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The way we conform to paid labour:

Commitment to employment and organization from a comparative perspective

by

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Abstract

This thesis compares work orientations in six Western countries (the USA, Great Britain, New Zealand, Germany, Norway, and Sweden), using data from the 1997 *International Social Survey Program* (ISSP). The main issue examined is whether different 'production regimes' correspond to levels and patterns of employment and organizational commitment among the working population.

It is concluded that the country levels of employment commitment varies depending on the institutional set-ups, with respect to production and welfare regimes, being highest in the Scandinavian countries and lowest in Great Britain and the USA. Organizational commitment varies in a more complex manner, with the strongest commitment being found in the USA and the lowest in Sweden. In all countries, the most important factor determining the level of an individual's organizational commitment is whether the person finds his or her job *interesting*. This effect is independent of job satisfaction. Organizational commitment was also found to be positively and strongly correlated with right-wing political values in five of the six countries. When it comes to employment commitment, it was found that women display, often significantly, higher commitment than do men. The results suggest that the most important motivator for employment commitment is the desire for interesting work. The concluding discussion summarises and presents the main findings in schematic figures, and includes interpretative discussions focusing on future research.

Key words: Employment Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Person–Environment Fit, Political Values, Production Regimes, Work Rewards, Work Values.

Preface

About half a year after completing my studies in social science at Umeå University, I received a phone call from Stefan Svallfors. He asked if I would like to join him as a doctoral student in a research project on work orientation. I was of course happy that Stefan had thought of me for this project, but it already felt as if the university belonged to a completely different world from the one I was living in. I had by now returned to my earlier occupation in the construction industry, pretending I never left this life for university studies. As I had just finished a temporary job in Umeå, my wife and I had recently put our house up for sale and set our minds on Stockholm. Amid all this activity I had almost forgotten that a few months earlier I had asked Stefan about the possibilities of a future for me in the field of sociology. Now, as the door stood open, I hesitated.

I did not hesitate for long though. This was what I wanted to do, for many reasons. We took down the for-sale sign from in front of our house, and stayed in Umeå. I eventually found myself comfortable in the academic world, and I came to believe that my earlier working-life (starting out in a lumber yard, continuing on building sites, and finally as a diver in the construction industry), had some sort of relevance for this project on work orientation. What I can say now, concerning the relationship between my past and present (exactly five years after that phone call from Stefan), is that the past has, at times, provided empirical support for my thinking and writing, and that these last few years of thinking and writing about work have helped me to find perspective on my past.

Thinking and writing, however, is not a completely individual and isolated activity, especially not in the academic environment. There are many people I would like to thank for helping and inspiring me at various stages in my work as a doctoral student, many of whom I have already mentioned in the attached articles and who may not be named here. To sum up, I would like to thank the whole department – technical, administrative, and academic staff – for contributing to the highly professional, yet friendly and down-to-earth atmosphere in which I work. Here, I must also point out that I am extremely thankful for living in a society where the transition from blue-collar to academic work is economically possible in the first place. In particular, I am grateful for the financial support given by the Swedish Council for

Working Life and Social Research (FAS 2001-2159) and the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation (J 1998-0043).

There are also a few people whom I, for various reasons, would like to mention individually: I would like to thank Gun-Marie Ericsson for convincing me early on that sociological studies could lead to something, Mats Johansson because he initially triggered my interest in the subject, Jonas Edlund for always being supportive in statistical/technical matters, Anna-Lena Almqvist and Eva Sundström for keeping an eye on my attempts to analyse gender differences, Sten Höglund for interesting conversations about work, life, and organization, Jonas Höög for giving me support at one stormy seminar, Maritha Lundgren for helping me edit the manuscript, Ingrid Schild for giving a helping hand with my English, and Ivar Söderlind for stimulating discussions about the European Monetary Union and for recurrent conversations about sociological method. I would also like to thank Lars Dahlgren, Nils Eriksson, Björn Halleröd, Mikael Nordenmark, Olle Persson, and Mattias Strandh for their critical readings of my final drafts. Especially, I would like to thank my proficient mentor, Stefan Svallfors, for his supportive guidance and critical reading throughout the entire project, and for giving me the perfect mixture of structure and freedom.

But most of all, thanks are due to my loving wife, Carmel. Without her, her British background, and our early years of English communication, I would never have found the courage to write my thesis in this language. I would also like to thank her for being an excellent and never-tiring partner in discussing both the theoretical and empirical aspects of work orientation – most often, of course, from the English/Swedish comparative perspective.

Without all these people and institutions, and without all the scholars around the world whose thoughts and findings I came to know through their writing and came to use as stepping stones in my own writing, this thesis would not be. Thank you!

I dedicate this book to my father who at all times was a hard worker, and to my three sons in hope that they find, and never lose, the meaning and value of work.

Umeå, September 2004 Carl Hult

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The Attached Articles:

Article I – Hult, Carl and Stefan Svallfors (2002) 'Production Regimes and Work orientations: A Comparison of Six Western Countries' *European Sociological Review* Vol. 18, pp. 315–31.

Article II – Hult, Carl (2004) 'Organizational Commitment and Person–Environment Fit in six Western Countries' (accepted for publication in *Organization Studies*).

Article III – Hult, Carl (2003) 'Organizational Commitment and Conflicting Values: The Impact of Systems of Norms in Six Western Countries' *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* Vol. 44 pp. 408–43.

Article IV – Hult, Carl (2004) 'Gender, Culture and Non-Financial Employment Commitment in Great Britain and Sweden' (manuscript submitted to *European Societies)*.

The way we conform to paid labour

When they have caught about ten birds they sail their boat to Tarakan, a trip of at least a hundred kilometres that takes several days or maybe a week. There they sell the birds for a guilder each to the Dutchmen.

– If you cleared more jungle and planted more maniok *or rice you could sell that instead. Then you could make ten times as much a day as you do now. Now you can't make twenty cents a day on your birds. If you follow me you will make fifty cents. If you work for the Dutchmen in Tarakan you would make up to one guilder a day. Why do you catch birds? They laugh at me. They think I'm joking or that I'm crazy. Deep down I know they are right.* [. . .] *They are free people who like to do what they enjoy and nothing else.* (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 20–1, my translation)

Back in the 1930s, Eric Lundqvist was employed by a Western company to develop timber harvesting in the rainforest of Nunukan by the coast of Borneo. The story he tells is interesting. As the only westerner in place, Lundqvist was responsible for organizing the hard work of taking down the enormous trees by hand, building a functioning sawmill and a railway in the vast jungle, and shipping five thousand cubic meters of sawn timber a month. In fact, his story is not just a story about how to organize work, but a story about how to create a complete society from almost nothing. All Lundqvist had to begin with was the untouched forest, demand for wood and a group of men all of whom had little or no experience of organized work. Thus, one of his biggest challenges was to make the available people conform to paid labour.

The methods Lundqvist used to create a committed workforce were basic. Women and a variety of merchandisers were invited to the sites. Houses were built and families were established. Among the initially free natives this created a wish to stay and a growing need for money in order to stay. But this was not enough. Professional gamblers helped keep the need for new money at a constantly high level. On top of this, Lundqvist imported Chinese work teams that had the reputation for working like machines on their daily ration of opium. Eventually, the arrangements added up to an

intricate societal system of needs that served as a powerful, but also dangerous, motor for production. To keep the system under control, Lundqvist contracted Heibans from the local tribes. Unlike most of the available people, they proved to be spontaneously motivated and loyal in all tasks; but they were also proud warriors with long, sharp knifes and a particular interest in human heads. The Heibans made sure that the societal system never got out of hand.

During my attempts to turn these free men into slaves, I came to learn quite a bit about my own society. (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 42, my translation)

Whatever the historical reasons for the development of any particular modern society, labour and production will likely always be at its heart. The need for production and profit once created the need for a reliable labour force and social order in the rainforest of Nunukan. Likewise, the continuous need for social order in any developed society creates a continuous need for reliable labour markets with an ongoing need for jobs, production, and outlet markets. In this world-wide system of needs, all developed societies also need the continuous reproduction of citizens who are well conformed to paid labour. The question of labour is thus equally important at both the organizational and societal levels. It is not surprising, then, that over the years considerable effort has been put into research into various aspects of people's orientation to work in the Western world.

This doctoral thesis will continue in this long tradition of interest in people's relationship to paid work. The importance of such research has not diminished. In our time there is a common belief that increasing international competition and the demographic trend towards low reproduction and ageing populations will be among the most serious issues for the future of Western societies. To keep our lifestyles, to maintain our level of welfare, and to retain prosperous production within our borders, Western countries need, it is often argued, to engage all available people and compete in quality, skill, and commitment like never before. According to this perspective, comparative analysis of how people relate to paid work in contemporary societies, if anything, is increasingly important.

Various aspects of people's relationship to work, whether in terms of commitment, job satisfaction, or other relevant attitudes or preferences, are sometimes grouped under the umbrella concept of 'work orientation'. As hinted at in the title of this thesis, as well as in the short story from Nunukan, the particular type of work orientation that interests me is how people conform to paid labour in terms of loyalty and commitment. Two aspects in particular will be the focus, namely 'employment commitment' (commitment to the labour market) and 'organizational commitment' (commitment to a particular firm or organization). These two aspects will throughout the project be treated as outcomes of and as dependent on other varying societal, organizational, and individual factors. We will shortly return to these issues in more detail.

Work orientation, theories, and earlier research

Given the vast terrain of earlier and contemporary academic approaches to the subject of work, in combination with the narrow frames for this project, it is inevitable that many important contributions to the field will pass unrecognised. Some theories and research are not considered here because they have little connection to the particular approach of this project; others are omitted because of limited space, while still others – not too many, I hope – because they have escaped my notice.

There are, however, two scholars that a project like this cannot omit mentioning: Karl Marx (1818–1883) and Max Weber (1864–1920). Karl Marx should be recognised because he was one of the first who took interest in the broad category of workers and in their particular orientation to work. He argued that this category of workers (defined as the lower social classes[1]) becomes 'alienated' from their own work activity because their activity, as well as the products of their activity, are owned and ruled by others in a capitalist society (Marx 1967: 55–65). The only value that the alienated worker can find in his life-long struggle at work is means for existence outside of this activity, 'life begins for him where this activity ceases' (Marx

[1] Or as those who systematically have to sell their labour for a considerably lower price than the value it adds to the products. See, for example, the speech by Marx to the First International Working Men's Association, June 1865 (Marx 1865).

1967: 62). This is, of course, an unfortunate situation if one believes, as many do, that fulfilment through creative activity is a basic human need.

Although few outside the academic world still refer to Marx's alienation theory, important aspects of it have influenced many contemporary theories and ideas about society, social class, and differences in work and organizational environments. It could, for example, be argued that twentieth-century trends in industrial reorganization, shifting from hierarchical, control-based 'Taylorism' to human-resource management and beyond (e.g. flattening of organizational structures, extended job autonomy, participation in decision-making, and skill usage) mark the tacit recognition of Marx's theory of alienation. It is commonly held today that productivity benefits from the worker's full participation and commitment. The notion of worker alienation has also been incorporated into the theories of a particular branch of research into work-related attitudes (e.g. Blauner 1964; Goldthorpe et al. 1968; Korpi 1978: 132–66; Johansson 1991: 175–95; Eriksson 1998; Theandersson 2000; Berglund 2001). An often-used concept in this tradition is 'instrumentality', which refers to the degree to which people view paid work only as a means for achieving other aims in life. Thus, a highly instrumental attitude to work would be to find no meanings or values in a job other than financial ones. Research has shown that an instrumental orientation to one's work is evident among modern affluent industrial workers, in lower social classes or lower hierarchical levels, and among less-skilled workers (e.g. Goldthorpe et al. 1968: 10–42; Johansson 2001: 65–87).

Max Weber should be recognised because he was one of the first to take an interest in the particular type of work orientation typical of the capitalist Western world. One of Weber's most famous contributions concerns the origin of capitalism. Weber argues that the entrepreneurial spirit of modern capitalism is mainly a result of the historical transformation of the puritan, ascetic, and fatalistic logic of early Protestant religious beliefs into the beliefs and reasoning of profane daily activities (Weber 1978). Exactly how far along in this process we are today is perhaps best expressed by Giorgi and Marsh: 'work may in part have become the continuation of religion by other means' (Giorgi and Marsh 1990: 516). Although Weber's theory of capitalism and its origins never influenced our understanding of different opportunities in the production hierarchy in the same way as did alienation theory, it has nevertheless inspired later research into attitudes towards work. The

most famous scholar in this respect is Adrian Furnham who has produced several publications on the subject of the 'Protestant work ethic' (cf. Furnham 1990).

One problem with the concept of the 'Protestant work ethic' (PWE) is that it has come to encompass so much and to be used in so many sometimes-contradictory contexts that it is now difficult to say exactly what it means (Furnham 1990: 13–7). However, behind the accreted value constructs and correlates, we should find that devotion to work in order to accumulate money for its own sake lies near the core of the concept (Weber 1978: 25; Furnham 1990: 2). PWE has also been formulated as an 'obsession with money as a sign of success' (Furnham 1990: 61). According to Furnham, PWE is positively related to admiration of success, political right-wing values, and to free enterprise and anti-welfare beliefs (Furnham 1990: 66–70). Thus, if instrumentality is the attitude that applies best to those who are alienated from their work activities, PWE should apply to those who are unconditionally involved in it.

The Protestant work ethic has come to be treated as more related to a country's religious culture (with the emphasis on *culture*) than to the religious beliefs of groups and individuals (e.g. Giorgi and Marsh 1990). If we, for example, return to the problems Lundqvist experienced in Nunukan, when he tried to make the natives conform to paid work, the situation could be understood as a typical clash between two cultures where one is based on PWE and the other is not. It is, of course, possible to side-step PWE and explain variation in similar constructs of attitudes with cultural differences alone (e.g. Hofstede 1994). It has been shown that some work-ethic scales related to PWE correlate with some of Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Furnham et al. 1992).

This project is related to Marx and Weber in that work-related attitudes are analysed and compared in Western countries, and in that the particular situation of lower-level workers, on the one hand, and of higher-level administrators, executives, and self-employed people, on the other, are considered in the analysis. I have, however, chosen an approach that focuses on the possibility of a positive and more intrinsic attachment to work. Instead of instrumentality, alienation, and/or Protestant work ethic, the attention in this project will be directed towards the degree of conformity, loyalty, and com-

mitment to task, organization, and employment in modern capitalist societies.

The countries focused on will be Sweden, Norway, (Western) Germany, Great Britain, New Zealand, and the USA. Some of the attitudes this project deals with could, of course, be viewed as originally influenced by the historical extension of the Protestant work ethic in these countries. Be that as it may, the most fruitful explanations of contemporary variation in work orientation are still to be sought in societal and organizational differences, in circumstances related to the individual's position in the production, and in several other known or as yet unknown social and psychological mechanisms.

I realised that I did not have much to teach these men and I let them take care of things on their own. This is also appreciated by the Heibans more than by any other Indonesian people. They like to feel they are trusted and relied upon. They hate to work as slaves and machines. Neither is it possible to tempt them with money. These warlike Heibans work because they like the one they work for, because they like to prove they can do something better than others. (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 88, my translation)

Employment commitment

As already mentioned, two particular aspects of work orientation are the focus in this project, namely, employment commitment (commitment to the labour market) and organizational commitment (commitment to a particular firm or organization). By 'employment commitment' is meant the perceived values in a job other than financial ones (Warr 1982). Unlike concepts such as 'work centrality' or 'work involvement', the emphasis is thus explicitly on 'employment' – here synonymous with 'having a job'. This definition excludes those values people can find in a variety of activities, such as leisure activities and housework, which they may or may not consider as work. Thus, it is the non-financial values associated with a *job* that are important here, not the values associated with work in a broader sense (cf. Jahoda 1982). Moreover, employment commitment is not a measure of the non-financial values found in a *particular* employment situation. Instead, it refers

to the perceived importance of employment *in general* for social reasons and for psychological well-being (Nordenmark 1999*a*: 29–35).

Since employment commitment refers to the perceived values of a job – other than financial – the measure may be viewed as the opposite to instrumentality (high instrumentality is of course equal to low non-financial employment commitment). This view may in turn lead us to believe that the two measures are interchangeable, and that choosing one over the other is arbitrary. However, I find employment commitment to be a particularly important measure. Although we know that most people do commit themselves to employment for pay, the concept directs our attention towards other less instrumental labour market motivators that may embrace people more deeply and stably than do merely monetary rewards.

However, using the concept of non-financial employment commitment one could easily be criticised for excluding pay as a motivator, on the one hand, while including almost anything else, on the other. To get a more detailed picture of what kind of non-financial values people may find in a job, we should turn to Marie Jahoda (1982). Jahoda presents a list of five non-financial value categories, as follows: 'the imposition of a time structure, the enlargement of the scope of social experience into areas less emotionally charged than family life, participation in a collective purpose or effort, the assignment by virtue of employment of status and identity, and required regular activity' (Jahoda 1982: 59).

Jahoda describes all these values as unintentional by-products, which by necessity follow from the structural forms of modern employment (Jahoda 1982: 59). She argues that, even though these categories are by-products, there are reasons to view them as enduring needs of human beings (Jahoda 1982: 59). Jahoda turns to the anthropological literature and to examples of societies where employment as an institution does not exist (often because of a favourable climate). She argues that in these societies, the equivalence of employment is met by rituals and other religious and community practices (Jahoda 1982: 59–60). The assumption that the everyday needs of existence as well as needs for other higher social and psychological values are in some societies fulfilled without employment, brings deeper insight into the resistance Lundqvist must have experienced trying to make 'free' people conform to paid labour in Nunukan. The shift of means for attainment of these

higher values is most likely a difficult process, and for many perhaps also quite irreversible.

Given this list of higher values in employment, it is not surprising that the situation of being *unemployed* has received a lot of attention in the research literature dealing with employment commitment. Unemployment is a situation where the values perceived in employment may become more salient for the individual as they can no longer be taken for granted. Study of the unemployed and their orientation to work is also important in achieving a correct understanding of unemployed people and their suffering in times of high unemployment put in perspective to the public worry that some unemployed may become too comfortable with their situation in a welfare society (cf. Strandh 2000).

Several scholars agree that there are non-financial values in work that do not in general decline in importance with unemployment (e.g. Jahoda 1982; Jackson 1994; Halvorsen 1997, 1999; Nordenmark 1999*a*). Some recent studies, however, indicate a tendency of decline in employment commitment among unemployed, at least among the long-term unemployed (Halvorsen 1997, 1999; Svallfors et al. 2001). It has been indicated that those unemployed who manage to find other meaningful activities in life display a weaker employment commitment than do those who are unable to find such activities (Nordenmark 1999*b*: 13).

In the research literature on employment commitment a considerable focus has been directed at gender and the influence of family situation. Studies have shown that women's commitment to employment increased during the 1970s and 1980s while men stayed relatively unchanged in this respect (Lorence 1987; Gallie et al. 1998: 189). In addition, recent research indicates that in older age categories, men are more committed to employment than are women, while in younger age categories women are more committed than are men (Nordenmark 1999*b*). Several other recent studies indicate that the gender differences in employment commitment are generally quite small or non-existent (e.g. de Vaus and McAllister 1991; Rowe and Snizek 1995; Halvorsen 1997; Tollbert and Moen 1998; Gallie et al. 1998: 194) or that women are even more committed to paid work than are men (Svallfors et al. 2001; Gallie and Paugam 2002: 99).

However, some scholars argue that 'traditional' gender patterns still apply, and that regardless of progressively higher labour market participation among women in recent decades, women's orientation to work or their perception of values in a job differs from men's in some respects (Hakim 1991, 1995, 1996, 2000; Hofstede 1994, 1998, 2001). Still others argue that attitudinal gender differences, if they exist, depend on opportunity differences within the societal structure of work (Bielby 1992; Marsden et al. 1993).

Another variable that has received some attention in its relationship to employment commitment is *age*. Recent studies have shown that employment commitment tends to decline with age (Marklund 1993; Halvorsen 1997, 1999). In a Scandinavian study, employment commitment was found to be significantly related to age only in Denmark, where younger people were more committed than older (Svallfors et al. 2001). There is reason to believe that if there is an age-related decline in employment commitment, it stems from the prospect of transition to the socially accepted status of pensioner (cf. Marklund 1993; Jackson 1994).

As touched on in the discussion of instrumentality and PWE, societal stratification by characteristics such as education and social class is often a telling factor in studying the pattern of work-related attitudes in a society. Earlier research into employment commitment has paid surprisingly little attention to differences between social classes. Studies of social class have mostly concluded that class has little or no significance (Marklund 1993; Gallie et al. 1998). However, the previously mentioned Scandinavian study showed that both class and education have a considerable effect on employment commitment in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark (Svallfors et al. 2001).

From a comparative perspective, one could ask to what extent the degree of employment commitment varies across nations as a reflection of different national societal circumstances. Is there any observable pattern in the aggregate level of employment commitment, and/or in differences in the level of this commitment according to class and education level within countries, that could be attributed to national differences in what has been labelled 'welfare regime' (Esping-Andersen 1990) and 'production regime' (Soskice 1999)? As well, is there any gender pattern in employment commitment that can be attributed to national differences in 'gender regime' (Lewis 1992)? There are reasons to believe that some group differences in the perception of values in

employment do vary according to the nation-specific organization of production and labour market legislation and policy. There is also reason to believe that gender differences in employment commitment vary with national differences in gender-relevant aspects of labour market legislation and policy (such as childcare availability). Or are perhaps the values and meanings of work mainly culturally determined, as some scholars have argued (e.g. Hofstede 2001)? If so, the values perceived in work and employment would not be governed by the national institutional set-up, but instead would be deeply rooted in cultural value systems. However, the type of research that could answer such questions has so far been scarce. There have so far been only a few multivariate comparative studies of employment commitment. There is one recent study of the EU countries (Gallie and Paugam 2002: 98–100), but here the countries are not analysed separately. Another, more thorough study of employment commitment concerns Scandinavia (Svallfors et al. 2001), but this study is limited because of the societal similarities between Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. [2]

Organizational commitment

By 'organizational commitment' is meant the degree of identification with and effort put into a particular work organization, including the acceptance of the organization's goals and values as one's own. The intention is to measure to what extent the employee–organization relationship is characterised by loyalty, and to what degree the employee is prepared to continue the employment even if faced with attractive alternatives (cf. Porter et al. 1974; Steers 1977; Mottaz 1987, 1988; Mowday et al. 1979; Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 22–4; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Marsden et al. 1993). The notion of organizational commitment is conceptually closely related to what Goldthorpe et al. call the moral and positive 'solidaristic' orientation, defined as a deviation from instrumentality (Goldthorpe et al. 1968: 38–42).

High organizational commitment in the labour force is believed to decrease employee turnover and absenteeism, thus reducing the costs of replacement and training (cf. Porter et al. 1974; Steers 1977; Marsden et al. 1993). Possible negative aspects of organizational commitment, such as

[2] There is also one recent comparative study with a different approach, focusing on instrumentality instead of commitment (Berglund 2001).

stress and strain on the individual and the family, have also been discussed (Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Marsden et al. 1993).

Organizational commitment has often been regarded as an effect of work-related circumstances in the particular workplace (e.g. March and Simon 1958; Halaby 1986; Mottaz 1987, 1988; Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Marsden et al. 1993). The mechanism at work here has sometimes been described as an individual–organization exchange relationship, where the individual gives effort and loyalty to an organization in exchange for certain features of his/her employment, in so far as these are in line with the individual's preferences (e.g. Hrebiniak and Alutto 1972; Porter et al. 1974; Schoenherr and Greeley 1974; Steers 1977; Mowday et al. 1979; Farrel and Rusbult 1981; Halaby 1986; Mottaz 1987, 1988). One hypothesis is that the individual enters an organization with particular knowledge, skills, and goals, and with the expectation of a work environment where his/her knowledge and skills will be used and goals fulfilled. If the organization meets these expectations, the individual's organizational commitment will be strengthened (e.g. Halaby 1986; Mottaz 1987, 1988).

A slightly different hypothesis concerning work-related attitudes in general, is that work activities always compete, in terms of time, interest, and role identification, with other activities outside the domain of work (Loscocco 1989; Bielby and Bielby 1989; Bielby 1992; Cohen 1995). According to this perspective one would expect the level of organizational commitment to result from interaction between the goals, costs, and circumstances at work, on the one hand, and a range of experiences, interests, obligations, and goals in life outside work, on the other.

It has been argued that the strength of organizational commitment relates to the degree to which the individual has invested in a work situation, and/or in alternatives to a particular employment situation (e.g. Becker 1960; Schoenherr and Greeley 1974; Farrel and Rusbult 1981; Loscocco 1990). One indicator of individual investment in a work organization would be organizational tenure. Tenure has, however, displayed only a modest positive effect on organizational commitment (e.g. Mottaz 1988; Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Marsden et al. 1993), and even a negative effect once age is controlled for (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 122). There are indications that age has a positive and independent effect on organizational commitment (e.g. Mathieu

and Zajac 1990; Svallfors et al. 2001), perhaps because older people have fewer alternative opportunities or have come to accept and justify their remaining in an organization (Mathieu and Zajac 1990: 177).

As with employment commitment, a substantial portion of the research interest in organizational commitment has been directed towards gender differences. Although it seems like there has been an a priori belief that women would display weaker organizational commitment than would men, later research has generally revealed that the net differences between the sexes in this regard are negligible (e.g. Marsden et al. 1993; Svallfors et al. 2001), or that women display slightly stronger commitment (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 134).

Contrary to gender, social class seems to be an important factor in organizational commitment. One recent research indicates commitment to be significantly stronger in higher classes and strongest among the self-employed (Svallfors et. al. 2001). Such results could indicate a strong connection between hierarchical position and exchange relationships in the work situation. If this is so, we should perhaps talk about workplace positions rather than social class. That is, if organizational commitment does vary according to workplace position because of differences in work-related goals and rewards. However, class differences in organizational commitment could also reflect an important mechanism in the very class structure. It may be a question of different orientations to or identifications with work in different social groups, maintained by corresponding social expectations in different classes (Loscocco 1989).

Since organizational commitment includes the inclination to accept the organization's goals and values as one's own, the level of commitment may also be influenced by political values. It has been argued that the central norms, values, and expectations experienced in any particular work organization originate in a more general societal technical/economic system of norms, and that subordinated groups espouse incompatible systems of norms, partly developed as a defence against the insatiable nature of the technical/economic system (Lysgaard 1985). This theory derives from a case study conducted in a Norwegian company in the 1950s. Throughout the analysis Lysgaard gives several examples of worker attitudes and behaviours that could be described as reflecting lower levels of organizational commit-

ment. However, the worker's critical orientation towards the organization serves mainly to buffer the pressure from the technical/economic system (Lysgaard 1985). This theory identifies a workplace situation similar to what Goldthorpe describes as the worker's identification with the work group but 'alienative' orientation towards the organization (Goldthorpe 1968: 41). As Halaby puts it: 'worker attachment depends on neither "love" nor "money" but on the legitimacy of employer governance regimes' (Halaby 1986: 635). Thus, some alienative attitudes among subordinated groups towards the technical/economic aspects of the organization could be understood as a consequence of conflicting values and as political resistance to these technical/economic aspects. To what extent this picture is a contemporary reality in the Western world, however, is an open question.

The most important matter – concerning organizational commitment – is to determine the main mechanism governing this type of commitment. To what degree is the variation in organizational commitment dependent on competing commitments, such as family and leisure activities? To what degree is it dependent on values inherent in social class and/or workplace structure? And to what degree is organizational commitment a function of the perceived workplace situation? It is obvious that each of these possible explanations calls for a rather different strategy to increase people's commitment to their work. If, for example, the attachment to the work organization is developed mainly through circumstances outside the workplace, the effects of reorganization and social/technical changes at the shop floor would of course be limited. A further question is whether the answer to this is of universal application, or whether commitment is developed via country-specific mechanisms. This question can only be answered by carefully conducted comparative research. To date there are only a few multivariate comparative studies of organizational commitment. Recent research includes Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990), Kalleberg and Mastekaasa (1994), Gallie et al. (1999), Svallfors et al. (2001), Furåker and Berglund (2001), and Kalleberg and Reynolds (2001). Because of the selection of countries and/or approach, none of these studies has been able to answer the questions raised in this thesis.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction will here be treated as a possible explanation for variation in organizational commitment, and will mainly be used as a control variable. However, the intuitively close relationship between satisfaction and commitment calls for some definitions and a short summary of earlier research into the topic. By job satisfaction we should understand the degree of satisfaction with a particular job or organization, and as the individual's emotional response to a particular work situation. Job satisfaction has also been defined as an 'overall affective orientation on the part of individuals toward work roles which they are presently occupying' (Kalleberg 1977: 126). As already hinted at, job satisfaction is often viewed as closely related to organizational commitment. Following the exchange approach, one could say that both are reactions to job conditions and organizational circumstances. The possibility of a reciprocal effect between the two variables has been discussed (Mottaz 1987). The possibility of conflicting effects has also been discussed: strong commitment may increase expectations for fulfilment through work, expectations which can easily be disappointed causing a decrease in satisfaction (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 25–6, 76–8).

In spite of a possibly complex causality, job satisfaction is normally viewed as a strong predictor of commitment rather than the other way around (e.g. Mottaz 1987; Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 76–8). The two variables are also conceptually distinct: when satisfied, we are supposed to *like* or be *happy* with something; when committed we are supposed to be *attached*, *engaged*, and *loyal* (Mottaz 1987). Commitment is also considered to be a more stable and slowly developing attitude, to be a relationship with the organization as a whole that is partly future-oriented. Satisfaction is more present oriented and typified by more immediate reactions, often to particular aspects of the work situation (Porter et al. 1974; Mottaz 1987). It is believed that although a person can be satisfied with one aspect of a job but dissatisfied with another, a composite satisfaction with the job as a whole is possible by balancing specific satisfactions and dissatisfactions (Kalleberg 1977).

Several studies have indicated that job satisfaction is positively related to organizational commitment (e.g. Marsh and Mannari 1977, 1981; Farrell and Rusbult 1981; Mottaz 1987). It has, however, been questioned whether vari-

ous aspects of organizational commitment are equally affected. High satisfaction may produce a stronger intention to stay, but not necessarily a willingness to invest more effort in the organization (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 15). It has also been suggested that job satisfaction, on the whole, is a rather dubious measure, since people in the long run may find it difficult to maintain dislike of a job. Staying in a job one dislikes tends to threaten one's self-respect, it is argued, and if one cannot change the job one can always change one's attitude (Goldthorpe 1968: 11).

Some studies have shown that women tend to be more satisfied in their work than are men (e.g. Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990; Gallie and Paugam 2002: 101), others that differences are small or non-existent (de Vaus and McAllister 1991; Mannheim 1993). Such findings have elicited calls for explanations as to why women, generally assumed to occupy less rewarding, low-status jobs, display similar or higher work satisfaction than do men. One proposed explanation is that the women in the labour force often represent a self-selected group of those who prefer working because they are satisfied with it, while other women tend to choose traditional home-making roles (Hakim 1991, 1995, 1996).

There are few comparative studies of job satisfaction. One of the first studies of work orientation using a comparative approach did, however, include this variable (Inkeles 1960). Two more recent multivariate studies, Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) and de Vaus and McAllister (1991), found considerable national differences in job satisfaction. Another recent study examined the EU countries, although without analysing the countries separately (Gallie and Paugam 2002: 98–100).

Values, rewards, and person–environment fit

It is also important to say something about work values and rewards, since this project will treat these variables as possible components in the psychological mechanism underlying both job satisfaction and commitment. Organizational and workplace characteristics and perceived work rewards are viewed as important predictors in a majority of studies of organizational attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Locke 1969; Hackman and Lawler 1971; Porter et al. 1974; Kalleberg 1977; Mottaz 1987, 1988; Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990; de Vaus and Mcallister 1991; Kalleberg and Reve 1992; Gallie et al.

1999; Gallie and Paugam 2002). The very recognition of the importance of the workplace environment suggests an implicit or explicit person–workplace exchange approach. This approach becomes explicit with Goldthorpe et al. (1968: 182) as regards instrumentality, with Locke (1969) and Kalleberg (1977) as regards job satisfaction, and with Mottaz (1988) as regards the concept of 'person–environment fit' with respect to organizational commitment.

The concept of 'person–environment fit' refers to the fit between individual work values and perceived work rewards. The hypothesis here, as has already been mentioned, is that the individual enters the organization with certain preferences, desires or values placed on different aspects of work. If these desires are met, in terms of rewards, satisfaction and commitment will be high (Mottaz 1987, 1988). It has been argued that the person–environment fit is the most central explanation for variation in organizational commitment (Mottaz 1988). Demographic variables, it is argued, do not explain, they just point out in which groups we should find high or low levels of person–environment fit (Mottaz 1988).

However, the person–environment fit model tends to simplify a complex mechanism. There is no evidence that it is simply a *good fit* (meaning similar levels) between the desire for a certain feature and the degree to which this feature is perceived as supplied in the workplace that positively affects organizational commitment and job satisfaction (cf. Kalleberg 1977; Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 145–48). Rather, it seems that it is the combination of low desire and high supply that will produce the most positive result. If the effect of the supply of a certain feature is strong and positive, the net effect of the desire for it will mostly be weak and negative (cf. Kalleberg 1977; Mottaz 1988). Thus, the greater the supply of an important feature, the greater the levels of satisfaction/commitment; however, the more the individual still desires this feature, the more this high satisfaction/commitment is reduced (cf. Kalleberg 1977; Mottaz 1988). Although both values and rewards have to be considered to get the full picture, it has been speculated whether already the individual's attention directed towards certain rewards may reflect some sort of desire–supply interaction (Kalleberg 1977).

Preferences and perceived job characteristics are commonly categorised as either 'intrinsic' workplace features (such as work autonomy and interest-

ing work) or 'extrinsic' workplace features (such as pay and advancement). Intrinsic features are understood as ends in themselves, while extrinsic features are viewed as means to other ends (cf. Hackman and Lawler 1971; Mottaz 1987, 1988). The distinction can also be understood such that intrinsic rewards are 'benefits that employees derive *from* task performance as opposed to those they receive *for* such performance' (Lincoln and Kalleberg 1990: 98).

There is evidence that intrinsic rewards in particular are positively related to both job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Kalleberg 1977; Mottaz 1987, 1988). One attempt to express the full mechanism at work here suggests that work rewards affect job satisfaction, which in turn affects organizational commitment, but that some intrinsic work rewards also directly affect organizational commitment (Mottaz 1987). However, some scholars disagree with the emphasis on intrinsic rewards. Goldthorpe argues that, when it comes to the broad category of factory workers, it is economic – not intrinsic – rewards that have the power to attach employees firmly to the employer (Goldthorpe et al. 1968: 31–2). This conclusion rests upon case studies conducted in Britain in the early 1960s, and the mechanism may, of course, vary depending on the time and place. It has, for instance, been suggested that a relatively high satisfaction with intrinsic rewards could be a historically specific reflection of recently reduced national variation in extrinsic satisfaction (Kalleberg 1977). In conclusion, the relationship between work values, work rewards, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment has so far not been exhaustively studied. In particular, comparative research is necessary in order to investigate the degree of universality in the mechanism.

In sum, most earlier research into various aspects of work orientation has its shortcomings. There has been a biased emphasis in the analysis of group differences. The relatively modest differences between men and women have at times been overemphasised, while the relatively substantial differences between social classes or different workplace positions have received less attention. There are only few comparative studies in the field, and those that exist rarely encompass more extensive multivariate analysis. The analysis is rarely conducted on the basis of national differences in terms of the political and institutional environment for work and production. In addition, the studies often examine only selected samples (such as students, particular

types of workplaces or professions), making it difficult to generalise the results. Finally, there has been an evident Anglo-Saxon bias in that the overwhelming majority of research has treated data from the USA or Great Britain.

The comparative theoretical approach and the chosen countries

The overall theoretical point of departure for this project is *the historical institutionalism*. Supported by the findings of earlier research, we have come to expect people's orientation to work to vary over time and between nations. It then seems natural to look to nation-specific institutional frameworks and historical change for explanations of this variation. The advantage is that such a comparative approach makes it possible not only to map the situation in a single country, but also to determine which social mechanisms and attitudinal outcomes in the work arena can be viewed as general, and which should be viewed as nation specific (cf. Kalleberg 1988).

Historical institutionalism has so far mainly been used in the comparative analysis of politics, where it has proven fruitful (cf. Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Rothstein 1996; Hall and Taylor 1996; Peters 1999; Thelen 1999). By 'institutions' we should understand formal arrangements, of relative durability, that regulate and aggregate individual behaviour by structuring options and delimiting choices (Hall 1992: 96; Levi 1990; North 1990). Thus, institutions comprise systems of formal rules, sanctions, and routines, manifested in, for example, social insurance systems, family legislation, and labour market legislation. They are the outcome of political decisions and their implementation (Thelen and Steinmo 1992; Rothstein 1996).

A central assumption in this theory is that preferences are shaped by people's relationships to institutions. Not only do institutions have consequences for people's behaviour in that they constitute arenas in which certain strategies have to be enacted; they are also important for establishing interests, identities, and norms. Because of how they function, they influence people's perceptions of good and bad, of what is possible and impossible, and of what is true and false (Rothstein 1996; Steinmo and Watts 1995: 336). It would, however, be wrong to say that institutions determine attitudes and behaviour; rather it is a question of modifying effects where certain institutional designs tend to make certain attitudes and behaviour more likely than others (Svallfors 2003).

In the case of attitudes to work and employment – the focus of this dissertation – there is no reason to assume that these attitudes are isolated from the institutional framework in which they developed. With this departure it is not, as in neo-classical theory, assumed that work orientation can satisfactorily be explained using only economic variables, although we must admit that the economy is an important factor. Neither is it, as in Marxist theory, assumed that work and work orientation can be understood mainly as a struggle between classes, although we must admit that class is an important variable. The theoretical approach taken in this project is that people's orientation to work is continually modified by the circumstances in which they are forced to act and work. Thus, it is assumed that every nation will develop a specific institutional environment closely linked to its culture and traditions. This environment, it is believed, establishes the framework for individual attitudes and values, and for the country-specific labour markets, organizations, and work situations within which the individual has to act.

Production regimes

One central concept in the institutionalist framework is that of 'production regimes' (Kitschelt et al. 1999). By production regimes is meant the national institutional configurations by which production, the labour market, and the welfare state are connected. There are two major types of production regimes: 'coordinated market economies' (CMEs) and 'liberal market economies' (LMEs) (Soskice 1999). As noted by Huber and Stephens, 'the same welfare regime is compatible with different – but not any – labour market institutions and policies' (Huber and Stephens 2001:109).

CMEs are characterised by relative co-operative relationships between various companies and financial institutions, extensive co-operative relationships between unions and employers, extensive labour market regulation, a financial system that allows the long-term financing of company investments, and an emphasis on qualified education of the labour force through apprentice systems or by special training. CMEs tend to be combined with welfare states that seek to minimise conflicts between labour market actors and seek to guarantee the reproduction of a qualified labour force. The social insurance system tends to be extensive, securing at least the core of the labour force from various risks connected to labour market dependence and life cycle changes (Huber and Stephens 1999). CMEs compete in terms of

quality rather than cost, and depend for their survival on the continuous reproduction of a highly skilled and highly motivated workforce. Such skills are often specific in kind and tied to a particular occupation or firm (Soskice 1999: 115–6). Only in this way can CMEs compensate for their comparatively high wages and other labour costs.

LMEs, on the other hand, are characterised by high profit demands, deregulated labour markets, short-term time horizons of financial systems and companies, a highly competitive enterprise environment, and an emphasis on general education to provide skills (Soskice 1999: 110–11). The welfare state is rudimentary and leaves most of the safeguarding against labour market and life cycle risks to private insurance (Esping-Andersen 1990: 26–7; Huber and Stephens 2001).

As a consequence, we could expect the work and labour market climate of an LME country to differ markedly from that of a CME country. In LMEs, the tendency is to strive for low labour costs; work organizations tend to be more hierarchical, the relationships between management and workforce being short-term in nature and based on unilateral control exerted by management (Soskice 1999: 117–18; Rhodes 2000). In CMEs, on the other hand, there is an effort to involve the workforce in production. The relationships between management and workforce are in this case based on cooperation and negotiation. The CME policy is to reinforce qualifications and maintain commitment, even for those temporarily unemployed, by providing education or other labour market activities.

The countries

This project concentrates on six countries, three representing each type of production regime. The six countries are Sweden, Norway, and what was formerly West Germany as examples of CMEs, and the USA, Great Britain, and New Zealand as examples of LMEs. In terms of the institutional characteristics of labour markets, financial systems, business–state relationships, union involvement in decision-making, skill formation, and the emphasis on quality production vs. mass production, such a categorisation seems highly justified, and it is stressed in the comparative political economy literature (cf. Pontusson 1997; Streeck 1997; Graham 1997; Hollingsworth 1997; King and Wood 1999; Schwartz 2000; Huber and Stephens 2001).

Like any classification of countries, the one made here necessarily entails simplifications. For instance, Germany puts less emphasis on full employment and labour market participation than does Scandinavia with its 'social democratic' model, Britain has a much more extensive welfare state than does the USA, and New Zealand has recently experienced more dramatic reforms than have the other LMEs (Huber and Stephens 2001; Pierson 2001; Ebbinghaus 2000; Ginsburg 1992; Castles et al. 1994; Kelsey 1995; Schwartz 2000). For a more detailed discussion concerning country differences, see article I.

It has been shown that work practices of the Scandinavian countries do indeed differ, as expected, from the USA and Britain in terms of job autonomy, participation in decision-making, employee training, and skill usage, while the evidence for Germany is more mixed (OECD 1999: 178–221; Dobbin and Boychuk 1999; Gooderham et al. 1999; Gallie 2000; Gill and Krieger 2000; Gallie and Paugam 2002: 82). According to Dobbin and Boychuk (1999), such differences amount to coherent systems of 'skill-oriented' practices found in the Scandinavian countries, vs. 'rule-oriented' practices predominant in countries such as the USA.

Exactly how individual and group-level theories (concerning class, political values, person–environment fit, etc.) can be integrated with the macro theory of regime differences is a complex and space-consuming matter and will therefore not be outlined here. Detailed discussions concerning this in relation to specific questions raised are conducted in the attached articles. However, the major theoretical assumption in this project is that coordinated market economies and skill-oriented work practices would, *ceteris paribus*, lead to higher commitment to employment and organization than would the rule-oriented practices of liberal market economies.

Research questions

The first and main question this project seeks to address concerns differences in work orientation between CMEs and LMEs. Is the general orientation to work more positive and stronger in CME countries, where institutional mechanisms are established in order to strengthen commitment within the workforce? Are there greater differences in commitment between the various

groups comprising the labour market (i.e. between social classes, genders, or between highly and less-educated people) in LME countries than is the case in CME countries?

Questions regarding employment commitment

To what extent do group differences in employment commitment vary between nations as a reflection of different national societal situations? Is there any observable pattern of group differences in employment commitment within countries that could be attributed to country differences in the organization of welfare and production? Are there any class differences in this respect? If there are, is the pattern similar among countries, or does it vary between them? Are there any gender patterns in the perception of values in employment that can be attributed to nation-specific differences in labour market legislation and policy (such as childcare availability)? Or are the values and meanings of work, as well as gender differences in this respect, mainly culturally determined and as such deeply rooted in national value systems?

Questions regarding organizational commitment

The main task here is to find the major mechanisms governing organizational commitment, and to determine whether they tend to be universal or country specific. Does nation-specific organization of production affect organizational commitment differently for different groups of people within countries? Is the variation in organizational commitment dependent on competing commitments, such as family and leisure activities? To what degree is commitment dependent on values inherent in the social class structure? Can political values influence the level of organizational commitment? Or is organizational commitment mainly a function of the perceived workplace situation?

The data

The data analysed in this project derive from the *International Social Survey Program* (ISSP), a comparative attitude survey inaugurated in the mid 1980s that now involves almost 40 countries. The ISSP represents an attempt to

create a truly comparative data set for use in analysing attitudes and values pertinent to a range of issues among the populations of industrialised countries (Davis and Jowell 1989; Becker et al. 1990). From 1990 onwards, the survey replicates previous modules, allowing for comparison both between nations and over time (Svallfors 1996). This project uses a subset of questions mainly drawn from the 1997 replicate of the *Work Orientation* module, in which 25 countries participated.

While comparative attitude research is potentially very fruitful, it is also fraught with difficulties that may make results and interpretations fragile (Svallfors 1996; Jowell 1998). The potential problem lies in the risk of measuring national differences in the meanings and connotations attributed to various concepts, rather than substantial differences in values and attitudes. This problem has been dealt with as far as possible within the ISSP itself. The questionnaire design is a cross-national exercise involving drafting groups comprising people from several countries. Translation difficulties have been dealt with both through careful indications in the master questionnaire of the concepts to which the literal expressions refer, and through careful national procedures in translating the questionnaire. Problems establishing cross-national validity in concepts and translations are therefore not insurmountable.

The countries selected for this project are all Western industrialised countries for which differences in societal and organizational circumstances and trends in most cases can be understood as degrees or nuances rather than as sharp contrasts. Thus, the cultural differences are not problematically difficult to deal with when interpreting the way questions could be conceptualised and answered, although the countries still display some interesting societal differences.

Further problems in survey research are connected to samples and non-responses. All six countries used random sampling methods in surveying their adult populations (>18 years). The achieved samples of the studied countries are reasonably representative of the adult populations in that they do not have extremely low response rates and they do not allow non-random substitution of respondents.[3] Response rates range from 67% in Sweden and

[3] The net samples for the chosen countries comprise 1355 respondents in Sweden, 1228 in the USA, 1215 in Germany, 1198 in New Zealand, 2199 in Norway, and 1080 in Great Britain.

the USA to just over 50% in Britain and Germany. Such relatively low response rates are unfortunately not unusual in frequently surveyed countries. Although the achieved samples are not biased systematically in their age, gender, and education distributions, as always, we still know very little about how non-responses affect the attitudinal representativity of the samples. An educated guess would be that people who take little or no interest in their work might be under-represented in the achieved samples, and that the levels of organizational and employment commitment therefore might be slightly overestimated in the survey.

Summary of the articles

The first article in this thesis is a descriptive attempt to determine whether different Western countries and their organizations face the future differently equipped with respect to employment and organizational commitment.

> *From the green jungle we can cut ourselves free. We can make space for the sun by a riverside or by the coast. We can clear, sow, and harvest and tell every foreman to take a hike.* […] *In the grey jungle people are driven like slaves throughout their lives, by each other and by their machines. It is a terrible treadmill that never gives its slaves time to think or to break free. This is called civilisation.* (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 43–4, my translation)

Article I – Production Regimes and Work orientations: A Comparison of Six Western Countries

The main question raised in this paper is how and to what extent different production regimes and other institutional country differences may affect people's orientation to work. The countries examined were Sweden, Norway, and Germany (CMEs), and New Zealand, Great Britain, and the USA (LMEs).

When it comes to aggregate differences, it was shown that employment commitment varies as would be expected from the institutional set-ups of the

six countries. Employment commitment was highest in Norway, followed by Sweden, something that could be expected when the institutional characteristics of Scandinavian countries are taken into account. The integration of most of the adult population into employment, the work-enforcement mechanisms of the social and labour market policies, and the institutionalised ideological emphasis on the virtues of paid labour are all mechanisms, which should be conducive to high employment commitment. The German welfare state is much less focussed on paid labour for all, and the liberal market economies are even less equipped in this respect.

Organizational commitment was found to be highest in the USA and lowest in Sweden. This suggests that the emphasis on supplying a skilled and committed workforce apparent in the coordinated market economies does not necessarily lead to stronger organizational commitment among employees.

Turning to group differences in commitment, little support was found for the existence of any *systematic* variation in how these vary between production regimes. Class differences in employment commitment are large in Sweden and Britain but comparatively small in New Zealand and the USA. Gender differences in employment commitment were present in four out of six countries, in which women were found to be more committed than men. No systematic differences were found between men and women in how family factors affect commitment.

Class differences in organizational commitment were clearly present in all countries but New Zealand. The differences were larger in Sweden than elsewhere. This pattern seems to offer strong support to a 'class conflict' interpretation of organizational commitment, where the presence of strong unions not only would create weaker organizational commitment at an aggregate level, but also larger class differences in such commitment. New Zealand may in this regard be seen as a 'limiting case', where the influence of unions has become negligible, and class differences in organizational commitment non-existent.

In summary, there were few truly clear-cut findings regarding the structure of work orientations in different production regimes. This may indicate that institutional set-ups and ensuing differences in work practices have no straightforward relationship to differences in commitment. The combined

effects of labour market institutions, welfare policies, work practices, and labour relations on commitment are, as this study has shown, difficult to assess.

Article II – Organizational Commitment and Person–Environment Fit in six Western Countries

The second article was developed on the basis of the more unexpected findings of the first paper. In the first paper it became evident that the nation-specific organization of production does not affect organizational commitment as initially anticipated. One question that emerged from this finding was whether, for some reason, there might be country differences in how people perceive whether they get what they want from their immediate work environment. Do employees in some countries perceive that they get more of the work rewards they desire than do employees in other countries, and could this mechanism of desire and rewards explain the observed country differences in organizational commitment?

Everything depends on how one looks at things. Viewed correctly, the company I represent is really charitable. [. . .] *we'll help with both salary and opium to spend the salary on. Yes, the Chinese are the easiest to turn into proper, settled workers. It's worse with the Dajaks; they are the worst of them all.* (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 46, my translation)

In this paper, the connection between work environment and organizational commitment was investigated and compared between Sweden, Norway, Germany, Britain, New Zealand, and the USA. Differences in work environment were pursued on two levels: (1) referring to the theoretical literature and to empirical findings of comparative research, and (2) referring to how individuals perceive their workplace situations in relation to their personal evaluations of various workplace features. The term 'person–environment fit' was used to conceptualise the mechanism of individual desires for certain features, on one hand, and the perceived supply of them, on the other.

The study revealed a number of similarities among and differences be-

tween the countries studied. However, no explanation of the observed country differences in organizational commitment was found, nor any sign of any interpretable country pattern. Instead, we found support for the existence of a high degree of universality in the person–environment mechanism. This study made it clear that country differences in commitment cannot be explained by perceived work circumstances. In other words, people in countries with lower levels of organizational commitment do not necessarily perceive their work circumstances as less satisfying.

Age was positively related to commitment in most models used in this study. However, a substantial part of the initial correlation between class and commitment proved to originate from differences in the perceived supply of certain job features in the workplaces. Unsurprisingly, the effect of being self-employed was significant and positive in four of the six countries. In New Zealand, job satisfaction and the perception of values and rewards must be assumed to be surprisingly equally distributed throughout the hierarchical structures of organizations, since class differences in commitment were found to be insignificant in all models.

The personal desire for certain work features and the perceived supply of them had similar effects on organizational commitment in all countries. We can, however, discern two different types of features here: (1) those where the degree of supply is positively related to commitment, regardless as to whether the feature explicitly desired (e.g. interesting work), and (2) those that tend to have a significant positive effect on commitment only if they are both desired and supplied (e.g. job security and societal features). In all countries, the supply of interesting work had the strongest direct correlation with organizational commitment, after controlling for job satisfaction. This suggests that having interesting work directly influences employees' commitment to the organization in a more stable manner than any other job feature examined in this study.

The study found no support for the assumption that skill-oriented practices in coordinated market economies would, *ceteris paribus*, lead to higher organizational commitment than would rule-oriented practices in liberal market economies. Instead, the liberal market economy of the USA displayed higher organizational commitment than did the coordinated market economy of Sweden. However, the connection between perceived circum-

stances at work and organizational commitment proved to be salient at the individual and group levels. Above all, the positive effect of finding the job interesting was identified as a core factor connecting the individual and the organization. Moreover, this particular correlation is independent of job satisfaction in all countries. Furthermore, features such as pay and advancement displayed relatively modest effects.

Article III – Organizational Commitment and Conflicting Values: The Impact of Systems of Norms in Six Western Countries

The two first articles offered no explanation for the observed country pattern in organizational commitment. Differences in organizational commitment can be explained neither by differences in the organization of production nor by differences in the person–environment fit. One question that inspired the third article was therefore whether the country differences in organizational commitment could depend on political and ideological differences. Could nation-specific low levels of organizational commitment reflect some sort of general value conflict or political resistance to the technical/economic system?

> *The hunger for profit amongst Dutch capitalists made me and all my thousand workers sweat and strive without seeing any other goal than to produce timber for these insatiable ships.* (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 43, my translation)

This paper compared organizational commitment in the USA, Great Britain, New Zealand, Germany, Norway, and Sweden. The main focus was on the hypothesised existence of conflicting values arising from different systems of norms. The assumption was that the central norms, values, and expectations experienced in any particular work organization originate in a more general technical/economic system of norms; and that subordinated groups, supporters of left-wing values, those identifying with lower social classes, and union members all espouse other systems of norms not entirely compatible with this technical/economic system, and that these groups are therefore likely to display lower organizational commitment than other groups.

At the country level, the liberal market economies were expected to produce lower commitment and also greater group differences due to more pronounced subordination in their organization of production. However, it was anticipated that high national levels of support for technical/economic values as well as a nationally low experience of work-related class conflict would mitigate this effect, and that this would explain the higher organizational commitment in New Zealand and the USA.

The results presented in the paper suggested that conflicting systems of norms and values do exist and have implications for organizational commitment. However, the initially observed lower commitment among subordinated groups and those identifying with lower classes proved to be mainly a result of differences in perceived values and rewards in the work situation. However, Service class I (higher level controllers and administrators) seemed to be more aligned with the technical/economic system than was the case at any other level of organizational hierarchies.

Union membership proved to be a significant factor both in New Zealand and in Germany, where union members displayed clearly weaker commitment than did non-members. The strong negative effect in New Zealand may partly be explained by ideological resistance against the technical/economic forces on the part of those still choosing to remain union members despite the 1990 *Employment Contract Act*.

The most interesting factor was political values, which was initially significant with lower commitment being found among left-wing respondents in all countries except Norway. The effect was significant when controlling for age, values and rewards. A remaining independent effect of the right-wing scale was also found when controlled for job satisfaction, management/employee relationship, and country. This final model reduced a substantial part of the initially observed country differences.

This paper lent no support to the hypothesis that workers in the collective sense (defined as ‘the subordinated’) would produce a system of norms that conflicts with organizational values and norms to the extent that their organizational commitment is substantially diminished. Instead, the results suggested that the independent existence of conflicting norms mainly resides in groups to the political left or tied to organized labour. Thus, this study found no support for the claim that commitment-reducing values are socially pro-

duced in work-related groups. Rather, such values seem to be inferred from existing political systems of norms.

Article IV – Gender, Culture and Non-Financial Employment Commitment in Great Britain and Sweden

In the final article of the dissertation, the focus shifted to employment commitment. The approach here developed partly out of curiosity about the findings of the first paper indicating that women generally have higher employment commitment than do men.

The women don't work. Most of them just roll dice and drink coffee. (Eric Lundqvist 1953: 45, my translation)

The main question raised was whether men and women commit themselves to work and employment for, as some argue, different reasons. The main focus was on the mechanisms governing non-financial employment commitment (such as the possible effect of family situation, workplace position, and various work-related preferences and experiences). The question was investigated comparatively in Sweden and Great Britain where, in spite of many similarities, the existence of two different societal/cultural contexts with relevance to gender and work has been suggested by some scholars.

Following Hofstede's argument that masculinity/femininity is a cultural dimension, it was expected that aspirations to obtain a secure job, to help other people, and to be useful to society would be more important motivators of employment commitment among women than among men, and more important in Sweden than in Britain. On the other hand, the aspiration to achieve advancement was expected to be a more important motivator of employment commitment among men than among women, and more important in Britain than in Sweden. For all these factors, gender differences were expected to be greater in Britain than in Sweden.

Following Hakim's thesis as to women's heterogeneity regarding commitment to the labour market, it was expected to find women's employment commitment – compared with men – to be substantially lower in lower

workplace positions, among part-time workers, and perhaps in less-educated groups. In addition, women's employment commitment, compared to men's, was expected to decrease with the level of domestic responsibility and in the presence of children.

Overall, none of these assumptions were supported by the findings in the study. It was clear that country and gender variation in employment commitment cannot be reduced to cultural differences in work values. Masculinity and femininity as a national cultural dimension was not observable in the pattern of *why* men and women commit themselves to the labour market in Sweden and Great Britain. The results, therefore, speak in favour of institutional analysis of the subject of work orientation.

Women and men in both countries displayed similar patterns of the effect of work goal importance and workplace experiences on employment commitment. In this respect, the most important motivator found was interesting work. This feature was independently important for commitment both as a work goal and as actual experience in the workplace. The findings suggest that any explanation of the fact that women in both countries display a significantly stronger non-financial employment commitment than do men, should be sought in circumstances that developed over the final decades of the twentieth century rather than in deeply rooted cultural values.

In Britain, higher workplace position and higher education were found, however, to be more important for women's than for men's commitment. Given that women in both countries displayed generally stronger commitment than did men, the correct interpretation of this finding would be that education and upward mobility in terms of organizational/occupational position increases the already relatively high employment commitment of British women compared to that of British men.

The country differences found in gender pattern lend no support to Hakim's claim of a general heterogeneity in women's preferences. Instead, the results can be interpreted as indicating that work-lifestyle preferences are actually very responsive to the policy differences apparent between Sweden and Britain. It is, of course, still possible that many women experience conflict in making a choice between paid work and child rearing. If there is such a conflict, however, it does not affect women's employment commitment in

the cases of Britain and Sweden. In this study, only men displayed a significant change in employment commitment from having children.

No connection was found between employment commitment and the level of desire for job security or for opportunities to help other people and be useful to society. The main reason for non-financial employment commitment is the desire for personal fulfilment by means of interesting activity. This is equally true for both men and women.

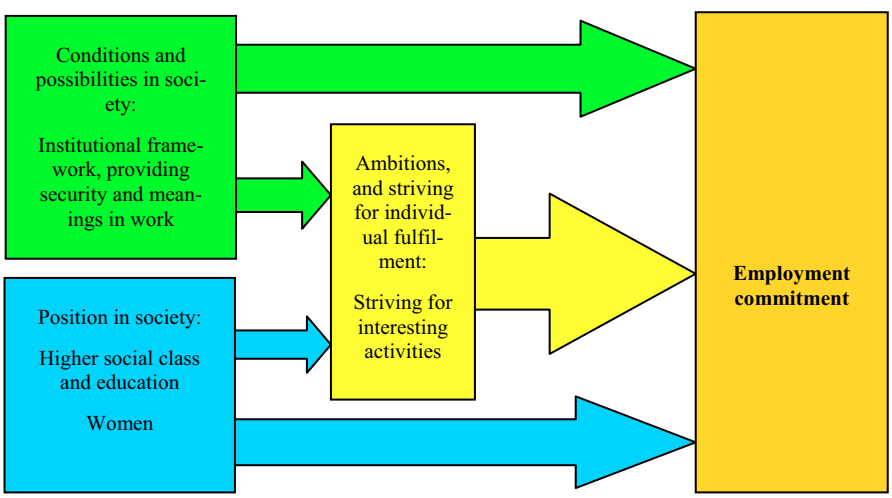
Concluding discussion

To what extent can this project contribute to the understanding of the way we conform to paid labour in the contemporary Western world? To answer this question with at least some degree of creativity, the concluding discussion will have to move beyond what has been directly observed in the separate articles. For example, some possible mechanisms need to be outlined although their existence are only products of causal interpretation of empirical findings. That is not to say that it should be too speculative to assume that one circumstance at times *induce, produce* or *affect* the other. Far from! We should, however, keep in mind that the only thing that has been indicated in this study is statistical correlation.

For the purpose of this thesis I decided to study two aspects of conformity: non-financial employment commitment and organizational commitment. On the whole, the findings in this project suggest that employment commitment is responsive to the national institutional set-up, while organizational commitment is not (at least not in any easily interpretable way). We have seen that the country pattern of employment commitment varies according to the mixture of welfare and labour market policy. If this policy framework is extensive and geared towards full employment, it seems to reinforce people's perception of the non-financial values and meanings of a paid job. The implication of this finding is that people's level of labour market commitment could well be influenced by the design of the national, institutional framework. The finding also indicates that generous welfare policies do not undermine people's motivation to work.

Employment and organizational commitment are, in spite of their differences, both positively related to the degree to which people perceive that they have interesting work (cf. articles II and IV, and Appendix 1[4]). However, while organizational commitment is responsive mainly to the experience of actually having interesting work, employment commitment, it seems, is in particular induced by the *aspiration* and *striving* for fulfilment by means of an interesting activity. In sum, if non-financial employment commitment is responsive to national social policy and is driven by aspirations, desired values, and goals in work activities, then organizational commitment is very much a psychological response to organizational circumstances. The hardly surprising implication of this finding is that the level of organizational commitment is largely a responsibility of the particular organization, since such commitment can be stimulated by opportunities for interesting work. The main results pertaining to employment and organizational commitment are summarised in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: The suggested mechanism governing employment commitment. Arrows indicate positive effects.

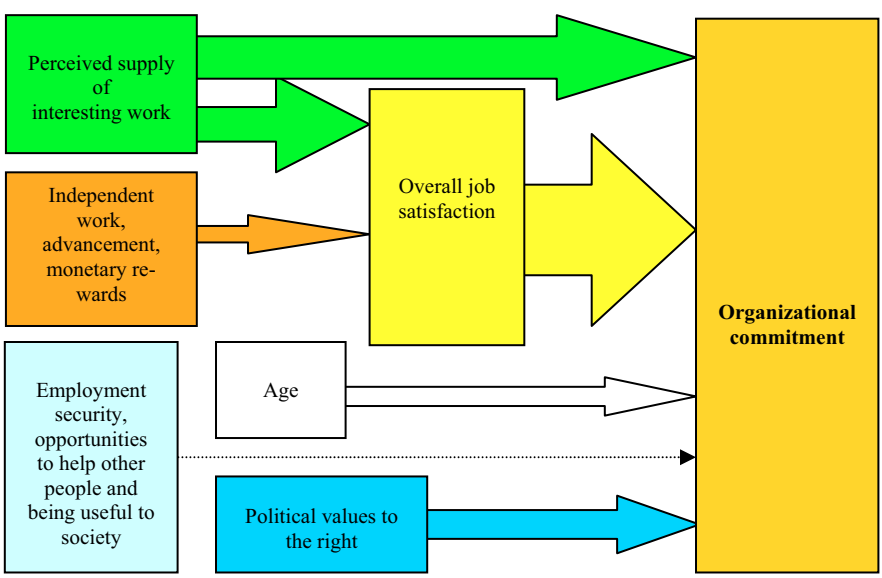


[4] Article IV compares employment commitment only between Sweden and Great Britain. For more general conclusions I therefore refer to Appendix 1 which presents a full six-country multivariate regression on employment commitment.

In Figure 1 we can see that the most important factors contributing to employment commitment are our desires and ambitions. The striving for individual fulfilment seems to be the main driving force here. The degree to which we perceive non-financial values to strive for in employment is, however, dependent on the conditions and possibilities in the society. Also, position in society affects employment commitment. Higher social class and education have an independent positive effect on such commitment (cf. Article IV, and appendix 1). This finding supports the assumption that some differences in work-related attitudes between social classes are maintained by corresponding class-specific values and social expectations.

We can also see (Figure 1) that women in general display a higher striving for non-financial fulfilment by means of employment. This is the only general gender difference found in this project. Gender differences in commitment related to the family situation were found to be sporadic, unsystematic, and more related to the particular country situation than to gender (cf. article I and IV). Let us now turn to Figure 2 and to the main findings concerning organizational commitment.

Figure 2: The suggested mechanism governing organizational commitment. Arrows indicate positive effects.



In Figure 2 we can see that the most important factors governing organizational commitment are not what we desire but *what we get*. We can also see that overall job satisfaction is important to this type of commitment, and is a mediating variable for the effect of perceived rewards in the work environment. The experience of interesting work, however, affects organizational commitment directly and independently. Moreover, the positive effect of having interesting work is clearly dominant over the positive effect of having independent work. Thus, interesting activity is of more basic importance for organizational commitment than is work autonomy. This makes sense, since autonomy in an activity that one does not find interesting would be rather pointless, while interest in an activity that is lacking in autonomy would still contribute positively.

Interestingly enough, political values and beliefs have displayed an important and independent effect on organizational commitment. The more politically to the right, the higher the expressed commitment. This effect explained a substantial part of the initially observed country variation in organizational commitment. Another interesting result, which also finds support in earlier research, is that the effect of monetary rewards on organizational commitment proved to be modest or non-existent.[5] Moreover, the initially indicated effect of class on organizational commitment was found to be mainly a result of a more stimulating work situation (with respect to values and rewards) for people in higher workplace positions than for those in lower positions. This finding underpins the conclusion that organizational commitment is mainly a response to the perceived work environment. However, age was found to be independently and positively related to organizational commitment.

What about organizational commitment and the exchange point of view? What about the concept of person–environment fit? Well, the results of this project are in agreement with some earlier research in that the supply of certain features does not need to be met by a similar level of desire in order to produce commitment to the organization. The term person–environment fit is therefore somewhat misleading (cf. article II). However, some of the findings may lead us to speculate whether there are two types of work features

[5] This finding offers a salutary perspective on contemporary reports of accelerating levels of option programmes, bonuses, and/or other monetary benefits for executives and board members of many large Western companies.

that cannot be distinguished by their intrinsic or extrinsic qualities, nor by the value people place on them, but by whether or not they have a *general exchange value*. Certain features may be perceived as being of more basic exchange value in a work situation than others, so the supply of these features can generally be viewed as rewards. This would be especially true in the case of interesting activity, where the universal mechanism is the greater the supply, the greater the organizational commitment (regardless as to whether the feature is explicitly desired).

It is also intuitively true that there is a basic value in getting monetary rewards in exchange for the effort put into work, despite the fact that such rewards do not in general attach people to their organizations to any important degree. In this case we may more correctly talk about an instrumental attachment. It could be argued that the greater the supply of monetary rewards, the greater the instrumental attachment to the organization. However, the more the monetary rewards are desired by the individual, the more likely the individual is to leave the organization for the prospect of higher rewards elsewhere (true loyalty cannot be bought). Thus, both monetary rewards and interesting activity may be regarded as basic exchange values in the work situation, although the desire for and perceived supply of them are differently related to organizational commitment.

On the other hand, we have seen that the supply of some features (such as job security, opportunities to be useful to society and be able to help other people) tend to require a certain fit with individual preferences to have an effect on organizational commitment. This tendency, however, has in general proven to be weak and sporadically distributed among countries (cf. Article II), so no valid conclusion can be drawn from this. Nevertheless, we have to consider the possibility that some work features may be more dependent on individual preferences, in that they are desired by some and yet sincerely avoided by others, while still others view them with indifference. Such features would therefore not be of any basic value in the employment exchange, and the supply of them cannot generally be viewed as rewards. The perceived supply of this type of feature would therefore require a certain fit with the explicit desire in order to have an effect on organizational commitment. In such cases, we may find a more correct use of the term ‘person–environment fit’.

Another way to view the exchange mechanism in the case of organizational commitment would be to bring employment commitment into the picture. Because employment commitment (the inclination to participate in organized work in the first place) seems to be driven by the aspiration to engage in interesting activity, and since organizational commitment is substantially increased by actually being supplied with it, there is reason to speculate that an exchange mechanism may already be at work at this level. It is likely that the general desire for interesting activity in work and employment eventually pays off in terms of organizational commitment if interesting activity is supplied by the organization.[6]

Why then – given this causal interpretation – is the *desire* for interesting activity so important in shaping employment commitment but of virtually no importance in the case of organizational commitment? It may be argued that the values people assign to various work features, when asked about it, tend to relate to abstract ideas about possible work circumstances that do not fully exist in reality (like the abstract idea of interesting activities). It may also be argued that the individual judgement of perceived non-financial values in a job (employment commitment) substantially refers to *ideas* about activities within a job in general, and therefore is partly conducted at the same abstract level as is the evaluation of work features. So it should come as no surprise to find, for example, the desire for interesting work to be a true motivator of non-financial employment commitment.

On the other hand, when we try to estimate to what degree a certain feature is supplied in our particular workplace, the level of abstraction changes. In making this judgement we bring reality into the picture. We still have to understand the feature by means of our ideas about it, but we have to balance that understanding with what we actually get (cf. Kalleberg 1977). This is also the case when we try to estimate the degree of loyalty and commitment that we are prepared to give to a particular organization. In real life we may, when we stop and reflect, find that we are attached to and stimulated by features, situations, and activities that correspond little to our abstract goals in life.

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[6] In all six countries organizational commitment and employment commitment are positively correlated at the .001 level.

Thus, the observed differences between the mechanisms governing the two types of commitment may be explained in that organizational commitment and the perception of rewards are weighed by reality to a greater degree than are employment commitment and work goals. However, great persistence in a strong desire related to abstract ideas about certain work features can independently reduce satisfaction in and commitment to the real, less ideal situation. This interpretation suggests a distinction between ideas, values, and ambitions, on one hand, and reality, perception, and response, on the other.

On the abstract level of ideas, values, and ambition we find no clear conceptual distinctions between ideas about work, work-related values and goals, and employment commitment – they are all, in one way or another, ideas about work. However, goals and commitment are something more than just ideas about work – they include a certain degree of intention or ambition – and can therefore be analytically distinguished here. Non-financial employment commitment can be understood as the strength of the individual ambition to participate in organized work, and work-related values and goals can be understood as highly important reasons for such commitment.

Individual values and goals, however, do not emerge from nothing; they most likely have their roots in more socially constructed and institutionally shaped ideas and beliefs about work – related to social class, gender and to the particular society. These ideas about work represents nothing that we have been able to observe in this project; but, again, since ideas about work conceptually differ from goals and commitment we can assume their existence. I can, for example, believe that some jobs and some activities are more important or interesting than others – something that, of course, may influence my goals in life. Likewise, I can believe that paid work is mainly a matter between me, my needs, and my employer, or I can believe that paid work is something socially imposed on me from all directions. I can believe that paid work is a possibility, a necessity, a citizen's right, or a citizen's duty or a mixture of all these. There are strong reasons to assume that there is a tendency towards a national uniformity of such ideas, shaped by the design of the national institutional framework, and that it is the composition of these ideas that in turn influences our national tendency to perceive non-financial values in paid work. It is, as we have seen, easier to perceive non-financial meanings in work in more regulated societies. Therefore, we could

say that it is the rules of the game that give the game meaning, and that deregulation reduces such meaning.

The level of reality, perception and response, on the other hand, comprise the situation where the individual confronts the actual work environment – by acting in it or by reflecting over it. The perception of the work environment affects the level of organizational commitment. Although organizational commitment have conceptual similarities with employment commitment – in that they both includes a certain degree of intention – they differ in that organizational commitment is a relatively pure response to the perceived workplace reality. This response is, as we have seen, only modestly adjusted by our explicit work goals. Nevertheless, the perception of the reality, to which we respond, is most likely influenced by our abstract ideas about work.[7] We have also seen that political values and age independently affect our commitment to the organization.

In summary, interesting activity seems to be the major driving force of commitment. The problem, however, is that there seems to be no universal agreement as to exactly what is perceived as interesting activity. We have, for instance, seen no sign that countries that earlier research suggests would emphasise skill development and participation in decision making should have higher general organizational commitment than do other countries. The results of this project show the opposite country pattern for organizational commitment, i.e. highest in the USA and lowest in Sweden. This unexpected finding may indicate that people are adaptive as to how certain work features are regarded as contributing to making work interesting or not. A challenge for future research would therefore be to dismantle the rather blunt measure of 'interesting work' into a set of more apprehensible facets of activities.

Country differences

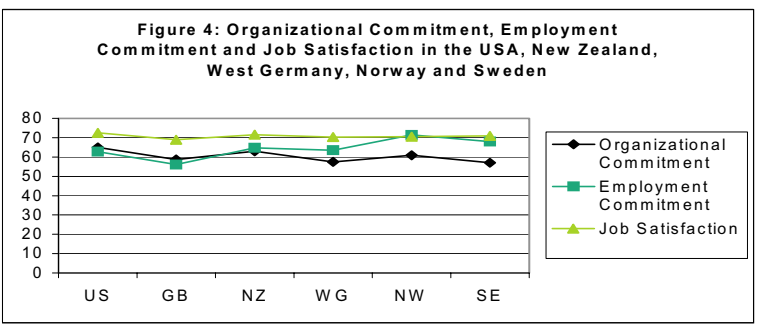
What then of work orientation and country differences? No huge differences in commitment between countries were found, but we did find some differences of significance. As already pointed out, employment commitment

[7] The picture is of course more complex than this. For example, our perception of the work environment may also somewhat influence our ideas about work. In addition, the perception of certain rewards and job satisfaction are directly correlated to employment commitment (cf. article IV and Appendix 1).

seems, as expected, to vary according to the mixture of welfare and labour market policy (highest in Scandinavia), whereas organizational commitment does not (highest in New Zealand and the USA). Thus, the relevance of regime categorisation is limited although the hypothesis of production regimes cannot be dismissed in all its applications. Since the analyses in this project have revealed the extent to which results obtained in one country may be specific to that particular context, it is still likely a fruitful line of inquiry to pursue questions as to how the wider institutional framework affects various aspects of orientations to work.

Why then do European countries have lower levels of organizational commitment than do New Zealand and the USA? In Figure 4 we can see that although employment and organizational commitment vary, the level of job satisfaction is very similar in all countries. Thus, the observed variation in levels of organizational commitment cannot be explained by any kind of dissatisfaction or perceived deprivation in countries with low commitment (cf. article II).

Figure 4: Organizational Commitment, Employment Commitment and Job Satisfaction in the USA, New Zealand, West Germany, Norway and Sweden



It is interesting to see that employment commitment and job satisfaction are on the same level and higher than organizational commitment in the Scandinavian countries, whereas employment commitment and organizational commitment are on the same level and lower than job satisfaction in the liberal market economies. This observation, however, does not help explain country differences in organizational commitment. One puzzling question here is why liberal Britain is closer to the coordinated market economies of Europe in terms of both organizational commitment and political values (cf.

article III), than to the liberal market economies of the USA and New Zealand. Could this phenomenon be explained by institutional differences alone? One way to go about this would be to argue that people in the USA and New Zealand *have to be* more faithful to their organizations, because their economic security – compared to that of people in the European countries studied – is more dependent on their work organization.

If this is so, we may also have to consider qualitative differences in organizational commitment between countries. Robert Starratt (2003) comes close to this point as he portrays a perhaps predominantly American dilemma, or false distinction between the roles of citizen and employee (Starratt 2003: 89). In the USA the role of the citizen is often defined by highly valued citizens' rights, such as free speech and democratic participation. The role of the employee, on the other hand, is often viewed as something rather different. 'Our work and our relationship with fellow workers is carefully spelled out in the contract whereby we sell our labour to the owner' (Starratt 2003: 89). Such a contract seems more consistent with commitment through *obedience* – the surrender of the right to free speech, etc. – than with commitment through democratic values.

Starratt deeply disagrees with the maintenance of this distinction, believing that work should be just one way to exercise citizenship. He argues that the one who finds something morally imperative related to the work situation also has an obligation as a citizen to speak up to the employer (Starratt 2003: 89). In line with this perspective, it could be argued that though organizational commitment may be lower in Europe, it may also be more honest and realistic, and perhaps more sensitive to long-term values, than is the case in a country like the USA. The development of this more 'honest' type of commitment would of course require that a certain degree of economic security be guaranteed outside the particular employment situation.

A different way to approach this problem would be to return to the importance of values and norms (emphasised in article III). This approach suggests that at a given time in a society certain values may be at least partly independent of the contemporary institutional environment; even so, these values can still be strongly reflective of the recent country-specific historical background. One can thus speculate as to whether the long history of class conflict in Europe could be at the root of general scepticism regarding the

technical/economic system, and whether this more critical orientation towards the very machinery of capitalism could in turn be responsible for the lower levels of organizational commitment found in the European countries. It is tempting to go yet one step further, and speculate as to the possible existence of a specific type of spirit in the 'settler societies'. Could the higher levels of commitment in the USA and New Zealand reflect a living legacy of optimism, positivism, and enthusiasm regarding technical/economic matters that is socially inherited from the daring entrepreneurs who once left Europe to build something new and better?

Which one of these two explanations we choose may depend on whether we come from a European country or from the USA or New Zealand, and also on our particular orientation towards the technical/economical system. However, the two explanations are not mutually incompatible. Generally high positivism and enthusiasm regarding technical/economic matters in a society may create less generous welfare systems. This may in turn result in high employee dependence on employers and less honest employee loyalty towards the organizations for which they work. However, the best answer to this question remains to be explored in future research.

Is commitment always good?

This project has moved along on the quiet presumption, it may seem, that commitment is predominantly good and preferable. However, we have to admit, this is not always the case. General employment commitment is of course good for a society built upon work and production, and it is good for individual companies in times of expansion. However, strong employment commitment can be devastating for the individual who cannot find a job and who is unable to replace the perceived values of employment with other activities (cf. Nordenmark 1999; Strandh 2000). Moreover, if productivity and growth is maintained in a society simultaneously with the existence of a permanently disadvantaged group of people outside the labour market, then the aggregated dissatisfaction produced by unfulfilled employment commitment may turn against the society in one way or another.

Organizational commitment, if not exaggerated and misdirected, is of course always good for the particular organization. From the individual's perspective, however, strong commitment to the organization can be ex-

hausting: it can detach the individual from other life activities and is therefore not necessarily good. Moreover, strong organizational commitment can, as in the case of employment commitment, be devastating for those who lose their jobs. Whether organizational commitment is good for society depends on the organization in question, and sometimes on whether we are thinking in the short or the long term. At one extreme, we find people committed to working for the Red Cross, for Médecins Sans Frontières, or to working in ordinary hospitals, with children or the elderly, or in a number of organizations that in one way or another change societies for the better. At the other extreme, people have displayed the most terrifying commitment to activities involved in the Inquisition or the Holocaust, and to Al-Qaida. Between these extremes, a great number of people are committed to activities that may be perceived as good for society from a relatively short-term perspective, but which may exhaust natural resources and damage the environment in the long run.

It would perhaps be a better world if people's commitments were always in harmony with universal human interests and long-term values – that is, if we could agree on these interests and values in the first place. Without being too moralistic or naive, one could imagine that to at least some extent people's labour market commitment could indeed be driven by such goals as helping people and being useful to society. Although many people find these aspects important, they are not generally reflected in the non-financial values people seek in a job (cf. article IV and Appendix 1). Thus, the main non-financial values that people perceive in employment are not altruistic or of a long-term society-preserving nature. The driving force of such commitment, it seems, is the desire for personal fulfilment by means of interesting activity. In conclusion, it seems that commitment to work and employment develops for mainly personal reasons. It would probably be too much to ask otherwise from people. After all, we like to believe that, in most activities, we are first and foremost our own agents, and this should of course be reflected also in the way we conform to paid labour.

I have become a slave of five thousand cubic meters a month. And sometimes I think that I have made the jungle into my slave. Holy stupidity! […] *By the morning I had decided to leave Nunukan and go native with Sari on Java.*
(Eric Lundqvist 1953: 245–6, my translation)

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Appendix 1 : **Employment Commitment in the US, New Zealand, Great Britain, West Germany, Norway and Sweden. Unstandardised OLS Regression Coefficients.**

	I	II
Women (*men in constant*)	4.21***	3.21***
Social class *(Unskilled worker in constant)*		
- Skilled worker	2.12	1.40
- Lower non-manual	4.10***	3.12**
- Service class II	7.61***	5.09***
- Service class I	11.83***	7.26***
- Self-employed	7.49***	2.44
University education (*secondary or less in constant*)	5.24***	3.37***
Country (*Sweden in constant*)		
- NW	2.98**	2.52*
- WG	-3.59***	-5.78***
- GB	-12.00***	-12.42***
- US	-6.31***	-6.97***
- NZ	-3.57***	-5.41***
Importance of job security	-	0.12
Importance of opportunities to help other people	-	-0.53
Importance of opportunities to be useful to society	-	0.87
Importance of opportunities for advancement	-	2.03***
Importance of high income	-	-5.75***
Importance of opportunities for independent work	-	-0.55
Importance of interesting work	-	5.40***
Having a secure job	-	0.47
Having a job with opportunities to help other people	-	-0.33
Having a job with opportunities to be useful to society	-	0.23
Having a job with opportunities for advancement	-	-0.16
Having a job with high income	-	0.60
Having a job with opportunities to work independently	-	1.09**
Having interesting work	-	3.62***
Job satisfaction	-	1.73***
Constant	58.87***	32.73***
R^2 *(%)*	*12.2*	*23.9*
(n)	4552	*4031*

Levels of significance: *** = t-value significant at .001-level ** = .01-level * = .05-level.

Table 1 is a compliment to article IV. Employment commitment vary between 0 and 100, where higher values indicate higher commitment. The samples from all the countries are joined together, and the regression is made in two steps. In step I, gender and social class are entered with control for country. In step II, work values, work rewards and job satisfaction are entered. Satisfaction can vary between 0 and 6 and values and rewards between 0 and 4.