

Questioning The Employment System: The European Flexicurity Approach

María Paz Martín Martín

Predoctoral Scholarship Holder
Institute for Public Goods and Policies
Human and Social Sciences Centre
Superior Council of Scientific Research (CSIC)
paz.martin@ch.csic

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Questioning The Employment System: The European Flexicurity Approach¹

María Paz Martín Martín
Predoctoral Scholarship Holder
Institute for Public Goods and Policies
Human and Social Sciences Centre
Superior Council of Scientific Research (CSIC)
paz.martin@ch.csic

Abstract:

This paper entails an analysis of the transformations of the so called modern employment system in relation to the concept of flexicurity, according to an European hegemonic institutional version. Specifically, it focuses in the changes operated in the relationship between employment and social protection in terms of regulatory principles and ideological basis within two presumed different cognitive-normative frameworks, which correspond to two different historical contexts in the Western world: the fordian and post-fordian era.

This is strongly connected to the development and the subsequent crisis/reform of the Welfare State, linked to the keynesian-fordian Pact. The first section of the study offers a theoretical travel along the arising and institutionalisation of the modern employment system. The second explores the factors and the features of the decline of this model. Finally, the third section is dedicated to the analysis of European discourses about flexicurity. Flexicurity, as an "ideal" political strategy to face and adapt to new (economic/social) challenges posed by globalization, contents a new notion of security in the area of employment. In the conclusions, the transcendence of this new notion of security is manifested in the apparition of a new representation of the citizen and of the employee that emerges from the transformation of the relationships: worker-employer, State-market and State-individual.

Keywords: *Flexicurity, activation, transitional labour markets, Welfare State, modern system of employment, security.*

¹ This text has been written within the framework of the projects "Qualitative Assessment of Activation Policies: Active and Passive Limits" (R&D&I project of the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, SEJ2007-64604) and "Protection and flexicurity. The modernization of employment public services" (FIPROS 2008/35).

1. Introduction²

The transformations that have been occurring since the 1970's in the production paradigm have gone hand in hand with transformations in the way work is organised and regulated, both in companies and in the State's public management. The adoption of simultaneous changes in other social policy areas and in public expenditure has led to the Welfare State's mechanisms, normative principles and values being questioned, and has sparked a debate on the reform and/or crisis of this organisational institution from various angles and perspectives.

As far as employment is concerned, there are important differences of opinion in the assessments of the scope and depth of these reforms. One view is that the labour sector is being recommodified, with the subsequent dismantling of its values and very nature of the wage-based society (Gautié, 2005; Serrano, 2005; Palier, 2001; Alonso, 2007; Boltanski, 2002). This is opposed by arguments pointing out its "natural" evolution, in keeping with economic, social and demographic transformations that require modifications in regulation mechanisms, without this involving the decline of a system due to its fundamental principles being removed (Supiot, 1997).

In the last decade in European Union member countries, public management of employment has gradually been transcending the national/state level to become a matter that concerns and, to a certain extent, is the

responsibility of European institutions³. As a result, European institutions have acquired a new role as agents producing and legitimising hegemonic discourses in this sphere, and they have the capacity to formulate and disseminate a European proposal for management of the social question. These institutions, therefore, become the announcers of proposals and alternatives arising from this crisis and/or reform of welfare policies.

Consequently, the European Employment Strategy is a supranational socio-economic policy instrument that is regularly referred to in Employment Guidelines. It is prolific in its creation of concepts and consolidation of certain theoretical currents⁴, a pioneer in the redefinition and dissemination of these concepts, and a generator of cognitive principles (informational basis of judgement in justice⁵). In fact, it can make them so popular and accepted that member states' employment legislation and traditions are even called in question.

The focus on flexicurity⁶ dealt with in this paper is part of the cognitive-normative production connected with the reform of the Welfare State by the European Union. It is difficult to define the term exhaustively and concisely, since not only is it ambiguous and polyphonic, but it also has a "political strategy" dimension, aimed at addressing the social and economic challenges of globalisation. As part of its "political strategy" aspect, flexicurity covers many aspects of the very nature of social security systems, the organi-

2 This text is the result of theoretical and conceptual work with a larger scope that will be used as an introduction to a comparative study among different European countries on the diversity of imaginaries and practices, which accommodates and produces, respectively, the social, political and economic flexicurity project in different contexts

3 European intervention in employment issues started with the Luxembourg Compromise (1997), after which the European Employment Strategy was set up. A soft governance tool, known as the Open Method of Coordination, was created to implement it. All these aspects will be dealt with in more depth later in the text.

4 Authors such as Amparo Serrano (2006) and Amy Verdun (1999) have stressed the importance that must be given to this invention process, and they have written more in-depth studies on the role of epistemic communities, represented by committees of experts, in the EU, who are not only behind the production of policies and the launch of initiatives, but also perform important work legitimising them.

5 This term comes from the work by Amartya Sen and it refers to the set of information and "type of knowledge" that is found at the basis of every concept on what welfare (or the common good, in general terms) is and what it should be.

6 We should make it clear that this study explores the concept of flexicurity as presented by the EU

sation of social services, social dialogue, etc. However, for the purposes of this study, we consider the reformulation of the employment-social protection relationship proposed by this strategy/concept using what we have termed the "modern employment system" as the contrast framework.

Given that the "modern employment system" is understood as a set of social, legal, economic and political representations in connection with work, according to its adherence to the cognitive-normative framework of Modernity, we will clarify the importance of the change proposed by the concept of European flexicurity in this regard. We aim to identify the occurrence of reforms that have changed fundamental values and principles⁷ up to the point when we can speak of a "flexicure employment system", clearly different from the "modern employment system".

Bearing this objective in mind, we will use a qualitative methodology: discourse analysis, since it enables us to access a more in-depth view of change and helps us to decipher the components of a new cognitive-normative framework, which promotes, legitimises and lends weight to the reform by disseminating some specific values and representations.

Consequently, this study has two main parts: an exploration of social representations and the hegemonic voices that made work regulation possible in Fordist societies, with the dominant institution of the Welfare State, and an analysis of the most recent European discourses on flexicurity. Specifically, we will deal with the following texts: Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs 2008-10 (11.12.07) and the Commission Communication: Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity (27.06.07). From analy-

sing them, it is evident that a "flexicure employment system" is emerging, based on three key points: the dissolution of the employer/worker dialectic, a new notion of security and a new State/individual contract. Finally, the concluding chapter first presents a summary of the analysis results, and ends with a comparative reference to the two comprehensive perspectives on reality ("State-progress model" and "international-knowledge integration model"), which include the various institutional concepts and approaches discussed here.

On the basis of new theoretical principles, the activation paradigm and the theory of transitional labour markets, we will show how the European concept of flexicurity has turned the notion of security, traditionally in conflict with flexibility, into its complement ("accomplice") to achieve economic and social objectives that are no longer aimed at attaining a balance between economic progress and social welfare, but rather at maintaining social cohesion without prejudice to competitiveness and economic growth. With this new approach, the new discourse on work is characterised, on the whole, by the transposition of the idea of subject as a citizen (possessing rights) for a new type of more individualised and psychologised subject, qualified with adjectives such as "motivated", "active" and "employable" (Serrano, 2007).

Flexicurity, as the most current institutional standard bearer of socio-economic reform trends, which began to emerge in the 1970's, involves a displacement of the basic criteria social solidarity is based on, so rights change to be an object of personal achievement and the condition of citizen subtly becomes that of a client.

⁷ If we take as a reference the grading of changes/reforms of the Welfare State created by Hall (1993), we can identify the type of transformations this work is focusing on as what he called "third order changes", those that involve the installation of a new permanent intervention logic of the Welfare State. Together with the third are also:

First order changes: they involve a wider use of existing public policy instruments.

Second order changes: they imply modification of instruments without causing a change in the nature of welfare systems. (Del Pino & Colino, 2006)

2. The Modern Employment System and its Crisis

Structured into two sections, below we will review the process of establishment and decline of the "safety net", in other words the public risk management mechanism. Firstly, we will try to clarify the principles and the nature of the so-called "modern employment system" to then focus on the aspects that led to its supposed dismantling around the 1970's.

2.1. Employment Protected by the Safety Net

In this section we will focus in a general way on the construction process of the Welfare State, paying special attention to state intervention for social protection in connection with employment. This institutionalised intervention meant that work and the worker became the priority focus of public attention and of political regulation. The "modern employment system" was created by institutional acknowledgement that the work relation, in terms of power position, is not equal or balanced. From that moment, the work sector became central in political, social and economic spheres in a way that it had never been before, as a regulating activity, charged with axiological and socialising attributes.

We will accompany the theoretical consideration with constant references to two of the foundational texts of the Welfare State, through which the "modern employment system" was institutionalised in the 20th century. These are: "The French Social Security Plan" (1946), by Pierre Laroque⁸ and "Social Insurance and Allied Services" (1942) by William Beveridge⁹, better known as the Laroque Plan and the Beveridge Report, respectively. Both will serve to illustrate some of the most relevant theoretical issues, as their authors were representative actors of the political scene at the time, spectators of their age and the inspiration behind changes.

The Welfare State is understood as the inheritance given to the western world in the 20th century by the "modern project" and its "considerations" on how to manage the "social question", taking into account that the latter has been transformed and diversified in accordance with the vicissitudes of industrialisation, the advances of capitalism and their opponents, workers' revolutions.

Consequently, before the emergence of the Welfare State¹⁰, in the strict sense of the term, the scope and rhythm of state intervention in the realm of economic liberties were shaped to create new rights, social rights, the first rights with a socio-political origin, and, in this respect, different to private right, since they were concerned about collectivity instead of the individual, and were created to a large extent as a result of social protests. These rights are based on two legitimising arguments: one moral, as they are the material expression of collective solidarity, and another instrumental, given that their existence facilitates social order. That is why collective solidarity and social rights are represented as a "social and economic progress" tool, the ultimate aim of the Welfare State (Donzelot, 1994). The Beveridge Report (page 8) reflects these aspects in the following terms: "...organisation of social insurance should be treated as one part only of a comprehensive policy of social progress" .

The work relation was, therefore, a fundamental pillar of public order, in that it was a mechanism distributing and channelling social and economic risks. At that time, work was beginning to be transformed into "employment" and the worker/employer attained a new entity of "citizen", protected by the so-called "employment salary rule" (Prieto, 2003). Workers went through a constant and generalised task of socialisation with their work activity (selection processes, assignment of tasks, complying with sche-

8 General Director of Social Security in France (1944-1951).

9 British economist and politician. He was a member of the House of Commons (1944) and of the House of Lords (1946) for the Liberal Party.

10 The term "Welfare State" appeared in 1942, so it forms part of the contemporary political lexicon (Fuentes & Fernández, 2007).

dules). The ultimate aim was to produce "standardised" citizens (Donzelot, 1994:157). This made the safety net more than a distribution system, in fact it betrayed social ethics, it gave meaning and a "must be" to social relations, to the worker and his way of life. The social representation of work was subjected to political-social regulation of it.

The employment ideal in this context is stable and lasting employment, that has to produce some "normal life" conditions. The foundational texts of the Welfare State, when they refer to employment, make constant reference to other spheres of life and they describe them surreptitiously. As a result, the family's needs are channelled via the worker's, and the medical cover is justified by maintaining the worker's ability to work. This employment ideal is at the moment leading to a special concern to "guarantee maintaining a paid activity" (Laroque, 1946:9) or otherwise a "... provision against interruption and loss of earning power...", so that "All the principal causes of interruption or loss of earnings are now the subject of schemes of social insurance." (Beveridge, 1942, page 12).

Work is, therefore, an activity capable of neutralising social conflict. The balance in this system is based on maintaining a tensionless, regulated conflict mediated by the philosophy of solidarity¹¹ within the social aim of pursuing the common good.

The "modern employment system" involves incorporating new terms in the State-individual contract. This reformulation goes hand in hand with official recognition and strengthening of an alliance that radical and Mar-

xist liberals had prefigured as "anti-nature". It is the "fortunate" State-market pact by which state interventions in the economy are recognised as essential for procuring a social balance that does not disrupt productivity and makes it possible to produce discourses on how social and economic progress complement each other. Examples of the terms of these pacts, which dissolve tensions without eliminating oppositions between the State and the individual and between the State and the market, are:

"necessary conciliation between the employer's essential authority in his company and the no less essential guarantee of protecting workers from employer abuse". (Laroque, 1946:9)

"There are some to whom pursuit of security appears to be a wrong aim. They think of security as something inconsistent with initiative, adventure, personal responsibility. That is not a just view of social security as planned in this Report. The plan is not one for giving to everybody something for nothing and without trouble... The plan is one to secure income for subsistence on condition of service and contribution and in order to make and keep men fit for service..." (Beveridge, 1942)

The political consecration of solidarity, as stated in the doctrine of solidarity produced by Leon Bourgeois, led to the creation of "public service" and "institution"¹² notions, which sealed this new form of contract between the State and the individual. The central focus of the doctrine of solidarity is the notion of "social debt" which emerges from

¹¹The doctrine of solidarity lends weight to collective social responsibility. The safety net is based on it. We will refer to the doctrine of solidarity in more detail later.

¹² Various authors have offered different definitions of institution based on classical sociological theory, current sociology and political science. Below are some examples of them:

Weber: "organizations with rationally established rules". (M. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1974).

Donzelot (1994), regarding "institution", spoke about the framework that can be regulated by the double law of order and equilibrium; he considers that the institution is the authority and a centre grouping resources that lead to a purpose. The institution therefore resolves the State-individual antinomy.

Dubet dedicated an entire book to analysing the role of institutions in current society. In it he gives a definition of institution as an organisation that engenders a specific form of socialisation. (Dubet, 2006:31).

Ashford (1989:18) sees institutions as "the manifest expressions of the way in which a people limits the use of collective authority".

a relational concept of poverty and which, in its most evolved version, is a "diachronic debt" that extends everyone's social responsibility to past and future generations. The aim is to create a mechanism arising from the interdependence of society members which decreases uncertainty and produces security, and which also includes a replacement of the notion of "guilt/individual responsibility" by that of "social risk". Solidarity in the framework of this doctrine is defined as the "scientific law organising society" (Donzelot, 1994:93). Aversion of risk and overcoming it through interdependence are seen in these extracts¹³ from the Beveridge Report, where "social security" is defined:

*"...the proposals of the Report mark another step forward to the development of State insurance as a **new type of human institution**, differing both from the former methods of preventing or alleviating distress and from voluntary insurance. The term "**social insurance**" to describe this institution implies both that it is compulsory and that men stand **together** with their fellows (...). There is no longer an admitted claim of the individual citizen to share in national insurance and yet to stand outside it, **keeping the advantage of his individual lower risk whether of unemployment or of disease or accident.**"*

Socio-political institutions, as dispensers of order through social security measures, will be the identity mark and element forming the insurance system, as well as reliable proof of the triangular State-individual-market relationship. At the moment its efficiency is going to depend on them being strong and well-united institutions, focused on preventing random situations.

In comparison with all these aspects stated

in the texts and which are the basis of the Welfare State, there are some others that hardly ever appear or which do so on a marginal basis: the concepts and categories of active policies¹⁴.

The conclusion of this first section lays the foundations on which we will later build our analytical focus. It specifies a series of aspects consubstantial to the nature of the safety net, to a certain manner of understanding reality, which lend weight to both the theoretical background and implementation of this safety net:

- a) Dialectical representation of reality. The indissolubility of contrasts¹⁵ is a point of balance in the system. For example, mediated, but not denied, conflict between employers and workers.
- b) Predominance of an ideal of increasing linear socio-economic progress, which operates as a way to justify the safety net by referring to a common good (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2002) and vice versa (this is presented as a condition of the possibility of progress and social order)¹⁶.
- c) Trust in a particular system of counterweights between solidarity, dependence and responsibility, as established by the terms State-market pact and State-individual-contract.

In this framework, "genuine" social protection is interweaved with a series of basic premises:

- Job loss, as an undesirable situation, illustrating possible flaws in the market and producing vulnerability.
- Compensation for the worker's unequal status compared with the employer (compensation of subordination and

13 We have highlighted in bold the most relevant expressions of what we aim to illustrate.

14 In fact, active policies were peripheral, at least in the Bismarckian States until the 1970's (Seeleib-Kaiser & van Dyk, 2008).

15 We are referring to maintaining 'substantial' oppositions, such as: worker-employer; work-private life; State-individual, State-market, etc.

16 This justification is what Amartya Sen (1988, 1989...) has called: "informational basis of judgement in justice" (IBJ) that can be understood as the "informational principle of welfare (IPW)".

heteronomy).

- The existence of a mediating State guaranteeing this protection.

The disappearance of these premises or their replacement by others implies a profound transformation of legitimising arguments of the existence of this protection and their contents, a symptom of large-scale changes that took place thirty years after the model was institutionalised.

2.2. *The Welfare State Facing a Presumed Crisis*

Reflecting on the transformation factors of this modern concept of the employment-social protection relation is inevitable. We have tried to clarify the factors that come into play and their importance in the debate on the crisis and/or reform of the Welfare State, which began in the 1970's and which gave rise to new discourses on what public intervention is and what it should be in the progress of the economy.

We consider "a presumed crisis in the Welfare State", understood as a crisis of legitimacy, from a theoretical/intellectual point of view, led by intellectuals and new social movements, and also from a material point of view, based on the Welfare State's actual inability to tackle the pressures and demands coming from all sides: economic depression, transformation of the production paradigm requiring a reform of employment policies, internationalisation of capitals, socio-demographic changes, etc.

All this led to a reformulation of state intervention. For some authors, the latter is defined by incremental reforms in a context of "permanent austerity" (Pierson, 2006), but for others it involves the beginning of an increase in financial and productive policies benefiting adjustment, reconversion and economic reorganisation, whilst social policies are relegated to the background, to the extent that there has been talk of a rupture between economic and social concerns (Rosanvallon, 1995).

Below we will try to clarify which of these

two diagnoses best describes the flexicurity proposals promoted by the European Union.

3.A Flexicure Employment Ideal

As a result of the crisis in the 1970's, the modern employment system, with all its baggage, started to be questioned, and new employment forms, previously considered atypical, started to be used. Currently, flexicurity is a political strategy with enough resonance to contribute to the institutionalisation and standardisation of new forms of employment and labour market regulation which have been displacing those of the Fordian-Keynesian paradigm. That is why we speak of the arrival, or even the "installation" of a "flexicure" employment ideal.

3.1. *Prior Questions on the Concept of Flexicurity and its Dissemination by European Institutions*

Since the European Employment Strategy was created in 1997, the European Union has increased in importance in connection with the management of Welfare State crisis/reform processes. Although national trends regarding employment management and social affairs are very different in nature depending on each State's welfare system, we have considered that the incisive character being acquired by European initiatives in this field is important enough to pay attention to, both their planning and their effects on member States.

The new proposals of social protection and employment management are included in this line of intervention under the protection of a new political concept/strategy known as "flexicurity", which describes a "fortunate" combination of labour-economic flexibility and remodelled social security, on the basis of which the highest levels of economic growth and social cohesion can be attained and/or maintained.

It is believed that the concept of flexicurity was originally mentioned in Denmark around the middle of the 1990's, in response to a management model of the labour market

supported by three basic pillars ("Danish golden triangle"): flexibility of work contracts, active labour market policies (which include priority attention to training and motivational factors) and high social protection (above all, during transitions). To a large extent, flexicurity is an alternative to "internal labour markets" when the demands of the new economy mainly favour forms of employment described in them as "atypical". Therefore, the aim is to eliminate the distinction between the internal and external market (making atypicality disappear with it) and replace both by the "transitional labour market" category¹⁷ to reduce segmentation.

When the term is internationalised, however, it almost loses its original content. And we say "almost" because the EU is actually promoting a flexicurity strategy, which, although it seems to be uncertain, contains a delimited representation of the world and its needs. In short, the European Union has a hegemonic view of flexicurity, which member States come to participate in through procedural measures of the Open Method of Coordination (OMC). This form of governance on multiple levels provides a reference for national actions through the establishment of common indicators (benchmarking), used to establish targets in figures, and to determine "good practices". On the other hand, the OMC also has an influence on the scope of national hegemonic representations by transmitting new concepts and terms to National Reform Programmes (later converted into specific national public policies).

Two new theories on the best organisation of the labour market, depending on the cultural and production changes of the post-industrial era, are the basis of the pillars of flexicurity. We are referring to the activation paradigm and the theory of transitional labour markets. The activation paradigm has an effect on the implementation of active labour market policies compared with Keynesian type policies (Serrano, 2007). They are

fundamentally supply policies. Serrano (2007) has identified three fundamental factors that are the basis of the activation paradigm, which differentiate it from the previous model: an individualised approach to the problem, psychologistic in nature, based on modelling behaviour, workers' attitudes and motivation; an emphasis on employment, in other words, on the economic aspects of citizenship, above political and social aspects; and a strengthening of the contract moral, in the sense of the private/liberal contract, based on the criteria of reciprocity and deservingness.

The increase in these measures not only means a change in the hegemonic understanding of the nature of the problems (unemployment and social exclusion) and in determining those responsible for it, but also redefining the category of work, worker and job seeker. Protected by this paradigm, especially centred on the stimulation of an individual's independent and responsible conscience, as a creator of his own destiny (more akin to the imposition of duties than to the possession of rights, to maintain social order), the notion of "security", previously defined as "protection against risk" starts its transformation process into an "active/activating security", virtually opposite in nature to the previous one. "Security" is referred to as the "ability to adapt to change". This new notion of security occupies a central place in the strategy of flexicurity to the point that it becomes the element forming it. Based on this point of view, the activation paradigm involves an important innovation in the scope of social policies, since rather than an intervention mechanism "for" the individual, it involves one "on" him, on his personal morals.

The theory of transitional labour markets emphasises adaptation to job transition, as well as to the different labour situations employees find themselves in as a result of this transition. In this respect, this theory is connected with the idea of empowerment that Schmid (2001) defines as "potential to adjust"

¹⁷ We owe the emergence and intellectual development of this category to Gunter Schmid, among others (1995).

or "the capacity of individuals to cope with risk". On the other hand, transitions are compared theoretically with "individual paths" in which careers and personal life are understood as a whole. Although the labour market previously consisted of stable and lasting jobs, it now has multiple transition types, which are apparently adjusted to particular life cycles. Consequently, public authorities concerned with labour market management explicitly legitimise a "transitional lifestyle" for citizens.

The importance that a worker's motivational aspects and pace of life are beginning to have on the public agenda, to the detriment of legal-formal regulation of the Keynesian approach, leads to the introduction of moral-psychological (governmental) strategies to produce change-favouring attitudes in the individual) e.g.: always being ready for professional updating). They also reinforce work ethics and the idea of achieving success through work. The activation paradigm insists on the virtuosity of qualities such as flexibility, autonomy, adaptation and the development of human potential in the worker. However, depending on the national labour market structure, how the paradigm is represented in the collective imaginary and interaction with it, as well as on the characteristics and suitability of the intervening institutional apparatus, and the existence of real methods of participation for workers (which enable them to take part in the definition of these qualities, or express a preference for them), the result in practice can be quite the opposite: (material and moral) precariousness, individualisation, alienation and overexploitation of both capacities and (labour) identity, which can become more pronounced depending on each specific country's culture, institutional tradition and socio-labour context.

The various types of flexible work (internal and external numerical flexibility, functional flexibility and wage flexibility) completely break down the qualities that have previously been attributed to the "normal form of employment"¹⁸: stable over time, with defined tasks, and a fixed wage and hours of work. Consequently, reinforcing the security for this new method of working would be the same as cancelling out ("neutralising") the model¹⁹:

3.2. Risk, Movement and Uncertainty: the New Rules of the Game

This subsection will contain an in-depth analysis of the activation paradigm and the theory of transitional labour markets as they appear in the European texts dealt with. We will focus on a new concept of security, as it is surrounded by a series of aspects that are the consequence and the condition of their redefinition and around which our analysis of the discourse is structured. The texts analysed will be quoted by their references: COM(2007)803final, for the Commission Communication: Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity and COM(2007)303final, for the Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs 2008-10. These will be analysed paying attention to the following aspects:

- a) Flexicurity context and goals/objectives, by which it is legitimised and even becomes necessary (detecting a possible new informational basis of judgement in justice).
- b) The notion of "security" and its cognitive-normative components.
- c) The traditional dialectical relation between worker and employer.
- d) The terms of the State-individual contract and its correlation with those of the State-

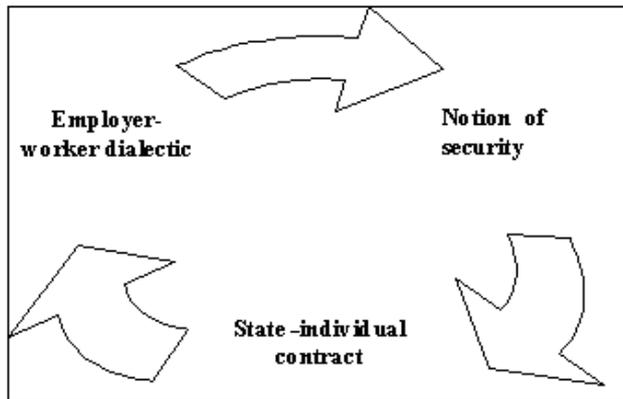
18 We are referring more precisely to the "normal job form" defined by Boltanski and Chiapello (2002) quoting G. Lyon-Caen: "Employment on a permanent full-time contract in a specified stable workplace, with career prospects, social security, and a trade-union presence in the work place".

19 The following quote serves as an example of this, taken from the Communication on Principles of flexicurity: "Too frequently, policies aim to increase either flexibility for enterprises or security for workers; as a result, they neutralise or contradict each other" (COM(2007)359 final, p.4)

market pact.

The last three aspects mentioned are clearly inter-related in this circular diagram. Any transformations in them lead to changes in the others (Fig. 1). Their interaction scenario is the "economy/knowledge society" in the "globalisation era".

Fig. 1:
Analytical Focus: Change Indicators



Source: Own production

a) Flexicurity for a Changing and Globalised World

The constant strong references in texts to globalisation as the backdrop to all current problems and solutions, and the classification of new world circumstances as subject to a knowledge-based economy, are a re-configuration of the map of problems, of those affected and of their solutions in terms of the common good. The extracts analysed, in this regard, evidence a "single version" (García-Borés, 1996), monological and homogenising discourse of each State's circumstances, attempting to convey an irrefutable image of the world. Their content is marked by the use of resources typical of totalising discourses: impersonalisation, passivation, naturalisation, etc., and it is eminently prescriptive (and urgent) in nature .

*"The EU and its Member States need to progress further towards a **dynamic, suc-***

*cessful knowledge economy, spreading the benefits of prosperity more evenly across society. There must be **more winners** from the process of change and more upwards mobility. More "have-nots" must be transformed into "haves"."* (COM(2007)359 final, p. 3)

"Spreading the benefits of prosperity" is a roundabout expression that continues to point towards the rhetoric the text is inundated with and which, in this case, displaces terms more pragmatic (less lyrical) in tone and which were at the centre of the debate on welfare in the past, such as "redistribution". The typical language of social discourses in the Keynesian era (with terms such as "social justice" and "redistribution") is buried in these texts on flexicurity by that of competition: "more winners", "more upwards mobility". These are the contributions expected from a positively expressed knowledge economy, being introduced by the adjectives "dynamic and successful".

Globalisation and the demands of a knowledge-based economy are, therefore, common challenges for all (employers, workers, States, etc.), and flexicurity is the depositary of the univocal and "all-prevailing" recipe to tackle these challenges. Flexicurity is a homogeniser of problems and solutions.

"Flexicurity (...) also aims at helping employees and employers alike to fully reap the opportunities presented by globalisation." (COM(2007)359 final, p. 4)

"an integrated flexicurity approach is vital to sustain economic growth and reinforce social cohesion." (COM(2007)803final final, p. 26)

In this eminently competitive context, "security" cannot refer to a static state. In fact, security becomes interchangeable with flexibility, resulting in one of those engines that promote "change to adapt to change".

b) Security and Flexibility: Interchangeable Concepts

In connection with the new notion of "secu-

urity", the flexicurity proposal has the following definition of security:

"Security (...) is about equipping people with the skills that enable them to progress in their working lives, and helping them find new employment. It is also about adequate unemployment benefits to facilitate transitions. Finally, it encompasses training opportunities for all workers, especially the low skilled and older workers." (COM(2007)359final, p.5).

This definition evokes the preventive and activating interpretation of "employability", although extended to a dynamic of transition and not only to an occasional job loss circumstance. Security is then an activation instrument.

The guarantee of security comes from self-insurance by means of a "personal employability contribution". That is why the "safety net" in the flexicurity project goes hand in hand with a strong call to "personal responsibility" compared with the safety net of the State-providence (and Keynesian Welfare State), based on the principle of "collective solidarity". Unemployment benefits are at the service of transitions. Their main mission is no longer to guarantee support in the event of the "loss of livelihood", but rather to facilitate transitions (*"progressing in their working lives"*).

"Benefits for citizens and society would accrue from enhanced mobility of workers between enterprises. Workers will be more inclined to take risks associated with job transfers if benefits are adequate during transition periods and if prospects for new and better jobs are real." (COM(2007)359 final, p.14)

An ontological concept of the fundamentally rational and self-interested individual can be gleaned from this extract. A risk-taking attitude in individuals can be bought (and, apparently, habits and representations learnt throughout their lifetime as well: the aim is to transform them with business exchange): *"if benefits are adequate"*. One criterion for deserving social benefits seems to be in har-

mony with these "transaction morals", which govern the State-individual relation, since receiving them is conditioned by *"enhanced mobility of workers between enterprises"*. In short, the aim is to make workers more prone to running risks (in exchange for something).

On the other hand, references to training place an emphasis on "human capital" and "lifelong learning".

"...the EU needs higher and more effective investment in human capital and lifelong learning in line with the flexicurity concept for the benefit of individuals, enterprises, the economy and society." (COM(2007)803 final p.31)

However, lifelong learning is not pure benefit. It may involve and, in fact, involves making an effort to accumulate knowledge that will become unusable in a short period of time. The culture of the incessant provokes a waste of knowledge, which here is clarified by the words: "accumulate", "renew" and "regularly".

"Workers, if they are to remain and progress in work and be prepared for transition and changing labour markets, need to accumulate and renew skills regularly" (COM(2007)803 final p.31)

Consequently, compared with security, which was founded in the social right of citizens-workers, and whose aim was to guarantee a job, a notion of "security" has emerged that depends on capacity for personal achievement, and which is understood as the ability to keep oneself moving work-wise.

"Individuals increasingly need employment security rather than job security, as fewer have the same job for life." (COM(2007)359 final, p. 3)

In this extract what could be considered as the "insurance slogan" of flexicurity emerges: *"employment security rather than job security"*. This phrase totally deconstructs the "original" meaning of security in the world of work, since it promotes the insurance of

constant transition as opposed to job keeping (that was something "secure", the previous meaning of the notion. In an increasingly turbulent employment world, "security" cannot be likened to a good anchor when there is a storm, but rather to a good oar. You always have to be prepared to set sail, and have the most suitable skills required to hop from one island to another (from one job to another).

The result is a "confusion-dissemination" of the concepts of flexibility and security, when before they were perceived as substantially opposed.

c) Dissolution of the Worker-Employer Antagonism

This exchangeability of the notions of flexibility and security is intimately linked to rupture with a dialectical representation of reality, introduced in aspect a), which naturally affects the traditional worker-employer antagonism. In the texts analysed, employer and worker share the same boat, and they are the object and subject of similar efforts.

"to develop more systematically in the National Reform Programmes comprehensive policy strategies to improve the adaptability of workers and enterprises" (COM(2007)359 final, p.4)

"Adaptation requires a more flexible labour market combined with levels of security that address simultaneously the new needs of employers and employees". (COM(2007)359 final, p.3)

In these extracts, the use of the adverbs "systematically" and "simultaneously" referring to an ideal means of public action to tackle the "needs of employers and employees" is representative of a strong level of dissolution of the employer-employee opposition from a hegemonic institutional perspective. On the other hand, "adaptability" and "adaptation" again emerge as a call for homogenisation of the situation both employers and workers face.

²¹"Employment protection legislation".

²² Illegitimate taking advantage of public benefits.

We will also consider that this dissolution lies in the cognitive base of legal-formal or exogenous (de)regulation of the employment relation, as it ends the conscience of a weak contracting party and, in return, it leads to an increase in personal responsibility, which channels the worker towards autonomous and independent, yet, paradoxically, unavoidable experiences.

"The effectiveness of active labour market policies is positively related to less strict EPL²¹" (COM(2007)359 final, p.7)

In short, workers have to develop skills to play a role for which protection is dispensable. Competent workers in this new configuration of welfare are workers as flexible as the manner of production: available, creative, communicative and autonomous. A cognitive leap occurs from the wage-based employment system to the enterprise-based employment system (Prieto, 2003), which, without a doubt, contains a different definition of the worker. We have gone from what has traditionally been called the salaried employee to what some authors call "the worker-employer of himself" (Serrano & Crespo, 2002).

d) New Terms of the State-Individual contract: New Balance between Rights and Duties

The terms of the State-individual contract transform in accordance with a representation of the citizen who has to be responsible for himself. The consolidated concern for moral risk²² gives rise to a hardening of criteria to deserve benefits. All this apprehension of the dependence of the individual on the State transforms the relations between them. At the same time as the relations become more personalised, they need a whole set of control measures to come into effect, which have a material element (new information and communication technologies), and a legal-formal element (the invention of new figures or regulations that entail new

duties for job seekers, “activity commitment”, for example). The centrality acquired by moral risk in the new management system requires strengthening of control and monitoring of the implementation of employment policies.

“...continual review of **the incentives and disincentives** resulting from the tax and benefit systems, including the management and conditionality of benefits...” COM(2007)803 final, p.29).

Euphemisms and roundabout expressions to refer to the moral risk have also been observed:

“Good unemployment benefit systems (...) may have a negative effect on the intensity of job search activities and may reduce financial incentives to accept work”. (COM(2007)359 final, p.6)

This privatising tendency in the State-individual contract is demonstrated by two opposing discourses: on the one hand, obsession with work incentives, which, furthermore, are connected with a strengthening of the conditions to access and keep benefits, and, on the other, the call for a “distribution of responsibilities” connected with a strong call to worker’s duties as an individual, so that dependence on the State, and, therefore, social costs, are reduced.

Every reference to social security is either subjected to this “right-and-duty” principle to attain the “cost effective” goal²³, or approached from a standpoint of the conditionality to access to it.

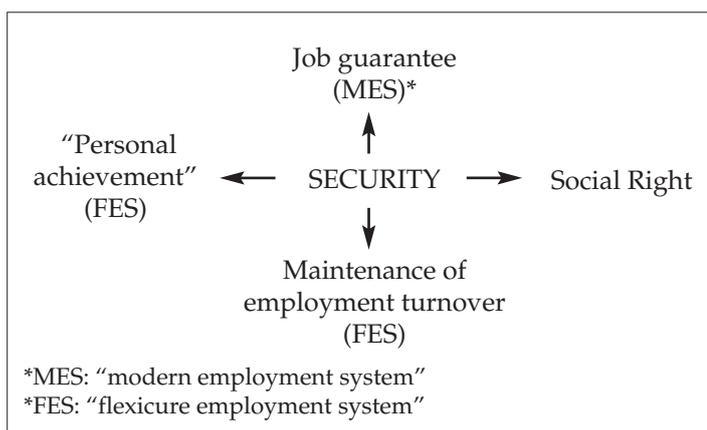
“Improving social security (...) may require additional or redeployed public expenditure that must go hand in hand with monitoring and conditionality of benefits in order to ensure that such spending is cost effective”. (COM(2007)359 final, p.14)

Consequently, the social contract (State-individual) starts to adopt hues of a private contract, but, in this case, accused of a strong asymmetry and marked by hierarchy, in detriment to the rights of the individual-worker.

4. Conclusion: “State-Progress” Model versus “International Integration-Knowledge” Model.

The existence of a new notion of security can be gleaned from this analysis, whose implications involve a transformation of the essential characteristics (premises) forming the social protection of the modern employment system, which we stated in the first part of this study. As a result, the perception of the loss of a job as an undesirable risk is displaced by a new ideal representation of the “transitional market” and a reallocation of values to the risk concept, which changes from being conceived as “risk-danger/threat” to being seen as “risk-adventure”.

Fig. 2:
Contrast Of Security Notion Attributes



Source: Own production

The need to compensate the asymmetry in the employer-employee relation disappears

²³The aim is to provide support to restrict or cut back on public expenditure, appealing to a moral formula that has a special impact on the worker.

as the traditional representation of these agents as opponents is dissolved on the basis of an "individual-worker" concept that seems to need to be more monitored and encouraged by the State than protected. Finally, in contrast to the State mediating with defined institutions, a soft or flexible system of governance is promoted, with the participation of many actors, which the "globalisation process" (soft governance), at a macro level, and expressions such as "distribution of responsibilities" (decentralisation, contractualism), at a micro level, exemplify. These final observations are presented clearly and concisely in figures 3 and 4.

As shown in figures 3 and 4, this analysis provides evidence of a transformation that affects the fundamental values and principles forming the previous model. A new cognitive normative framework is identified, therefore, referring to the change. It is the one we associate with the "international-knowledge integration model" in contrast to the "state-progress model" that enveloped and lent weight to the "modern employment system".

In figure 5 there is a table contrasting the key/normally used terms in the framework of every one of these models to highlight the

differences. In contrast to the representation of reality as intrinsically dialectic in the framework of Modernity, globalisation emerges as a circumstance homogenising problems and solutions, Not just between States, but also between individuals. As far as the basis of welfare information is concerned, the ideals of economic and social progress are replaced by economic growth and social cohesion. Finally, the triad "solidarity, dependence, responsibility" modifies its proportions on the basis of a commitment to increasing individual respon-

Fig. 3:

Contrast Between Cognitive And Normative Frameworks

C-N F MES	C-N F FES ²⁴
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialectical representation of reality • Basis of welfare information: increasing linear socio-economic progress • State-market and State-individual pact: solidarity, (inter)dependence and responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissolution of dialectic • Basis of welfare information: Adaptation of globalisation challenges • New State-market and State-individual pact: personal responsibility

Source: Own production

Fig. 4:

Genuine Social Protection Versus Flexicure Social Protection

"GENUINE" SOCIAL PROTECTION	FLEXICURE SOCIAL PROTECTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job loss as an undesirable risk (market flaws) • Compensation for the worker's unequal status compared with the employer • Mediating State guaranteeing protection. Defined institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment, but not job security (adapting to market) • Common challenges and individual responsibility. Moral risk • "Distribution of responsibilities" and governance on many levels

Source: Own production

24 *C-N F MES: Cognitive and normative framework of the modern employment system.

*C-N F FES: Cognitive and normative framework of the flexicure employment system..

sibility, which, although understood as State independence, is market dependence, whilst solidarity is displaced to other areas, such as humanitarian and voluntary action. On the other hand, the concept of “social capital” is established as a new tool and reason for inter-relation between individuals, but with generally instrumental motives. In any event, the existence of more or less social capital depends on luck (socio-economic status) and the individuals’ capacity to establish trusted networks that serve as a support (this is something that is in contrast to a public guarantee system).

We detect an identification of the “international-knowledge integration model”, which emerges in texts on flexicurity, with the proposals of Giddens’ third way (2001) . We have noticed changes in the nature of the hegemonic ideas of risk management, social security and employment, through the emergence of new concepts and categories.

As far as the content of these changes is concerned, we have observed that “European flexicurity” tends to wage war against job protection, whilst it establishes an unreserved alliance with the market, trying to offer protection that is competitive and productive. In fact, enterprises’ competitiveness depends on workers’ employability.

Fig. 5:

State-Progress Model Versus International-Knowledge Integration Model

Welfare State (State-Providence)	Flexicurity (Third Way)
Market imperfections	Globalisation
Fordist production system	Post-Fordist production system (flexible)
Employee/employer opposition	“Common challenges” for both
Collective solidarity	Individual responsibility
Vulnerability	Social exclusion
Redistribution	Sustainability
Economic progress and social justice	Economic growth and social cohesion
Regulating State	Governance on multiple levels
State hegemony	International integration

Source: Own production

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