Working at the weekend: supermarket and shopping centre workers in Salford/Manchester (UK) and Porto (Portugal)

Jill Ebrey & Sofia Alexandra Cruz

To cite this article: Jill Ebrey & Sofia Alexandra Cruz (2014) Working at the weekend: supermarket and shopping centre workers in Salford/Manchester (UK) and Porto (Portugal), Leisure Studies, 33:2, 233-246, DOI: [10.1080/02614367.2014.884622](https://doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.884622)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02614367.2014.884622>

Published online: 05 Mar 2014.

Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)

Article views: 128

View related articles [↗](#)

View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Working at the weekend: supermarket and shopping centre workers in Salford/Manchester (UK) and Porto (Portugal)

Jill Ebrey^{a*} and Sofia Alexandra Cruz^{b,c}

^a*Sociology, University of Manchester, 30, Crimsworth Ave, Chorlton, Manchester M16 0FB, UK;* ^b*Faculty of Economics of University of Porto, Rua Dr. Roberto Frias, 4200-464, Porto 4200-464, Portugal;* ^c*Institute of Sociology of University of Porto, Rua Dr. Roberto Frias, Porto 4200-464, Portugal*

(Received 28 November 2013; final version received 28 November 2013)

This paper firstly discusses the origins and importance of ‘the weekend’ in the ‘industrial’ cities of Manchester (UK) and Porto (Portugal). Drawing on previous work specifically focused on this subject, it examines the spatio-temporal shifts evident during the industrial revolution, which produced a more ‘disciplined’ labour process. Work and leisure were, thereafter, constituted as separate domains, the weekend being a designated leisure time and space. We consider the more recent temporal shift, generated through the processes of flexibilisation, which, we argue, renders ‘the weekend’ as we understand it, under threat. We discuss this through the presentation and analysis of testimony from workers, those working in a supermarket in Salford/Manchester and in shopping centres in Porto. Our conversations, in the form of semi-structured interviews, with workers in these locations led us to questions of ‘social time’ and whether there is any longer, recognition of ‘time for ourselves’.

Keywords: weekend; retail work; leisure; industrialisation; time; space

Introduction

This paper has the weekend as its central focus. From its origins in the Saturday half-holiday inaugurated in 1843 in the UK, it can be understood in two ways. Firstly, the nascent weekend can be seen as part of the rationalisation of the industrial working week and attendant ‘time off’, making the production of spaces and times by social actors a more knowable entity for the institutions of the emergent state, of religion and those of capital. This newly ‘gridded’ timespace rendered incompatible the perceived ‘indiscipline’ of St Monday (an unofficial Monday holiday (Reid, 1976, 1996) as well as the traditional and often seasonal fairs and festivals, with industrial capitalism. Secondly, and perhaps paradoxically, the weekend has become a powerful imaginary for both capital (consumption) and individual actors (spaces of desire).

We base our discussion on conversations in the form of semi-structured interviews conducted with supermarket and shopping centre workers about working at the weekend. Thus, the difficulties of combining ‘flexible’ working with the sociality and conviviality of the weekend are discussed. Rather than understanding ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ or ‘sociability’ as separate domains, we discuss the possibilities of the

*Corresponding author. Email: jill.ebrey@manchester.ac.uk

weekend from the point of view of those who are engaged in paid work. We consider the way in which ‘work time’ casts a shadow over all other temporalities, influencing the way in which all times can be produced.

The paper discusses existing modes of working at the weekend across service settings including supermarkets and shopping centres and the consequences for workers. It draws on the empirical findings of two separate research projects conducted in UK and in Portugal. These were conducted independently employing similar qualitative research methods. Manchester (Evans, Fraser, & Taylor, 2002) and Porto (Fernandes, 1997, 2000), though different in size, had textile manufacturing and distribution at the core of their industrialization: both cities have currently very little textile manufacturing activity. Latterly, they have relied on the new service sector as a source of capital accumulation (Gadrey & Zarafian, 2002; Leidner, 1993). The use of these two European contexts offers the possibility of capturing differences and similarities across the experience of those working at the weekends. The article is organised as follows: firstly, methodological considerations and procedures are discussed; secondly, the inauguration of the weekend in both Manchester (UK) and Porto (Portugal) is outlined. The rationale for its inauguration, arguably in Manchester 1843 as the Saturday half-holiday is discussed, alongside its symbiotic relationship with the new regime of industrial production. Thirdly, it analyses the articulations between weekends, leisure and work and the setting of working weekends in England and Portugal in a European context. Fourthly, the paper presents a discussion about the employment contracts of the supermarket and shopping centre staff and their role in shaping the weekends of the interviewees. Fifthly, material based on our empirical work is discussed, including relevant contributions from the workers with whom we talked. Particular attention is paid to how workers represent and live the weekends. By placing the perspective of employees at the core of the analysis, we will demonstrate that workplaces such as supermarkets and shopping centres and their so-called flexible working practices are key organisational contexts in which to understand the contemporary weekend, and the impact on its social times and spaces.

Research design and methods

This paper draws on interviews conducted in two research projects within the retail sector – one in a supermarket in Salford, just outside the Manchester boundary, and the other in shopping centres in Porto. The Manchester/Salford store is a relatively large one, retailing in clothes, kitchen and electrical goods, as well as food. The demographic of the area surrounding it is varied: the district immediately adjacent is historically associated with the white working class, which is rated on the Index of Deprivation as within the 3% most deprived nationally (<http://www.salford.gov.uk>), whilst further towards Manchester City Centre are the newly built apartments of a younger and more affluent aspiring middle class.

The store manager in Manchester/Salford invited the researcher to contact those to be interviewed, at random, on a single walk around the shop. Of necessity, 16 workers were asked to participate on that day and interviewed later. It was a rather odd experience, wandering the supermarket aisles, alighting on people and inviting them to become involved, though there was an attempt to choose both men and women of different ages and people of varying ethnicities. The conversations took place in the function rooms of a local hotel, very near the supermarket, provided generously by

the manager for a nominal charge. The hotel as the location for meeting was chosen in order to facilitate ease of access; it meant that workers could more easily offer an hour or two of their time, either before or after their shift. In addition, some interviews (two or three) took place at the homes of workers, if that was easier for them.

The supermarket workers who agreed to participate were encouraged to talk autobiographically (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), firstly of their lives hitherto and then of their weekends, both within and outside of work. It was considered that asking participants solely about their weekends would not produce as rich an account as putting their weekends in the context of individual biographies and general everyday lives. Discussions were particularly orientated around the 'time of work' and the 'time of family, friends and sociality' and how these different temporalities interwove or impinged on each other. Boundaries between different domains and the work of delineation of the week from the weekend were also considered. The conversations were fairly long, sometimes extending to two hours, in one case reconvening at another time, to complete the account.

The research in Porto involved interviews with 60 employees, interviewed in eight (8) shopping centres located in the Porto Metropolitan Area. These shopping centres were small (2), medium (4) and large (2) in terms of the average number of shops. Their location in the main cities of the Porto Metropolitan Area (Maia, Vila Nova de Gaia, Matosinhos, Valongo and Gondomar) is associated with a process of urban regeneration, supposedly offering a new economic and demographic life to these cities.

The number of interviews was conducted according to the principle of saturation (Burgess, 1994), a strategy that consists of collecting information until it becomes redundant. Much of the research on retail is qualitative, with researchers experiencing some difficulty in being able to access employees and their workplaces (Leidner, 1993; Reiter, 1997). The first 15 interviewees were employees who were at the same time studying at the University of Porto, the workplace of the researcher. These interviews were conducted in the office of the researcher at the university. Nevertheless, in order to diversify the profile of interviewees, it was necessary to find other employees who were not studying at the same time as working at the shopping centre. Consequently, the researcher contacted employees directly in the shopping centre shops, identifying herself as a researcher, stating the objectives of the research and then enquiring about their employment status: whether they were a student or not and if they would be available to collaborate in the research. This unorthodox means of accessing employees was more complex, but allowed the arrangement of a later interview, taking place in the following week after their shifts at work in a shopping centre café.

In both research projects, the themes for analysis revolved around the temporal dimensions of the weekend, the feelings of workers, both about weekends and about working at weekends, and the weekend practices of Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. Semi-directed interviews produced some revealing responses, which we hope, following the work of other colleagues, (e.g. Fagan, Lyonette, Smith, & Saldaña-Tejeda, 2012), will stimulate further debate about weekends, work and leisure and how we can construct ideas about what might constitute 'the good life' or even 'the really good life'.

Weekends, spaces and times

Despite the perpetual change, transformation and refiguration of contemporary social life (Harvey, 1996; Swyngedouw, 2004), the weekend has remained an important and

pervasive institution. Its meaning has shifted from being merely ‘the end of the week’ to ‘the weekend’, (Rybczynski, 1991), a separate time and space with a life of its own and a qualitatively different ‘feel’. The weekend became more firmly entrenched as production gathered momentum in the early twentieth century, latter characterised as ‘Fordist’ (Harvey, 1990; Williams, Haslam, & Williams, 1992). Indeed, it is suggested that under Fordism, the weekend as ‘social time’ was left alone (Cederstrom & Fleming, 2012). Hours worked on Saturdays and Sundays were often designated ‘unsocial hours’ and were assigned a financial premium for those working then.

The activities of both labour and capital, in the context of a rapidly industrialising landscape, produced a spatio-temporal rhythmicity epitomised in the weekly five-plus-two cycle of days. As the weekend became established in the twentieth century, the timescapes contributed to a gradual ascent in public mood, reaching a crescendo of expectation on Friday night or Saturday morning. Men and women, however, might differently experience this, and whilst acknowledging this here we do not discuss ‘gendered weekends’ in any detail. That deserves another paper.

Manchester, in the north-west of England, is considered to be the world’s first industrial city (Hall, 1998). Its success is based around a small amount of production (the surrounding towns undertaking most of the manufacture of cotton goods), wealth being mostly created through the storage, distribution and marketing of textiles. (Kidd, 1993) Perhaps not surprisingly, it seems to have been one of the first cities, if not *the* first, to inaugurate a dedicated Saturday half-holiday. In 1843, some employers in the city agreed to designate Saturday as a regular afternoon ‘off’ from paid work, following a lively debate about the merits of such ‘time off’, led by the *Committee for the Establishment of the Saturday Half Holiday*, chaired by 23-year-old William Marsden and conducted in the local and national press of the UK (Manchester City News, 1884).

Porto, in the north of Portugal, has been an important industrial and commercial city since the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It has some historical parallels with Manchester and environs in that its industry was based around textile manufacture and distribution. It was, too, the first Portuguese city that in 1911 forced the Republican government to establish the right to weekly rest on Sundays and restrictions limiting work to eight hours a day from Monday to Saturday. In 1933 the ‘New State’ regime maintained that working hours should be restricted to eight daily hours from Monday to Saturday. It was only in 1971 that the *English week* (*semana inglesa*) (Saturday half-holiday and nine daily hours Monday to Friday and three hours on Saturdays) were adopted by industry, retail and services in Portugal.

Why a Saturday half-holiday?

The rationale for Saturday being made a half-holiday is complex, but in this instance we can identify two strands as particularly important. Firstly, certainly in England, the availability of labour for the newly industrialising cities needed to be predictable, day-by-day, week-by-week. The ‘messier’ pre-industrial seasonal fairs and the unofficial day off, St Monday, (Reid, 1976, 1996), were subjected to legislation, in favour of a more rationalised and synchronised timescape. This gradual nudging into a 5 + 2 weekly rhythm established, until recently, a hegemonic temporal and spatial ‘grid’ in the industrialising West. Secondly, in addition to legislating for the new times and spaces of production, the new timescapes produced new spaces of consumption (Slater, 1997). Arguably, without the new organisation of time, capitalist commodity

production and consequent spaces of consumption would not have developed in the way that they have; the Saturday half-holiday offered a time for *cultures* of consumption to be developed, but also to be rationalised, by the designation of particular times and spaces for consumption. Hitherto, Saturday afternoons in Britain and Portugal have historically been understood by many as the time for visiting the city centre to shop for non-essential goods. The period between 1880 and 1930 sees ‘... the emergence of a mass-production system increasingly dedicated to producing consumer goods (rather than the heavy capital goods such as steel, machinery and chemicals which dominated much of the later nineteenth century)’ (Slater, 1997, p. 13).

Saturdays and Sundays, would in time, become the axis around which the rest of the week spun; Friday came to be the high point for many, with Monday the low. This structured the everyday temporalities of social actors in relation to leisure, because the ‘working week’ was still dominant. The changing ‘tones’ of day begun during the industrial revolution signalled a different economic order, one that was productive of a different spatio-temporality. The contemporary processes of flexibilisation and deregulation appear to have altered everyday temporal rhythms, but are these changes undermining the weekend?

Weekends, leisure and work

Harvey (1990), in his comprehensive account of the transition from the ‘rigidity’ of Fordism to the ‘flexibility’ of post-Fordism, discusses the economic turmoil and financial restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s. Flexibilisation, he argues, ‘confronted the “rigidities” of Fordism through flexibility of labour processes, labour markets, products and patterns of consumption’. Herein perhaps lies the threat to the weekend as a rightful ‘social time’: so-called ‘flexibility.’ For many workers, particularly those now employed in the retail and service sectors, weekends are being eroded in the move towards the maximisation of profit or ‘output’.

A networked globe has produced new forms of capitalism and new productions of time and space, thus rearranging the relations of the social. Castells (1996) suggests that the production of time, once sequenced and linear, is now disorganised, and somewhat fluid: it is possible to be virtually in many places at one time. Timeless time means that the future is in the present, it can’t be anticipated. ‘Flexible’ work operates within this ‘timelessness’, particularly if most weekends are worked. It means that one operates only in the cycle of the present, the ‘time sequences’ of working depending on the place of work and its needs, rather than the individual and her/his social world. The enjoyment of anticipation has been undermined by the times of flexible working: there is no time for the self, no ‘proper time’ (Nowotny, 1994).

The (working) weekend in Europe

Across Europe, the financial crisis and its consequences have raised questions over the acknowledgement of the weekend as protected social time. Several struggles about the legitimacy of the weekend and particularly Sunday working have been seen across the continent during the past decade. The debate over Sunday working has been vigorous (particularly before the coming to power of President Hollande) in France, where a mass of contradictory legislation around the issue has been partly overridden by a new law passed in 2009 by the government of President Sarkozy.

The letter from the EU to the Greek Government in 2012 suggested, amongst other proposals, that a six-day working week should be adopted and confers upon Saturday the status of a 'normal' working day, thereby allowing employers to avoid 'unsocial hours' payments. In the UK, Eric Pickles, the current Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government is said to be 'sympathetic' to a permanent extension of Sunday opening hours, temporarily permitted during the British 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, whilst in Portugal, the regulation of opening hours involves a range of different stakeholders, such as public administration, large retailers, traditional retailers, consumers and workers, all having different viewpoints (Pereira & Teixeira, 2002). In both England and Portugal, the regulations governing smaller shops have traditionally been more liberal around Sunday opening hours. However, larger retailers are arguing for extended opening hours and governments seem to be favourably disposed to the idea, especially in the UK and Portugal, where conservative administrations allow the market a central role in the economy.

The liberalisation of working hours arguably has detrimental implications for the everyday lives of workers across the globe. The weekend possibilities of many of the Salford and Porto workers, as will be demonstrated, were severely compromised. The endless deferral to the clock for most of the seven days without the pause of a Saturday and/or Sunday to share with friends and family was lamentable. Although this discussion revolves around the experiences of individual workers, their experience is that of many across the globe.

Weekend working and contracts: the retail sector in the UK and Portugal

Since the deregulation of the working week in the UK, workers in the retail sector are more often expected to work at the weekend, indeed their contracts may stipulate as such. There may still be contracts that offer a Sunday pay premium, but at the time of research many of the workers in the supermarket had been offered inducements to sign a new contract, which required Sunday working on the same basis as any other day, that is with no 'unsocial hours' premium. Sundays at the Salford supermarket were voluntary; incentives hitherto were made through a small 'Sunday Premium'. That 'premium' was double the hourly rate until 2003, when a new contract was negotiated, which guaranteed workers a small lump sum and a 5% pay rise. In Portugal, shopping centres can operate on both Saturdays and Sundays and workers are expected to work on both these days. They are obliged to do shift work, which means that both full-time (40–42 h per week) and part-time employees (25–35 h) work on Saturdays and Sundays. Some work on Saturdays and Sundays only (16–18 h per week). These hours of work only refer to formal working times: in reality, work involves far more working hours than the formal hours of workers' contracts. Non-anticipated absences at busy times mean that workers have to cover absences at short notice during busy times (Lallement, 2003).

Research findings

Perceptions about the weekend

Both pieces of research analysed the work and the working times of those working in the retail sector. They focused on both the week and the weekend, first of all discussing whether all those who were interviewed, recognised the weekend as a 'different' social time. Further to this, the kind of activities that might take place at

the weekend were discussed – what they were and whether they took place in the home, in the immediate locale or further away, even abroad. They talked about in whose presence they ‘did’ the weekend, with family or friends or both. Conversely, those who worked weekends, discussed what Saturday and Sunday were like at work, whether weekends in the middle of the week felt the same as having days off at the weekend and to what extent they missed out on a particularly *social* life on Saturdays and Sundays. Since weekend working is ‘the norm’ in the retail sector, there was some consideration of how the weekend space and time might be considered as feeling *different* and lived differently, by participants. Rybczynski (1991) for instance, articulates the weekend as having separateness from the week, indicating a timespace which might be ‘out of the ordinary’. But did working arrangements that included weekend working in supermarkets and shopping centres, produce ambivalence about the weekend and its sociality?

Holly, for instance, speaks regretfully of times past when she could anticipate time out of work: the time configuration of her Sundays off allowed her to do that. Saturday nights are now laden with anxieties around whether she would be able to get up on time the next day:

My weekend for me really, is when I finish on a Friday and it’s my Saturday off, and I’ve got that day, but I can only do so much. Where at one time we’d perhaps go to Southport for the day, or go to Blackpool, ... we might still do that, but I’m concerned about getting home then, because I know I’ve got to be in on a Sunday, ... when you don’t have to work on a Sunday, it doesn’t matter does it, you can come home at eleven o’ clock at night. I’ve found ... if we wanted to go out anywhere on a Saturday night, you don’t want to be out really late because you know you’re thinking all the time, ‘Oh God, I’ve got to be up in the morning. (Holly, 50’s)

Age and family: different patterns

Amongst supermarket and shopping centre workers in Manchester and Porto there was a general acknowledgement of the weekend as ‘collective’ time off. This feeling was weaker or stronger depending on family patterns of work and leisure and whether and for how long the weekend might have been worked. Age seemed to play a part in how weekends were lived: attending to the needs of children and general enjoyment of time together defined the weekends of working parents, particularly mothers. Cath, for instance, a single parent with two sons and a daughter, had worked at the supermarket for eight months and was emphatic about her weekends, even though she often had to work:

Ooh yeah (...) I love my weekends with the kids (...) ‘When I have a full weekend off, that’s extra special (...). Years ago, I never used to work weekends, but since coming to the supermarket, basically I’ve worked every weekend unless I’ve been on holiday. (Cath, 50’s)

Cath had been used to having weekends off, particularly when her children were younger. She had taken great pleasure in doing ‘weekend things’ such as window shopping and going to the cinema: working at the weekend made those activities more difficult. She spoke of physically ‘shutting the door’ on the week at a particular moment on Friday evening, an act that signified the arrival of the weekend, a particularly intimate period of time that she was able to spend with her children. Much of Cath’s weekend time was spent in the house, but Saturday was the day on

which she and her family had the time to go up to the city centre, doing window shopping and going to the cinema. It is hard to see how this could happen without the short period of continuous time, which these activities demand and the traditional weekend is able to provide. For Cath, the weekend, in tandem with the working week, formed the rhythmicity of her everyday life. She expresses this rhythm, with reference to days:

I hate Wednesday morning, I hate it. I hate Wednesdays ... (...) A lot of people hate Mondays. I don't like the sort of getting up first thing Monday morning, but as soon as my feet hit the floor, you know, I'm awake, I'm there, but Wednesdays, No. I feel as though Monday morning I'm on that big you know, I'm up there ... By Wednesday I'm coming down that slope and I'm hit, I'm almost at the bottom, feel drained and tired towards a Wednesday I really do, but once I have a good sleep Wednesday night (...) and picking up Thursday and alright you're going up a floor in a way ... the best way you can describe it and then by Friday I'm right at the top you know, and I start coming down slowly but surely, you know what I mean. But Wednesdays are ... I hate Wednesday because it's so slow, so boring. It's such a boring day (...) because in work the atmosphere goes stilted and like stale. Almost nobody knows what to say. They just say, 'huh, hiya, y'alright?', 'Yeah', like automated. But no, I don't like Wednesdays. Monday to Wednesday is good. (Cath, 50's)

Sarah, on the other hand, a colleague of Cath's, is rather more ambivalent about the weekend. After leaving school and before doing a degree, she spent some years in the hotel and catering trade and started work at the supermarket in 2002, after spending some months travelling in Australia. Before signing her contract, Sarah stipulated that she should have two days off together in the week as well as Sundays and that she would work thirty hours.

Normally, Saturday night I don't do much, like I don't go out much, (...) I don't like places that are totally crowded, you know, pubs and things ... I think I would probably just count Sunday as my weekend. (Sarah, 30's)

Unlike many of the other respondents in Manchester, Sarah had no particular feelings about the weekend and its possibilities. She gave a vivid account of leaving education, entering the hospitality industry, subsequently spending long working hours in hotels, where the busiest work time is at the weekend. For Sarah, this experience has seemingly produced an alternative to the 5+2 weekly rhythm, one where Saturdays and Sundays do not have the 'special quality' that many of her colleagues anticipate.

Max, a university student, is enthusiastic about his work at the supermarket. His father's job brought the family to Manchester when Max was very young and has entailed permanent night shifts (including most weekends since he started). Consequently, the weekend has less significance for Max than for some of the other interviewees. Whilst Max sometimes socialised at 'student' midweek club nights, his family timescapes rendered weekends much the same as the rest of the week. Like Sarah, the weekend as a time for being sociable seemed to have little meaning for him. He does however acknowledge, that it is a time when he can do things not possible elsewhere in the week. He says of weekends:

Nothing special. It's just time I get off uni' now. If I do go out, it doesn't tend to be at the weekend anyway (...). (Max, 20's)

Sarah and Max each revealed in their discussions ambivalence about the weekend and its particular forms of conviviality. This has led us to consider how ‘flexible’ working will shape the social worlds of workers, since contributions from their colleagues indicate that meaning is still attached to traditional constructions of the weekend.

Paula, a mother of two children, has worked in shopping centres for 10 years. As a full-time worker, she regrets the time that she has to spend in work on Saturday and Sundays:

For me it is very important to have the weekend at home with my family, but unfortunately it not possible any more, because shift work is mandatory for everyone working in the shop, so I have to work with my husband in a different way, because we have children who are six and eight years old. Not having Saturdays and Sundays as days off is quite hard, because on these days, the schools are closed and I am working. (Paula, 38 years old)

Paula’s testimony demonstrates the threat to the work–life balance of the loss of Saturdays and Sundays as days off (Gregory & Windebank, 2000). For those who have children, having, for example, a Wednesday and then a Friday off is not of similar ‘value’ to parents as having weekends. Rita, a part-time worker at the shopping centre in Porto, is studying at the university. She has worked 25 hours per week for 10 years and considers the weekend as a ‘special time’ that retail workers are losing.

In my opinion, it is a loss for workers in supermarkets and shopping centres to lose the important thing that was the weekend. This is very negative to their personal and family lives and causes problems for the health of workers (...). (Rita, 23 years old)

This testimony echoes what Kalleberg (2012) calls precarious work, suggesting that ‘flexible’ working times have pervasive consequences for the health and well-being of the workers. Potential working times in shopping centres now range across the whole week, from Monday to Sunday, and much of the day and evening. As such, spaces of both work and consumption (Miller, 1998; Ritzer, 1999) are open 13 h a day, 7 days a week, 363 days a year to customers who buy and consume material or immaterial goods, or spend their leisure time there. The working times of workers in larger retail outlets throughout the world have had to adapt to that reality.

Living the week(end)

We talked with the workers of the supermarket and shopping centres about what they did at the weekend, whether and how the weekend was different from the week and the qualitative differences between the weekend and other days.

Spaces and times at the weekend

Emma and Stephen, who have Saturdays and Sundays off, celebrate their weekends and commiserate with those that have to work. There seemed to be little institutional rationale behind their being awarded weekends off. Emma, for instance, was permitted Saturdays and Sundays off, providing she endured a very boring weekday job date-checking certain food items. Stephen did not really know why he had been

given Saturdays off. He recognises the importance of weekends off to his colleagues and said he has moments of guilt about it, particularly on a Sunday. He dealt with this when talking, by expressing solidarity with his fellow workers:

Well like I say at the moment now, you might feel like Bettabuys are open Sunday and they might be short (of staff) and you're thinking, Sunday, oh you know they'll be short and I could've gone in and helped them. (Stephen, 50's)

He is passionate in his defence of the weekend – often spending Sundays off on excursions with the scooter club he belongs to:

It's your time; it's your time to do what you want. If you're giving five days at work, surely you're entitled to (two) days (off) ... it's not too much to ask is it? (Stephen, 50's)

His colleague Emma articulates the general feeling about having a weekend off and then talks about why the Monday to Friday cycle works for her, having worked one where her days off had to be taken during the week. She feels that if days off are 'scattered' through the week, her time feels fragmented. She articulates clearly the virtues of weekends off:

(...) I've not had any routine for a long time – it's always been scattered. I've always been doing something and something's encroached on some day, something that I've had to do and I've never had like two days off together, a period of time when ... there's a period I could separate work from leisure time. It was always interspersed between the different bits. Everything was scattered about. (Emma, 20's)

The words Emma uses – time and routine as 'scattered' are instructive. Her language emphasises the temporal disjuncture of living as a 'flexible worker'. As such, she identifies the blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure, hinting at the complexity of leisure and of the weekend as a space and time for leisure. She further outlines the fragmented week of a 'flexible' worker when asked about 'the virtues of separating work from leisure'.

Because you can shut off. I don't think ... you can enjoy something if you've got to do something at the end of it or there's repercussions from it, like if you've got work the next day, then there's always the worry, 'Am I going to get up in the morning?' 'Am I going to feel really bad?' or 'In the morning am I going to feel really rough?' (or) '... I shouldn't have done that last night', or whatever (...) it's a wind-down in whatever way from the week. There's a lot of times when I've come home from work all uptight and stressed out and I know I've got to go back in the morning and do it all again. At (the) weekend I can come home on a Friday night, I can relax or I can put my feet up or I can just, even if I'm not gonna literally sit down and unwind, I'm gonna let go of that little bit, let go of work for a couple of days and however I use the time, I know I'm not going back. I don't have to think about that for a little while. I can just think about me and what I want to do. (Emma, 20's)

Joyce, working in the supermarket, has a different experience of living the weekend:

Say if people want to go out at the weekends, say on a Friday night, go somewhere that you have to stay late, I can't really go out. I have to say, 'Well, I'm working tomorrow', because I've got to get up at five o' clock to start work at seven, so I can't really go then. I have to say 'I'll have to leave it'. It does impinge on your social life (if you) work weekends. Like if I work Sundays I can't go out on a Saturday night,

but (if you do) you're always thinking, 'well I can't have a drink, I can't have too much, because I've got to get up early' ... I work early on a Sunday. (Joyce, 40's)

Joyce's account demonstrates the role of clock time, and in particular the times of the supermarket, in her life. The *configuration* of time is an important consideration when discussing the weekend, since the possibility of two nights free or at least one night preceding a day when other friends and family might not be at work the next day is important. For Joyce, there was not a single day when this happened, except when she was on holiday. Her account illustrates the way in which she excuses herself from social activities, as she has to consider getting up in the morning and thus how leisure is 'controlled' by paid work.

The testimony of Paulo, who works in a Porto shopping centre during the weekend, demonstrates a similar desynchrony in his professional and personal life:

For me there is a huge difference between working at the week or the weekend, because (at the weekend) everyone in the family is at home, our friends ... (...) I would like to be at home too, doing things that the majority of the people who do not work during the weekend do, except spend leisure time in shopping centre. I cannot imagine spending my free time in a cage, because I am already working in a cage ... and I'm here working on Saturdays and Sundays (...) For those who are working students (working at) the weekend is quite useful because they have no time during the week as they are at school or university ... but for us who are here all the time, it is quite hard but ... we have to work ... (...). (Paulo, 28 years old)

There was a sense in which Joyce and Paulo never had *proper time* (Nowotny, 1994), that is time for themselves, or time for leisure. Paulo explains his antipathy for the shopping centre, which he describes as a 'cage', in other words a glass cage or a glass palace (Gabriel, 2003), vowing never to spend his leisure time there. The younger workers are more well disposed towards their shopping centre place of work, as the boundaries between work and leisure are not so clear-cut for them – it can feel like a form of leisure:

For me, spending the weekend working is quite amusing, because we are in the shops with friends ... sometimes the store manager even organises some games to find out which shift makes more money and which is the fastest ... for instance last month there was a game like this, and the winners won a playstation (...). (Pedro, 18 years old)

This testimony illustrates an organisation that is guided by the principle of 'more, better and more faster' (Gollac & Volkoff, 1996), promoting working weekends that whilst most definitely are *work*, appear more like leisure, since the elements of organised 'play' make the labour therein *appear* less boring and monotonous. As the workers are younger, the employers can shape soul and body according to the demands of the labour process (Wacquant, 2006). This is perhaps not surprising; after all, shopping centres are explicitly marketplaces, aiming to sell products – the workforce is a part of that commodifying process.

Living the weekend, either working or not, in supermarkets or shopping centres, produces specific social uses of time and space, as was argued at the beginning of this paper. Having to work at the weekend reveals cumulative inequalities in time and space, those that may socially exclude and produce social desynchronicity.

Our research has demonstrated that the interrelationship of time and space was key in the making of convivial and fulfilling weekends for most of the workers with whom we spoke. A weekend time configuration of two days off paid work, is a continuation of the demarcation of weekend time since industrialisation. Two possible evenings free of looking at the clock allows a certain relaxation, a temporal freedom, thus permitting a greater mobility. 'Mobilities, as both metaphor and as process are' at the heart of social life and 'hence produce and reproduce social life' (Urry, 2000, p. 49). Holly was quoted earlier on how her weekend outings have been severely constrained by the 'flexible' temporalities imposed by the supermarket, whilst Pam, one of her colleagues, really enjoyed weekend camping trips away with her family and friends to various parts of the UK where she experienced '[...] freedom, freedom all the way ...' until flexible weekend working made such trips impossible.

Conclusion

This paper considers how supermarkets and shopping centres are both key organisational contexts in which to understand contemporary weekends; it analyses the way in which flexibilisation as a trend impacts on its social times and spaces. Weekends are produced as a result of particular processes, initially the spatio-temporal rearrangement of industrial capitalism. The spaces and times of the weekend are generated through the process of industrial modernity and its separation of home, work and market (Cross, 1997).

It analyses the relationship between work and leisure in a flexibilised labour market, here represented by a supermarket and shopping centre, discussing specifically workers' perceptions of their weekends and how they are lived, either working or not. Our findings suggest that the weekend is both stratified and unevenly experienced in age and family contexts. Young workers without families and children to support have more flexibility and a minority accept more positively having to work the weekend. The majority of workers with whom we discussed their Saturdays and Sundays, however, found them of great individual and social value. Indeed, some of their testimony sounded a lament for the loss of their weekends to flexible working. For many, the weekend is still regarded as the 'nirvana' at the end of the week, as a bounded time and space, different from the week and specifically associated with various forms of leisure; in these instances it may also as be regarded as a semi-autonomous time and space to think and reflect. Other key conclusions from the findings are the fragmentation of having time off scattered across the week and the desynchronicity produced as a result, sometimes meaning a greater social isolation. Boundaries between work and the rest of life become blurred, thereby rendering a complete break from work difficult. Inevitably, the time of work thus becomes dominant. Supermarket and shopping centre workers operate in the cycle of the present, the time sequences of working depending on the place of work and its needs, rather than the individual and her/his social world. Thus, those who have to work in supermarkets and shopping centres at the weekend consider themselves socially unequal as they point out qualitative differences between the social and individual organisation of weekend and other days.

To conclude, we would argue that the weekend must not only be understood as a time and space of (and for) capital accumulation, of consumption, but as a space and time for leisure with a degree of autonomous 'doing' and 'being' for social actors.

Sofia Cruz and Jill Ebrey would like to thank all the workers with whom they discussed weekend working; their time and involvement made this article possible.

Notes on contributors

Jill Ebrey is an associate researcher at the ESRC Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change (CRESC), The University of Manchester, Manchester. The author is particularly interested in the histories and sociologies of the weekend and more broadly, researching the interface between work and leisure, asking questions about the meanings of each and the increasingly blurred boundaries that distinguish them. The author is currently working on meanings of culture, participation and cultural value as part of the Understanding Everyday Participation research project. The author has a recent publication: Banks, M. Ebrey, J. and Toynbee, J. (2014) *Working Lives in Black British Jazz -A Report and Survey*. Milton Keynes: Open University.

Sofia Alexandra Cruz, PHD in Sociology, is an assistant professor at Faculty of Economics of University of Porto (Portugal) and researcher on the Institute of Sociology of University of Porto (Portugal). Her research interests are service work, organisations, professional groups and social entrepreneurship. Her recent publications are: Service interaction and dignity in cleaning work: how important is the organizational context?, *Employee Relations* (forthcoming); Os jovens pouco escolarizados no mercado de trabalho português [Youth with low schooling in Portuguese labor market], *Análise Social* (forthcoming); O trabalho de vigilância nos centros comerciais [Security work in shopping centres], *Tempo Social* (2013); Interação comercial e contextos organizacionais na restauração e lojas de vestuário [Commercial interaction and organizational context in restaurants and shops], *Análise Social* (2012); *O trabalho nos centros comerciais* [Work in shopping centres] (Afrontamento, 2012); Mulheres trabalhadoras nos supermercados: Alguns dados de caracterização socioprofissional [Women workers in supermarkets: Social professional data], AAVV, *Percursos de mulheres. trabalho, família e participação associativa no grande Porto* [Pathways of women. Work, family and associative participation in Porto] (LivPsi-MDM, 2011); O trabalho nos centros comerciais. notas sobre uma pesquisa empírica [Work in shopping centres: Reflections about an empirical research], *Precários em Portugal: Entre a fábrica e o call center* [Precarious workers in Portugal: Between the factory and the call center] (Edições, 2011); A actividade comercial: Uma reflexão sobre feminização, juvenilização e precarização laboral [Retail activity: Reflections on female, youth and precarious work], *A igualdade de mulheres e homens no emprego em Portugal: Políticas e circunstâncias* [Employment equality between women and men in Portugal: Policies and circumstances] (CITE, 2010).

References

- Burgess, R. (1994). *In the field: An introduction to qualitative research*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Castells, M. (1996). *The rise of the network society*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cederstrom, C., & Fleming, P. (2012). *Dead man working*. Alresford: Zero Books.
- Cross, G. (1997). The suburban weekend: Perspectives on a vanishing century dream. In R. Silverstone (Ed.), *Visions of suburbia* (pp. 108–131). London: Routledge.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Evans, K., Fraser, P., & Taylor, I. (2002). *A tale of two cities: Global change, local feeling and everyday life in the north of England*. London: Routledge.
- Fagan, C., Lyonette, C., Smith, M., & Saldaña-Tejeda, A. (2012). *The influence of working time arrangements on work-life integration or 'balance': A review of the international evidence*. Research synthesis paper prepared as an input to the report for discussion by the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Working Time Arrangements, Geneva: ILO
- Fernandes, J. (1997). *Porto: cidade e comércio* [Porto, city and retail]. Porto: Arquivo Histórico da Câmara Municipal do Porto.

- Fernandes, J. (2000). Cidade do Porto e Área Metropolitana do Porto: realidades e desafios [Porto and Metropolitan Area: realities and challenges]. *História*, 1, 127–143.
- Gabriel, Y. (2003). Glass palaces and glass cages: Organizations in times of flexible work, fragmented consumption and fragile selves. *Ephemera*, 3, 166–184.
- Gadrey, J., & Zarafian, P. (2002). *L'Émergence du Modèle du Service: enjeux et réalités* [The emergence of the service model: Issues and realities]. Paris: Éditions Liaisons.
- Gollac, M., & Volkoff, S. (1996). Citius, altius, fortius. Intensification du travail [Citius, altius, fortius. Intensification of work]. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, 114, 54–67.
- Gregory, A., & Windebank, J. (2000). *Women's work in Britain and France*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hall, P. (1998). *Cities in civilisation*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Harvey, D. (1990). *The condition of postmodernity*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Harvey, D. (1996). *Justice, nature and the geography of difference*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Kalleberg, A. (2012). Job quality and precarious work: Clarifications, controversies, and challenges. *Work and Occupations*, 39, 427–448.
- Kidd, A. (1993). *Manchester*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
- Lallement, M. (2003). *Temps, Travail et Modes de Vie* [Time, work, lifestyles]. Paris: PUF.
- Leidner, R. (1993). *Fast food, fast talk: Service work and the routinization of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Manchester City News. (1884). *The Saturday Half Holiday*, 322–323.
- Miller, D. A. (1998). *A theory of shopping*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Nowotny, H. (1994). *Time: The modern and postmodern experience*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Pereira, M., & Teixeira, J. (Eds.). (2002). *Working time in retail, liberalization and conditioning*. Lisbon: Lisbon Retail Centre, Office for Studies and Economic Prospects.
- Reid, D. A. (1976). The decline of Saint Monday 1766–1876. *Past and Present*, 71, 76–101.
- Reid, D. A. (1996). Weddings, weekdays, work and leisure in urban England 1791–1911: The decline of Saint Monday revisited. *Past & Present*, 153, 135–163.
- Reiter, E. (1997). *Making fast-food*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Ritzer, G. (1999). *Enchanting a disenchanted world: Revolutionizing the means of consumption*. London: Pine Forge Press.
- Rybczynski, W. (1991). *Waiting for the weekend*. New York, NY: Penguin.
- Slater, D. (1997). *Consumer culture and modernity*. Oxford: Wiley.
- Swyngedouw, E. (2004). Globalisation or 'glocalisation'? Networks, territories and rescaling. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 17, 25–48.
- Urry, J. (2000). *Sociology beyond societies*. London: Routledge.
- Wacquant, L. (2006). *Entre las Cuerdas. Cuadernos de un aprendiz de boxeador* [Notebooks of an apprentice boxer]. Argentina: Argentina Siglo XXI Editores.
- Williams, K., Haslam, C., & Williams, J. (1992). Ford v Fordism: The beginning of mass production. *Work, Employment and Society*, 6, 517–555.