

Will Social Policy Form Part of the Decision Making Process about Maternity Leave in the Czech Republic?

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Czech Family Policy

- Standard length of parenthood leave is 3 years – with benefit (slightly below minimal wage) and formal garancy of previous job
- Very low number of fathers on parenthood leave
- Absence of formal childcare arrangements for children below 3 years
- Labour market entry restrictions and discrimination of women and mothers (lack of part time jobs, prejudice of employers towards women in fertile age and women with young children)
- → **Re-familisation** (traditional gender roles and pressure to intensive motherhood, low chance to balance work and family life for women)

Demographic Behaviour and Family Values of Czech Population

- low / lowest low fertility country – (total fertility rate – 1,5/2008; 1,2/2002)
- extremely fast postponement of motherhood (1992, year of onset – 22,5; 2008 – 27,3)
- 2001–2005 – shift of ultimate fertility from age range 20–25 to 25–30
- low marriage rate (total first marriage rate: 1978–98%; 2008–66,10 %) and high divorce rate (total divorce rate: 1991–34,8%; 2008–49,6%)
- positive attitudes towards parenthood, parenthood is still considered a natural part of life
- Czech men tend to prefer traditional division of labour concerning parenthood and domestic labour

Research question

- **Do external conditions, above all social policies and standards, affect the process of decision making about motherhood?**
- **Do women mention the influence of social policy on their decision making?**
- External conditions cannot influence the decision making process concerning motherhood (Hakim, 1998, 2002; the same in Czech background Rabušic 2006)
- x
- Women take perceived opportunities that socially and culturally vary into account while constructing their biographies (Crompton, Harris 1997, 1998)

Our research population

- Two qualitative researches (in depth interviews with 50 Czech women in fertile age)
- Grounded theory)
- Topic of both researches: transition to motherhood
- Three population of women (primiparas and childless women after thirty, the women, who suffer from infertility)
- Part of analysis, searching for connection between decision-making on motherhood and external conditions set by social policy for parenthood

Results

- No explicit connections during transition of motherhood (referring to personal values and identity – independent on actual family policy system)
- Indirect influence of policy – connection of decision making process on motherhood with participation on labour market (and in public sphere in general)
- Influence of policy more explicitly articulated while considering having the second child

Time for work x time for motherhood

- Till cca 30 – the period of legitimate participation on labour market
- Work take the form of career (promotion, increasing wage, competencies and responsibilities)

X

- Refusing the framing of work as career – work as a preparation for motherhood

Motherhood like radical life change

- Motherhood = in long term anticipated absence in the sphere of work
 1. The emphasis of positive aspects (the possibility of escape from work and be at rest) – for involuntary childless women the work may lose its attractiveness loss of motivation and willingness to invest in career, concentration to motherhood
 2. The emphasis of negative aspects (decrease of standard of living, risk of loss of employment or work position, risk of loss of social contacts) – intentionally prolonged childless period

The emphasis of positive aspects

„In the current situation, when I have been working in the same department eleven or twelve years, I would take it as a great liberation from work, because I don't want to go somewhere else and it's not like I don't like it there, but it's the same thing over and over and it doesn't fulfill me anymore and it's not as much fun anymore as it was when I started. So (it would be) a bit of an escape from the work, that I would finally have the peace, I would have a baby, I could play with it. And I would have three years of maternity leave if I could stay home and I wouldn't go to work, I wouldn't go back, (I'd like to) enjoy it, a bit.“

(Jana, secondary education , 32, involuntary childless)

Utilitarian meaning of work

- Expectation of altering previous job for less prestigious and less demanding job after becoming mother as a necessary precondition for harmonization of work and family
- Preparing for new situation while working at the previous job
Working after becoming mother with the motivation of keeping social contacts, supplement the family budget, have other source of identity beside motherhood
- These strategies are not perceived as the loss (but actual opportunity to act alternatively is very low)
- Strengthening of gender differences in paid work and family work: both partners participate on labour market with the differences in income and prestige of their jobs, woman is the only caregiver and housekeeper

Utilitarian meaning of work – quotations

„I came to ask if they don't need someone for computers, and they were just getting courses for young mothers started, so I got a lot out of it; it was enough for me, because I couldn't do it more than once a week in the morning because of the law, and finding a lady to babysit, that would have taken some time... I can't go back (to my original job), I spoke to the personnel director, who's the same age as me, she has a child now, but she goes to work from morning till evening. So I told her that if there were some part-time position open I would take it, but I'm not counting on it...“

(Markéta, graduate, 38 years old at first birth)

An effort to balance work and family (mothers who want to keep their previous job)

- An effort to fulfill contradictory demands of labour market and caring
- Dependency of woman's participation in labour market on the willingness of the employer, readiness of partner to be more involved into the care and domestic labour), grandparents to help with raising children

An effort to balance work and family – quotations

„I took Anna to Grandma’s, in the morning I breast fed her, then went traveling on business and in the afternoon I was back breast feeding her. It was kind of guerilla, terrible at the beginning. I worked when she slept, or at night; later a girl came to watch her, and now we do it like this: Anička goes to preschool 3 days out of the week and the girl comes and watches her 2 days. In April she’ll probably start going to the preschool every day, because there’s a lot of work right now, I have to work weekends and nights, and it makes my husband nervous and he says “On the weekend you should spend time with us”, and it’s true. So I’d like to get rid of the working weekends and do that even though I lose my maternity benefits. So it’s always a terrible decision, and when you have a kid, work, and the household, and some hobbies or something, and you get the feeling you’re neglecting one thing when you’re dealing with the other, it’s always hard to balance.“

birth)

(Marie, graduate, 34 years old at first

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Conclusion

- Anticipation of motherhood and connected long term absence in sphere of work influence fundamentally the woman's career and her deciding about motherhood
- These anticipation is general (from her perspective as well as from her employers) – without regard of actual motherhood
- Postponement of motherhood as a reaction to the consciousness of fundamental life change that will occur (→ the increase of lifelong childlessness)
- The meaning and importance of work varies during the woman's life course (x Hakim's typology of women)
- Women with the intention to maintain their job become hard-pressed because they have to deal with discrepancy between requirements of public and private sphere – Beck's theory of labour market)
- Minimal variance and flexibility of life at the parental leave strenghten traditional gender roles (that persists after parental leave) and dependency of women on men

Thank you for your attention

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