

Abstract of a paper proposed for

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Title of paper:

Patterns of Work-Care Relationship in the Central and Eastern Europe

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Childcare policies have been recently perceived as one of the main instruments of state's influence on gender relations and women's economic autonomy (Daly 1994; Esping-Andersen 1999; Lewis 2000; Mahon 2002). While family policy or gender regimes in the Western world have received a lot of attention already, the situation in the newly democratised postcommunist countries has remained under-analysed. The picture of postcommunist countries is thus often one-sided and continues as following: during socialism, women were encouraged to join the labour force. Special incentives included publicly-provided affordable childcare services. After the collapse of communism, governments in most of those newly democratised states assumed that society would opt for a male-breadwinner model. Therefore, they for instance started to close many of the childcare centres, especially nurseries, and withdrew from supporting them financially (Ferge 1992; Makkai 1994; Heinen 2000; Haney 2002).

These processes were put into practice and no doubt those countries have a lot in common. Thus, postcommunist welfare states were treated as a monolith and the common features were emphasized (Hantrais 2004; Pascall and Lewis 2004). Studies that have started to deal with the possible diversity, are still quite rare, usually focus on parental leaves provisions (omitting the question of childcare services) and take two-three cases. At the same time, the comparison is often not systemised enough and the differences between these countries are underspecified.

The aim of this paper is to try to deal with the problems of research on postcommunist countries. We decided to compare work and care regimes in the eight new European Union

member states: the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia during the period 1989-2004. These eight countries are from the postcommunist group, they were facing similar challenges within the same timeframes, each of them was regarded as successful in their ‘unification with the West’, and they gained the EU membership at the same time. This paper takes the fuzzy-set approach to comparative studies, as this helps to specify the differences, and is especially useful for the medium-n comparisons. This also allows for tracing the dynamics of changes thorough the years and opens the way for acknowledging new combinations of policies. This is also the attempt to overcome the problem of using the Western analytical framework with defined concepts and welfare policy models to Eastern Europe, i.e. concept-driven analysis that might take some important elements out of the picture.

The variety of different mixes of childcare policies has already been described and analysed (Polakowski and Szelewa 2006), roughly grouping them into four clusters alongside the family-state-market triangle. It took into account state policies concerning parental leave and childcare arrangements. This time, however, an important dimension is added to the analysis – the rates of female participation in the labour force. First, this is a crucial dimension for comparative analyses of gender inequalities on the labour market. Second, this enables the examination of the possible impact of a particular set of childcare policies on the female access to labour market, and thus, to commodification. Third, comparative analysis of such dimensions makes it possible to express the *differences* between the 8 new European Union members with this respect. Therefore, this allows for more meaningful analysis of not only policy models, but *regimes* of work-care relationships. Importantly, with the use of the fuzzy set ideal types approach the paper will present the dynamics of changes through different phases of transformation and consolidation of work and care regimes in these countries. In other words, the changes in regimes will be presented both synchronically and diachronically.

The importance of the fuzzy set theory in the context of this paper is at least twofold. First, the innovative character of this type of analysis stems from the fact it allows for assessing both, the qualitative (in kind) but also quantitative (with regard to the degree) membership in a given set (Ragin 2000). Second, the just mentioned properties of the fuzzy sets approach can be successfully used for assessing conformity of cases to ideal types. For the analysis Following feminist scholarship on welfare policies, but also other comparative studies of family policies, we include the following dimensions. Relating to parental leave provisions: the universality (the principles of access) and generosity (the duration and the

level of payments), for analysing public childcare provisions – extensiveness (coverage of children in particular age-group) and quality of the care. The last dimension, as described above, is female labour force that will be expressed by the participation rates in the labour market.

We expect to cluster the countries into four regimes of work and care. This will centre around the question of burden of childcare not only within the state-market-family triangle, but also with the references of within-family share of both: care responsibility and the income gaining. Initially, we identified four broad regimes. These are explicit familism, implicit familism, female mobilising and comprehensive support types. The countries are clustered as follows: the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Slovenia in the explicit familism policy model; Estonia and Latvia the female mobilising type policy; Lithuania and Hungary pursuing the childcare policies typical of the comprehensive support model; and finally the childcare policy in Poland resembles characteristics of the implicit familism model.

The work will follow in several steps. First, some points of the theoretical discussion concerning comparative approach to childcare policy will be presented, closed by the choice of the policy dimensions for comparison. Second section of the paper will describe the fuzzy-set method. Third, some space is devoted to the justification of the sets calibration (establishing the critical points for the set membership). Fourth, we present the empirical findings and will try to draw conclusions concerning the possible regularities, the potential for clustering the countries and this way coming back to the theoretical problems.

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