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Work-home balance in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden: Is it possible to identify models?

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Founded in 1963 by two prominent Austrians living in exile – the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern – with the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, and the City of Vienna, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) is the first institution for postgraduate education and research in economics and the social sciences in Austria. The **Sociological Series** presents research done at the Department of Sociology and aims to share “work in progress” in a timely way before formal publication. As usual, authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

Das Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) wurde im Jahr 1963 von zwei prominenten Exilösterreichern – dem Soziologen Paul F. Lazarsfeld und dem Ökonomen Oskar Morgenstern – mit Hilfe der Ford-Stiftung, des Österreichischen Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und der Stadt Wien gegründet und ist somit die erste nachuniversitäre Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für die Sozial- und Wirtschaftswissenschaften in Österreich. Die **Reihe Soziologie** bietet Einblick in die Forschungsarbeit der Abteilung für Soziologie und verfolgt das Ziel, abteilungsinterne Diskussionsbeiträge einer breiteren fachinternen Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Die inhaltliche Verantwortung für die veröffentlichten Beiträge liegt bei den Autoren und Autorinnen.

Abstract

Balancing home and work has become an increasingly important theme in western European countries as more women have entered the labour market. The main focus here is on the differences between Austria, the Netherlands, and Sweden. A critical comparison of welfare states shows that the different approaches in these countries can essentially be narrowed down to five models: the *traditional or modified carer model*, the *egalitarian employment model*, the *universal carer model*, as well as one with *reversed roles*. As opposed to previous comparisons, it is argued here that no one country can clearly be classified as one of these five types. On the contrary, depending on the research perspective, one will see an extremely complex pattern emerge of how job and family are combined, what kind of political regulations exist, and whether these are in agreement with social values and norms. That is why we need to analyse three different dimensions: firstly, employment participation and employment patterns of parents give insight into the *practical compatibility*. Secondly, maternity/paternity leave and childcare facilities are examined as an important factor of *political compatibility*. And finally, it will be shown how and to what extent these facts conform to social values and norms (*cultural compatibility*).

Zusammenfassung

Der Beitrag behandelt die Vereinbarkeit von Beruf und Familie in jeweils unterschiedlichen sozialen Kontexten. Zur Diskussion stehen hier die Unterschiede zwischen Österreich, den Niederlanden und Schweden. Argumentiert wird, dass im Wesentlichen fünf verschiedene Vereinbarkeitsmodelle einen Ländervergleich erleichtern. Es sind dies das traditionelle oder modifizierte Versorgermodell, das egalitäre Erwerbsmodell, das universelle Betreuermodell sowie die Rollenumkehr. Ausgehend von diesem theoretischen Gerüst wird die *Vereinbarkeitspraxis* anhand von empirischen Studien zu den Erwerbsbeteiligungen und Erwerbsmustern von Eltern in den drei Ländern nachgezeichnet. Daran anknüpfend gelten Elternkarenz und Kinderbetreuungsplätze als wesentlichster politischer Einflussfaktor (*Vereinbarkeitspolitik*). Analysiert wird zudem, inwieweit diese Fakten mit den sozialen Werten und Normen der Frauenerwerbstätigkeit und Kinderbetreuung übereinstimmen (*Vereinbarkeitskultur*). Als Ergebnis zeigen sich Widersprüche und Ungleichzeitigkeiten *in* und *zwischen* den Ländern, so dass *ein* Land nicht länger *einem* Vereinbarkeits- oder Wohlfahrtsstaatstypus zugeordnet werden kann.

Keywords

Home-work balance, employment of women, sociology of family, welfare state comparison.

Schlagwörter

Vereinbarkeit Beruf und Familie, Frauenerwerbstätigkeit, Familiensoziologie, Wohlfahrtsstaatsvergleich

Bemerkungen

This article is based upon the report of the project 'Home-work balance in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden' (B. Haas, E. Steinheimer, C. Wallace) which has been financed by the Austrian Jubilee Fund of the Austrian National Bank (2000-2002).

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1. Introduction

In most European countries the empirical significance of two-income households is growing, even if there are children to be raised. The principle aim of this article is to show the pattern of reconciling work and care responsibilities in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden.¹

This comparison judges the differences between these countries to be higher than the differences between specific groups of people within a country. Although levelling down may certainly be criticized as ‘fetishism of the nation state’ (Duncan 1998: 224), it is justified due to the fact that the EU does not have a consistent gender policy (Lewis/Ostner 1995) and that female employment is deeply rooted in a cultural context (Pfau-Effinger 1998).

In contrast to many other comparisons between welfare states, which try to examine a large number of countries with only a few variables, this one (agreeing with Daly's 2000 plea for few countries and lots of variables) compares only three countries in order to be able to do greater justice to the diversity on a national level. These three particular countries were chosen as perfect examples for the specific ways of integrating women into the labour market (Esping-Andersen 1999). The Netherlands, a conservative welfare state,² are well-known for their ‘part-time society’ (Visser/Hemerijck 2000). In this context, we ask to what extent shorter working hours enable or at least make it easier for mothers to take a job. Sweden, with a socio-democratic, universal welfare regime, stands out for catering to women's interests more than other countries in Europe. Known for their generous policy concerning gender equality, the Swedish aim to a high labour force participation of women. By contrast, the gender-specific division of labour in Austria, with its conservative, employment-oriented regime, proves to be rather traditional. Nevertheless, these three EU members also show similarities: In all three of these highly-developed industrial countries it is mainly women who are affected by the compatibility of work and family. But unlike in Great Britain, for instance, this is not exclusively considered to be a ‘private matter’, and people indeed expect a lot from public support measures for working parents (Auer 2002).

Taking the critical examination of previous typologies as a starting-point, we introduce five theoretical types in order to compare the countries. Furthermore, three different levels are analysed, namely the practical, the political and the cultural compatibility. First of all, we

¹ This article is based upon the report of the project ‘Home-work balance in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden’ (B. Haas, E. Steinheimer, C. Wallace) which has been financed by the Austrian Jubilee Fund of the Austrian National Bank (2000-2002).

² Typologies, however, can be interpreted in various ways: The Netherlands are considered to be either a ‘conservative welfare state’ (Strandh/Nordenmark 2002) or a ‘socio-democratic type’ (Pfau-Effinger 2003), whereby both authors make reference to Esping-Andersen (1990) and both of them focus on gender equality. This shows that the types need to be defined more clearly.

describe the practice by the employment patterns of parents. Then, the regulations concerning maternity/paternity leave and the availability of childcare facilities provide an insight into the influence of different politics. Finally, it is also necessary to consider the ideological background, the social values and norms concerning women's employment and childcare.

2. Theoretical models

Most welfare state comparisons give us a limited understanding of the home-work balance because they focus either upon political, socio-economic and quantitative aspects or upon cultural aspects. We therefore deal with the deeper relationship between the practice, the culture and the policy of the home-work balance by narrowing down national differences to five models. These models have been elaborated in a critical examination of previous comparisons and typologies which can be divided into two main strands. The first one, which is here labelled as 'structuralist', includes the different types of socio-political welfare states and breadwinner systems (Lewis 1992; Rubery/Fagan 1998). The second, so-called 'culturalist' approach analyzes the gender arrangement by concentrating on the social values and norms that go hand in hand with a gender-specific division of labour (Duncan 1998, Pfau-Effinger 1998; Blossfeld and Hakim 1996).

On principle, country-specific typologies describing the gender arrangement are quite different from each other (Bussemaker/van Kersbergen 1994; Sainsbury 1994). The two approaches – structuralist and culturalist - chosen for this comparison, however, ask very similar questions. Both are dealing with the integration of women into the labour market, with socio-historical and socio-political backgrounds and with the effects thereof. Due to the different aims and research foci the results vary considerably in some cases, but on an abstract level these two approaches do have a few things in common, which are then brought together in five new theoretical types.

As most people are familiar with the two aforesaid perspectives, they will only be described in a few words. This will be followed by a critical examination of the different approaches, on the basis of which new typologies (including the theses that go with it) will be developed.

2.1 Structuralist approach

The comparison of breadwinner systems (Lewis 1992; Rubery/Fagan 1998) plays a major role in welfare state analyses. This comparative method, which is based on empirical facts, originated in a critical examination of Esping-Andersen's (1990) typologies. The main emphasis is on female and male employment behavior, on the connection to political/institutional regulations, and the effects on social security. Welfare states are

characterized according to the strength or weakness of the traditional gender roles (*very strong, strong breadwinner models; modified systems, weak breadwinner systems*). This gender hierarchy is, among other things, caused by political regulations that give preference to full-time employment over unpaid work (i.e. care) and the compatibility of work and family life. The gender-specific nature of care and the effects of welfare policies on 'citizenship' are examined as well (Boje/Almqvist 2000; Daly 2000).

2.2 Culturalist approach

Resource-theoretical, structuralist welfare state typologies often fail to investigate the characteristic *forms* of female employment in individual countries (Pfau-Effinger 1998; Blossfeld/Hakim 1997). Pfau-Effinger takes up this particular research question and analyzes the cultural embeddedness of employment-related decisions. She examines the development of part-time work within the context of socio-cultural norms and institutional frameworks and differentiates between the *male breadwinner/female part-time carer model* (Germany), the *dual breadwinner/state carer model* (Finland) and the *dual breadwinner/dual carer model* (Netherlands). Furthermore, she is focusing on cultural and institutional lags in order to explain the historical modernization paths in each country.

2.3 Critical review of the typologies

The following critical review of the two approaches will serve as a foundation for the own typologies.

The weakness of structuralist welfare state models lies in the fact that they don't always provide sufficient explanation. Even though they take women's socio-economic position and the significance of welfare state policies into account, they don't go beyond mere descriptions (Ellingsaeter 1998). This particularly applies to the category 'gender' (Duncan 1998: 200; Pfau-Effinger 1998: 182). It is also criticized that the analyses of gender-specific dimensions in welfare states are only limited to the dimension of women's financial and existential independency, rather than understanding it as a chance for women to make their own choices or be emotionally and psychologically independent from their husbands and children. Therefore, as some critics claim, they should also include different options concerning women's right to self-determination (Bussemaker/Kersbergen 1994: 24).

Welfare state analyses are furthermore known for implicitly overrating the influence of political regulations on social life, culture, and basic economic conditions (Daly 2000: 36), although the causal relationship between these three areas may give rise to criticism and needs to be somewhat relativized (Gornick 2000).

In contrast to this particular emphasis on politics and economy, Birgit Pfau-Effinger's analysis (1996, 1998, 2003) concentrates on social values and norms as well as on the practical consequences thereof (gender arrangement). It needs to be pointed out, however, that her country typology is not clearly based on the *gender arrangement theory*, i.e. taking into consideration both culture *and* practice, but – as her classification of the Netherlands as a double breadwinner/double carer model shows – rather focuses only on cultural issues. Regardless of the ideological goal of equality, the distribution of work among the two genders proves to be very traditional in this country. Although the contradictions between practical life and the predominant culture are discussed in detail in the historical review, they are not sufficiently taken into account in the typology.

2.4 Compatibility types

A synthesis of the two approaches discussed above leads to various new types, which will cover a wide range of theoretical options with regard to the division of labour among the two genders, including the *traditional breadwinner model*, the *modified breadwinner model*, the *egalitarian employment model*, the *universal carer model* and *role reversal*. These types are insofar different from the structuralist and culturalist approach, as they focus on the compatibility of work and care in partnerships rather than on the integration of women into the labour market. They cover two different dimensions: The employment participation and employment patterns of women and men with childcare responsibilities on the one hand, and the distribution of unpaid work/care among men and women on the other hand.

The weakness of the following typologies is a considerable lack of cross-national reliable studies dealing with the division of the *unpaid* work in households. Comparisons and surveys first of all elaborate employment patterns. Furthermore, time budget studies and surveys on the unpaid work focus upon the use of time of *all* men and *all* women and therefore neglect the division within a partnership. Hence, this dimension is only theoretically founded in the following table. An empirical verification would be welcomed in future.

Table 1: Work-care typologies

| New Types | structuralist | culturalist |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| traditional breadwinner model | (very) strong breadwinner model (Austria) | housewife-breadwinner model (historically widespread) |
| modified breadwinner model | modified breadwinner model (the Netherlands) | male breadwinner/female part-time carer model (Austria ³) |
| egalitarian employment model | weak breadwinner model (Sweden) | dual breadwinner/carers model with state carer role (Sweden) |
| universal carer model | - ⁴ | dual breadwinner/dual carer model (the Netherlands) |
| role reversal model | - | - |

Source: Own classification

In the *traditional breadwinner model*, the husband or male partner is employed full-time while the woman is (temporarily) unemployed. The compatibility of work and care plays a minor role insofar as women in this case mostly choose to quit their jobs as soon as they have a child, at least for as long as they have to take care of it. After that, they may get a job again. Providing and caring for children is mainly thought to be done in the private household. In this model, children require special individual care, which is generally expected to be given by the mother.

In the *modified breadwinner model*, flexible working hours or an individual or collective reduction thereof can make it easier for women, who have to work and care for their families, to coordinate and combine professional careers and family-related responsibilities. The male partner has a full-time job, whereas the woman works in a part-time job. This model considers childcare to be a private matter, although some mothers who work part-time may also ask other persons (relatives, acquaintances, friends, specific institutions) to take care of their children.

³ Birgit Pfau-Effinger classifies here Western Germany. Austria is not included in her analysis, so that I tried an own classification of Austria according to her categories and dimensions.

⁴ As the analysis of Jane Lewis is only empirically funded, there is no universal model, which does not exist in the empirical data.

In the *egalitarian employment model*, full-time work for both partners has precedence over childcare. Here, the question of whether and how it is possible to combine professional and private matters is even more important than in the modified carer model. This model also understands childhood as a stage of life that requires special care and support. However, it is not primarily the families, parents or relatives who are responsible for childcare. On the contrary, from the very beginning of childhood the welfare state essentially provides the necessary infrastructure. One important characteristic is the fact that gainful employment is universalized, but care and housework are not. In this system it is mainly women who carry out unpaid work/home care, which makes it considerably different from the following model.

In the *universal carer model*, both are gainfully employed and the share of women and men carrying out unpaid work is about the same. In this kind of model, childhood can be seen quite differently: If both parents have an almost full-time job (about 40 hours), the child will mainly be taken care of by other persons and institutions rather than mother and father. Theoretically, this model would also allow childcare to be an exclusively private matter if parents largely reduce and/or rearrange their working hours (weekend and night work) in order to be able to take care of their offspring – each of them one at a time and for the same amount of time. The social construction of childcare in this model is very open and variable, as it may be possible to find all the above-mentioned types of care, including even a mix of institutional or private care, such as in the modified model.

In the *role reversal model* women spend more time at their jobs than their partners. The husband or partner either works only part-time or doesn't have a job at all (taking care of the household, unemployed, or in training). Just like in the traditional or modified model, only one person is mainly responsible for childcare in this case.

3. Research questions and theses

Depending on the research approach, the main focus until now has been on employment integration and socio-political regulations (structuralist) or on cultural views, social values and norms and the specific employment types that go with them (culturalist). But, in order to do justice to the presumed strong interaction between practice, politics and culture, this analysis pays equal attention to all three dimensions.

The theoretical models, which were introduced earlier, serve as a kind of framework that will make it possible to compare the results of the secondary analysis from different perspectives:

From a *structuralist* point of view, one needs to ask how work and family life are combined in Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden. For an abstract comparison of these countries, both

employment participation and employment patterns of fathers and mothers with children up to 15 years are examined. The analysis focuses, if possible, on 'household strategies' (Wallace 2002) and/or the division of work in partnerships rather than on the question of how mothers or single parents reconcile these two areas. This particular perspective was mainly chosen to counteract the existing feminization with regard to the compatibility of work and care and to underline the fact that it is also men who are or should be affected by this problem.

One may assume that political/institutional conditions also have a certain influence on employment participation and specific types of employment. Political compatibility thus raises the question of how often children of different ages are entrusted to the care of professional institutions. Unfortunately, due to the fact that there are also various informal types of care, the answer to this question only supplies limited information about the actual integration of mothers and fathers into the labour market. But, on the other hand, the amount and availability of childcare facilities does inform about the socio-political significance of childcare outside of the family and about the extent of the institutional promotion of or obstacles to female employment.

From a *culturalist* perspective, it is necessary to investigate ideological and/or cultural factors that may have an effect on the compatibility of professional careers and family life. This primarily includes the acceptance of female employment, the division of housework among men and women, as well as the question of who is responsible for the household and for childcare. With this particular approach, however, one needs to be aware of the fact that, in practice, the compatibility of work and home may very well differ from the ideas and expectations of an optimal practical solution.

The *synthesis of structuralist and culturalist results* leads to the following *research question*: Can the three countries each act as a protagonist for a particular gender and/or carer regime? What kind of inconsistencies and lags exist between practice, culture, and political strategies if they are categorized by tradition(ality), equality, and universality?

The following thesis can be derived from that research assumption: Only Sweden can be clearly classified as an egalitarian employment system, while the other two countries don't show a single, dominant pattern. Depending on the research perspective, Austria either corresponds to the traditional model (structuralist) or to the modified model (culturalist). Similar inconsistencies can be observed in the case of the Netherlands, which corresponds to the modified model (structuralist) as well as to the universal model (culturalist) (see Table 1).

4. Comparison between Austria, the Netherlands and Sweden

Each country is usually portrayed as representing a particular compatibility model described above. But each country can fit into several categories, because we do not find 100% of families in any one category when analysing the different practice and the cultural embeddedness of home-work balance as well as the political background. Indeed, probably all models can be found to some extent in all countries. We will attempt to find out which apply most appropriately to which countries.

The synthesis of the structuralist and culturalist approach and our results of the examined data on the compatibility of work and care will be portrayed in the following overview:

Table 2: Comparison of countries

| types | Two approaches | | Comparison of countries | | |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------------|----------|---------|
| | structuralist | culturalist | Practice | Politics | Culture |
| traditional | A | -- | A, NL | A | A |
| modified | NL | A | NL, S | A, NL, S | A, NL |
| egalitarian | S | S | A, S | S | -- |
| universal | | NL | -- | NL | NL, S |

Source: Own classification

According to the *structuralist approach*, each of the three countries corresponds to one specific model: Austria can be classified as a traditional breadwinner model ((very) strong breadwinner system), the Netherlands as a modified breadwinner model (modified breadwinner system), and Sweden as an egalitarian employment model (weak breadwinner system). The inclusion of cultural values and norms in the *culturalist approach* also makes it possible to differentiate between individual types, although the categorization in this case differs somewhat from the structuralist approach: From this perspective, Austria is considered to be a rather modified type, as part-time work is thought to be the best solution for combining family and professional careers in this country. Compared to that, the views on male and female roles in the Netherlands are much more universalized. An equal distribution of work and care is deemed to be socially desirable, which makes the Netherlands a universal carer model. In Sweden, the results of the structuralist and culturalist approach are very similar: This country mainly shows an egalitarian employment pattern, where the main emphasis is placed on full-time employment for both men and women.

However, the research findings in this context can only partly confirm the classification of a country as a specific type, although they do overlap with the structuralist and culturalist perspectives in some points. Let's first focus on the three levels and compare the countries.

4.1 Practice

The following results are essentially based on three sources. The *Family and Fertility Survey (FFS 1996)* allows a comparison of the employment participation of women and the types of employment they choose depending on the age of their children, although it does not provide any information about the employment patterns of their partners/spouses at that time or about decision-making processes within the household. This, however, will be answered by an analysis and evaluation of the *Labour Force Survey (LFS 2000)* called: 'Women and men reconciling work and family life' (Franco/Winqvist 2002). Unfortunately, the latter survey does leave out Sweden, one of the countries included in the present analysis, which is why additional survey data on Sweden and the Netherlands are taken from the EU project '*Household, Work and Flexibility*' (HWF 2000).⁵

Data from the FFS 1996⁶ imply that in all three countries the employment participation of women tends to increase with the age of their children. Austrian mothers with children between 0 and 2 years show an extremely low level of employment participation (21%), whereas half of the Swedish mothers with very small children have a job. The employment rate of Dutch mothers with children of that age group is comparably high as well (43%). It is characteristic, though, that regardless of their children's age the employment participation of mothers remains relatively constant in the Netherlands, but only on a part-time basis. In contrast, part-time work in Austria generally has a much lower significance than full-time work, so that this country shows mostly egalitarian employment patterns and at the same time classifies as a traditional breadwinner model. Nevertheless, employment participation largely grows with the age of the children, increasing to more than half among mothers with children in kindergarten age and up to 62% when they have reached school age. The employment participation of Swedish mothers also rises as their children grow older, whereby in this case the care of small children and children in kindergarten indicates a modified carer model, while the egalitarian model, i.e. full-time employment for mothers, only becomes slightly more significant than part-time work when the children reach school age.

⁵ The project 'Household, Work and Flexibility' (project leader: Claire Wallace) was subsidized within the scope of the Fifth Framework Program of the EU and provides comparable survey data for a total of eight existing and possible future members of the EU (cf. www.hwf.at).

⁶ The use of older data from the Nineties can be justified by the fact that the typologies mentioned above also relate to this particular period.

Table 3: Practice of compatibility by age of children

| | Austria | The Netherlands | Sweden |
|--|---|--|---|
| Percentage of currently employed women with a youngest child of nursery school age (0-2 years) | 21 (thereof 8,7% on part-time) traditional | 42,7 (thereof 38,9% on part-time) modified | 50,1 (thereof 30,5 on part-time) modified |
| Percentage of currently employed women with a youngest child of kindergarten age (3-6 years) | 53,4 (thereof 26% on part-time) egalitarian | 50,1 (thereof 43,1% on part-time) modified | 75,2 (thereof 46,8% on part-time) modified |
| Percentage of currently employed women with a youngest child of primary school age (6-9 years) (for Sweden from 7 to 12 years) | 62,3 (thereof 26,6% on part-time) egalitarian | 55,5 (thereof 47,5% on part-time) modified | 84,7 (thereof 41,6% on part-time) egalitarian |

Definition of part-time: all jobs requiring between 1 and 35 working hours, whereas 36 hours or more are 'full-time'. Based on this definition, the share of Swedish women with part-time jobs is rather high, since many women work for 31 to 35 hours a week.

Source: FFS 1996, own calculations and classification according used typologies

The following results about the division of labour within the household confirm the tendencies expected by the FFS 1996 data. According to that, the Netherlands mainly have a modified compatibility strategy: In the majority of couples with children (53% in the LFS and about 66% in the HWF) the woman works less and the man more than 30 hours a week. Compared to that, this pattern is much less frequently found in Austria, with about 28% (LFS), and in Sweden, with about 21% (HWF). In Sweden, both mothers *and* fathers work full-time in most cases (about 75% of the couples according to the HWF). The same pattern can be observed in 39% of the couples in Austria, thus making it the most frequent strategy. Besides that, the traditional breadwinner model, where mothers don't have a job, is also quite common with about 33% (LFS). The situation in the Netherlands is similar. In Sweden, the traditional breadwinner model only plays a marginal role with 2% (HWF) and has about the same significance as role reversal, in which case women spend more time at their job than men. So far, it doesn't look as if there were any alternatives to the traditional, modified and egalitarian pattern in any of the three countries.

Table 4: Practice of compatibility by employed couples with children under 14 years

| Own typology | Austria | The Netherlands | | Sweden |
|---------------------|----------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | LFS 2000 | LFS 2000 | HWF 2000 (n=281) | HWF 2000 (n=228) |
| traditional model | 32,6 | 32,7 | 18,9 | 2,2 |
| modified model | 27,7 | 52,9 | 65,8 | 21,1 |
| egalitarian model | 38,8 | 10,8 | 12,1 | 74,1 |
| universal model | - | 2,3 | 1,4 | 0,4 |
| role reversal model | 0,9 | 1,3 | 1,8 | 2,2 |

Definition of categories: *Part-time* means here an employment under 30 hours per week, *fulltime*: 30 hours or more. *traditional model*: man fulltime, woman not employed; *modified model*: man fulltime, woman part-time; *egalitarian model*: man fulltime, woman fulltime; *universal model*: man part-time, woman part-time and *role-reversal*: man part-time or not employed, woman part-time or fulltime.

Source: comparable data for Austria and the Netherlands are derived from the Labour Force Surveys 2000 (Franco/Winqvist 2002) (data for Sweden not available here, so that data of HWF 2000 were used).

A universalization of gender roles (universal carer model) doesn't just require equal shares in terms of employment, but also in terms of housework and care. In all three countries, women still bear greater responsibilities than men when it comes to household chores or rearing a child. Compared to the other two countries, Swedish men make the largest contributions to the household (ISSP 1994), but even here about two thirds of the unpaid work is still carried out by women (Nordenmark 2002).

The dimension of the unpaid work is until now in our typologies only theoretically founded. This means that the *traditional and modified models as well as the egalitarian models* imply a traditional division of labour within the household insofar as the woman is the main responsible for the unpaid work, only the universal model and the role reversal differ from this traditional pattern.

4.2 Policies

In most welfare state comparisons the influence of political factors is essentially analyzed in two key areas: the regulations on the protection of working mothers and on maternity/paternity leave on the one hand, and the availability of childcare facilities, on the other hand. Therefore, these areas will also be discussed in this particular context.

Table 5: Length of paid maternity and paternity leave

| | Austria traditional and modified | The Netherlands modified | Sweden egalitarian and universal |
|-----------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| protection of mothers | 16 weeks | 16 weeks | 16 weeks |
| fathers leave | 2 days | - | 10 days |
| paternity leave | 156 weeks (thereof 26 weeks reserved for the partner) | 38 weeks | 64 weeks (thereof 8 weeks reserved for the partner) |
| Part-time leave | 130 weeks with a limitation of possible income from employment (or 156 weeks, if partner makes also use of leave) | 26 weeks unpaid | statutory right to work 75% of fulltime) until the child is 8 years leave can be taken as 25%, 50%, 75% or full-time. |
| Sickness leave | each partner 10 days until child is eight years | - | each parent 30 days until the child's 2 nd year. Parents of children aged under 12 are entitled to 60 days extra leave in case of a child being ill long-term |

Source: Austria: AK 2001 (actual regulation of childcare money); the Netherlands: SCP 2001; Sweden: Boje/Almqvist 2000

The regulations on maternity/paternity leave are quite different in each of the three countries, and in each case they support a specific compatibility model. In Austria, the long (paid) absence from the job conforms to the traditional breadwinner model. In theory, this kind of leave is also available to fathers, but due to the small practical significance of paternity leave, the traditional pattern still prevails. With its current regulation of childcare allowance, Austria now has the longest period set aside for childcare of all three countries: If the maternity/paternity leave is split up among mother and father, they will receive childcare allowance for up to three years. Unlike the past, childcare allowance is no longer a social security benefit and thus no longer dependent on previous employment. This means that all parents may claim it. Another novelty is the fact that the recipients are now allowed to have a higher additional income: Parents with a gross monthly income of up to EUR 1.134,-- are – in addition to that – entitled to child allowance. That makes it generally possible to have a job during maternity/paternity leave, which means that this policy also somewhat supports the modified model. Even so, the comparably generous financial settlement for families (e.g. child benefits) encourages mothers to give up their jobs for a longer period of time. In

contrast to that, Sweden and the Netherlands focus much more on the promotion of continuous employment.

The respective regulations on maternity/paternity leave in the Netherlands explicitly aim to make it easier for parents to combine work and care. Up to now, insufficient financial support during childcare has indirectly contributed to a more continuous employment integration (modified model) (Bruningen/Plantenga 1999). Only a few professions (in civil service and certain private enterprises) are entitled to financial support. The Netherlands stand out for merely having had part-time maternity/paternity leave in the past, longer full-time leaves have only existed since the end of the Nineties (Jager 2002).

In Sweden the main political aim of the respective regulations is the equality of men and women on the labour market. This, in turn, enables and supports an egalitarian employment model. One characteristic feature in this case is the high replacement rate (80% of the previous earnings) which is a great incentive to be gainfully employed before the birth of one's first child. Here, women and especially men are encouraged to be gainfully employed *and* responsible for childcare at the same time. The regulations on maternity/paternity leave, for example, include the legal right to part-time work until the child is 8 years old, whereby the maternity/paternity leave may be split up among the parents (modified and universal model). Currently, two months are set aside for the other partner (for the father in most cases), with the intention to entice him to take advantage of this opportunity. But, all in all, paternity leave in Sweden is only limited to a relatively short period, whereas in the Netherlands, for instance, there are much smaller differences between the length of maternity and paternity leave (Bruning/Plantenga 1999). In all three countries, though, it is mainly women who take up the major part of this period.

In addition to the benefits for mothers childcare facilities have great influence on the employment situation as well (Gornick et al. 1997). Sweden is considered an archetype for exemplary institutional childcare. Every child older than 18 months has a right to institutional care and a majority of the children is indeed taken to professional, public care centers. This infrastructure makes it easier for women to remain in a (full-time) job (modified, egalitarian model). A relatively large number of children up to three years is brought to childcare facilities. Compared to that, Dutch and Austrian children of the same age are hardly ever (less than 10%) taken care of in public institutions, which is a sign for the rather traditional patterns in these countries. Although the situation improves for children between 4 years and school age, the Netherlands and Austria are still far away from the Swedish standard.

Table 6: Percentage of children (by age), who visit a care facility (funded by the state to 75%) in 1997

| | children from 0 to 2 years | children from 3 to 6 years | children from 6 to 10 years |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Austria | 3 ⁷ | 75 | 6 |
| The Netherlands | 8 | 71 | 5 |
| Sweden | 40 | 96 | 64 |

Source: European Commission (1996; 2000) in: SCP (2001); Data for Sweden: Boje/Almqvist (2000)

4.3 Culture

The equal concentration of both women *and* men on work and family has been increasingly accepted during the last few decades. Nevertheless, working mothers are still faced with many different ideological demands.

Austrians frequently reject the idea of mothers concentrating on both work *and* care as long as they have small children (up to 3 years). Taking a temporary leave from the job after the child is born is considered to be more appropriate than continuous employment (Auer 2000; Lutz 2000). Furthermore, part-time regulations for mothers with children are generally accepted in Austria as well as in the Netherlands. The predominant social model intends the mother to be the main carer (Den Dulk 1999). However, it ought to be pointed out, though, that Dutch women mostly get the job arrangement they want, whereas in Austria the desire to find a part-time job is extremely high in all age groups and generally even higher than the frequency of this particular type of employment (BM 2000).

In the case of Austria, it is difficult to estimate the ideological acceptance of the egalitarian and universal models. Younger and higher qualified persons are generally more receptive to these models and more likely to be able to afford a reduction of working hours. According to internationally comparable results, the attitude towards female employment and childcare is rather traditional. Women in Austria are still expected to carry out most of the unpaid work/care, and full-time work is often criticized for having a negative effect on the children and on family life in general (ISSP 1994).

⁷ If you account not only the state funded facilities but also the private ones, the amount rises to 6% of the children from 0 to 3 years (Hammer 1997).

In the Netherlands, the universalization of gender roles is more widely accepted. The results of the ISSP (1994) show that the Dutch are – compared to Austrians - much more supportive of the idea that men and women equally share unpaid work/care. The high social demands with regard to private childcare provided by the parents lead more and more couples to put off the birth of a child for another few years in order to concentrate on their professional careers for a longer period of time. Then the majority of mothers change to a part-time job. One reason therefore is that there have been more and more incentives for everyone to take a gainful employment (Visser/Hemerijck 2000).

In the Netherlands various political/ideological declarations of intent during the Nineties seemed to lead towards a universalization of gender roles: Men were encouraged to reduce their working hours, so that women and men could invest an equal amount of time into unpaid and paid work (Emancipatieraad 1996; Equal Opportunity Council 1996; Task Force on Future Scenarios Redistribution of Unpaid Work 1995 and Task Force on the Daily Timetable 1996). But regardless of these political ambitions, the practical implementation is considered to be an individual matter ('do-it-yourself part-time' (Jager 2002)).

From the perspective of continental European countries, the Scandinavian welfare state has always been regarded as an exemplary, 'women-friendly' welfare state. Both parents can be gainfully employed while their children are taken care of by public institutions (care as a public responsibility; social reproduction 'going public' or 'public family') (Boje/Strandh 2002; Leira 1998). The principles of universalism and egalitarianism should be provided by an institutional framework: a minister for gender equality, the office of the gender equality ombudsman and the gender equality committee, as well as the government division for gender equality (SI 2000).

Scandinavian researchers, however, question equal opportunities insofar, as this is not a new gender arrangement between men and women but rather a 'deal' that women make with the state (Hirdman 1998: 42). After all, an increased integration of women into the labour market does not necessarily change the fact that they are mainly responsible for housework and childcare (Boje/Strandh 2002). That's why Nordic countries are still considered to be ('weak') 'breadwinner systems' (Rubery/Fagan 1998).

According to a Swedish survey (Ellingsaeter 1998), parents in this country clearly prefer full-time employment for both partners. But a reduction of women's working hours for family reasons (modified breadwinner model) is also welcomed. In reality mostly mothers reduce their working time to take care of their children. As a consequence they remain the main responsible for unpaid work/care. And this is not likely to change very much when they switch to an egalitarian employment model after the more intensive phase of childcare. Swedish people are known for their high demands in view of gender equality and equal partnership. The dissatisfaction observed in some cases is frequently related to these high expectations and to the fact that it is often difficult to translate them into reality. They think

that the compatibility of work and family life still leaves a great deal to be desired. Thus, Swedish women are faced with a role conflict whereas working women in the Netherlands believe that they are more successful in coping with the different demands of gainful employment and family duties (Strandh/Nordenmark 2002).

5. Conclusions

Typologies – a well-tried and widely accepted tool in social research - make it possible to draw abstract pictures of reality, which may in turn be compared, analyzed, and further developed on a theoretical level. The frequent categorization by tradition(ality), equality, or universality has proven to be a suitable tool to compare different countries and portray gender arrangements. Possible differences are highlighted by putting the practical compatibility of work and care in contrast with the respective policies and regulations and the existing social values and norms.

The results can be summed up as follows: Contrary to the theses of the structuralist approach, the practical combination of work and care in **Austria** should thus be seen as both traditional *and* egalitarian. Even so, the relative significance of full-time employment for mothers has rarely been taken into consideration in Austrian policies so far. Regardless of the political/institutional situation, Austria – more than the two other countries – shows a clear preference for private childcare by the mother. On the one hand, Austrians are in favor of mothers leaving their jobs, whereas on the other hand they also consider part-time work as the most sensible type of employment for women who need to look after their children. Obviously, this only partly conforms to the results of the culturalist approach in which Austria is labelled as a modified model.

The situation in **the Netherlands** is rather inconsistent as well, which also raises the question whether this country can be clearly classified as a modified model (like in the structural approach). In practice, the fact that mothers are not employed is empirically significant both in Austria *and* in the Netherlands. In contrast to Austria, however, where working women mostly have full-time positions, Dutch women are more likely to work in part-time jobs. Nevertheless, this does not conform entirely to the great significance of universal roles in theory. From a culturalist perspective, the Netherlands may thus be considered a universal model. But, just like in Austria, the social expectations also conflict with the real options to combine working life and family duties.

Similar contradictions also exist in **Sweden**, which has been – both from a structuralist and culturalist point of view – regarded as an egalitarian model. In Sweden the labour force participation of mothers plays an important role, whereby part-time work is limited to the first phase of childcare, when the child is still very young. Afterwards mothers have good chances

to switch to a fulltime job. All things considered, the practical compatibility of work and care generally corresponds to the political regulations on female employment in Sweden. However, the ideological demand for a better, more equal distribution of unpaid work/care correspond to the universal model which has not yet been met sufficiently. Therefore, Sweden cannot be clearly classified as one specific type, either - like in the structuralist or culturalist approach.

Table 7: Consistencies and Inconsistencies within and between the countries

| | Practice | Politics | Culture |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Austria | traditional and egalitarian | traditional and modified | traditional and modified |
| The Netherlands | traditional and modified | modified and universal | modified and universal |
| Sweden | modified and egalitarian | modified, egalitarian (and universal) | modified, egalitarian and universal |

Source: Own classification

Due to their descriptive character, these typologies merely provide little or no information about how the practical, political, and cultural levels influence each other. They do, however, allow two specific arguments:

First argument: All three countries show some similarities between practice, politics, and culture, but the nature of these similarities is different in each country.

Second argument: Concerning the compatibility of work and care, no one country can clearly be summed up in one specific dominant type. Each country has *one* area that does not coincide with the other two (see Table 9, bold print).

ad First argument: Social values and political measures largely correspond to each other in *all three countries*, but the respective goals with regard to gender mainstreaming are somewhat different in each case. Austrians, for instance, are in favor of a traditional distribution of work and of mothers working part-time in addition to childcare, both of which are also promoted on a political level. As opposed to that, Dutch people largely welcome the employment integration of all persons capable of gainful employment, regardless of childcare obligations. At the same time, however, the importance of full-time employment is called into question. As an alternative, the social and political/ideological universalization of roles, i.e. both parents working part-time, would allow couples with children to share paid and unpaid work. Austria and the Netherlands both stand out for the fact that politics and culture correspond in many different aspects, whereas *Sweden* primarily shows similarities between

practice and politics. The compatibility model in this case includes the (temporary) one-and-a-half-income partnership as well as full-time employment for mothers and fathers, both of which are also applied in practice and supported by political measures.

ad Second argument: In *Austria and in the Netherlands*, the practical distribution of paid and unpaid work/care is not in agreement with politics and culture. In Austria, full-time employment for mothers and fathers is neither promoted on a political level, nor is it considered to be socially desirable. The Netherlands, on the other hand, do not have any political regulations or measures (e.g. paid maternity leave) that would encourage mothers to completely leave their jobs for the purpose of childcare.

In Sweden, the cultural demands in connection with the equal distribution of paid and unpaid work are not sufficiently met on a practical and political level. The high social value of universal gender roles is primarily taken into consideration on the labour market, much more so than in private households, where it is still women who are mainly responsible for the unpaid work.

Consequently, it is necessary to ask what factors truly affect the compatibility of work and care. The influence of politics and policies (structuralist approach) and culture (culturalist approach) on the practical compatibility of professional careers and family life can only be verified in some cases: In Austria, politics and culture only have a limited effect on the practical level, as an egalitarian pattern, i.e. full-time employment for fathers and mothers, is neither culturally desired nor promoted by political measures. This proves to be quite similar in the Netherlands: The demands for a partial integration of mothers into the labour market and equal work shares largely differ from the actual implementation of these goals in practical life, which is rather traditional. Only in the case of Sweden can the observed practical combination of work and care be seen as a result of the respective political regulations. There are, however, other discrepancies: The practical compatibility does not entirely conform to what society expects from an equal division of work between men and women at the job and in the private household. Therefore, the strong influence of social values and norms (like in the culturalist approach) needs to be relativized as well.

So, the final answer to the question of this article is: Yes, it is possible to identify models for the compatibility of work and home, although these models do not conform precisely to one country.

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