

## Brave New Volunteers? The Value of Paid and Unpaid Work for Flemish Red Cross Volunteers

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**Abstract** This paper considers the current debate on the changing position and meaning of paid work in Western societies. In the wake of a structural crisis of fulltime employment, a new role and potential is attributed to voluntary work. With data drawn from a survey of Red Cross volunteers in Flanders (Belgium), this research assesses empirically the value volunteers attach to paid and unpaid work and their disposition to combine paid and unpaid work more flexibly. Contrary to current theorizing about the advent of a brave new world of work, this study provides evidence for a continuing existence of strong paid work orientations, *even* among a population that actually performs unpaid work. Moreover, it is not the economic (dis)embedding of volunteers, but the extent and nature of their social participation that primarily explains the strength of paid work orientation and the propensity to tailor paid work more flexibly to volunteer work.

**Résumé** Cette étude considère le débat actuel sur la position changeante et la signification du travail rémunéré dans les sociétés de l'ouest. Dans le sillage d'une crise structurelle de l'emploi à plein temps, un nouveau rôle et potentiel est attribué au bénévolat. Avec des données tirées d'une enquête sur le bénévolat de la Croix Rouge dans les Flandres (Belgique), cette recherche analyse de façon empirique la valeur que les bénévoles attachent au travail rémunéré et non rémunéré et leur disposition à combiner les deux de façon plus souple. Contrairement à la théorie actuelle qui annonce l'apparition d'un brave nouveau monde du travail, cette enquête fournit la preuve d'un attachement fort au travail rémunéré, *même* parmi la frange de la population qui effectue du bénévolat. De plus, ce n'est pas l'enclassement économique ou non des bénévoles, mais l'étendue et la nature de leur participation sociale qui explique principalement la force de l'orientation du

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travail rémunéré et la propension à adapter le travail rémunéré plus souplement que le bénévolat.

**Resumen** Este trabajo estudia el debate que existe en la actualidad sobre la posición cambiante y el significado del trabajo remunerado en las sociedades occidentales. En vísperas de una crisis estructural del empleo a jornada completa, se atribuye un nuevo papel y un nuevo potencial al trabajo voluntario. Tomando como base los datos obtenidos en la encuesta realizada a los voluntarios de la Cruz Rojo de Flandes (Bélgica), este análisis valora desde una perspectiva empírica el valor que estos voluntarios otorgan al trabajo remunerado y no remunerado y su disposición a combinarlos de forma más flexible. A diferencia de las actuales teorías que postulan la llegada de una nueva era de esforzados voluntarios, este estudio ofrece pruebas fehacientes sobre la existencia continuada de los trabajos remunerados, *también* entre los ciudadanos que realmente realizan servicios de voluntariado. Es más, no es sólo el interés económico de los voluntarios lo que explica la solidez de la orientación del trabajo remunerado y la propensión a ajustar el trabajo remunerado con el voluntario de forma más flexible, sino el alcance y la naturaleza de su participación social.

**Zusammenfassung** Dieser Beitrag betrachtet die gegenwärtige Debatte über die sich ändernde Stellung und Bedeutung bezahlter Arbeit in westlichen Gesellschaften. Im Zuge der strukturellen Krise in der Vollzeitbeschäftigung wird der gemeinnützigen Arbeit eine neue Rolle und neues Potential beigemessen. Basierend auf Daten aus einer Befragung von ehrenamtlichen Mitarbeitern beim Roten Kreuz in Flandern, Belgien, nimmt diese Studie eine empirische Einschätzung des Wertes vor, den ehrenamtliche Mitarbeiter bezahlter und unbezahlter Arbeit beimessen sowie ihrer Bereitschaft, bezahlte und unbezahlte Arbeit flexibler miteinander zu kombinieren. Im Gegensatz zu gegenwärtigen Theorien über den Beginn einer tüchtigen neuen Arbeitswelt, beweist diese Studie die anhaltende starke Orientierung an bezahlter Arbeit, *sogar* innerhalb einer Bevölkerungsgruppe, die tatsächlich unbezahlte Arbeit leistet. Darüber hinaus ist es nicht das wirtschaftliche Einschließen bzw. Ausschließen von ehrenamtlich Tätigen, sondern das Ausmaß und die Art ihrer gesellschaftlichen Teilnahme, die hauptsächlich die starke Orientierung an bezahlter Arbeit erklären und die Bereitschaft, bezahlte Arbeit flexibler auf ehrenamtliche Tätigkeiten zuzuschneiden.

**Keywords** PostFordism · New work society · Transitional labor · Civic work · Red Cross volunteering · Flanders

## Introduction

This paper considers the current debate on the changing position and meaning of paid work in late modern Western societies. Confronting a fundamental restructuring of the once so robust industrial foundations of the modern era, prominent scholars herald the “end of work” (Rifkin, 1995), the advent of a “post-industrial”

or “post-Fordist” society (Gorz, 1997; Harvey, 1990; Ransome, 1999), the specter of a “jobless society” (Castells, 1996), or the dawn of a “brave new world of work” (Beck, 1999, 2001). A common thread in these manifold observations is that the modern industrial ideal of lifelong full-time and standard employment is no longer valid in the present context. Instead, a rising proportion of people are experiencing some form of flexibility or discontinuity in their paid work careers. Long-term structural employment is also on the rise, especially among the lower-skilled workforce.

The implications of such a transformation reach well beyond the economic sphere, because “even outside work, industrial society is a *wage labor society through and through*... If it is facing a systematic transformation of wage labor then it is facing a social transformation” (Beck, 1992, p. 140). The heralded structural crisis of standard full-time employment consequently implies a shift to a society “based on non-market criteria for organizing social life” (Rifkin, 1995, p. 235).

The widely held assumption that traditional “paid work centered” or “full-time employment society” (Mutz, 1999, 2002; Mutz, Kühnlein, Klement, & Janowicz, 2000) is breaking down has fuelled scholarly discussion about the renewed meaning and position of the third Sector. More specifically, it is argued that “shifts are taking place in the role and potential of volunteering and the role of paid work, service to the community, and social responsibilities” (Anheier & Salamon, 1999, p. 47). Recently, there has been a growing call for a redefinition of traditional forms of labor, elevating voluntary work to a status equal to paid work (*ibid.*, see, e.g., Beck, 2001; Rifkin, 1995). However, as yet, such “third sector-minded” conceptualizations are essentially tantamount to highly projective theorizing: “Though there are some more tendentially visionary works, approaches and perspectives which are constituted by social-scientific and empirically grounded analyses are still lacking” (Mutz et al., 2000, p. 3).

This research presents an initial empirical assessment of this highly innovative stream of theorizing. Attention is focused on understanding how current labor market transitions undermine traditional ideals and values concerning the meaning of work. The remainder of this paper explores empirically the theoretical assumption that the essential role and meaning of paid work is crumbling as a consequence of the progressive destandardization of employment conditions. Data used in this paper are taken from a survey that consisted of 652 personal in-home interviews with a representative sample of Red Cross volunteers in Flanders (Belgium) in the year 2000. The data concentrates on the volunteers’ strength of paid work orientation, their attitudes towards more flexible combinations of paid and unpaid work, and their actual propensity to reduce paid work in favor of unpaid work. In a first step, a descriptive analysis reports how individual volunteers perceive the aforementioned, somewhat visionary views on a more equal balance between remunerated and unremunerated activities. In a second step, an explanatory model seeks to predict the attitudinal differences observed.

It should be emphasized that there is, to date, no population survey available that includes systematic measurements of this re-conceptualization and re-valuation of work. This study therefore represents an initial empirical exploration of the ongoing theoretical debate. The Red Cross volunteers under investigation serve as a

convenience sample for assessing a few pilot questions on this matter within the frame of a larger research project (Hustinx, 2003). Furthermore, assuming that people who actually volunteer embrace more positive attitudes towards volunteer work than people who do not volunteer, this study does not grasp the whole universe of possible opinions. In contrast, the results will be positively biased.

### A brave new world of work?

Our deeply ingrained understanding of work in terms of full paid employment is a product of early industrial or Fordist modernity. In the wake of the fundamental restructuring of economy and labor market of the last few decades, however, the traditional full employment ideal can no longer be sustained (Amin, 1994; Beck, 1992, 2001; Carnoy, 2000; Castells, 1996, 2000; Gilbert, Burrows, & Pollert, 1992; Ransome, 1999; Schmid, 1998; Taylor, 2004). The progressive flexibilization of working arrangements leads to a general de-standardization of work: “overall, the traditional form of work, based on full-time employment, clear-cut occupational assignments, and a career pattern over the life-cycle is being slowly but surely eroded away” (Castells, 2000, p. 290). The flexibilization of employment patterns (and its reverse, namely an *individualization* of work and work biography—see Beck [1992, p. 92]; Castells [2000, p. 282]) implies growing employment insecurity and risks for unemployment to a growing part of the population.

Two dominant responses to the structural disintegration of the full employment society may be observed. First, among social welfare thinkers and policy makers, a persistent emphasis on labor market participation as the key route to social integration continues to exist (e.g., Esping-Andersen, Gallie, Hemerijck, & Myles, 2002). In this paradigm, unpaid work retains its subordinate status in relation to paid work, or is considered a mean to achieve paid employment at best. In contrast, the second approach advocates an extended meaning of work. It is argued that increasingly flexible and precarious labor market conditions reduce the centrality of paid work. This does not imply a devaluation of work but a weakening of the previously strict separation between work and other spheres of life (Mutz et al., 2000, p. 5). The increasingly permeable boundaries between the worlds of work and non-work reflect a new societal configuration in which the meaning of work is extending beyond the contours of paid labor (Hackett & Mutz, 2002; Kühnlein & Mutz, 1999; Mutz, 2002).

In the latter approach, volunteering acquires a new role and potential. It is considered a replacement for a lost embedding in traditional labor market institutions (Erlinghagen, 2000), or an adequate answer to conditions and risks resulting from a discontinuous occupational biography with intermittent periods of (un)employment (Kühnlein & Mutz, 1999, pp. 300–301). Some authors consider civic work as a possible substitute for periods of unemployment, and this in combination with the establishment of some form of social credit system assuring social benefits alongside monetary contributions to the social security system (see Beck on “civic money” [1999, 2001], or Rifkin [1995] on “shadow wages” and “social wages”). However, by elevating voluntary work to a status equal to paid

work, it risks to become a mere surrogate for structural unemployment (Beher, Liebig, & Rauschenbach, 2000; Erlinghagen, 2000):

In practice this may even lead to programs, in which the unemployed are required by social welfare law to take on forms of civic work by social legislation—which turns the voluntary character of community work into its contrary and leads to a distorted type of politically induced and forced social integration through (therefore low valued) work. (Mutz et al., 2000, p. 8)

Alternatively, it is argued that citizen activities are essentially non-remunerated forms of work (i.e., not based on the necessity to earn an income) and, consequently, can only *complement* paid work (ibid., p. 9). In this view, the ongoing restructuring of the labor market may ideal-typically convert into a “triad of work” in which paid employment, (public) volunteer work, and (private) self-initiated activities are complementary fields of activity (for an attempt to put these ideas into practice, see the *Munich model*: Mutz, 1998, 1999). In this “new work society,” individuals act as entrepreneurs in charge of their own labor activity (Kühnlein & Mutz, 1999, pp. 296–301). An important characteristic feature is the flexible and dynamic individual configuration of different forms of work into a self-organized and self-determined “work biography.” The “triad of work” consequently opens opportunities for “dynamic unemployment” (Kühnlein & Mutz, 1999, p. 295) or “transitional employment” (Schmid, 1998, p. 5) based on a phased redistribution of paid and unpaid work between employed and unemployed people. In this context, Schmid also proposes a “new full employment” ideal that is orientated toward an average working time of 30 h a week over a life-cycle of both men and women (Schmid, 1998, p. 4).

Such novel conceptualizations supplant the “paid-employment-centered” life-world by a paradigm with more emphasis on (paid) work as a meaning system then on the necessity of securing an income. However, Erlinghagen (2000) finds that for the unemployed, volunteering does not serve the same functions as paid employment. Experiences of unemployment do not increase the propensity to volunteer. By contrast, unemployment, in particular in combination with lower levels of educational attainment, impedes the likelihood of (continued) volunteer participation. Ironically, strong professionalization tendencies on the “volunteer market” have reduced its accessibility only to those citizens who bring along the same qualifications required from successful participation in the labor market (Brömme & Strasser, 2001; Erlinghagen, 2000). Furthermore, so far there is no empirical knowledge of the way in which new individual work configurations are constructed, or how transitions between different segments of activity occur. Changes in the occupational biography are presumably more a matter of pressure than of purposive choice. The flexible and self-determined design of dynamic “work biographies” yet remains the privilege of only a few “pioneers of flexibility” (Mutz et al., 2000, p. 9).

To investigate empirically the changing meanings attached to paid work, Mutz and colleagues (Mutz et al., 2000, pp. 4–5) set out three working hypotheses. First, it could be argued that *the normative idealization of paid work would break down*. The resulting decreasing centrality of work would not necessarily mean a devaluation of

paid work, but rather a weakening of the formerly strict separation of work and life. A more open biography balancing work and life more flexibly would become possible, especially for men. A second hypothesis runs that individualization on the contrary leads to *an increasing orientation towards paid work*, because “only the integration into the system of paid work renders an individualized way of life possible” (ibid.). A third conceivable scenario is that *the centrality of paid work decreases while job orientation increases and simultaneously extends to areas of activity beyond paid work*. In other words, new models of societal participation develop that are not tailored to paid work.

Against the background of these hypothetical projections, this study is guided by three basic and highly exploratory research questions: (1) How central is the position of paid work in the lives of the Red Cross volunteers under investigation? (2) Do these volunteers favor more flexible combinations of paid and unpaid activities? (3) Which individual characteristics influence the strength of paid work orientation on the one hand, and the support for flexible combinations of paid and unpaid work on the other hand? The first two questions are explored by means of descriptive tables, while an explanatory analysis seeks to address the third question.

## Research procedures

### Data and sample

The data considered in this paper are taken from a survey that consisted of 652 in-home standardized face-to-face interviews with a representative sample of volunteers of the Red Cross in Flanders (Belgium) in the spring of 2000. A minimum response rate of 79% is obtained (AAPOR, 2005, p. 28). Explicit refusals occurred in 2% of all contacts with potential respondents. Non-responders (i.e., all eligible cases for which no interview was obtained due to refusals or break-offs, non-contacts, or other reasons; AAPOR, 2005, pp. 18–19) did not systematically differ from responders with regard to sex, age, and length of service. The age and gender characteristics of the sample proved to be representative of the volunteer population studied. However, the length of service among the selected volunteers differed from the volunteer population as a whole and therefore appeared to be an inaccurate representation of the real population distribution. To remedy, weight factors were introduced (for a discussion, see Hustinx, 2003, pp. 127–133).

Of the respondents, 51% were male and 49% were female. The age of the volunteers ranged from 15 to 81 years of age, with a mean of 36 years and a median of 35 years. Twenty-five percent were younger than 24 years, and only 10% were older than 57 years. Twenty-nine percent of the sample had an educational level not exceeding lower secondary school, 38% had completed their higher secondary education, and 33% had some higher (non-)university education. The respondents predominantly lived with a spouse (51%), with parents, or with other family members (33%). Alternative living arrangements, like cohabitation (7%) or living alone (9%), were less frequent. Four out of 10 respondents had children in the household. The majority of respondents were employed full-time (48%), 10% had a part-time job, and 14% were unemployed, incapacitated, or housekeeper. Retirees and students represented

respectively 8% and 20% of the sample. At the time of the survey, the responding volunteers reported that they served the Flemish Red Cross for an average of 8 years. Half of the volunteers served for more than 5 years, one out of four for even more than 10 years. Thirty-one percent of the sample had a length of service of 3 years or less.

This paper only considers respondents who relate either actively or passively to the labor market. That is, the opinions of students, retirees, incapacitated, and housekeepers are not taken into account. As a result, 436 respondents are included in the analysis (66.9% of the total sample). The employment situation of this subsample appears to be rather homogeneous and does not reflect the widely heralded structural changes on the labor market.<sup>1</sup> It was found that 90.6% were employed (75.0% full-time and 15.6% part-time), 6.3% were unemployed, 2.4% were on a sick leave or maternal leave, and .7% were on a non-compensated leave or had interrupted their career. Some 74.0% enjoyed employment security in the form of a fixed contract, and only one fourth experienced some form of flexibility in working arrangements. Furthermore, 65.1% kept one and the same job in the 3 years preceding the interview, and 80.7% had never been unemployed during that same period.

The overall majority of respondents clearly are not affected by labor market restructuring. As a consequence, the thesis that volunteering represents a functional substitute for disrupted work biographies and persistent unemployment does not apply to the sample under investigation.<sup>2</sup> Instead of assessing the (changing) role of volunteering against the background of a *structural crisis* in the work society, consequently, the analysis concentrates on the concomitantly heralded *normative crisis* concerning the meaning of work.

## Measures

### *Dependent variables*

Two survey questions were designed to assess the propensity to reduce paid work in favor of unpaid work. The first included 10 evaluation items (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree) gauging the permeability of the boundaries between paid work, family life, and volunteer work. An exploratory factor analysis (Hatcher, 1994; Kim & Mueller, 1978a, b)<sup>3</sup> revealed a single latent construct with

<sup>1</sup> This could more or less be expected, since it is common knowledge that, in general, people endowed with more cultural, economic, and social capital are more likely to (be asked to) volunteer (see for, instance, Wilson, 2000; Wilson & Musick, 1997a, b, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Likewise, the strong overrepresentation of full-time employed contradicts the hypothesis of an increasing propensity to combine more flexibly paid and unpaid work. As already mentioned, the so-called “pioneers of flexibility” represent a minority group that remains underrepresented in random population samples.

<sup>3</sup> On the basis of an initial iterated principal factor analysis with squared multiple correlations as prior communality estimates, only one common factor with an *eigenvalue* greater than 1 could be identified. The final factor solution included 4 items, and was based on maximum likelihood estimation. All items retained had factor loadings greater than .60. We proceeded with the analysis by constructing a factor-based scale score by adding together the respondent’s responses on the items included in the factor solution. The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of the scale equals .78, which indicates that we have produced a reliable measure. Reversed item scores were calculated in order to interpret a high score on the Likert scale in terms of a strong paid work orientation.

4 items: (1) If I weren't financially dependent on my job, I would cut it down and commit myself to more volunteer work; (2) If I could freely determine my own work schedule, I would schedule it around my volunteer work; (3) I would like to alternate longer periods of paid work with longer periods of volunteering; (4) I would like to do more volunteer work cutting back on my regular job. Summating reversed item scores, an attitudinal measure was constructed measuring the *strength of paid work orientation*.

The second question presented a series of twelve possible measures that would enable the volunteers to spend more time volunteering. Respondents could indicate whether they would be prepared to take these measures or not with a simple "yes" or "no." Three sum-scores were calculated: a general sum of confirmative answers; a separate sum of options with loss of income; and a separate sum of options without loss of income. It comes as no surprise that a strong negative correlation exists between paid work orientation and the propensity to cut back work in favor of more time volunteering ( $r = -.48$ ). On the other hand, taking work-related measures without and with a loss of income correlate moderately positive ( $r = .38$ ) but are clearly not interchangeable.

### *Independent variables*

*Economic variables* A major series of predictor variables gauges the labor market participation of the volunteers. Included are the socio-economic position of the volunteers (full-time employed, part-time employed, not active), social class (i.e., an abbreviated version of the EGP-classification, see Erikson, Goldthorpe, & Portocarero, 1979, p. 420), family source of income (two incomes, one income, replacement income),<sup>4</sup> employment security in terms of the type of contract (fixed or temporary), flexibility in working arrangements, the number of jobs during the 3 years preceding the interview, and the number of times unemployed during the same reference period. In addition, job characteristics were measured by means of two summated rating scales: the extent to which one performs executive work, and the level of dynamism in the job.<sup>5</sup>

*Family variables* A second group of predictor variables assesses the family situation of the respondents: living arrangements (with partner, single, or with parents), parental status, and family life course (pre-family life, family without children, family with young children, family with teenagers or young adolescents, empty-nest family).

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<sup>4</sup> The questionnaire also assessed the family income level of the respondents, a variable that is commonly used to measure socio-economic status. Due to a high number of missing values (12.3% among the working respondents, 20.3% for the total sample), this variable was not taken into account, as it tends to be unreliable.

<sup>5</sup> An overview of the selected items of all scales used in the analysis is available from the author upon request.



*Cultural variables* Cultural measures firstly include age and educational attainment (no, primary or lower secondary education, higher secondary education, and higher [university] education). Both variables are considered key proxy indicators for an individualized or “self-reflexive” monitoring of the individual life course—of which the theoretically conceived flexible and self-organized work biographies are presumably an essential component. In addition, possible effects of gender, religious belief, and church practice are accounted for. Finally, two summated rating scales gauge opinions about traditional gender roles and strength of communal orientations.

*Social participation variables* A final set of independent variables maps the extent and nature of social participation: the number of core or active associational memberships; the number of volunteer commitments outside the Red Cross; and “unconventional” forms of participation such as protest actions and checkbook activism (Maloney & Jordan, 1997). Dealing with a highly particular volunteer population, it is furthermore indispensable to consider variations in styles of Red Cross volunteering (Hustinx, 2003, 2005; Hustinx & Lammertyn, 2003, 2004). Indicators concern the volunteers’ motivation to volunteer, as well as their patterns of involvement. The motivation to volunteer is measured by means of three summated rating scales assessing the importance attached to recognition, satisfaction, and self-development derived through volunteering. In addition, the analysis includes three statements regarding the interaction between paid work and volunteering: (1) So I can do things I’m good at and use my skills to their full extent; (2) Because here I can find the satisfaction and the appreciation I can’t find in my job; and (3) Because it is a good addition to my job. Next, patterns of involvement distinguish between “peripheral,” “intermediate,” and “core” modes of involvement. This multivariate measure was constructed by means of a latent class analysis on the basis of a number of behavioral measures: the frequency of volunteering (categories ranging from “daily” to “once a year”); the number of hours of volunteering per month or per year; the length of service (in years); whether volunteers hold formal office in a volunteer board; and the number of main activities the volunteers reportedly performed in different Red Cross units (for a discussion, see Hustinx, 2005).

## Research findings

This paper firstly aims at assessing the propensity to reduce paid work in favor of unpaid work. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for 10 evaluation items exploring the permeability of boundaries between paid work, family life, and volunteer work. In general, the respondents take a rather hesitant position. Mean scores center around the midpoint of the 5-point response format, and medians show that for most statements, half of the respondents somewhat to strongly disagree. Overall strong agreement exists, however, about one particular item: no matter how important volunteer work is to the respondents, their regular job will always come first. Moreover, four out of 10 Red Cross volunteers consider it normal that society values paid work more highly than volunteering. It follows, conversely, that only a

**Table 1** The balance between paid work, family life, and volunteer work in Flemish Red Cross volunteers<sup>a</sup>

	<i>N</i>	Mean	SD	Median	Percentages				
					1	2	3	4	5
1 I find it hard to combine my job, my family life and my volunteer work.	433	2.99	1.31	3	15.7	26.7	15.9	26.3	15.5
2 I think it's normal that our society thinks more highly of a paid job than of volunteering.	432	3.07	1.33	3	15.9	21.7	20.6	23.3	18.4
3 If I weren't financially dependent on my job, I would cut down and commit myself to more volunteer work.	425	3.21	1.16	3	8.6	21.9	23.3	32.1	14.1
4 If I could freely determine my own work schedule, I would schedule it around my volunteer work.	424	3.11	1.12	3	8.5	23.1	28.8	28.3	11.3
5 I would like to alternate longer periods of paid work with longer periods of volunteering.	419	2.61	1.01	3	13.4	35.9	30.4	16.2	3.6
6 I would like to do more volunteer work cutting back on my regular job.	417	2.54	1.07	2	18.4	33.4	28.7	14.5	4.9
7 Flexible work hours are a good way to combine paid work with volunteer work.	424	3.74	1.09	4	7.0	7.7	12.6	50.1	22.6
8 No matter how important my volunteer work is to me, my regular job will always come first.	427	4.43	.83	5	1.5	3.3	4.7	32.0	58.5
9 Both partners in a parent couple should take a part-time job so they could spend an equal amount of time in the upbringing of their children.	410	3.28	1.45	3	7.5	20.4	23.9	33.0	15.1
10 Both the partners in a relationship should work part-time so that they both have an equal amount of time to commit themselves to the community.	412	2.50	1.03	2	18.5	33.1	30.8	14.7	2.9

<sup>a</sup> "Paid work orientation"-scale consists of reversed items scores on items 3, 4, 5, and 6

Note: 1 = totally disagree, 2 = rather disagree, 3 = neither disagree, nor agree, 4 = rather agree, 5 = totally agree

minority of respondents are willing to cut back on their regular job, to reduce working hours between partners in a couple, or to alternate between longer periods of paid work and volunteering. Roughly half of the respondents indicate that financial reasons prevent them from cutting down on their job. Instead, flexible working hours appear to be a more desirable alternative to match paid work and volunteering more adequately. With respect to family life, reducing working hours among partners in a couple appears to be considerably more acceptable when the extra time available is invested in the upbringing of children rather than devoting it

**Table 2** Flemish Red Cross volunteers' propensity to take measures in order to spend more time volunteering

In order to spend more time on volunteering, would you be prepared to...	Yes	No	No opinion	Not applicable	<i>N</i>
1 Work 1 day less every week without loss of income (i.e. compensation by the company or the government)?	78.0	15.8	2.1	4.1	436
2 Work one day less every week with loss of income?	8.2	86.8	1.9	3.1	436
3 Take paid leave?	48.9	42.3	1.9	6.9	436
4 Take non-compensated leave?	14.8	75.8	2.9	6.5	435
5 Interrupt your career?	11.2	79.6	1.7	7.5	436
6 Choose a flexible timetable?	54.9	33.2	2.8	9.0	436
7 Choose a part-time job instead of a full-time job?	15.6	76.7	1.7	6.0	436
8 Take a housekeeper?	8.8	82.9	.5	7.9	433
9 Pay for a babysitter?	12.3	59.7	.5	27.5	434
10 Ask family or friends to look after the children?	48.3	22.4	1.0	28.3	434
11 Make an agreement with another volunteer to baby-sit the children every other time?	37.7	32.8	.3	29.2	434
12 Cut down on other hobbies?	20.2	68.8	2.3	8.7	436

to community involvement. Finally, respondents are almost equally divided between (totally) disagreeing and (totally) agreeing that job, family life, and volunteer work are hard to combine. The combined paid work orientation measure reveals that paid work remains an important point of reference for the Red Cross volunteers at issue. Nearly half of the respondents embrace a moderate to strong paid work orientation.<sup>6</sup>

Next, respondents were presented a set of 12 tangible measures that would enable them to spend more time volunteering. The results are shown in Table 2 and again suggest that the Red Cross volunteers are not prepared to sacrifice pay in favor of extra time volunteering. Overall disagreement exists if possible arrangements involve a certain loss of income, cutting down on paid work, a temporary interruption of the professional career, or additional expenses. Likewise, although in general, the respondents are not willing to make financial sacrifices, flexible working hours could provide a valuable alternative. Moreover, almost eight out of 10 respondents would work less if they somehow received monetary compensation. Table 2 furthermore indicates that whereas almost half of the respondents would be prepared to invest some of their paid leave in their volunteer activities, more than 2 out of 3 nonetheless do not want to sacrifice other hobbies. Finally, although statements about children do not apply for about one third of respondents, the data indicates that paying for a babysitter is out of question. However, informal (mutual) childcare does not represent an attractive alternative to everyone. This may indicate that spending less time with one's children in favor of volunteering is the least negotiable option.

<sup>6</sup> Some 13.7% of the respondents embrace a strong paid work orientation (scores 16–20), 36.7% score moderately positive (scores 12–15), 37.2% position themselves rather reserved (scores 8–11), and 12.4% have a very weak paid work orientation (scores 4–7).

A next step in the analysis is to explain variations in individual preferences for flexible combinations of paid and unpaid work. Dealing with four continuous dependent variables, results were analyzed using multiple regressions with the stepwise selection method of SAS (Statistical Analysis System; see Hatcher & Stepanski, 1994). An overview of the results is presented in Table 3. No multicollinearity between the independent variables could be traced.

Across all models, it is not the economic (dis)embedding of the volunteers, but the extent and nature of their social participation that explains most of the variation in the dependent variables. Broadly speaking, the more extensively *and* intensively the respondents are participating in associational life and various types of volunteering, the weaker their paid work orientation and the stronger their propensity to reduce paid work in favor of, or tailor it more flexibly to, their volunteer work. However, there is an additional net effect of types of motivations that goes in two different directions. On the one hand, although higher levels of satisfaction with volunteering correlate with weaker paid work orientations, a simultaneous negative influence on the tendency to change the balance between the realms of paid and unpaid work exists. In addition, if respondents consider volunteering a good addition to their job, they feel less inclined to give more weight to volunteering at the expense of their paid work. On the other hand, if respondents seek some form of self-development through volunteering, they are significantly more apt to balance paid and unpaid work more evenly. The opportunities volunteering provides to do things one is good at and to use one's skills to their full extent produce a similar but weaker effect. Surprisingly, if volunteering compensates for the lack of satisfaction and appreciation in the volunteers' job, it is associated with weaker paid work orientations but does not affect their tendency to actually create more time for volunteering.

Examining the (generally secondary) net effects of the economic, family, and cultural variables, the first regression model reveals that higher education, executive work, and the pre-family stage of life increase the paid work orientation of the respondents. On the other hand, strong communal orientations are negatively associated with the strength of paid work orientation. None of these predictor variables, however, exert any influence on the actual inclination to reduce paid work or change working arrangements so as to spend more time volunteering. In the latter respect, the second model shows that women are slightly less inclined to take a step back in their job than men. Next, respondents with a lot of dynamism in their job are neither keen on cutting down paid work in favor of volunteering. Finally, in comparison with families with young children, families without children are fairly more receptive to favor volunteering at the expense of their paid job.

Focusing on work-related measures with a certain loss of income, a different combination of predictor variables enters the model. As age increases, respondents seem more willing to sacrifice pay, whereas lower education and being economically inactive temper respondents' enthusiasm for such measures. Furthermore, the higher the number of periods of unemployment in the 3 years preceding the interview, the less importance respondents attach to a possible loss of income in favor of more time volunteering. The negative effect of belief might point to the religious importance attached to a work ethos (although it has no bearing on

**Table 3** Explaining opinions about flexible combinations of paid and unpaid work<sup>a</sup>

	$\beta$ Model 1	$\beta$ Model 2	$\beta$ Model 3	$\beta$ Model 4
<i>Economic indicators</i>				
Socio-economic position	–	–	–	–
Socio-economic class (ref = self-employed)				
Professional	–	–	–	–
Routine non-manual	–	–	–	–
Worker	–	–	–	–
Not working	–	–	–.08	–
Flexible working arrangements	–	–	–	–
Employment security				
Fixed contract (dummy yes/no)	–	–	–	–
Number of jobs in past 3 years	–	–	–	–
Number of times unemployed in past 3 years	–	–	.13*	–
Job characteristics				
Executive work	.10	–	–	–
Dynamic work	–	–.07	–	–
Family source of income	–	–	–	–
<i>Family indicators</i>				
Living arrangements	–	–	–	–
Parental status	–	–	–	–
Family life course (ref = family with young children)				
Pre-family life	.08	–	–	–
Family without children	–	.08	–	–
Family with teenagers/young adolescents	–	–	–	–
Empty-nest family	–	–	–	–
<i>Cultural indicators</i>				
Sex (ref = male)	–	–.08	–	–.11*
Age	–	–	.12*	–
Education (ref = middle)				
High	.11*	–	–	–
Low	–	–	–.09	–
Traditional gender roles	–	–	–	–
Solidarism	–.15**	–	–	–
Church practice	–	–	–	–
Belief (dummy yes/no)	–	–	–.09	–
<i>Social participation indicators</i>				
Number of core/active associational memberships	–	.10	.09	.12*
Number of volunteer involvements outside RCF	–.10*	.14*	.16**	–
Protest action	–.16**	.15**	–	.18***
Checkbook activism	–	.12*	.15**	–

Table 3 continued

	$\beta$ Model 1	$\beta$ Model 2	$\beta$ Model 3	$\beta$ Model 4
Motivation to volunteer				
Satisfaction	-.12*	-.11	-.13*	-
Recognition	-	-	-	-
Self-development	-	.31***	.19***	.33***
Do things one is good at/use skills to their full extent	-	.09	-	-
Find satisfaction and appreciation one cannot find in job	-.13*	-	-	-
Volunteering a good addition to one's job	-	-.18**	-	-.23***
Modes of Red Cross volunteering (ref = peripheral)				
Intermediate	-	.13*	.14*	-
Core	-.11*	.27***	.27***	.15**
$R^2$ (Adjusted)	.17	.18	.15	.14

<sup>a</sup> Ordinary least squares regression, stepwise selection with selection entry = .15

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$

Note: Model 1 = paid work orientation, models 2–4 = propensity to take work-related measures to increase time for volunteering (model 3 = with loss of income, model 4 = without loss of income)

respondents' paid work orientation) or the fact that charity in terms of monetary donations on the one hand, and giving time on the other, traditionally are clearly separated activities.

## Discussion and conclusion

This paper considers the debate on the changing meaning of work in the wake of a fundamental restructuring of the labor market. The scope of this research, however, is limited for a number of reasons. Given the particular composition of the volunteer population studied, first, the proposition of *a structurally induced pressure* to rebalance different forms of work could not be explored empirically. Instead, this analysis focused on *the (changing) normative meaning of paid work*, and more specifically on the hypothesized decrease in the central position that paid employment traditionally occupies in the organization of life. A second limitation relates to the use of cross-sectional data, which obstructs conclusions regarding possible evolutions over time. And dealing with a convenience sample of volunteers, third, the observed variation in attitudes and opinions does not reflect the full range of possible dispositions. Dealing with a volunteer population, the research findings are positively biased.

However, the nature of the results implies that an even stronger case can be made. Contrary to current theorizing about the advent of a brave new world of work, this study provides evidence for the continuing existence of a strong paid work orientation, *even* among a population that actually performs unpaid work. The overall majority of these "informed respondents" state that no matter how

important their volunteer work is, their regular job will always come first. Moreover, 4 out of 10 consider it normal that society values paid work more highly than volunteering. And about half of the respondents score moderately to strongly positive on the scale measuring their strength of paid work orientation. Second, the data reveals that the volunteers under investigation are not particularly inclined to cut back on their paid job or to sacrifice pay in order to spend more time volunteering. On the other hand, forms of monetary compensation or flexible working arrangements appear to be more appealing alternatives. From these observations, it may be concluded that both spheres of activity are still associated with different meanings and functions. The majority of volunteers do not allow volunteering to infringe upon their paid work—at least not if it involves a loss of income. The empirical boundary between paid and unpaid work may not be as permeable as theoretically hypothesized. In addition, on the basis of these data, the theoretically conceived extension of job orientation to areas of activity beyond paid work seems to be a marginal phenomenon at best, and this even among a group that already is involved in different types of activity.

The explanatory models however reveal some more varied mechanisms behind the general picture. Referring back to the three working hypotheses evolving from the heralded normative crisis in the meaning of work (Mutz et al., 2000), it seems that, although the data does not provide evidence for a decreasing centrality of paid work, some preliminary support for the other two strands of hypothesizing could be found. On the one hand, one could argue in favor of the proposed link between individualization and stronger paid work orientation. The first regression model reveals that higher education, doing executive work, having no family obligations whatsoever, sharing weaker communal orientations, and having fewer and less intensive associational and volunteer involvements—variables that very cautiously may be associated with a more individualized disposition—substantially increase the paid work orientation of the volunteers. On the other hand, the seeds for an extending meaning of work are also present in the research outcomes.

The data shows that the propensity to create more space for volunteering by taking work-related measures is the strongest if the volunteers value highly opportunities for self-development through volunteering and for using one's skills to their full extent, if they consider volunteering not just a good addition to their paid job, and if volunteering is not just a socially agreeable and satisfying thing to do. Furthermore, the strong positive bearing of core involvements suggests that the volunteer work has to be a fully fledged activity, that is, encroaching substantially upon one's leisure time and involving considerable task responsibilities. In other words: it has to be "serious leisure" (Stebbins, 1996) in which the volunteers contribute an extensive amount of time and effort to their unpaid work, and during which they come to see their volunteer activities as highly valuable for their self-development and not just supplementing their paid job. As such, in spite of the limited scope of this study, it may have revealed a glimpse of the routes that could lead beyond the paid work society into a new work society with more fluid boundaries between different fields of activity and a more flexible and self-determined design of different forms of work.

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