

Preserving insider protection. Dutch dualization and the boundaries of union solidarity (1971-1996)

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9948 words

Abstract

Drawing on archival sources, this article reconstructs how trade unions influenced the regulation of alternative work arrangements in the Netherlands between 1971 and 1996. It shows how the main Dutch trade union confederation shifted from an exclusive, passive attitude based on a logic of legitimacy to a more inclusive, pragmatic attitude grounded in a logic of incentives. Trade unions' ability to translate inclusive union attitudes into solidaristic outcomes despite decreasing organizational power depended on the political dynamics of the specific regulatory context. In the legislative channel, trade unions exchanged the deregulation of fixed-term labor contracts for improved nonstandard work conditions.

Keywords: Dualization; Solidarity; Trade unions; Segmentation; Industrial relations

Introduction

Have trade unions enhanced or constrained labor market dualization? Many scholars have resorted to trade unions to understand the political dynamics behind widening insider-outsider divides in the labor market. The dualization literature suggests that business pressures for flexibility and decreasing power resources have forced trade unions to adopt exclusive strategies restricted to workers with open-ended labor contracts (Emmenegger, 2014; Palier and Thelen, 2010; Hassel, 2014). This strand suggests that challenging circumstances can motivate trade unions to contribute to segmentation through strategic accommodation or producer coalitions restricted to the core workforce. Conversely, the solidarity literature has emphasized the mostly inclusive nature of union responses to precarious work (Doellgast et al., 2018; Carver and Doellgast, 2021). Rather than viewing unions as contributors to dualization, these studies suggest that trade unions have typically taken up the interests of outsiders. Building on this insight, they aim to understand the conditions for successful union contestation of precarious work. Finally, a third perspective attempts to square the seemingly contradictory findings of both strands. Treating inclusive and exclusive responses as equally viable policy alternatives, it examines trade unions' motivations for choosing either of these strategies at a given time (Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015). In this decision, the approach highlights the importance of the perceived alignment of insider-outsider.

This article explores the Dutch case. The central question is how trade unions have influenced the regulation of alternative work arrangements in the Netherlands between 1971 and 1996. The contribution of this endeavor to the literature is twofold. Firstly, it provides a detailed account of the transition from exclusive to inclusive union strategies, highlighting the importance of the perceived inevitability of nonstandard employment relationships and the value of outsider voices in the context of declining union membership. Secondly, by comparing union involvement in the corporatist and legislative channels, this study shows the importance of channel-specific political dynamics for trade unions' ability to translate inclusive union attitudes into solidaristic outcomes.

Although Germany constitutes the central case in the dualization literature, the Netherlands has also received ample attention (Rueda, 2007: 126–137; Emmenegger, 2014: 256–267; Thelen, 2014: 154–173). Focusing on part-time employment, scholars have typically described the Dutch case as an example of a relatively solidaristic development path, more or less disregarding alternative work arrangements (e.g., Thelen, 2014). This focus is understandable given the extraordinary presence of part-time work in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, it has caused a one-sided picture of Dutch dualization in international literature. In their emphasis on part-time jobs, these analyses tend to undervalue or even miss the vital role of nonstandard employment relationships in the segmentation process.

I define alternative work arrangements (or nonstandard employment relationships) as employment relationships that enable employers to deviate from the conditions of the regular labor contract in attracting labor. These alternative work arrangements - agency work, on-call contracts, and own-account work – are arguably of more importance in understanding Dutch dualization than stable part-time employment. Whereas the regulatory differences between full-time and part-time as well as fixed-term and open-ended have become relatively small, nonstandard employment relationships are responsible for most of the divergence in wages, job security, and social insurance entitlements across the Dutch labor market (Burri et al., 2018: 3). For this reason, I conceptualize dualization as a process of deepening divisions between workers with full-time, open-ended labor contracts (labor market insiders) on the one hand, and workers with alternative work arrangements (labor market outsiders) on the other. Given the far more limited yet relevant distinction between fixed-term or part-time labor contracts and their full-time, open-ended counterparts, I view the former employment relationships as a separate labor market segment between both poles.

To reconstruct trade union attitudes and strategies, I conduct a process-tracing analysis drawing on archival sources. The year 1971, when the social partners agreed on the first collective labor agreement (CLA) for the agency industry, serves as the study's starting point. In 1996, the Dutch social partners reached the Flexibility and Security Agreement, which concluded a period of intense societal deliberation on regulating alternative work arrangements. This year serves as the ending point of the analysis. During this period, trade union activities and discussions centered on two of these arrangements: agency work and on-call contracts. Although own-account work has a long history and is important to Dutch dualization, it was not high on the labor agenda during the study period. Therefore, the analysis primarily addresses agency and on-call work.

The analysis shows that trade union attitudes toward outsiders became more inclusive over time, moving from a logic of legitimacy to a logic of incentives. In the context of waning power resources, the extent to which trade unions could translate more inclusive attitudes into solidaristic outcomes depended on channel-specific political dynamics. Union involvement in sectoral bargaining led to fragmented yet tangible improvements for flexible workers. However, trade unions could not turn inclusive attitudes into solidaristic outcomes through the legislative channel because of a countervailing push for the deregulation of insider employment protection.

Process-tracing design

In the Dutch policy context, collective labor agreements (the corporatist channel) and statutory legislation (the legislative channel) play a crucial role in labor market regulation (Van Peijpe, 1998: 22). Since the decentralization of bargaining in the 1980s, sectoral trade unions and

employers' associations are in charge of negotiating collective labor agreements (Tros et al., 2006: 33, 108; Hemerijck, 2003: 56). Nonetheless, the central social partners can have considerable influence on sectoral bargaining, for instance by agreeing on bargaining guidelines in their meeting platform, the Labor Foundation (StvdA). Furthermore, the Dutch collective bargaining model attributes a relatively strong role to the state, giving it the power for public wage interventions and control over the statutory extension of CLAs (Touwen, 2014: 166, 171; Thelen, 2014: 23–4). In the legislative channel, trade unions and employers' associations also exert institutional power. On labor regulation, both the private, bipartite Labor Foundation and the public, tripartite Social and Economic Council (SER) tend to partake in policymaking. Whereas the social partners use these platforms to influence legislation, they are a tool for the cabinet to attract expertise and to increase societal support for policy reforms (Oude Nijhuis and Ornstein, 2020: 12, 14; Jaspers, 2010: 15–6). Despite the high institutional power of Dutch trade unions, their organization rate has been comparatively modest and experienced a steep decline during the 1980s. Between 1971 and 1996, union density decreased from 37.5 to 24.1 percent (*OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database*, 2021).

The reconstruction of trade unions' influence on the regulation of alternative work arrangements consists of two parts: (1) identify how trade unions approached the regulation of nonstandard employment relationships and (2) analyze to what extent these attitudes translated into adjustments to labor market regulation. In the first step, the analysis reconstructs initial union responses to emerging alternative work arrangements and traces how these attitudes developed over time. As Dutch labor market regulation primarily draws on statutory legislation (legislative channel) and collective labor agreements (corporatist channel), the second step compares labor contributions to regulation across both channels.

Despite the importance of societal discussions in the legislative channel for the Dutch case, I acknowledge the dangers of methodological nationalism presented by the solidarity literature (Doellgast et al., 2018: 4–5). For this reason, the analysis also addresses the largest union in the services sector (Mercurius NVV, later FNV Dienstenbond). I selected this union because of its central role in the negotiations of Agency CLAs and the prevalence of nonstandard employment relationships in the services sector. Due to feasibility concerns, the analysis excludes the workplace level and focuses on the sectoral bargaining on the Agency CLA. The study relies on reports and secondary sources to identify shifting trends regarding alternative work arrangements in CLAs other than agency work. The analysis aims to retrieve the dominant union response in the corporatist and legislative channels at a particular time. As trade unions are complex organizations, it may well be that some initiatives, such as activism on the workplace level, deviate from this dominant approach.

The reconstruction draws on the archives of the Labor Foundation, the largest trade union confederation (NVV, later FNV), the most prominent services union (Mercurius NVV, later FNV Dienstenbond), a semi-structured interview series of the International Institute of Social History (IISH) with former FNV president Lodewijk de Waal, and reports from the Social and Economic Council, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment (SZW), the Ministry of Economic Affairs (EZK), and the largest employers' association in the agency sector (ABU). In 1970, thirty-seven percent of trade union members were part of the NVV, while the FNV, resulting from a merger between the Socialist NVV and Roman Catholic NKV, organized sixty percent in 1977 (Windmuller et al., 1990: 306–7). After the merger, the Protestant CNV became the second-largest trade union confederation, organizing fifteen percent of trade union members in 1977. Where possible, the analysis also addresses the

positions of this confederation, relying on their external publications, the sources of the meeting platforms (StvdA and SER), and historiography.

The potentially revealed and changeable nature of preferences constitutes a methodological challenge for this reconstruction, as actors are likely to change their positions in anticipation of the political challenges they face (Hacker and Pierson, 2002: 283). As a first strategy, this analysis exploits diachronic variation to map the strategic behavior of actors by examining the preferences of the social partners over a long period with changing strategic circumstances. The study period includes times of labor strength (the 1970s) and weakness (the 1980s and 1990s), different compositions of parliament and cabinet, and economic fluctuations. Additionally, the time frame contains two periods in which employers applied specific types of alternative work arrangements on a much broader scale: (1) agency work in the 1970s and (2) on-call contracts in the 1980s. Looking at the positions of the same social partners in these different strategic circumstances over time makes it possible to observe how their attitudes change in line with the political context (Paster, 2012: 24–5). A high degree of consistency across these political challenges suggests genuine attitudes, while sudden changes in policy positions point to strategic behavior. Agenda-setting also indicates genuine support for regulation (Korpi, 2006: 181–2). As a second strategy, this study applies a multi-level design, enabling the analysis of trade unions on different organizational levels (sectoral, central) at divergent institutional platforms, both internal (e.g., board meetings) and external (e.g., consultative institutions). Cross-examining attitudes and behavior at different levels and platforms mitigates the issue of revealed and changeable preferences (Toshkov, 2016: 121–2, 300; Bennett and Checkel, 2014: 33).

Trade unions and alternative work arrangements

Two theoretical angles have dominated scholarship on union involvement in regulating alternative work arrangements. Firstly, the dualization literature seeks to explain cross-national variation in labor market segmentation, despite a general increase in flexibility. Within this strand, two influential theories point to exclusive union strategies as the explanation for widening insider-outsider divides in the context of waning labor power. The first account postulates that trade unions can contribute to dualization through strategic accommodation (Emmenegger, 2014). Although trade unions oppose nonstandard employment relationships, they can pragmatically drop their resistance as a last-resort option to protect the institutional position of their organization and primary constituency: insiders with open-ended labor contracts. The second perspective stresses the importance of producer coalitions (Hassel, 2014; Palier and Thelen, 2010). According to this school, cross-class coalitions between employers' associations and trade unions explain the dualization in coordinated market economies. The increasing pressures for flexibility in the labor movement forced strong trade unions to turn inward and negotiate agreements with employers to protect workers with open-ended labor contracts in their specific sectors. Due to the exclusive nature of these arrangements, employers could implement alternative work arrangements around this well-protected core workforce for cost-cutting purposes. Hassel (2014: 66) even argues that the cost-cutting strategy itself relied on 'union co-operation.'

Secondly, the solidarity literature focuses on labor responses to precarious work (Doellgast et al., 2018; Carver and Doellgast, 2021). While recognizing examples of exclusive union responses, these studies find that inclusive strategies have constituted the dominant union strategy, particularly in the long run. The literature's primary goal is to understand the

conditions for successful solidaristic union responses. A recent literature review identified two paths to solidarity: a conflict-based path and a social partnership path (Carver and Doellgast, 2021: 374–6). The conflict-based path tends to take place when the institutional power of trade unions is low and the associational power among workers is high. In contrast, the social partnership path occurs when trade unions leverage their existing role in institutions to improve the labor conditions of outsiders. Whereas associational power is at the center of the conflict-based path, worker-to-worker identification and cohesion are also weighty for the success of union strategies along the social partnership trajectory.

Thirdly, Benassi and Dorigatti (2015) tried to square the findings of both literatures by framing inclusive and exclusive union responses as equally viable policy alternatives. According to this approach, the perceived alignment of core workers' interests with flexible workers or management determines the nature of union responses. In the context of declining bargaining power and high institutional power, this perspective suggests that trade unions are initially likely to cooperate with management to pass the adverse effects of their deteriorating power onto workers with alternative work arrangements (Benassi and Dorigatti, 2015: 538). Contrary to the dualization literature, however, this approach suggests that unions eventually view nonstandard employment relationships as a threat to insider interests when such contracts disperse, motivating trade unions to represent outsider interests over time.

My analysis provides two contributions to the literature. Firstly, the study shows the importance of the perceived inevitability of nonstandard employment relationships and the value of outsider voices in transitioning from exclusive to inclusive union strategies. Secondly, comparing union involvement in the corporatist and legislative channels demonstrates how channel-specific political dynamics can constrain trade unions' ability to translate inclusive union attitudes into solidaristic outcomes.

The emergence of alternative work arrangements

Flexible labor relationships were standard practice for most of Dutch history. The 1907 Labor Contract Act introduced open-ended labor contracts, but employers could still dismiss permanent workers without needing just cause (Van Arkel, 2007: 168, 183; Van Peijpe, 1998: 125). The job security currently associated with open-ended labor contracts only emerged with the Extraordinary Decree on Labor Relations in response to the Second World War (Hoogenboom and Knegt, 2017: 285, 287–8). This emergency legislation prescribed a preventive dismissal assessment for labor contracts, forcing employers to acquire ex-ante permission from a government body for layoffs on the grounds of just cause (Albers and Konijn, 1987: 18; Van Arkel, 2007: 176–7). In 1953, reforms kept the preventive assessment intact but introduced ex-post compensation for 'obviously unreasonable' layoffs through local courts (Raijer, 2014: 233–4; Van Peijpe, 1990: 49–50; Hoogenboom and Knegt, 2017: 287). De facto, the regulation created a double dismissal system, allowing employers to choose between the slower ex-ante procedure and the costlier ex-post route. With the increased protection of open-ended labor contracts, it became more attractive for employers to look for alternative work arrangements.

Before the study period, union involvement with nonstandard employment relationships was scarce. However, commercial labor intermediation was already repeatedly the subject of policy discussions in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1930, the Dutch government installed a permit system for labor intermediation (Sol, 2001: 86). There was broad societal support for making intermediation a strictly non-profit affair, both nationally and

internationally. The practical application of the act was so restrictive, issuing no permits to new commercial intermediaries, that it severely repressed profit-based intermediation in the formal sphere. At the same time, private non-profit initiatives by organized interests never took off (Sol, 2000: 64). Formally, this resulted in a near public monopoly on labor intermediation. The practice on the work floor deviated from the legal reality, however. The public employment service, still primarily organized on the municipal and regional levels, was relatively fragmented and underfunded (Van Bekkum, 1996: 367–9). Meanwhile, commercial alternatives continued operating in regulatory grey areas (Sol, 2001: 87, 90–1).

In the aftermath of the Second World War, entrepreneurs established work agencies in the administrative sector (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 569, 577). Although agency workers were in a triangular employment relationship with the work agencies and user organizations, they formally accepted job assignments as freelancers (StvdA, 1970: 1; Christe, 2002: 194). This arrangement enabled the agencies to avoid the legal definition of an intermediary and the strict job security legislation of permanent labor contracts, obscuring the legal status of the agency worker. Whereas most commercial intermediaries earned a one-time fee for matching workers and employers, the agencies received a sustained share of the payment from the user organization (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 563). In response to the increasing salience of the issue of private intermediaries, the government introduced a separate permit system for commercial intermediation in 1970, bringing work agencies into the formal sphere (Fortanier et al., 1983: 202–3; SER, 1994a: 6, 11; Christe, 2002: 193). Under this permit system, the conditions for agency work were strict: it had to be supplementary, temporary, covered by social insurance, and was forbidden in several sectors.

Initial labor responses

Compared to these public initiatives, trade unions were relatively late to take up the issue of agency work (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 576). In the early 1970s, characterized by the sharp expansion of agency work, collective bargaining structures started to address their activities. Employers rather than trade unions were the initiators. In 1971, the largest agency industry association (ABU) started talks with the services unions on agency work regulation (Mercurius NVV, 1971c: 6). Van Driel and Koene (2011: 580) have demonstrated that the move typified ABU's strategy to legitimize agency work by showcasing socially responsible behavior. According to De Landgraaf, representing NVV's Services Union (Mercurius), the nature of the employment relationship was at the center of the negotiations. On the one hand, the ABU aimed to avoid labor contract coverage for agency workers by emphasizing the freedom of the worker and the employer: 'The ABU argues that there cannot be a labor contract between agency worker and work agency in any way, because the agency worker can stop working at any moment and the principal can also revoke the assignment' (my translation, Mercurius NVV, 1971b: 3). On the other, Mercurius wanted the work agencies to recognize that they employed the agency workers, justifying labor contract coverage. Ultimately, the ABU and the trade unions agreed on the first agency CLA. The agreement applied to the administrative sector but was subordinate to clauses on agency work in the CLA of user organizations (Mercurius NVV, 1971a: 2). The ABU succeeded in preventing labor contract coverage, as the CLA merely suggested that there was a labor relationship between the agency worker and work agency, not a labor agreement (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 580). Consequently, the job security of agency workers remained very low, with the arrangement ending upon finishing the job assignment.

Although the CLA slightly improved the conditions of agency workers, it was controversial within the labor movement, which fundamentally opposed commercial intermediation. As the sector continued to expand, calls for action among trade union representatives increased. In 1975, the NVV adopted a resolution on female labor conditions that called for replacing agency work with public alternatives (NVV, 1975: 22, attachment). Later that year, the three trade union confederations (the Socialist NVV, Roman Catholic NKV, and Protestant CNV) published an employment report in which they similarly argued that ‘private work agencies which mediate for-profit for the most in-demand workers and de facto exclude vulnerable groups have to be restricted. ... Labor market intermediation ... should primarily be a government task’ (my translation, NVV et al., 1975: 35). In its 1977-1981 manifesto, the CNV stated that the agency arrangement ‘is a form of labor intermediation and, fundamentally, does not belong in the commercial sphere, but with the government’ (my translation, CNV, 1976: 8). In terms of genuine attitudes, the confederations were, thus, closely aligned.

However, the union confederations pursued different strategies to attain similar goals. In 1976, the FNV, resulting from a merger of NVV and NKV, announced that its services union would leave the Agency CLA negotiations. FNV Board member J. ter Horst explained to a major Dutch newspaper that continuing the CLA negotiations would be inconsistent with the principled stance against commercial intermediation in the employment report (*De Volkskrant*, 1976: 3, 7). The FNV Board, rather than its sectoral union, initiated the move, stating that agency work had to be regulated through the CLAs of user organizations rather than a separate CLA for work agencies (FNV, 1976a: 1, 1976c: 1–2). The Board required majority support from FNV Council's sectoral trade union representatives to change the FNV's official stance. In the Council's meeting, J. Brouwer, President of the FNV's services union, warned that ‘the ABU has adopted the stance that the labor relationship rests with the work agencies, and not the user organizations. If the current CLA with the ABU is abolished, this is no longer an issue; in that case, the question arises, whether it would still be possible to represent agency workers' interests’ (my translation, FNV, 1976b: 9). Nevertheless, FNV Secretary Ter Horst stated that ‘it is our [FNV Board] viewpoint that the operation of work agencies has to be put to an end ... the development of the agency industry and the corresponding undermining of the position of permanent workers have moved the Confederation Board to map out the now proposed pathway’ (my translation, FNV, 1976b: 9). As the Council agreed with the Board's proposal, the sectoral trade union had to leave the Agency CLA negotiations.

The Council discussion shows that the initial exclusive attitude of the FNV followed a logic of legitimacy. The reasoning behind the decision to leave the Agency CLA negotiations was that FNV's participation in regulation legitimized agency work and, therefore, indirectly encouraged the broader use of an undesirable work arrangement that competed with the labor contract. Consequently, there was no alignment of insider-outsider interests from FNV's perspective. Whereas the perceived disparateness of insider-outsider interests informed an exclusive FNV response, this attitude did not translate into labor-induced dualization. Given the confederation's stark opposition against agency work and the absence of large zero-sum exchanges, there was no basis for cross-class coalitions or strategic accommodation. Instead, the attitude led to labor passivity regarding regulating alternative work arrangements, signified by the decision to leave the Agency CLA negotiations, at times of high organizational strength. Contrary to the FNV, the other negotiating parties, the CNV Services Union and the independent BVA, kept negotiating Agency CLAs. The CNV remained fundamentally opposed

to commercial intermediation but thought that abolition would only be feasible in the long run, as it required improving the public intermediation system (CNV, 1981: 20; Hazenbosch, 2009: 621). As a result, the CNV was much more pragmatic. In 1981, CNV policy officer H. Nentjes advocated containing the rise in agency work by making permit requirements stricter and by diminishing the use of agency work through CLAs (Hazenbosch, 2009: 622).

Whereas agency work quickly expanded in the late 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s saw an upsurge in on-call work (Smitskam, 1989: 69). The spread of on-call work similarly exposed tensions between insiders and outsiders. In 1985, FNV women reported that the underrepresentation of social groups which disproportionately faced nonstandard employment relationships explained initial labor passivity (FNV-Secretariaat van Vrouwelijke Werknemers, 1985: 42). The conservative mindset among the union rank-and-file toward workers with alternative work arrangements served as another explanation, especially if those outsiders were women: ‘as it is often about (married) women, traditional views on the family and breadwinners show themselves. For them, these are only women who earn something on the side. Sometimes trade union representatives even genuinely support hiring these groups temporarily. In their mind, this enhances their ‘permanent’ position. These conflicts of interest are most visible when restructuring takes place. On-call workers or homeworkers can be viewed as direct competitors, undermining their position’ (my translation, FNV-Secretariaat van Vrouwelijke Werknemers, 1985: 42–3).

In the IISH interviews, Lodewijk de Waal, former President of the FNV Dienstenbond (1988-1992) and the FNV (1997-2005), confirmed the prevalence of these exclusive attitudes. Asked for the reasons behind trade unions’ crumbling reputation during the rapid changes of the late twentieth century, he stated that: ‘Innovation is difficult for associations, that applies to all associations. Because the existing people have existing interests and then it is hard to accept the emergence of part-time work. I had discussions at V&D [department store] as a union leader with members who said: “part-time workers undermine the CLA, they do it for less money, and you have to stop them; they should not exist.” I experienced it afterward when we created the CLA for agency workers. Then they said: “those agency workers, they should not exist, so you should not represent their interests either.” That is what the existing membership says It is incredibly difficult for an association such as the labor movement to attract new groups because the old groups resist it... Within the Dienstenbond [FNV], we had many part-timers, so we had a more progressive perspective on them. We also wanted to organize agency workers, but the Industriebond [FNV] almost forbade us, and the confederation [FNV] almost forbade us to sign a CLA. That conservatism is there’ (my translation, De Waal and Ornstein, 2018a: 01:44:42-01:46:52).

In short, FNV’s initial attitude to alternative work arrangements was predominantly exclusive and passive, while the CNV adopted a more active, pragmatic stance. Believing that eradicating alternative work arrangements was feasible, the FNV feared that participation in regulation would legitimize these employment relationships and contribute to their dispersion. However, abiding by the logic of legitimacy had the paradoxical consequence of meager FNV contributions to regulating nonstandard employment relationships at times of high organizational strength.

FNV’s outward turn

Whereas unions had a strong bargaining position in the 1970s, the first half of the 1980s would dramatically change unions’ strategic environment. The second oil shock constituted a critical

juncture in the development of alternative work arrangements and the power resources of trade unions. High labor costs and increasing interest rates put enormous pressure on Dutch employers in the context of falling demand, causing many companies to go bankrupt (Touwen, 2014: 262; Sluyterman, 2003: 251). In the industrial sector alone, employment decreased with 300.000 full-time jobs (Visser and Hemerijck, 1997: 13). The social partners channeled many workers into disability schemes with lower costs for the employer and higher replacement rates for the worker, causing an inactivity crisis (Oude Nijhuis, 2018: 207; De Liagre Böhl, 2013: 329–30). A massive restructuring of the Dutch economy ensued, where employment moved from the industrial to the services sector.

Many employers responded to the crisis by intensifying their use of nonstandard employment relationships and shrinking their core workforce on open-ended contracts (SZW, 1986: 1). In this way, they were (1) able to save labor costs to meet budgets or enhance profitability and (2) to pass on employment risks, improving the organization's adaptability to changing economic circumstances. The outsourcing of activities that were not considered core competencies continued (Bos and Vaas, 1986: 16). In highly competitive, labor-intensive sectors, such as the cleaning industry, third-party suppliers competed for the resulting contracts by reducing labor costs (Knotter, 2017: 3). Furthermore, employers increasingly created an internal layer of nonstandard employment (SZW, 1986: 1). Whereas employers previously attracted flexible labor through triangular work arrangements, they now also directly engaged in highly flexible employment relationships with workers, indicated by a boom in on-call contracts.

Due to the economic turmoil, the societal discussion focused on labor market flexibility as a means to restore private profitability and economic growth rather than as a source of precarity. The crisis reinforced employers' conviction that the strict employment protection of labor contracts hampered their ability to adapt to changing economic circumstances (Gerwen and De Goey, 2008: 210). Business associations now called for deregulation to enhance labor market flexibility (Boumans, 2021: 10). Such ideas increasingly resonated with policymakers as the dominant economic paradigm shifted toward the supply side. Alarming government reports advocated wage moderation, welfare state retrenchment, and labor market flexibility to solve the Dutch industry's lack of competitiveness (Schippers, 2010: 78–9; Touwen, 2014: 268–70). Cabinets Lubbers I (1982-1986) and Lubbers II (1986-1989), consisting of the Christian democratic CDA and the Liberal VVD, adopted the wage moderation and welfare state retrenchment agenda (Oudenampsen, 2020: 781; De Liagre Böhl, 2013: 330–1). However, alternative work arrangements were not a policy focus. Instead, the Cabinet Lubbers I pressured the social partners on wage moderation by threatening with public wage decrees. The strategy contributed to the Wassenaar Agreement, where the social partners exchanged wage moderation for shorter work duration to stimulate employment, either through worktime reduction or part-time employment (StvdA, 1982: 1; Van Bottenburg, 1995: 193–195).

Although work time reduction consistently topped the labor agenda, alternative work arrangements received much attention during the second half of the 1980s. As nonstandard employment expanded, the FNV's passivity increasingly came under pressure from calls by outsiders for regulation. Female trade union members, in particular, were pivotal in pushing the issue of alternative work arrangements on the labor agenda (Van Eijl, 1997: 260–1; Van Dijk et al., 2018: 103). From the 1970s onwards, the labor market participation of married women had grown tremendously (Visser, 2002: 26–7). Due to the burden of care tasks, scant public provision of social services, such as child care, lack of work experience, and rising

unemployment, these women often had to settle for small, precarious jobs (CNV, 1987: 4; FNV-Secretariaat van Vrouwelijke Werknemers, 1985: 9–10). As male breadwinners were typically in insider jobs, this development led to a gendered dual labor market (De Groot, 2021: 764). In 1984, FNV women issued a resolution that called upon the FNV Congress to represent outsider interests: ‘the FNV has to make policy regarding the issue of the flexibilization and marginalization of labor ...the unions have to look for ways also to make membership more attractive for people with small and temporary jobs;...the unions should pay more attention to the representation of the interests of these groups;... the unions have to enact a policy of regulation regarding this marginal work for now’ (my translation, FNV Women, 1984: 2).

A year later, FNV women wrote a report that propagated a more pragmatic approach toward nonstandard employment. The FNV women reasoned that striving for the prohibition of alternative work arrangements, desirable as it may be, in principle, might not work in practice: ‘A ban does not always have the desired effect. It does not, in all cases, serve the interests of women working under a flexible contract. For them, a ban might mean that they have to give up their paid work. Additionally, a ban does not always end up working as a ban’ (my translation, FNV-Secretariaat van Vrouwelijke Werknemers, 1985: 34). Given the issue of legitimization, the report suggested that initial responses had to focus on eliminating nonstandard employment relationships: ‘In the first instance, we do not choose such fixes, because they legalize what we find undesirable and because they enlarge the differences between workers.’ (my translation, FNV-Secretariaat van Vrouwelijke Werknemers, 1985: 35). However, if flexible workers were widespread in a given sector, the report suggested regulation instead. The FNV women advocated coverage for all workers by CLAs, abolition of the one-third criterion for the minimum wage, and a minimum of five guaranteed working hours for on-call contracts with a maximum range of twenty percent (FNV-Secretariaat van Vrouwelijke Werknemers, 1985: 36–7, 40). Note that the guaranteed minimum of working hours would effectively ban zero-hours contracts.

The influence of the FNV women on FNV’s Services Union becomes apparent when juxtaposing these policy stances with the later positions of the services union in its flexible work manifesto. This manifesto called for the recognition of on-call workers as employees, the abolition of the one-third criterion, and a minimum of five guaranteed working hours for every on-call contract with a maximum range of twenty-five percent (FNV Dienstenbond, 1986a: 4–5). The increasing voice of outsiders within the labor movement occurred in the context of the membership crisis that trade unions experienced after the second oil shock. Between 1979 and 1985, union density dropped from 37 to 28 percent (*OECD/AIAS ICTWSS database*, 2021). Under these circumstances, trade unions looked for new reservoirs of potential members. According to the FNV Dienstenbond, its growth potential was particularly high in emerging service sectors, such as finance, and among underrepresented social groups, such as migrants, the young, and women (FNV Dienstenbond, 1986b: 13). An inclusive strategy would make the trade union more attractive to these labor market outsiders. In December 1986, its congress decided that the trade union had to ‘pay additional attention in its policy and recruitment to ... the young ... [and] women ...’ (my translation, FNV Dienstenbond, 1986c: 1).

An internal report of the FNV Dienstenbond on agency work illustrates how the ineffectiveness of the passive, exclusive union strategy undermined the approach. In January 1984, its Board decided to ‘take up the representation of agency workers’ interests again’ (my translation, Van Gelder, 1984: 1). Afterward, it wrote an evaluation of the earlier CLA decision to leave the Agency CLA negotiations and to focus on regulation through the CLA of user

organizations instead. It concluded that this strategy had been largely ineffective: ‘until now, this has only succeeded to a very limited extent.... A problem with the initial FNV strategy is and remains that agency workers are not formally employed by the user organization, but by the work agency for the duration of the assignment’ (my translation, Van Gelder, 1984: 6). While FNV’s decision to stop negotiations reduced the legitimacy of agency work in the short run (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 584), it also left the interests of an increasingly large group of workers unrepresented by the confederation. The report maintained the union’s ideational opposition toward commercial intermediation, but recognized that eliminating agency work was not realistic in the short run, given the economic turmoil after the second oil shock (Van Gelder, 1984: 3, 6, 11), showing striking resemblances to CNV’s earlier positioning. Due to agency work’s short-term inevitability, the report suggested a dual strategy aimed at regulating the work arrangement through both the CLA of the user organization and the work agency: ‘All things considered, it, therefore, seems sensible to conduct the representation of agency workers’ interests through two pathways from now on: a. to introduce clauses in all CLAs to regulate the position of the temporary work, i.e., better regulate agency work, especially where it concerns primary labor conditions; b. to sign CLAs with the work agencies in which the position of agency workers is improved, particularly targeting secondary labor conditions...’ (my translation, Van Gelder, 1984: 8–9).

This proposal signifies a more inclusive approach to agency work. The FNV had consistently argued that user organizations had to formally employ agency workers, ensuring CLA coverage through the user organizations. However, while the FNV abstained from the Agency CLA negotiations, labor contract coverage of agency workers failed to improve, and the sector quickly expanded (Van Gelder, 1984: 8). When the FNV Dienstenbond recognized agency work’s short-term inevitability, its attitude shifted from a logic of legitimacy to a logic of incentives. Rather than preventing legitimization, the trade union became focused on making agency work as least attractive as possible compared with open-ended labor contracts. With the change of logic, the agency’s and permanent workers’ perceived interests became more aligned, opening up possibilities for inclusive union strategies. Improving agency work conditions enhanced agency workers’ position and made the arrangement less attractive as an alternative to labor contracts. The FNV Dienstenbond proceeded by adopting the dual strategy regarding agency work. In 1986, the union returned as a negotiation party of the Agency CLA (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 590).

The outward turn occurred when the trade union experienced high external pressures and decreasing membership, contrary to the expectations derived from the dualization literature. Due to the (1) ineffectiveness of the passive, exclusive union strategy, (2) pressures from the female labor movement, and (3) the increasing need to attract new members among underrepresented social groups, FNV’s attitudes toward alternative work arrangements shifted. However, different elements of the FNV did so at different paces. The outward turn of the FNV Dienstenbond was critical, given its role in the Agency CLA. The Food sector Union (Voedingsbond FNV) was another frontrunner. Although the Voedingsbond FNV expressed the end goal of prohibiting on-call contracts, it called for a pragmatic strategy of incremental reforms to reduce the gap between on-call and permanent contracts (Voedingsbond FNV, 1984: 6–7).

Conversely, the FNV confederation was a late adopter. In 1984, the FNV congress ‘Labor and solidarity’ put dualization on the confederation agenda. Nonetheless, the language used in the background document indicates an exclusive approach: ‘The FNV will strongly

oppose certain forms of flexibilization...concerning work time, the introduction of temporary contracts, and on-call contracts that provide no security on the available amount of work...The FNV will strongly oppose the introduction or extension of diverging legal arrangements for different (groups of) workers, such as diverging job security regulations....' (my translation, FNV, 1984: 25–6). In its 1986-1990 manifesto, the FNV uttered similar language, calling upon the government to eliminate on-call contracts (FNV, 1985: 12). Likewise, the interviews with Lodewijk de Waal suggested that the principled, exclusive stance of the FNV and the *Industriebond FNV* frustrated initiatives by the *FNV Dienstenbond* to represent agency workers.

However, FNV policy became more pragmatic and inclusive during the late 80s. Although not widely distributed among the rank-and-file and not adopted as an external FNV stance (FNV, 1987b: 2), an internal policy document incorporated the distinction between the statutory prohibition of zero-hours contracts and regulation of min-max contracts through sectoral bargaining (FNV, 1987a: 8, 10–1). Its tone was also more pragmatic on agency work, albeit still focused on regulation through the CLAs of user organizations. The underlying strategy indicated a logic of incentives: 'The outlined approach advocated by the FNV assumes that the distance in essential labor conditions between employees with regular labor contracts and their colleagues with more flexible contracts in each area becomes as small as possible...The minimum limits indicated in previous paragraphs are in fact the hinges to achieve the intended distance reduction' (FNV, 1987a: 12). FNV's attitudes grew toward CNV's policy positions (CNV, 1987: 15–16). Their joint push for regulation of min-max contracts in meetings between the Labor Foundation and government representatives illustrates the convergence toward a more pragmatic, inclusive strategy (StvdA, 1989a: 2–3, 12, 1989b: 14, 17).

During the mid-90s, FNV's stance on agency work also became more pragmatic, facing the breakdown of the permit system on commercial intermediation and the prospect of a new regime of agency work regulation. Whereas FNV's Industry Union had previously opposed *FNV Dienstenbond*'s bargaining activities in the sector, the union openly advocated extensive regulation rather than prohibition: 'It is not useful to regard commercial work agencies as a bad solution...It is better to use work agencies' knowledge and experience and involve them early in labor market or business problems...The union demands are primarily in the area of labor conditions' (my translation, *Industriebond FNV*, 1995: 11). The approach aimed to ensure that work agencies would become like 'regular' companies and agency workers like 'regular' employees. The FNV viewed the coming reforms of agency work as an opportunity to build a broader regulatory regime for nonstandard employment: 'With this plan, we go to a very different type of regime. No everything-is-allowed system where unbounded agency work slowly crowds out existing CLAs and sectoral regulations, but a regime where flexible use of labor will become possible on a much larger scale than now, yet with decent labor relations' (my translation, Catz, 1996: 31–2). Rather than focusing on prohibition, this approach's cornerstone was to ensure labor contract coverage for alternative work arrangements. FNV policy on nonstandard employment had shifted from a logic of legitimacy to a logic of incentives.

Sectoral bargaining

To what extent did shifting attitudes translate into bargaining behavior and outcomes in the corporatist and legislative channels? After its outward turn, the FNV played a more active role

in regulating nonstandard employment relationships. In the aftermath of the Wassenaar Agreement, there was a societal preference for corporatist decision-making on labor issues. The agreement and its execution in sectoral bargaining had shown that the social partners were still able to negotiate a deal on challenging societal problems (Visser and Hemerijck, 1997: 81), albeit under the looming threat of yet another public wage decree (Van Bottenburg, 1995: 193–4). Accordingly, the SZW committee on flexible work advised the government to leave the initiative for regulating alternative work arrangements to the social partners (my translation, SZW, 1987: 6). The government followed the recommendation except for efforts to provide minimal protection to on-call contracts.

Contrary to Wassenaar, the peak employers' associations and trade union confederation provided no central guidelines on alternative work arrangements, leaving negotiations decentralized. In the second half of the 1980s, sectoral collective bargaining led to tangible results. The Agency CLA constitutes a critical example. In 1986, the FNV Dienstenbond restored its bargaining with the agency industry despite its aversion to commercial intermediation (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 590). These negotiations resulted in an Agency CLA covering agency work across all economic sectors for the first time. The new CLA realized the dual strategy that the Services Union had propagated. The Agency CLA automatically covered agency workers. Meanwhile, sectoral CLAs of user organizations also covered agency workers when specified by the CLA (Industriebond FNV, 1995: 6). Nonetheless, agency work still lacked labor contract coverage. Regarding on-call work, there were numerous examples in the late 80s of restrictions or improved labor conditions through CLAs, for instance, in department stores (Bijenkorf and V&D), bus services, meat wholesalers, hospitals, private insurance, and the hospitality industry CLAs (FNV, 1987c: 1; Van Peijpe, 1990: 47). Crucially, these achievements remained relatively fragmented, as they were not part of a broader, centrally coordinated bargaining strategy (Kösters et al., 2021: 131–3). Although improving the conditions of some flexible workers, trade unions' endeavors in the corporatist channel were insufficient to curb the general rise of alternative work arrangements. Nevertheless, the constraining role of unions toward nonstandard employment in the corporatist channel contradicts the picture of unions as contributors to dualization.

Discussions on statutory legislation

In the legislative channel, three parallel policy debates throughout the 1980s and 1990s paved the way for the renowned flexibility and security exchange.

The first discussion focused on the Netherlands' relatively strict employment protection for labor contracts. The preventive dismissal assessment was at the epicenter of this debate, ruling that employers required ex-ante permission from a government body on the grounds of just cause to discharge individual workers. In 1982, the Christian peak employers' association called for the abolition of the ex-ante assessment, stressing its negative impact on the international competitiveness of Dutch business (*NRC Handelsblad*, 1982: 1). The plea sparked fierce opposition by the FNV and the CNV, but resonated with policymakers who increasingly adhered to supply-side ideas. In 1983, a politically appointed Deregulation Committee equally advocated the abolition of the preventive assessment (Van Aardenne, 1983: 49). The rigid regulation of fixed-term labor contracts was similarly controversial. At the time, fixed-term contracts no longer automatically ended at the end of the contract period after renewal (Albers and Konijn, 1987: 46–7). Instead, renewal led to a formal termination requirement, giving them much of the liabilities of the open-ended labor contract. Employers often avoided this rule by

hiring the worker through a work agency between both contracts, but this was cumbersome (Van Peijpe, 1998: 136). A 1984 government report proposed to allow one renewal of fixed-term contracts for the same duration without additional dismissal requirements (De Koning and Van Aardenne, 1984: 12). Given their controversy, the government requested the Social and Economic Council (SER) for further advice on the two issues. The SER recommended maintaining the preventive assessment but allowing one renewal of fixed-term contracts without additional dismissal requirements (SER, 1988: 16, 26).

After two CDA-VVD governments, the Social Democratic PvdA replaced the Liberal VVD in the cabinet in 1989. Despite the Social Democratic cabinet presence, CDA-Minister of Social Affairs De Vries boldly proposed abolishing the ex-ante mechanism in 1993 (Emmenegger, 2014: 261; Van Peijpe, 1998: 128). Contrary to the earlier SER recommendation, the initiative exposed divisions among the social partners on the preventive assessment. Trade unions remained highly skeptical of the dismissal reforms (SER, 1994b: 20, 31). However, the peak employers' association, dominated by large employers, supported abolition, referring to benefits for the international competitiveness of Dutch companies (SER, 1994b: 31, 34). Labor representatives found the associations of small- and medium-sized enterprises on their side. Although critical of the rigid employment protection, these business representatives feared that the abolition of the cheaper ex-ante dismissal route would leave their members worse off (SER, 1994b: 35, 37). After abolition, employers would no longer have the choice between a cheaper and a faster route. Before the proposal could pass the legislative procedure, the government fell (Emmenegger, 2014: 261; Van Peijpe, 1998: 128). The parliamentary elections resulted in a shocking loss for the former governing parties: the CDA went from 54 to 34 seats, while the PvdA went from 49 to 37. Whereas both parties experienced major losses, the PvdA became the largest political party. The Liberal parties obtained many of the seats of the former governing parties. The VVD grew from 22 to 31 seats and D66 from 12 to 24. Despite opposing ideological views between the Social Democratic PvdA and the Liberal parties, there was a strong political desire, particularly within D66, to govern without the Christian democrats that had been part of every post-war government (De Liagre Böhl, 2013: 344; Oude Nijhuis, 2018: 254–5). The resulting Kok I government (PvdA, VVD, D66), in which the PvdA delivered both the Prime Minister and the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, changed course and maintained the preventive assessment (Melkert, 1994: 1–2). Nevertheless, the push of employers and Liberal parties for dismissal reform continued.

The second discussion focused on agency work. In 1991, Lubbers III established profound changes to the Dutch Labor intermediation system. As part of the reform package, the government put the *Centraal Bestuur voor de Arbeidsvoorziening* (CBA) in charge of the permit system for commercial intermediation (Van Peijpe, 1990: 42–3). The CBA had to issue yearly permits for work agencies and monitor their activities. However, the body lacked the resources to deal with the rising number of applications and enforce the permit system among commercial intermediaries with and without permits. Facing the lackluster enforcement of the CBA, Minister De Vries proposed to abolish the permit system in 1993 (Van Driel and Koene, 2011: 591). The move caused far less controversy than the announcement of the preventive assessment. In 1994, the Social and Economic Council agreed that 'maintaining a permit system is no longer necessary' except for several sectors (SER, 1994a: 49). The abolition of the permit system was now a matter of time. Based on interviews with ABU representatives, Van Driel and Koene (2011: 591) have pointed out that the agency industry realized agency

work would not remain unregulated after abolishing the permit system. As a result, deliberation shifted to a new regime of agency work regulation.

Finally, the third discussion was about statutory legislation on on-call contracts. Whereas the SZW Committee on flexible work advocated leaving the primary responsibility for labor regulation to the social partners, it also called for government intervention to provide minimal security for on-call workers. If on-call workers felt that their work arrangement satisfied the legal labor contract requirements, they needed to prove this to a court, often perceived as a significant hurdle. The commission proposed introducing a legal presumption to mitigate the issue (SZW, 1987: 50–1). If an on-call worker worked for an employer for a certain amount of hours per week for a certain length of time, the legislator would presume that the worker had a labor contract. Trade unions welcomed the advice, arguing that excesses were likely to escape CLA coverage and, therefore, the reach of the corporatist channel (StvdA, 1988a: 6). They viewed the presumption mechanism as a viable solution for the unclear legal status of on-call contracts, propagated a similar presumption of contract hours, and advocated a minimum of three hours per call (StvdA, 1989a: 2; SER, 1991: 18–20, 24; StvdA, 1988b: 9–10). However, employers' representatives resisted statutory legislation with a classic contract freedom argument (SER, 1991: 26–7; StvdA, 1988a: 6, 1989a: 6).

Whereas trade unions' call for eradicating zero-hours contracts never resonated in parliament, government initiatives indicate a broad political concern for the extreme income insecurity of on-call contracts. Despite business opposition to regulation and cabinet support for labor market flexibility (De Vries, 1993: 1), the Lubbers III government (CDA-PvdA) supported the statutory minimum of three hours per call (Vries, 1993: 4). Between 1987 and 1993, the government also removed the one-third criterion from the minimum wage, social insurance, and occupational pension schemes, further improving the conditions of small contracts (Kiecker and Oude Nijhuis, Forthcoming: 10–1). In 1989, the government also promptly introduced a monthly wage floor for on-call work, setting it at seventy percent of the hourly wage for twenty days (Peijpe, 1990: 48). Despite being an improvement for on-call workers, trade unions jointly criticized the latter reform, as they strived for more fundamental regulation to tackle the legal status and working hours flexibility of on-call work (StvdA, 1989a: 2–4, 17, 1989b: 2–3). CDA-Minister of Social Affairs and Employment De Koning opposed the labor proposal of a legal labor contract presumption, arguing that the provision would also apply to other work arrangements that did not require such regulation, such as own-account work: 'The disadvantage is that it must be feared that this legal presumption will also be declared applicable to work arrangements for which this is not intended' (StvdA, 1989a: 17).

Exchanging flexibility and security

Facing (1) the pressure for dismissal reforms, (2) the breakdown of the permit system for agency work, and (3) calls for statutory legislation on on-call contracts, the Kok I Cabinet looked for a package deal that could square the pressures by employers for more flexibility and by workers for more security. Whereas the 1980s had revitalized corporatist decision-making, the early 1990s constituted a challenging time for the social partners. As the Liberal VVD and D66 replaced the Christian democratic CDA in the Kok I Cabinet, two critics of corporatist decision-making replaced a traditional political supporter (De Liagre Böhl, 2013: 340). Meanwhile, the reputation of trade unions and employers' associations received a heavy blow

when reports revealed their misuse of disability insurance at the cost of society (Oude Nijhuis, 2018: 248–50; De Liagre Böhl, 2013: 340–1).

In this context, Social Democratic Minister of Social Affairs Melkert initiated a reform package. Rather than abolishing the preventive assessment, Melkert's proposal tried to cater to employers and Liberal parties by deregulating fixed-term labor contracts. A chain of fixed-term labor contracts without additional dismissal requirements would become possible for at most three consecutive contracts, with less than three months in between and a total duration of two years (SZW, 1995: 27). Additionally, the proposal prescribed possibilities to extend the probation period and contained policies to reduce red tape for layoffs without significantly diminishing insider protection (SZW, 1995: 24, 31). To satisfy trade unions and Social Democratic backbenchers, the proposal would introduce the legal labor contract presumption and the minimum of three hours per call (SZW, 1995: 23, 33). The proposal also contained an onset for the re-regulation of agency work that left much for the social partners to fill in. On the one hand, Melkert's proposal would end the maximum term for agency work and called for a discussion among the social partners in the agency sector on the permit system and sectoral limitations (SZW, 1995: 28–30). On the other, the initiative advocated labor contract coverage for agency work after three months, leaving little clarity on the conditions during the first three months.

Despite Melkert's efforts to cater to Liberal parties through the deregulation of fixed-term contracts, cabinet negotiations on the reform package reached a stalemate. The government was split between a camp that wanted less regulation for labor contracts and agency work, led by D66-Minister of Economic Affairs Hans Wijers and supported by employers' associations, and a camp that opposed it, led by PvdA Minister of Social Affairs Ad Melkert and backed by trade unions (Passchier, 1996: 3–4). To break the stalemate, the cabinet reached out to the social partners to negotiate a compromise. According to the De Waal, the government signaled to the social partners that they would follow a potential agreement: '...[PvdA-Prime Minister Wim Kok] then thought: we give this issue to the social partners with the message "if you can come up with proposals, we will adopt them"' (my translation, De Waal and Ornstein, 2018b: 00:36:08-00:36:18). Given the demise of social concertation in the early 90s, the social partners viewed the request as an opportunity to consolidate their institutional power: 'And we [the social partners] thought: this is an opportunity. This is an opportunity to regain influence after we had the WAO [disability insurance] crisis...we were very gloomy about the Labor Foundation's survival...We saw an opportunity in Wim Kok's offer to get back in the race' (my translation, De Waal and Ornstein, 2018b: 00:36:37-00:37:09).

Motivated by this prospect, the social partners eventually signed a bipartite agreement that resembled Melkert's initiative. Similarly, the bipartite deal contained the legal labor contract presumption, the minimum of three hours per call, and mild reforms of job security legislations for open-ended contracts that maintained strong insider employment protection (StvdA, 1996b: 4–6, 1996a: 27, 30–1). Additionally, the Labor Foundation refuted the proposed extension of the probation period and added contract hours to the labor contract presumption (StvdA, 1996c: 7–8, 1996a: 15, 28, 1996b: 6). In exchange for these labor demands, the deal included two severe concessions from the trade union perspective. Firstly, the accord went even further than Melkert's proposal on the deregulation of fixed-term contracts to satisfy employers (StvdA, 1996c: 5–6; Passchier, 1996: 4; StvdA, 1996a: 17). Consecutive fixed-term contracts would be able to last three instead of two years with

possibilities of even further extension through CLAs. Secondly, the Labor Foundation agreed to abolish the permit system and the maximum term of agency work (StvdA, 1996a: 20–1, 1996c: 2–3), recognizing agency work as a legitimate employment relationship governed by a separate CLA. By accepting and regulating agency work, the FNV hoped – mistakenly, as it later turned out - that the work arrangement would absorb precarious alternatives, such as on-call contracts (De Waal and Ornstein, 2018b: 01:16:23-01:16:44). For the new regime of agency work regulation, the Labor Foundation relied on the covenant that the social partners in the agency sector had recently signed. The crux of this agreement was the legislative proposal to transform the agency work arrangement into a special labor contract, with deviating conditions during the first twenty-six weeks (ABU et al., 1996: 2; StvdA, 1996c: 4). In this initial period, work agencies could dismiss workers upon the end of a job assignment. Afterward, the arrangement would become a fixed-term labor contract. Once again, there was discretionary space for sectoral bargaining on the duration of these phases.

In subsequent years, the Kok I Cabinet almost entirely followed the bipartite agreement by enacting the Flexibility and Security Act and Labour Market Intermediaries Act, while the Agency work Covenant provided the basis for the next Agency CLAs (Melkert and Sorgdrager, 1997: 2–3). With the legislation, trade unions finally fulfilled their goal of labor contract coverage for agency and on-call work. Even when they could not ban zero-hours contracts, the legal labor contract presumption with contract hours seemed a reasonable alternative. The exchange was particularly successful in containing the rise of agency work. After the legislative changes, work agencies had to increase their prices to user organizations by seven to ten percent (Sol, 2001: 116). For trade unions and the Social Democratic PvdA, regulating alternative work arrangements came at the cost of deregulating fixed-term labor contracts and work agencies. In the exchange's aftermath, these concessions turned out to be rather costly. Employers renewed fixed-term labor contracts more often than policymakers had anticipated (Toren et al., 2002: vii). The possibilities for deviation through sectoral bargaining resulted in a more prolonged, highly flexible phase for agency work (Driel and Koene, 2011: 593) and extensions of the maximum consecutive period of fixed-term contracts in many sectors (Toren et al., 2002: 22). Evading the latter restriction remained possible by using a work agency, only now employers had to do so for three months instead of one. Additionally, the liberalization of work agencies caused uncontrolled growth of these intermediaries, leading to the spread of malpractices, for instance, in the agricultural sector (Vermeend, 2002: 5, 17; Sol, 2001: 116–7).

The exchange shows the role of channel-specific dynamics in explaining degrees of union solidarity. In the corporatist channel, trade unions constrained the dualization process by pulling the conditions of flexible workers upward. However, due to trade unions' limited bargaining power, such achievements remained relatively fragmented. In the legislative channel, ongoing pressures for dismissal reforms forced trade unions into a position where it was much more challenging to achieve solidaristic outcomes. The societal discussions show the unwillingness of trade unions to allow a downward correction of insider employment protection in exchange for improved conditions for outsiders. Instead, the PvdA and trade unions offered the deregulation of fixed-term labor contracts to improve the precarious, nonstandard employment relationships. By exchanging the deregulation of fixed-term labor contracts, their actions opened up yet another labor market segment. Therefore, the exchange was ineffective in curbing segmentation.

Conclusion

In the Dutch case of dualization, union solidarity changed over time and depended on the regulatory context. Initial FNV responses to emerging alternative work arrangements were predominantly principled and exclusive, following a logic of legitimacy. As this exclusion translated into passivity rather than intervention, the attitude did not contribute to dualization. The (1) ineffectiveness of the exclusive union strategy, (2) pressures from the female labor movement, and (3) the increasing need to attract new members among underrepresented social groups moved the FNV to adopt a more pragmatic stance. The shift from a logic of legitimacy to a logic of incentives facilitated the alignment of insider-outsider interests and FNV's outward turn.

The effect of this outward turn on regulation depended on channel-specific political dynamics. During the second half of the 1980s, there were myriad examples of trade unions achieving tangible improvements for agency and on-call workers through the corporatist channel. Nevertheless, the results remained relatively fragmented due to trade unions' limited bargaining power and the lack of central coordination. Consequently, the effects of the CLAs on the general dualization trend were limited. In the legislative channel, union solidarity was more complicated. Trade unions pushed for the regulation of alternative work arrangements at a time of decreasing labor power and a broadly supported countervailing push for dismissal reform. Trade unions and the PvdA wanted to improve the position of agency and on-call workers, but not at the cost of the job security of open-ended labor contracts. However, they were not in a power position to achieve one-sided reforms. Both parties solved the stalemate by offering the deregulation of fixed-term labor contracts. While the exchange facilitated labor contract coverage for nonstandard employment relationships, it contributed to further segmentation of the Dutch labor market.

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