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## Book Review

### **Triin Roosalu and Dirk Hofäcker (eds.) (2016) *Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe: Theorizing Markets and Societies in the Post-Postsocialist Era*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. 383 pages.**

Work-life balance became an independent scientific field within sociology during the 1960-1970s as more and more women entered the labour market. In the beginning, theories and models mainly focused on Western countries and their circumstances. In recent years, however, studies have been published that attempt to tackle the special case of Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries (e.g. Glass and Fodor, 2011). The main goal of *Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe* edited by Triin Roosalu and Dirk Hofäcker, is to describe the processes that took place in these countries from a cross-national perspective and to analyse their social outcomes not only from the perspective of work-life balance but care, an under-researched area in post-socialist countries. Their main question is whether standard theoretical approaches or empirical evidence, mainly based in Western Europe, can be applied to CEE countries.

The book offers a comprehensive approach; the authors examine all the post-socialist countries without presenting them as completely homogeneous. They not only look at them from a comparative perspective, but discuss (some of) them as stand-alone cases while building on Bohle and Greskovits's typology of post-communist political economies (neoliberal, embedded neoliberal regime, and neo-corporatist countries) (Bohle and Greskovits, 2012). The four main topics the authors cover are: family policies and norms, women's participation in the labour market, the balance between parenthood and paid work, and occupational and social mobility. As the authors emphasize, the most important conclusions of this volume are the following: there are intragroup differences between CEE countries and there are more similarities between Eastern and Western Europe than previously assumed. Furthermore, regional norms about parenthood have to be taken into account as the theories are based on Western European women's experiences, which indicates that a new theoretical background is needed. Lastly, findings on Eastern countries can still be ephemeral, given the high dynamics of changes the region is going through.

Among family policies of post-socialist welfare states, the most important to understanding the dynamics of female employment are the public policies regulating parental leave and childcare. The first chapter, written by Sonja Blum, focuses on the effect of the financial and economic crisis on family policies as a part of the comparative approach. The current categorizations of welfare regimes (like Esping-Andersen's) are also criticized for not being able to recognize the prevalence of hybrid forms. As the families' reaction to the crisis could be an important element of the comparison between existing typologies and recent trends of family policies, it is slightly problematic that the most recent data on family spending is from 2010. The same concern applies to childcare services. In that case, the most recent data dates back to 2006 (and as the authors point out, makes no distinction between part-time

and full-time services). In terms of family spending (compared to the GDP of each country), the CEE group lags behind due to the cutbacks during the 1990s. Five of them can be categorized as low spenders (Poland, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Romania and Slovakia), and five as medium spenders (Bulgaria, Slovenia, Lithuania, Estonia and Hungary).

In the third chapter, written by Triin Roosalu, Marion Pajumets and Leeni Hansson, experts attempt to compare a social-democratic (Norway) and a post-socialist (Estonia) country regarding paternity leave. After outlining the main framings of Norwegian and Estonian research reports and academic articles published between 1998 and 2009, it becomes clear that there are no radical differences between the two countries as the texts focus on four key elements: gender equality, father-child relationship, choice and flexibility, family strength.

The next chapter's main question is why second birth rates are more affected by uncertain economic circumstances than first birth rates in Eastern and Southern Europe. According to Jan Van Bavel and Joanna Róžańska-Putek's hypotheses, interplay can be found between economic uncertainty and cultural norms: the cultural value tied to parenthood still motivates couples to become parents, but the generally unfavourable labour market conditions prevent them from having a second child. The method used to investigate this question was a multilevel analysis, which included an individual, a regional and a country level interpretation among 21 European countries. The results show that the effects of subjective economic uncertainty on childbirth depend on the regional definition of adulthood – how important the status of parenthood is considered to be in order to count as a fully-fledged adult. The negative effect of economic uncertainty on second birth rates is stronger in the richer (northern) regions and countries, but higher GDP is also associated with higher second birth rates.

Part two deals with gender motives in the labour market where female employment and parental leave are the main questions of discussion. This part aims to differentiate the post-socialist countries' attitude to women's employment from different perspectives. During the years of socialism full employment facilitated women's entrance into the labour market, however state policies aiming at familization fostered retreats for a longer periods of time. Nevertheless, parents having children under three have a higher risk of unemployment and the chance grows linearly with the number of children.

The 5th chapter written by Ursula Bazant takes female employment in the European Union into an overall account. Examining the tendencies for all 28 member states, women's share in the labour market shows two different tendencies. In the old EU countries women more often react to unemployment or to family policies by taking involuntary part-time work, while in the CEE countries women tend to be excluded from the labour market. The level of education and field of industry influence employment for both sexes, but the number and age of children have a negative effect only on women's labour market situation. The employment rates for women with one child or none are almost the same in the 15-64 cohorts, but in the case of three or more children employment rates drop steeply. A similar effect cannot be detected in male employment rates. This trend is true for all countries investigated.

Family policies undermine the above described tendencies where women can re-enter the labour market.

Chapter 6 takes a closer look at the employment situation of working and homemaking young adult women in Hungary and in Romania written by Reka Geambasu. While there are certain differences between the two countries' transformation, the overall decrease of female employment and declining fertility rates suggest similar tendencies. The difference between the access to higher education in Hungary and Romania could lead to the difference of the gender distribution in the service sectors. As a common feature, the availability of part-time jobs does not have the same meaning as in Western Europe. In Hungary and Romania part-time employment would not be a solution to find a better work-life balance, but would put more pressure on women, as the household still remains a female sphere.

Parental employment patterns in the Czech Republic were examined by Lenka Fermánková, Blanka Plasová and Jiří Vyhliďal. They explored the influence of parenthood in the context of work-life reconciliation policy measures. The questions of familization or defamilization are rooted in the cultural norms and in public policies as well. Re-entering the labour market later increases the risk of unemployment. In the case of single parents the difficulties of maintaining the work-life balance are the same. The parental allowance system in the Czech Republic was designed to be universal instead of income-related, consequently those having lower incomes or being unemployed tend to choose the allowance for a longer period. This means that staying out of the labour market can be a reasonable economic decision for them. It has a considerable withdrawing effect on female employment. Prevalent gender norms of full-time motherhood influence individuals in the Czech Republic, while public policies do not encourage fathers' participation in parental leave.

Tatjana Bajuk Sencar examines the topic of gender segregation in post-socialist Slovenia with qualitative interviews. Within twenty-five years of transition, wages of highly educated employees have risen significantly; however, sectoral segregation is prevalent and hinders both the increase of female employment and the improvement of their working conditions. Interviews conducted with women working in the retail sector and with trade union officials have introduced a wide picture of working conditions. The liberation of working hours has made work-life balance harder to achieve as open hours and shifts became longer. Moreover, the unfair handling of the overtime work and the increased expectations for effectiveness also worsened the situation of the interviewed group. Despite the fact that trade unions and legal codes have become active to relieve the tension, the precariat situation of women has not changed.

The third part of the edited volume explores the issue of reconciliation between parenthood and paid work, and particularly maternal employment in post socialist countries. The studies depict the patterns in the division of paid and unpaid work, childbearing behaviours of employed women and the impact of care breaks on mothers' occupational mobility.

The effect of state policies on maternal employment in eight post-socialist EU member countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) was examined by Jana Javornik. The various combinations of

family policies offer a framework containing four types, such as explicit and implicit familialism, de-familialism and optional de-familialism based on Leitner's work (Leitner, 2003). Analysing the data from Mutual Information System on Social Protection (MISSOC), Eurydice, OECD and UNICEF databases have made it possible to create spider charts that depict the different spheres of childcare policies. As the accessibility of free childcare opportunities varies from country to country, and the allowance system is diverse too, while the type of familialism is different as well. This leads to different outcomes in terms of mothers' employment. The findings support the fact that the moderate duration and the affordable and accessible childcare enhance women's return to labour market.

Jan Rasmus Riebling, Rumiana Stoilova and Dirk Hofäcker aims to explain the phenomenon why household related tasks are said to be a female 'privilege' based on the analysis of habits and frames of social norms. The main focus of the research was on post socialist countries such as Hungary and Bulgaria and conservative Western European countries like France and Germany. Data from the Generation and Gender Survey (2004) demonstrated that life course patterns of men and women and the normative expectations have national specificities. The paternalistic value orientation is more prevalent in the post socialist countries presumably because the tradition of full time motherhood determinative in these countries as well. As the author suggests *"Therefore, the question "Who does the dishes?" seems to be answered mostly by tradition: "Those who have always done it."* (p. 227)

In the following chapter by Anna Matysiak and Daniele Vignoli employed women's motherhood behaviours were examined in Italy and Poland. Several similarities can be captured, for example by means of low rates of cohabitation, marital disruption and non-marital childbearing. The researchers expected a solid conflict between fertility and women's employment connected to institutional and cultural circumstances. The connection between women's behaviours on employment and fertility were compared around the birth of the first and the second child to see how country-specific situations affect women's decisions on employment and childbearing. The findings show dissimilarities between the two countries, staying employed is more important for Polish women, which may be explained by financial reasons, as Polish salaries still do not reach EU standards.

Going on with the question of maternity leave, an Estonian study by Triin Roosalu and Kadri Täht shows that staying at home with the child for more than half a year significantly decreases the possibility to stay in the same job after their return to work. The present research shows an unforeseen result as a longer period of staying home with a child may even increase opportunities for receiving a better position. The writers suggest that perhaps only women who feel secure in their labour market position stay at home for a longer period of time or they may be aware that it is hard to get back to their previous positions as organizations change rapidly. These alternatives make mothers looking for a better, or at least a new job after maternity leave, so they are potentially mobile in the labour market.

The last part of the book explores occupational and social mobility, starting with a comprehensive study on CEE countries earning inequalities within dual-earner couples. Martina Mysíková conducted the research based on EU-SILC data of 2009,

giving an overview on all European countries. She emphasized that the informal economy can influence men's results more often. The findings show that the investigated within-couple earning inequality is relatively low in Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic and higher in Germany and Austria. The inequalities were low when women had higher educational levels than their spouses and the couples had no children.

Still investigating the different gender gaps, the next study, by Eve-Liis Roosmaa and Kadri Aavik, compared Estonia and other European countries by participation in adult learning. Different welfare regimes were studied and the results indicate in general that women participate in adult learning to a greater extent than men. The researchers assume that women more often take part in non-formal and formal adult learning in Estonia because of the stronger expectations for women to gain higher education in order to compete in the labour market.

Educational pathways and gender inequalities were examined in the Estonian labour market in a broader sense, in which the main questions focused on horizontal and vertical gender segregation and their development. Ellu Saar and Jelena Helemäe used six categories of educational level from primary education to higher education. The conclusion shows that girls had a higher chance of reaching higher education because girls choose the general school as secondary education while boys more often decide to attend vocational schools. Concentrating on the labour market, the educational advantage of women helps them to secure senior positions but the glass ceiling can be observed in both Soviet and post-Soviet Estonia. Keeping managerial positions is more common among men by returning to higher education or even without higher education - as a new path to securing men's positions.

Female employees' problems were examined in Poland by interviewing leaders of women's movements to find out whether the question of gender equality in the labour market can be treated as a serious case. The author, Sławomira Kamińska-Berezowska showed that in Poland, women are more affected by unemployment or by working only part-time. Through the growing number of one-parent families, the feminization of poverty has also been present and the limited availability of contraceptives and strict reproduction laws have made the problem more visible, which motivated the advance of the Polish women's movement. Female leaders said that women have learned passivity: they are just a 'reserve army of employees' so they are easily losing their jobs based on the economic situation and the reconciliation of family roles with careers also raises problems. The interviewees had different notions on the usefulness of trade unions, but all in all, they saw them positively. Concerning social mobility and occupational problems, the fourth - and last - part of the book offered an in-depth picture of CEE countries, which gives a strong background for further research.

To sum up, *Rethinking Gender, Work and Care in a New Europe* has reached its aim by giving a comprehensive first insight to the case of CEE countries with highlights on post-socialist relations and on country-specific factors that have been neglected by former researches. Although in some cases the data used by the researchers dated back to several years, even a decade, this book starts answering

questions about Central and Eastern European countries' gender, work and care connections and provides a solid background for exploring new questions in the field.

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