the socially less valued time for reproductive activities remained the domain of women (men "gave a helping hand"); on the other hand, by virtue of their own gainful employment, women had direct access, not through or dependent on a husband/provider, to temporal structures decisive for social status under the given conditions. Generally speaking, women were economically independent.

On the one hand, women in the GDR were constantly complaining about the conflicting demands of work and the family and the resulting high demands on their time [table 9]; on the other hand, the patterns of how they spent their time show that they identified with the normative cultural image of the working woman or mother, that they were generally satisfied with the division of labor at home and in caring for children [table 10], and that their self-image and biographies included the reconciliation of qualified, full-time professional work with the responsibility for housework and childcare.

## 3. Changes in the Temporal Structures for East German Women After 1990

In simplified terms, one can say that the temporal structures for women in the GDR were relatively homogenous. Although temporal regimes were different for those who worked part-time or in shifts, generally speaking both the work schedules and temporal structures of other institutions such as the educational system, childcare facilities, shop opening hours, health facilities, public agencies, etc., were uniform for the whole GDR. Individual time for almost all women of working age was standardized and regulated along similar lines by the institutionalized temporal regime governing gainful employment and reproductive work in a central planned economy. Social differences in qualification, professional position, age or family status had hardly any effect on these uniformly regulated and practiced temporal structures. This situation changed following the unification of the two German states in 1990. Temporal structures began to show differing trajectories. These reflect the more numerous options regarding decisions and actions that women have now as opposed to in the GDR, corresponding to the current "trend toward individualization"; at the same time, they indicate greater social differentiation among women. The changes in the temporal structures for East German women might also be interpreted as the expression and result of a revaluation, and as such primarily a devaluation, of their capacity for gainful employment and thus their form of social integration. The main reasons for these changes are the following:

a. The abrupt change from a centralized planned economy to a market economy, with the following main features:
b. The collapse of East German industry and agriculture, rising unemployment, the elimination of a large number of specialized industrial and agricultural jobs that had been performed by women up to that point. Older women and single mothers, in particular, were pressured to leave the labor market in large numbers. In early retirement, unemployed, and/or on welfare, they were displaced into temporal structures that gave them the sense of not being needed. They experienced a rough transition from being a valued to a redundant member of the workforce [table 11].
c. The change from a largely positive view of women's capacity for work (and the corresponding "positive discrimination" by means of e.g. state policy or measures taken by employers to encourage the combination of work and family) to a clear hierarchy of men's and women's work. The dominant free market or business view leads to women, and especially mothers, being perceived and assessed as "risk factors."

A view to the developments of the East German job market since unification shows both gender-neutral and gender-specific tendencies. The experience of unemployment is mostly gender neutral. As the *Social Report* 1996 establishes, since 1990 in the former GDR "unemployment has already become a personal experience for over half of all citizens between 18 and 60" (*Winkler* 1996: 24). Also gender neutral, the risk of job loss is no greater for women than it is for men, i.e., no more women's jobs were lost in recent years than men's.

The chance of finding a new job, on the contrary, is gender-specific. The statistics show clear gender-specific differences with regard to unemployment and re-employment since 1990. In 1995, 19.4 percent of women and 11.1 percent of men were jobless in East Germany (and the percentage points have risen somewhat in the meantime – [table 12]); the proportion of unemployed women to total unemployment amounted to 62.4 percent.

In comparison to their share of unemployment, however, women have fewer chances than men of receiving aid in the form of "political job market measures," i.e. special job creation measures, creating a second labor market, partially with a non-profit orientation ABM), or of entering into a regular occupational situation. A similar picture is produced when the length of unemployment is observed. In 1996, 43 percent of those unemployed in East Germany had already been unemployed for longer than 24 months; this affected 57 percent of unemployed women, but only 24 percent of men (*Winkler* 1996: 25) [table 13].

a. [table 14] The devaluation of professional qualifications because they are not compatible with West German qualifications and degrees; devaluation of the professional experience of an entire age group of women – the majority

of those who were between their late forties and fifties in 1990 became unemployed or were pressured to enter early retirement [table 15].

b. The restructuring of the East German economy led to a redistribution of women in the various economic sectors. The number of women employed in industrial production has dropped sharply [table 16]; in contrast, they are represented in greater numbers in service sectors such as commerce, hotels and restaurants, and transportation, as participants in family businesses, as self-employed, and in banks and insurance companies. The tendency has increased for women to become concentrated in branches or areas with fewer qualified jobs and positions and less potential for the future. Above all, however, the fact that East German women have retained the desire to work full-time has led to their occupying a high share of temporary positions and/or those with sub-standard wages. The percentage of women working without an employment contract in the state of Brandenburg, for example, is much higher as that for men [table 17].

## 3.1

Since 1990, both the activity (employment) rate for women and the number of women actually employed have been sinking. Thus far, however, the majority of working women are still employed full-time (the average working week stipulated in contracts is 40 hours; a considerable percentage of women do over-time on a regular basis, which is compensated partly with money and partly with time off, but can also be uncompensated and often performed for fear of losing the job). As before, the percentage of women working part-time is approximately the same as it was in the GDR, but 39% of the women now working part-time would like to change to a full-time position (*Arbeitszeit* '99: 16). On the other hand, there is an increasing tendency for the sectors that typically employ women to offer part-time positions, which increases the pressure – especially on women who have been unemployed for long periods – to accept a part-time position in order to remain in the workforce at all.

a. Only 18% of the East German workforce (15% throughout Germany) work under so-called normal conditions (i.e. a full-time working week of between 35 and 40 hours spread evenly from Monday to Friday during the day, e.g. without working shift) [table 18]. The great majority of the workforce has some form of flexible schedule. More than a third of both men and women work regularly on Saturdays, and regular work on Sunday is on the rise – this trend will increase with the anticipated extension of shop opening hours. New types of "working hours bank account" model, as well as staggered working times, have since been introduced in East Germany as well, although they are not as widespread as in the "old German states" (*Arbeitszeit*

'99: 44). On the one hand, flexible working times are in the economic interest of both private enterprises and the public sector – they represent a modernized form of disposition over the time of dependent employees. Earlier forms of strictly defined temporal structures, with their clear division between time spent on the job and "spare" or leisure time, are becoming increasingly blurred. Yet on the other hand, flexible arrangements also correspond to individual interests in so far as they allow work schedules to be adapted to meet familial demands and conditions. It is no coincidence that households consisting of a couple with child(ren) represent the highest share of those whose working times deviate from normal times. This fact also indicates the changed conditions facing East German women when it comes to combining work with having children.

## 3.2

A further reason for the change in temporal structures for East German women is the fact that since 1990, an entire series of social policy measures has been dismantled and a considerable number of childcare facilities, especially those at workplaces, has been closed. One of the normative factors behind this is the attitude taken from West Germany that arranging and paying for childcare is mainly a matter for the individual, not the state, and that women are primarily responsible for this and should only work (generally part-time) if their family obligations allow them to do so. Housework has certainly become easier for East German women after 1990 due to the wide array of consumer goods, ready-to-cook meals, and so on. At the same time, they are bound to "reproductive" temporal structures to a considerably greater degree than before, because the idea that childcare and education should be shared equally by the individual and the society/state has a far lower profile now than in the GDR. Unemployed mothers, for example, have access to employment or retraining (and thus to "productive" temporal structures) only when they can demonstrate that their children are looked after during the time they are at work. Conversely, the diminishing number of preschool places are generally given to women who already have a job.

Most of the "new German states" still have a more comprehensive network of preschool facilities than do the "old German states." For merely all children from 3 to 6 years there are still kindergarten spaces available if the parents want it (that means: on average, the offer of child care facilities are much better in cities than in small communities or in rural areas). The opening hours of these facilities have largely conformed to the working schedules of the majority of women/parents employed full-time [table 19]. But recently, budget constraints at the federal states and at municipality level as well as the reduction in civil service positions (affecting childcare personnel, among others) in states such as

Saxony Anhalt and Brandenburg have led to amendments in childcare legislation. The trend toward West German conditions cannot be overlooked – as is already the case in many Western states, opening times are now set to be drastically reduced in East Germany as well – which means that the pressure will increase on women to work part-time only.

a. Finally, East German women are confronted with a cultural image of the "role of women" that deviates substantially from that of the gender contract in the GDR. True, the latter assigned women the responsibility for the "reproductive" tasks in the home and family, but women were integrated in the employment sphere and in the society in general by virtue of their own activities, not by virtue of a "provider" or husband. This fact gave women the right to claim e.g. social security and retirement benefits. In contrast to the presumptions of the *Wende* period, that women in the GDR were employed largely compulsorily and were only waiting for the end of their double-burden, the statistics show an unchanged (and even growing) desire of East German women to be or remain employed. About two-thirds of the women want to be employed full-time and approximately 30 percent would like to work part-time, while only a very small percentage of women want to be housewives. In 1996, 83 percent of East German women considered work to be "very important" and 14 percent "important." The positive valuation of women's work remains undiminished among East German men as well [table 20]. In other words, even women currently unemployed are not voluntarily going back to the "private sphere" ("the stovetop") and, above all, they do not want to stay there permanently. Instead, they want to return to the job market, sooner or later. (In reality, however, this will not be possible for all of them, especially not for the older ones.)

For the overwhelming majority of East German women, (full-time) employment is one of the givens in their life plans to which they cling, even under the changed conditions. The reasons why women continue to adhere to life-long careers, despite decreasing chances, are obviously quite complex. Among them, material/economic factors are not to be underestimated. Wages and salaries remain lower in eastern Germany than in western Germany (the differences, depending on the industry, lie between 10 percent and 35 percent so that a family can seldom live or maintain its standard of living on a single income [table 21]). The general insecurity of the job market leads to a situation in which no one voluntarily leaves her job. In addition, many women fear becoming economically dependent on a husband/man, not only currently but also from a more long-term perspective, i.e., after reaching retirement age. Real economic necessities are tied to the adherence to a professional occupation by an internalized norm of the compatibility of career and family which define the self-conception of most women in East Germany. This self-conception, moreover, rests in the

practical experiences of a relatively strong position in the household and in the family, a position bolstered by the contribution of women to household income (on average more than 40%) as well as by their hitherto independent position outside the home.

True, the great majority of East German women – and for that matter East German men as well – adhere to the GDR "gender contract," not only for economic reasons but also because their self-image/conception has been shaped by it. But much of the West German labor, tax, and family legislation that has been taken over by the "new states" is based on the normative image of a modernized provider/housewife model ("modernized" because it encompasses part-time work by women/mothers as "additional income"). The clearly privileged position of men when it comes to the allocation of training and employment positions appears to be resurrecting traditional gender roles and familial divisions of labor especially within the younger age groups in East Germany. In a study spanning the period of 1990-1994, Sarina Kaiser found growing gender-specific differences in the views held by 20 to 30-year-olds on gainful employment of women. In 1994, considerably fewer men were in favor of women working full-time than in 1990, even for households without any children. The number of both men and women in favor of part-time work for women, when children are present, has increased. In four years, the "equality head start", which these men had over those of the previous generation, had disappeared. In 1990, the young women and men alternated doing much of the housework or they did it together, and the men displayed a stronger connection to housework in terms of time than did those men of the older generation. In 1994, these temporal differences between the younger and older male generations were no longer evident (cf. Kaiser 1996: 219ff).

## In summary:

a. Since 1990, East German women have had to deal with something they had not experienced before in such a way, namely that the fact that being of the female sex seriously influences and/or impairs their access to employment, i.e. to temporal structures crucial for independent integration in the society, for social status, economic independence, and so on.
b. If East German women want to remain gainfully employed, and that under the full-time conditions "normal" for them, they are increasingly channeled into or compelled to take on typical women's jobs, non-permanent positions, or those with sub-standard wages and/or inadequate benefits. Thus the danger is growing that the number of women who cannot support themselves from their own employment is on the rise and that they will therefore be financially dependent on a primary breadwinner or the state. The greater number of options relative to those in the GDR in terms of standard working

biographies and temporary working arrangements has often meant a weakening of the position of women on the labor market.

c. In normative and also real institutional terms, East German women are again being compelled to enter temporal structures in which they perform "reproductive," unpaid, and lower-status work. Those who insist on combining work and family face not only structural but also financial problems. Because it is primarily considered an individual matter how women or parents reconcile the woman's employment with children, the woman's income or that of her partner plays a much greater role than in the GDR when it comes to financing childcare – which might also have to cover flexible working times – at public facilities or from private providers. Social differences among women with respect to professional qualifications and their own income or that of their household have a greater effect – also in terms of time – on which models can be practiced and which sectors of the labor market even come into consideration for women.

## 4. Ambivalent Effects of the Adherence of East German Women to the East German Gender Contract on the Temporal Regime of a "Postindustrial" Society

In the first years after unification, the idea dominant in Social Sciences was that the new federal states would adapt themselves to the West German model--in a crash course on "catch-up modernization" via the adoption of institutions and structures. From this perspective, cultural norms and traditions, mentalities, forms of action, etc. were rather seen as resources or restrictions in the transformation process taking place in East Germany. Meanwhile, sociological approaches have changed – not lastly because of the fact that East German women cling to the inherited GDR-model of combining (full-time) employment with family and motherhood and that the GDR gender contract remains in effect today. Accordingly, it is becoming ever clearer that the crisis-like economic and social developments in East Germany are not the expression of a short-term phase of transition and adaptation to the (more or less prosperous) West German model. Instead, the transformation processes in East Germany has from the outset been conducted under the sign of an "unchained" neo-liberal capitalism, which causes a pending radical reorganization of the economy and in the social welfare state, and in connection with this, a reordering of gender relationships.

In East Germany, flexible labor contracts, hours and forms of work have already been achieved which are seen as "pointing to the future" of West Germany as well, in terms of neo-liberal deregulation and reductions in the social welfare state.

Thus, many private enterprises in East Germany have already ceased to follow the sectoral wage agreements (union wage/standard wage) worked out between the labor unions and employers' associations. There are also special regulations for public employees which allow for the (unpaid) reduction of weekly working hours on the grounds of "social redistribution of labor" (See: Kühnlein, 1997, p. 32). The privatization of previously public services is also frequently connected with the creation of below standard wages, insecure contracts and part-time jobs. The major loss of work places in the primary and secondary sectors of the economy led to the rapid formation of a tertiary sector (non-profit, job-creation programs), in which the previous standards for a "standard labor contract" apply only conditionally.

These developments have both gender neutral and gender specific effects. They are described by the term "feminization of paid employment" among others, to indicate that under these conditions the "standard labor contract" applies increasingly less often to men, too. An interesting and as yet unanswered question is if and when the inherited and thus far practiced GDR gender contract will affect these developments. Recently East German women, by retaining full-time paid employment create quite significant pressure on the labor market. At least three possible tendencies can be outlined:

a. The clinging of East German women to the inherited GDR-gender contract turns out to be a temporary or transitional phenomenon. Even if East German women prove themselves on the job market and continue to adhere to the model of compatibility of career and family, the losses already sustained on the level of their professional qualifications cannot be overlooked. These occurred through the disappearance of entire industries and professions, as well as through lengthy unemployment and holes in institutional networks and social policy measures for the compatibility of career and family. One can assume that in the near future the supply of part-time jobs will also be increased in East Germany and that these jobs will mainly be unqualified and low paid jobs. The fewer the opportunities for women on the job market and the longer, for example, the period of their unemployment, the more inclined East German women will be to take on part-time jobs in order to remain in the labor force at all. So, on the long run these developments could result in a adaptation of East German women to the West German modernized model of the male breadwinner and the part-time working housewife. In this case, East German women would lose their till recently relatively strong position on the labor market through their qualified and fulltime employment. They would become part of the female tacit reserve of the labor market – flexible put in and thrown out, when necessary. (Next to social differentiation among women – women with high qualifications will also have the chance to make a career).

b. East German women's adherence to full-time work could also foster tendencies toward a more gender-neutral distribution of the "scarce work" *(knappe Arbeit)*. The fact that in East Germany – in contrast to in the former Federal Republic – there has been as yet no gender-specific divisions of the occupational sphere into (male, skilled) full-time work and (female, unskilled) part-time work, which could be carried over into the development of new forms of work, could prove to be favorable for the re-structuring of the job market.
One should also bear in mind that in the current reorganization of the occupational sphere in East Germany, drastic rationalization processes are taking place, not the least of which are occurring in the service sector where many women continue to be employed. Here, forms of work organization are being adopted from the industrial sector (e.g., group work, de-centralization) which are characterized by a general breakdown of hierarchies in the work processes. With this, however, the hitherto common "genderization" of work duties or decision-making powers and the previously quasi self-evident hierarchies between men and women are becoming obsolete. It remains to be seen whether the demand of East German women for equal access to qualified work together with the consensus inherent in the (GDR) gender contract will produce strong enough pressure to eliminate the hierarchization of gender relations which arise out of the modern organization of work. Despite these observable changes in work organization one should keep in mind that these changes do not really put into question the powerful structural division of the productive and the reproductive sphere and its engendering and gendered impacts. A precondition for bringing the possibilities of the East German gender contract into effect would be a re-valuation of non-market oriented social activities, especially of the reproductive and care work done in the household.

c. Most possible seems to me that the "flattened" gender hierarchies – in the context of economic and social changes – which individually quite often are experienced as crisis-like – could easily aid neo-liberal deregulation, e.g. a tendency towards a "feminization" of employment, as East German men, as a rule, are not the sole breadwinner in the family. Women's retention of the combination of (full time) employment and family under changing conditions could make it easier to introduce more flexible hours and forms of labor organization as well as to violate the sectoral wage agreements. These flexibilizations also could result in more difficulties for women to combine gainful employment and family as well as for both sexes to conduct a life with partners and with children in self-determined temporal structures, that means not at the last in temporal structures which are not dominated by and split into pieces by the demands of a flexible market and work organization. The "emancipatory potential" that could be attributed to East German women's self-image during the GDR period, reveals itself in the changed social context as highly contradictory.

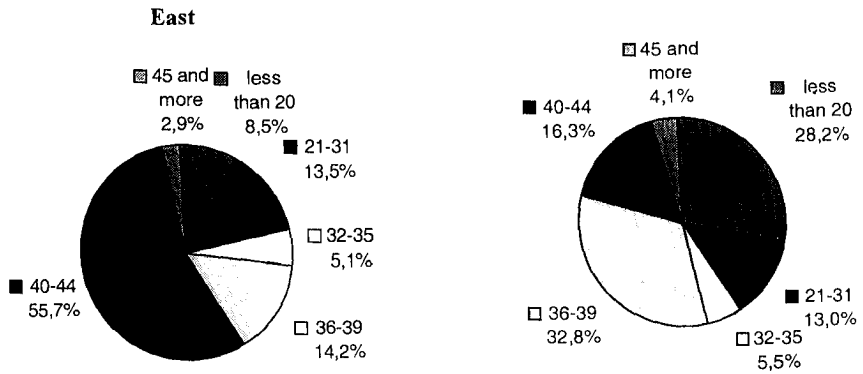
## Appendix of Tables

Table 1: Women's Activity Rate In 1995

| | East Germany | West Germany |
|---|---|---|
| percentage | 73,9 | 59,9 |

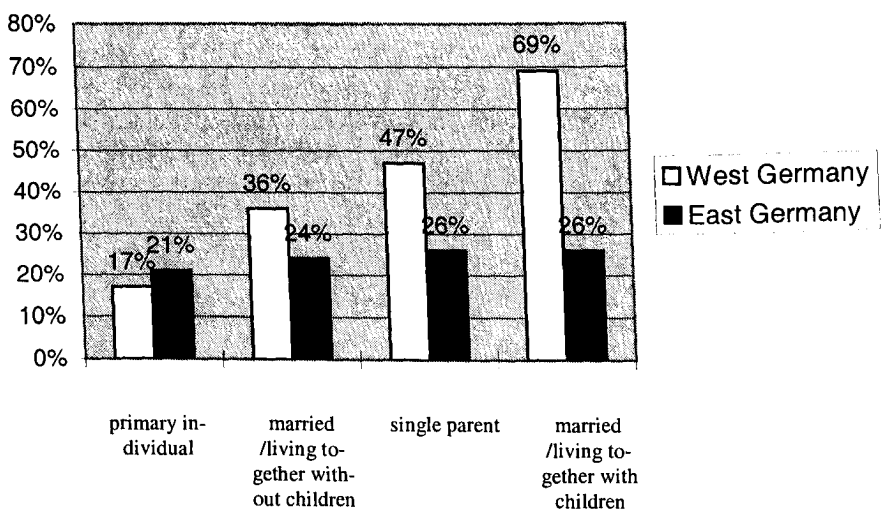
Source: Mikrozensus 1995

Table 2: Structure of Working Hours in April 1998: Normally Worked Hours by Female Employees (Percentages)



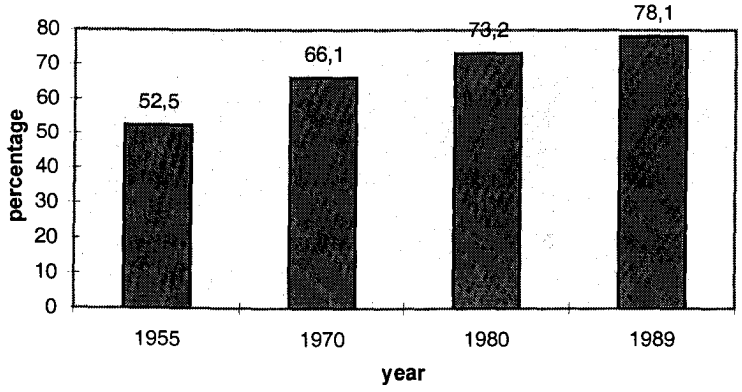

Source: Sozialreport 1999. Daten und Fakten zur sozialen Lage in den neuen Bundesländern. Berlin: Verlag am Turm 1999, p. 142

Table 3: Women's Part Time Work in East and West Germany by Marital Status




Source: Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Stadtentwicklung, Kultur und Sport des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.): Arbeitszeit '99. Kurzfassung. Köln: 2000, p. 8.

Table 4: Proportion Of Gainfully Employed Persons Among Women (Age 15 To 60)




Source: Frauenreport 1990. Berlin: Verlag Die Wirtschaft 1990, p. 63.

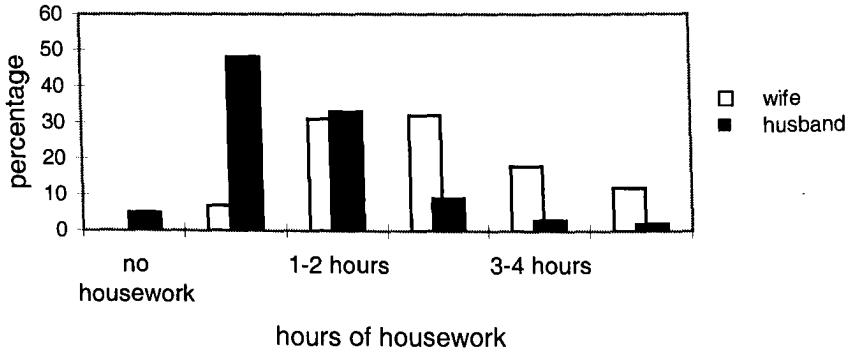
Table 5: Qualifications of the Economic Active Female (Male) Population in the GDR-Economy (Percentages)

| year | university (Hochschul-abschluß) | technical college (Fachschulab-schluß) | master crafts-man's diploma (Meister-abschluß) | skilled worker (Facharbeiter-abschluß) | unskilled worker (Teil- oder kein Abschluß) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1971 | 7,8 (32,7) | 15,7 (18,1) | 0,2 (2,4) | 27,3 (22,2) | 49 (24,6) |
| 1980 | 11,4 (36,9) | 34,1 (18,1) | 0,3 (3,4) | 30,1 (31,1) | 24 (10,6) |
| 1988 | 13,6 (35,6) | 38,6 (15,1) | 0,4 (4,0) | 32,8 (37,3) | 14,7 (7,9) |

Source: Die Frau in der DDR. Statistische Kennziffernsammlung. Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für Statistik, Berlin 1989.

Table 6: Time Spent on Housework on Weekdays According to the Women (Percentages)

| | no housework | up to 1 hour | 1-2 hours | 2-3 hours | 3-4 hours | more than 4 hours |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| wife | – | 7 | 31 | 32 | 18 | 12 |
| husband | 5 | 48 | 33 | 9 | 3 | 2 |




Source: Familienleben in der DDR. Zum Alltag von Familien mit Kindern, Berlin 1998, p. 158.

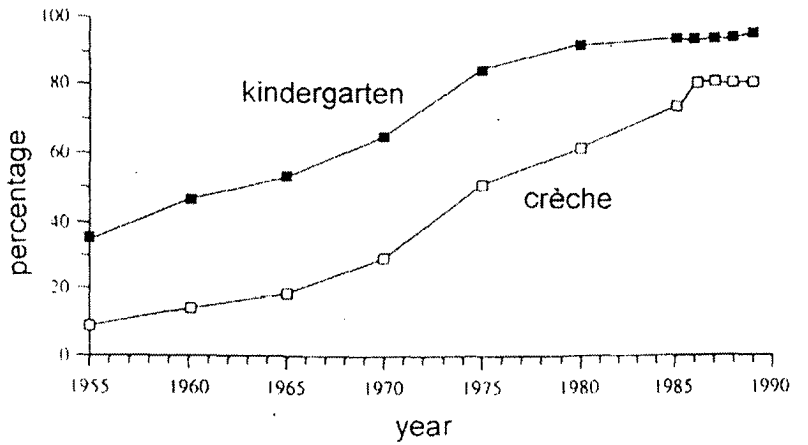
Table 7: Social Policy Measures in the GDR in the 80's (Selection)

a. A 40 hour work-week at full pay for all mothers with two or more children under 16 years of age (in comparison: the normal work-week in the GDR is 43 1/2 hours or 40 to 42 hours per week for shift-workers).
b. A monthly paid housework day for all married women, mothers of children under 16 years of age and for all women over 40.
c. 26 weeks of pregnancy or maternity leave (since 1976 – in comparison: 1950 – 11 weeks, 1963= 14 weeks, 1972= 18 weeks).
d. A paid leave for one year after the birth of a first or second child, 18 months for each further child. During the "baby year" support payments of between 70 and 90 % of the mother's average income. Return to original workplace is guaranteed. Since 1986, the "baby year" can be taken by either the mother or father or can be divided between them.
e. Unmarried mothers (1988 over 30 % of all first births are to unmarried mothers) receive a financial support payment at the level of sick pay (that is 70-90 % of average income) until the child is three years of age, if the child is unable to attend day care because of health reasons or if no day care space is available.

There is a broad network of state and factory-supported child care services (day care centers, kindergartens, after-school childcare, school lunch programs). As

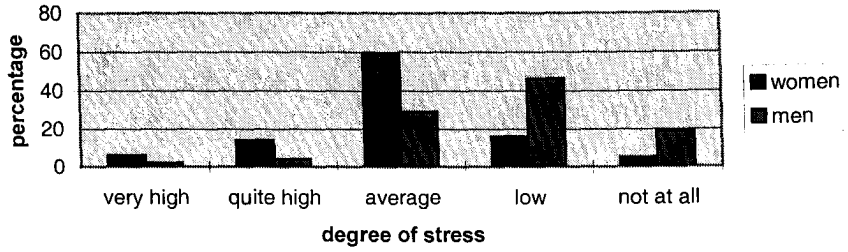
of 1988, 81 out of one hundred children were in day care and sufficient kindergarten spaces were available that any parent who wished could place their child in kindergarten. The spaces in these centers were free of cost, parents paid only a very modest fee as a contribution to the cost of meals or milk.

Table 8: Trend Of The Provision Of Childcaring Opportunities In The GDR Between 1955 And 1989




Source: Statistisches Amt der DDR (1990), p. 57 and 62, in: Heike Trappe: Emanzipatorisch oder Zwang. 1995

Table 9: Degree Of Stress Due To Everyday Housework (According To The Spouses) – Percentages




Source: Sozialreport 1990. Daten und Fakten zur sozialen Lage in der DDR. Berlin: Verlag Die Wirtschaft 1990, p. 271

Table 10: Degree of Satisfaction With the Practised Division Of Housework in 1988 (Percentages)

| Degree of Satisfaction | women | men |
|---|---|---|
| highly satisfied | 12 | 11 |
| satisfied | 55 | 64 |
| partly satisfied | 31 | 23 |
| dissatisfied or very dissatisfied | 2 | 2 |

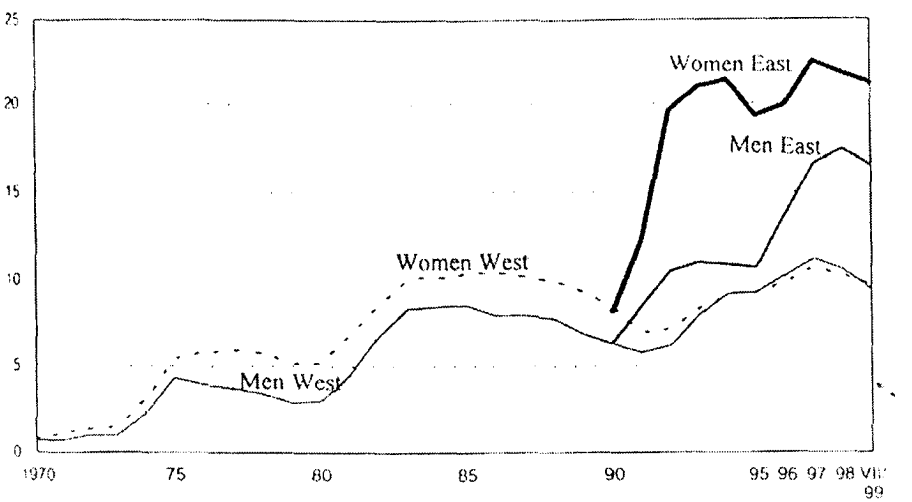
Source: Sozialreport 1990. Daten und Fakten zur sozialen Lage in der DDR. Berlin: Verlag Die Wirtschaft 1990, p. 271.

Table 11: Comparative Illustration of the Structure of Employment – April 1998 – Percentages



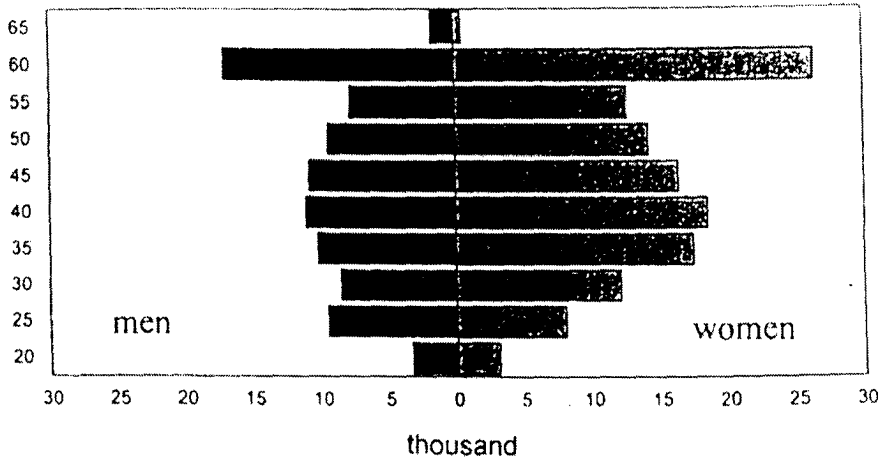

Source: Sozialreport 1999. Daten und Fakten zur sozialen Lage in den neuen Bundesländern. Berlin: Verlag am Turm 1999, p. 136.

Table 12: The Unemployment Rate 1970 – 1999




Source: Sozialreport 1999. Daten und Fakten zur sozialen Lage in den neuen Bundesländern. Berlin: Verlag am Turm 1999, p. 157.

Table 13: Age Structure of Unemployment – by Sex – September 1997 – Bundesland Brandenburg



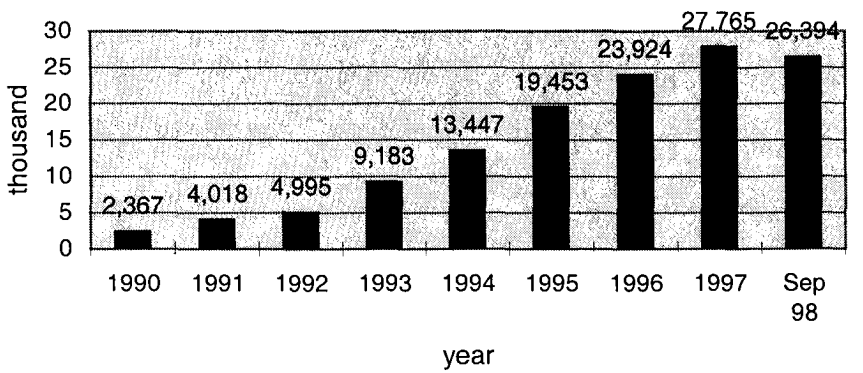

Source: Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Frauen des Landes Brandenburg (ed.): 2. Frauenreport Land Brandenburg, Potsdam 1999, p. 45.

Table 14: Employment Structure (Aged 18 to 59 years) 1997, new Länder [Federal States], by percentage

| | employed | job creation programs | Unem-ployed | Early retire-ment; retired; invalid; handi-capped | Others; in school or mili-tary service |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total | 52 | 7 | 23 | 6 | 13 |
| Sex | | | | | |
| Women | 46 | 7 | 27 | 6 | 14 |
| Men | 57 | 6 | 20 | 6 | 11 |
| Age group | | | | | |
| from 18 to 24 | 30 | 2 | 9 | - | 58 |
| from 25 to 39 | 62 | 6 | 22 | 1 | 9 |
| from 40 to 49 | 57 | 10 | 28 | 4 | 1 |
| from 50 to 59 | 42 | 7 | 31 | 20 | 1 |
| Qualification | | | | | |
| unskilled | 18 | 6 | 24 | 8 | 43 |
| skilled | 55 | 6 | 26 | 6 | 7 |
| Technical school | 69 | 8 | 16 | 2 | 6 |
| University | 72 | 9 | 13 | 4 | 1 |

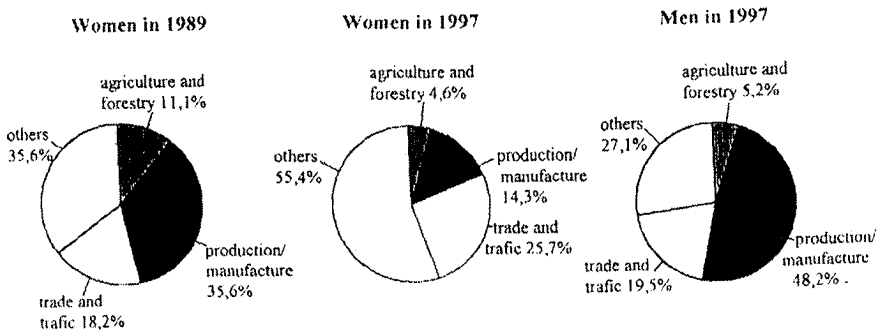
Sozialwissenschaflliches Forschungszentrum Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. 1997 *Sozjalreport* 1997. Berlin: Verlag am Turrn. p. 106.

Table 15: Unemployment of Women at the Age of 55 or Older in the Bundesland Brandenburg




Source: Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Frauen des Landes Brandenburg (ed.): 2. Frauenreport Land Brandenburg, Potsdam 1999, p. 44

Table 16: Gainfully Employed Women by Economic Area – Bundesland Brandenburg




Source: Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Frauen des Landes Brandenburg (ed.): 2. Frauenreport Land Brandenburg, Potsdam 1999, p. 29

Table 17: Part-Time and for a Limited Period Employed Women – 30 June, 1997 – Percentages

| area | proportion of women among part-time employees | proportion of women among for a limited period employed persons |
|---|---|---|
| Brandenburg | 85 | 53 |
| East Berlin | 75 | 48 |
| East Germany | 83 | 53 |
| West Germany | 80 | 53 |

Source: Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales, Gesundheit und Frauen des Landes Brandenburg (ed.): 2. Frauenreport Land Brandenburg, Potsdam 1999, p. 34

Table 18: Gainfully Employed Persons with Standard and Flexible Working Hours by Age – Percentages

| | **West Germany** primary individual | single parent | married/living together without children | married/living together with children | younger than 35 years | age 35 and older | total of employees |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| employees with standard working hours | 19 | 16 | 14 | 10 | 15 | 13 | 14 |
| employees with unregular working hours | 81 | 84 | 86 | 90 | 85 | 87 | 86 |
| | **East Germany** | | | | | | |
| employees with standard working hours | 21 | 24 | 20 | 15 | 19 | 18 | 18 |
| employees with unregular working hours | 79 | 76 | 80 | 85 | 81 | 82 | 82 |
| | **all Germany** | | | | | | |
| employees with standard working hours | 19 | 18 | 15 | 11 | 16 | 14 | 15 |
| employees with unregular working hours | 81 | 82 | 85 | 89 | 84 | 86 | 85 |

Source: Ministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Stadtentwicklung, Kultur und Sport des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (ed.): Arbeitszeit '99. Köln: 2000, p. 45.

Table 19: Social Benefits for Women/Mothers in the united Germany (Selection)

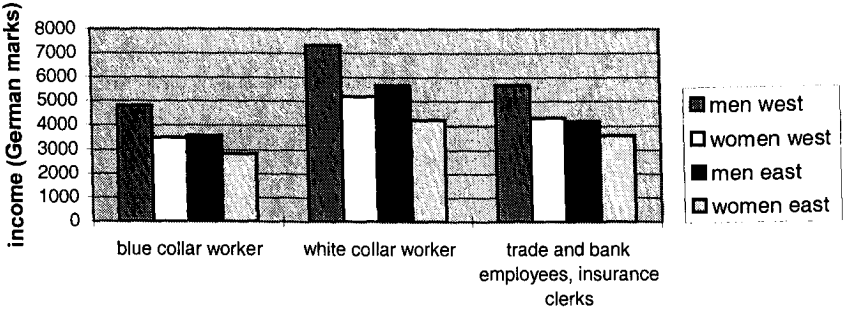
a. 14 weeks paid maternity leave with job-dismissal protection for 4 months
b. 36 weeks parental leave – can be splitted between the parents; child-rearing money is received for the first 6 months (600 DM:/month) and after that following 18 months can be financed depending on income
c. The legal right of all children to attend a preschool/kindergarten from age 3 to 6
   (introduced 1996 along with the new abortion law; to be put into action in all Federal Länder till 1999)
   [In 1994 the opening hours for kindergartens in West Germany were 4 to 5 hours (in the morning), in East Germany 8 hours]
d. Since 1992 3 years of childcaring are credited for pension

Table 20: "What is your attitude toward the employment of women?" 1997, new Länder, by percentage

| | Women should be employed... | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Total | Women | Men |
| in every case | 17 | 18 | 17 |
| only under certain conditions | 7 | 6 | 8 |
| not at all | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| each woman shouid be able to decide for herself | 72 | 72 | 73 |
| no opinion /no answer : | 3 | 4 | 2 |

Source: Sozialwissenschaftliches Forschungszentrum Berlin-Brandenburg e.V. 1997. *Sozialreport 1997.* Berlin: Verlag am Turm. p. 110.

Table 21: Gross Income 1999 In German Marks, On Average




Source: WSI-Tarivarchiv/Stat. Bundesamt; DIE ZEIT April 6, 2000.

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