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State socialism

Dismantling the male-breadwinner family model in Central and Eastern Europe?

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State socialism: Dismantling the male-breadwinner family model in Central and Eastern Europe?

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ABSTRACT

State socialism has undeniably shaped institutional legacies of post-socialist EU member states; not only had it produced extraordinary leap in terms of female employment, it also heralded significant change in the role of the state in the family. Therefore, post-socialist countries are often homogenised - not only historically ("former Soviet Bloc", "post-socialist"/"Eastern" group), but also on the ground of gender politics ("neo-/re-familialistic"). This paper challenges such overly simplistic characterizations and offers a more nuanced assessment via analysis of their socialist past. It explores the specificity of socialist experiences and explains how this period heralded change in the role of the state in the family, in social organisation of care, and how gender roles were inscribed in different institutional settings and practices within societies. It demonstrates that similar history notwithstanding, countries adopted different models of socialism, with different roles and influence of organised politics, as well as interventions via public policies. They endorsed and legitimized different "ethos" of gendered norms and practices, which broadly followed three trajectories: that of familialism in the Eastern Bloc, where states relied on families to produce childcare; that of liberal state in Poland, where parents were left with no public support; and that of defamilialism in Slovenia, committed to female continuous employment. This paper demonstrates that countries departed state socialism with mixed legacies and collective experiences about social organisation of care and female employment, and thus invites perspectives for further academic debate about the "common socialist legacy" and distinct "Eastern welfare regime type".

Key words: *female employment, childcare, family policy, state socialism, Central and Eastern Europe*

1. Introduction

Access to paid employment has conspicuous economic, political, cultural and social implications. However, women's access to independent income is still largely structured by widespread gendered division of caring, whereby women continue to carry the bulk of childcare and housework.

Relative to Western capitalist countries, post-socialist EU member states have been distinguished by comparatively high employment rates of women in full-time jobs since the 1950s. Before the severe labour market disruptions in the early 1990s, these ranged between 85 and 90 per cent, with practically no cross-country variation, and with fairly narrow gender gaps (e.g., Unicef 1999; author 2000). This was followed by a common decline in female employment in the early years of the 1990s. However, in retrospect, this was only a tidal wave, a blip of a readjustment during the most radical socioeconomic transformations (e.g., Eurostat 2005; Unicef 1999; author 2010). By 2000, total employment rates of women in full-time jobs were, on average, higher than in other EU countries (Eurostat 2005; Eurostat 2008; author 2010). Moreover, women have continued to engage in work on a full-time basis, regardless of their marital or parental status (e.g., Tang and Cousins 2004: 532; Rosenfeld and Birkelund 1995; author 2000, 2010).

Scholarship on female employment largely relates female employment trends in post-socialist countries to their 'exceptional' history and socialist legacy. It generally argues that the socialist state eroded the bonds of family life, freeing women to join the labour force by providing generous childcare policies (e.g., Einhorn 1993; van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2001: 5; Gal and Kligman 2000; Pascall and Lewis 2004: 375-7; Pascall and Kwak 2005: 29).

This article contends that such, seemingly straightforward relationship, is somewhat deceptive. These countries had indeed followed the programmes of the socialist revolutionary transformation of institutional order for almost five decades, which undeniably shaped their institutional legacies. But it is often overlooked that they did not enter the 'new' era with a common legacy or collective experiences about female employment or social organisation of childcare. This paper ponders such perception and highlights how post-socialist EU member states are largely 'homogenised' in welfare state studies not only historically ("post-communist/former Soviet bloc"), but also on the grounds of female employment ("Eastern group of full-time employment"). By and large, these countries get lost in the "Eastern/post-communist country group (e.g., Rostgaard 2004; Hantrais 2004; Saraceno and Keck 2008: 63).

Thus far, only a few studies have explored the issue of "representation" and raised questions about validity of such clustering (e.g., Fenger 2007; Bohle & Greskovits 2007; Torres et al. 2007; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; author 2010, 2012; Thévenon 2011; Roosalu 2012). Including a larger number of post-socialist countries, these largely challenge their overly simplistic characterization in earlier literature and suggest that post-socialist countries have developed in different directions. Albeit they are not classified into systematic typologies, authors find countries representing three substantially different regime types in the array of work-family policy: between 2000 and 2008, Slovenia and Lithuania incentivised women's continuous employment and gender equity, and had provided gender-neutral parental leave with daddy quotas as well as public childcare options. By contrast, Hungary, Czech Republic and Estonia

supported and reinforced conventional gendered caregiving; they financially supported stay-at-home mothers, whilst Poland, and to some extent also Slovakia and Latvia, left parents nearly without public support.

Previous studies convincingly show that existing research suffers from three serious shortcomings. First, institutional changes in these countries garnered much scholarly interest in the early 1990s, whereby the literature largely conveys a sense of fundamental change between the socialist past and post-socialist present. In this literature, generalizations are common that countries had moved in the same, neo-familialistic direction after the collapse of state socialism, and that "the winds of change" evoked "a renaissance" of traditional gender roles and neo-familialistic cultural practices (e.g., Funk 1993; Narusk and Kandolin 1997; Gal and Kligman 2000; Unicef 1999; Rostgaard 2004; Pascall and Lewis 2004: 375-7; Pascall and Kwak 2005: 29; Saraceno and Keck 2008). This scholarship suggests that increased traditionalism in attitudes, practices and policies had gained momentum when national economies plunged into recession during the early post-socialist period. To stabilise national economies in the context of global economy and overall austerity in fiscal policies, government officials indeed introduced a number of economic austerity programmes and measures, which generated overall retrenchment (e.g., Deacon 1992, 2000; Barr 1994; Müller 2000, Mrak et al. 2004). Policy change was dynamic and spurred severe cuts in family policies in most countries; lacking public subsidies, public childcare services plummeted, in parallel with decreasing female employment rates (e.g., Unicef 1999; Fajth 1999; UNDP 1999; author 2000, 2010). Gender theorists relate such trends to "ascendancy of liberalism" (e.g., Gal and Kligman 2000; Rostgaard 2004). They maintain that it was the ideological climate of this period that *pushed* women out of the labour force, with "returning women to the 'private sphere' (being) a central mechanism for transformation from 'full employment' to a quasi-capitalist system" (Funk 1993: 2).

However, this literature explicitly focused on the 1990s, and critics recognise that much of the writing was premature, reflecting the period of "exceptional" (King 2002: 5) and "extraordinary politics" (Balcerowicz 1995 in: Feldmann 2006: 846). At that time, countries were building up the conditions to "go back to normalcy" (Kovács 2002: 176) and "to enter the European Union" (e.g., Manning 2004). As Esping-Andersen (1996: 27) put it, the "stresses and strains of transition have rendered these countries a veritable laboratory of experimentation". Therefore, the critics maintain that conclusions about institutional change require the perspective of a distance, but also the comparison with the socialist past, in order to evaluate any path-breaking changes and their significance (e.g., van der Lippe and Fodor 1998: 132; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Ray 2009: 327; author 2010; Roosalu 2012).

Second and related, existing knowledge is largely skewed in the direction of countries that received more scholarly attention, i.e. Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland. That opens the issue of 'representation'. With reference to the studies of institutional change over the 2000s, these represent the *familialistic* policy spectrum (e.g., Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Motiejūnaitė 2008; author 2010, 2012; Thévenon 2011). They are characterized by long childcare leaves and short supply of public childcare, thus reinforcing the conventional gender division of labour (e.g., Leitner 2003). Their policy models mirror in a conspicuous fall in employment rates of women with preschool children, showing the lowest maternal employment rates at about 50 per cent

between 2000 and 2008, relative to 90 per cent in Slovenia and Lithuania (e.g., Eurostat 2005, author 2010). However, the literature largely overlooks other countries and country-specific idiosyncratic details, which implies limited knowledge about any internal diversity.

Third, scholars miss several interesting aspects on how the "ethos" of gendered norms and practices (Hobson et al. 2011: 173) and female employment have been shaped and legitimized, and whether, and how, policy discursive mechanisms were framed during state socialism. It is therefore indispensable in enhancing the interpretative capacities of theory on path dependency/change and convergence/divergence in social organisation of care and female employment to put this interrelationship into a historical perspective.

This paper is an attempt to do just that. The paper highlights the specificity of socialist experiences, and explains why, and how, this period heralded change in the role of the state in the family, social organisation of care, and how gender roles were inscribed in different institutional settings and practices within societies. It shows what constitutes 'socialist legacy' in terms of work and care practices, and ponders conceptual fundamentals of post-socialist dual-earner family models in eight post-socialist EU member states. Thereby, it offers an opportunity for a more nuanced assessment of a larger number of countries and the reconsideration of the "post-socialist regime type" via analysis of their socialist past. To better understand their socialist past, and to tease out any country distinctions, this paper makes a historical scan of policy and employment developments between the 1950s and the 1980s. Because comparable data on socialist past is scarce, it does not explore in any depth employment rates or policy provisions, or the part played by policy actors and social institutions. Instead, this paper systematically reviews earlier literature and single-country studies that covered female employment and childcare under state socialism, in order to come to some understanding of the nature of ideas and rhetoric that was used to make the case for both women's (full-time) employment and policy development during state socialism. To ascertain the extent to which national government programmes considered the uneven capacity of mothers to invest in paid employment, national information and evidence is combined and contrasted. The paper first considers the emergence of a dual-earner family model in the early post-war period. Then, it fleshes out the ideologies and normative fundamentals framing government programmes and policy initiatives. Drawing on these, it shows how countries responded to the tensions of dual-earner families and maternal employment, focusing on policy areas of childcare leave and service provision. The paper concludes with a critical reflection about the 'common socialist legacy' thesis and directions for future research.

1.1 Country selection

Post-socialist transition to market economy happened in about thirty countries at a roughly the same time, i.e. between late 1980s and early 1990s (Feldmann 2006: 831). This paper, however, is an eight country analysis of public policy-employment nexus, comprising the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. If any number of states among Central and Eastern European countries forms a somewhat coherent post-socialist group, it would be these eight (von Wahl 2008: 27). Moreover, they represent different socialist regime types. First seven formed the Eastern Bloc[1] and pursued the "Soviet model" of state socialism, whilst Slovenia was a constituent republic of Yugoslavia. Among these, only Estonia, Latvia and

Lithuania were constituent republics of the Soviet Union, while the Czech Republic and Slovakia (then Czechoslovakia), Poland and Hungary were 'independent' states since 1918 (e.g., Berglund et al. 2004; Motiejūnaitė 2008: 19). That notwithstanding, the Soviet Union had much political and economic influence and control over its Eastern Bloc possessions, and all seven countries pursued the 'Soviet', 'totalitarian' state socialism (e.g., Fuchs and Klingemann 2002: 28). In contrast, Slovenia adopted a "softer" socialist system of workers' self-management (Adam 1992; Kardelj 1977). There, elements of both cultural and social pluralism (more on that later) existed since the mid-1950s, with organized grass-roots support for women (Toš 1999: 219). These two socialist types reflect two different autocratic regimes, with different roles of the state and influence of organised politics. This alone implies curious internal diversity, which in itself makes an interesting study case as current knowledge falls short on reflecting both internal diversity and the socialist past.

2. Emergence of the 'adult worker' family model

Scholars on the gendered welfare state maintain that the welfare state confines mothers/wives into the home, while it drives men into the public sphere (e.g., Eisenstein 1983; Gordon 1990). Such social arrangements lead to 'public patriarchy' of men, who use the state to dictate policies (Eisenstein 1983: 41-58). To reinforce gender division of labour, the state employs two mechanisms: (the ideology of) the family wage, which limits alternative means of independence of women (e.g., Land 1980; Jenson 1986), and the ideology of motherhood, which "persuaded married women that their role in the home was of national importance and that motherhood was their primary duty" (Lewis 1980: 224). The socialist states indeed used these two instruments, but in order to secure the labour force necessary for the post-war reconstruction, as well as for meeting the labour demands related to the rapid industrialization.

Women participated in the labour markets worldwide before World War Two, mainly to generate additional household income (e.g., Jogan 2006). In the selected countries, women entered the labour force during the period of rapid industrialization in the late 1920s and early 1930s (e.g., Jogan 2006; Motiejūnaitė and Kravchenko 2008: 36). At that time, mothers accounted for about one third of all gainfully employed women in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, with their rates further increasing during both wars (e.g., Jogan 2006). However, the big acceleration in female employment started only in the mid-1950s, about ten years earlier than in the West (van der Lippe and Van Dijk 2001: 5). Namely, the socialist states, especially the Soviet Union, suffered disproportionately more human casualties during the war than other countries (e.g., Rummel 1990; Ellis 1993). Moreover, the pace of economic growth in the aftermath of World War Two was rapid, and growing demand for labour force produced extraordinary leap in female employment.

To secure the labour force necessary for the post-war reconstruction and to meet the labour demands related to the rapid industrialization, the socialist states largely utilised public policies, in order to erode financial viability of the male-breadwinner family model (e.g., Ferge 1979; Szalai and Orosz 1992; Einhorn 1993; Kotowska 1996). First, ideology of the family wage was abolished.[2] The wages were set so low that few families could have survived on one income, and mandatory individual taxation of income with high income tax load was introduced. Second, by the mid-1950s, participation in the labour force determined both the distribution of financial

resources, i.e. women's prospects for gaining (adequate) income during their working lives and into retirement, as well as access to social rights, such as housing and health care (e.g., Pascall and Manning 2000: 248). Enterprise welfare became the primary source of welfare over local and central government services. Housing stock was controlled by enterprises, social security managed by trade unions, and health care available at work (author 2010). Holidays, food and other consumer items were provided by employers and trade unions (e.g., Pascall and Manning 2000: 248). Occupational welfare as the main source of welfare and the economic necessity drove women across socio-economic strata to increase participation in the labour force. To generate sufficient income, they largely entered the labour force on a full-time basis; part-time employment was low, regardless of women's marital or parental status (Rosenfeld and Birkelund 1995). If it existed, it was generally involuntary, a result of lower labour demand, except for persons in school, partially retired and those with health problems (Blossfeld and Drobnič 2001: 39).

The shift to full employment was extraordinarily brisk and all-embracing, with continuous lifetime full-time employment becoming the norm for both men and women (Motiejūnaitė 2008: 19). By the end of the 1950s, work was both moral obligation, a duty to the state, as well as essential source of welfare. But was women's new economic status accompanied by policy logics? And if, how did the states accommodate emerging new needs of now typically dual-earner families?

3. The gendered socialist states – embarking on different paths?

The literature on the gendered welfare state argues that states via public policies determine gender roles, and hence women's (especially mothers') employment. It fleshes out the ideology of separate spheres of private and public, through which the welfare state reinforces the "culture of [gendered] social obligation" for care (Daly 2002: 262). State's normative assumptions about the gender division of labour underpin public policies, through which the state reinforces women's and men's roles as carers and breadwinners (e.g. Gordon 1990; Land 1980; McIntosh 1978). As a whole, "welfare policy functions to reinforce the entire social system of women's subordination, particularly their construction within the family and dependence on men" (Gordon 1990: 19). Thereby, the welfare state is "not just a set of services; it is also a set of ideas about society, about the family, and – not least importantly, about women who have a centrally important role within the family, as its linchpin" (Wilson 1977: 9).

The socialist states, too, had demarcated the moral notions about what the 'good' citizenship entailed, and women's participation in waged employment was only one of the duties the state ascribed to women; the production of more workers through motherhood was the other (e.g., Einhorn 1993; Gal and Kligman 2000). The states laid different foundations for 'proper' gender roles, using ideas and rhetoric to make a case for women's employment as well as for policy change.

Their responds to labour force/demographic needs had put them on different paths. In countries that pursued 'totalitarian' 'real' 'Soviet' type of socialism, state powers were oppressively used, having challenged the dual-earner family model several times. Normative assumptions about gender division of labour shifted between the 'pro-workerist' and 'pro-natalist'; women were

confronted with social and economic upheavals and maternal ideology competed with the duty of labour (e.g., Kirschenbaum 2001; Bicskei 2006). On the one hand, in times of labour shortages and economic growth, states committed to full employment. They actively promoted participation in productive employment, and both men and women were understood to owe the state a special patriotic duty to work (Pascall and Manning 2000; Pascall and Lewis 2004: 375). Government officials would employ an "arsenal of scientific techniques and procedures", in order to promote a dual-earner family model, with an emerging image of women as a "new socialist man" (Gal and Kligman 2000: 47). They launched a "supermoms image" (Dillaway and Pare 2008), and the image of "heroine workers-mothers" (Kollontai 1982: 15) became the cultural ideal underpinning of the gender division of labour (e.g., Einhorn 1993; Haney 1997, 2002). On the other hand, in times of economic downturns and demographic crisis, i.e. between the 1960s and early 1970s, the states would employ public policies that reinstated the ideal of the 'motherhood' as the primary duty of women to the state, now explicitly promoting full-time housewifery.[3] As explained further below, governments used the supply and allocation of childcare services and regulated provision, in order to address the demographic needs and economic demand (e.g., Einhorn 1993: 5, 13).

In Poland, for example, drastic cuts were made in the sector of light industry during the Gomulka period (between 1960 and 1970). When female unemployment emerged for the first time, the Polish state encouraged women to retreat from the labour market and return to (cheaper) family care work (e.g., Heinen and Wator 2006: 192). Practically no childcare facilities were established, and those operating catered for less than 30 per cent of children aged 3-6 years (Heinen and Wator 2006: 194; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). Between 1970 and 1975, when the investments returned and the demand for labour increased, female labour force was 'remobilized', and investment in public childcare increased. As discussed further below, similar trends were found in other six countries in the Eastern Bloc, whereby the states would have used familialistic policies according to their labour of demographic needs (for detailed overviews see, for example, Haney 2002 for Hungary; Domsch et al. 2003 and Einhorn 1993 for the whole Eastern Bloc). All in all, women were the "reserve army labour" (Van der Lippe and Fodor 1998: 133), the 'disposable workers', who were periodically employed and then laid off. Just like women in Western capitalist countries, they were the last to get hired but the first to get fired (Heinen and Wator 2006: 196).

In contrast, Slovenia showed trends of continuous and full-time employment during socialist period, regardless of women's marital or parental status (Jogan 2001: 237). That notwithstanding, the Slovenian women, too, were laden with expectations about 'proper' social role, rooted in male-centred tradition (Jogan 2004). But the following two elements left the Slovenian government officials with less room to manoeuvre during economic downturns, and hence with stark choices about whether or not to support female employment. First, women's equality "with men in all fields of state, economic, and social life" was enshrined in the Constitution in 1946, with access to paid employment becoming both a statutory duty and the right of both men and women (Jogan 2006).[4] Second, Slovenia adopted a self-managing system in 1950 (Kardelj 1977; Adam 1992). This was a socialist version of democracy "from the bottom", involving the citizens in the realm of formal political debate; hence, the role of the state was not as strong as in the Eastern Bloc (e.g., Jogan 2004; 2006). Although the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party

was also obvious, the Slovenian 'civic' organisations were more involved in the policy-making as legitimate social actors between the 1950s and late 1980s than in the Eastern Bloc.

Two 'civil' society organisations played a critical role in ensuring that gender equality (as a declared social objective) was (f)actually realized (Jogan 1990: 219): the Socialist Alliance of Working People[5] and the Alliance of Women's Associations (the Conference for the Social Activity of Women since 1961)[6]. Both were officially recognized by the Communist Party, and had systematically promoted equal opportunities and gender equality. Their continuous pressures between the 1950s and 1980s propelled the issue of state responsibility for the welfare of children and families into the realm of formal, political debate. By promoting access to paid employment as the civil right, they played a key role in campaigning for party platforms and policy measures, accentuating gender-neutral de-familializing childcare policies as key structural condition for women's access to paid employment, and hence their autonomy (Jogan 1990: 219).[7]

4. Responding to the tensions of work and family

Increasing full-time employment of women ultimately led to their economic empowerment, and, accompanied by a constant rise of their educational level, to their (financial) autonomy (e.g., Pascall and Lewis 2004: 375; Jogan 2006). However, whilst women's employment may have altered the terms under which they entered and negotiated family relationships, the prevailing expectations and norms continued to prescribe their dual responsibility as both earners and household managers/carers; namely, the image of the man as both waged workforce and the father was neither promoted nor widely shared (e.g., Einhorn 1993: 5; Gal and Kligman 2000: 72).[8] Household was considered 'private', and family obligations socially largely undervalued. Despite sporadic state attempts to socialize household work, women retained almost sole responsibility (Gal and Kligman 2000).[9] Engaging in dual roles as a full-time paid worker and a full-time mother-carer-household manager, the socialist women were overburdened (Gal and Kligman 2000: 53).

But, as women's employment and educational attainment matured, the demand for child care inevitably grew across the region (e.g., Jogan 2006). Familial care became decreasingly realistic because the pool of available carers shrank – potential carers (i.e. grandmothers) were very likely to be in the labour markets themselves. With increasing numbers of women in full-time employment, the demands for the adjustment of family responsibilities to women's working duties began to grow (e.g., Jogan 2001: 237).

4.1 Institutional contexts framing national policies on childcare

Socialist states did not build their childcare policies from scratch; during the early period of state socialism, they had largely used the inherited social programmes as the basis for further policy developments, and their general contours of childcare policies were fairly similar (e.g., Stark and Bruszt 2001; Szelewa 2007). Early government programmes largely promoted the idea of 'socially responsible parenthood'. To improve general health of the population and alleviate the problems of poverty and infant mortality, states had first extended pre-war maternity leave and introduced a more generous system of care for mothers and babies, for example, public distribution of milk for the babies, food coupons, and cash benefits to employed parents (e.g., Kollontai 1982: 12-15; Szelewa 2007; Jogan 2001). However, pressing demands for improved living and working

conditions propelled the issue of work-care integration onto their political agendas, and made public childcare a matter of (more extensive) public intervention in the 1960s.

To reduce the friction between paid employment and family life, government officials found ideological 'inspiration' in Engels' book *The origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (1884)[1942]. In his work, Engels argued that women would become equal to men, i.e. freed to participate in the labour market, if mothers were no longer responsible for child care, whereby the gender division of domestic work remained seen as "natural". Government officials used this idea to expand systems of social security, and to introduce new childcare policies that would support mothers in employment (e.g., Kantorová and Stašová 1999; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). More dynamic policy change occurred in the 1960s, by states gradually extending maternity leave and installing extended childcare leave schemes (Deacon et al. 1992; Einhorn 1993; Kocourková 2002). On the other hand, public childcare services would not be extended until the more prosperous 1970s and 1980s, when the foundations for different systems of public childcare service provision were laid.[10]

4.1.1 Policy area of child-related care leave

In countries of the Eastern Bloc, decreasing birth rates and a predominant one-child family pattern in the 1960s raised qualms in the governing circles - expressed in the slogan *"The Nation is Dying"* (Gal and Kligman 2000: 28) – especially in the light of already severe human losses during World War Two (Einhorn 1993: 82-86). To boost fertility, and thereby tackle the demographic crisis, national governments first installed higher conditional cash benefits to maternity leave; this was later followed by 'extended childcare' leave, to which they gradually installed social rights, such as earnings-related income support payments, pension recognition for care periods, as well as job protection during leave and protective labour market legislation for carers (e.g., ILO 1997; Kantorová and Stašova 1999; Jogan 2004).

The trends towards extending childcare leave began in Hungary, where the government installed a pro-natalist package, entitling mothers to a 3-year leave in 1967 (ILO 1997; Fodor et al. 2002: 479-481; Tarkanyí 2001). Czechoslovakia installed a 3-year paid childcare leave in 1970 (Kocourková 2002: 317), and Poland in 1972, but with means-tested cash payments (Heinen and Wator 2006: 195; Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). In the Baltic States, women were entitled to full income support payment during maternity leave of 16 weeks, followed by unpaid leave for up to three years. In 1982, paid childcare leave for up to a year was installed, which was extended for another six months in 1989 (Mikalauskaitė et al. 1999; Stankuniene 2001; Aidukaite 2004). In all six countries leave was granted to mothers only; fathers could have used it only under special circumstances such as the death of the mother, or mother's incapacity to take care of the child (e.g., Domsch et al. 2003). Thereby, their governments also addressed the demands of the more conservative streams for more 'maternal' care (e.g., Bicskei 2006; Heinen and Wator 2006: 204-205).

On the other hand, *Slovenian* policy on childcare leave was inspired by and resembled the Swedish policy model (Jogan 2006; Šircelj 2006). First, maternity leave was extended from 135 days to six months in 1974. In 1976, two years after Sweden, a gender-neutral parental leave scheme was installed (Duvander et al. 2010: 46; Šircelj 2006: 176). Such scheme was a novelty among the

socialist states, whereby both parents (but one at the time) were first entitled to a six month leave with full compensation of previous earnings, which was further extended to the total of one year in 1986 (Jogan 2001: 238-40, Šircelj 2006). Nonetheless, leave was cast in terms of activating mothers' labour force. Namely, the fathers' entitlement was weakened by his claim being conditional upon the written consent of both the child's mother and his employer (Černigoj Sadar 2005; Šircelj 2006). Thereby, only few fathers had used it. More 'conservative' streams (largely influenced and supported by the church) put forward several proposals for extending leave for mothers, but their calls were regularly dismissed as 'misogynist endeavours', and publicly characterised as "attempts to reinforce the conventional gender division of labour" (e.g., Jogan 2000: 25; Jogan 2006).

4.1.2 Policy area of childcare services

Prior to the 1970s, the system of childcare service provision was underdeveloped, and fairly similar among the eight countries (e.g., Kocourková 2002: 304; Michel 2006). Service provision was exclusively public. It was designed by central authorities and provided in the enterprise-based facilities and agricultural collectives, and heavily subsidized by the public funds (e.g., Kamerman 2000; Kocourková 2002: 304; Křižková et al. 2005; Černigoj Sadar 2003, 2005). Services operated on a full-time basis, some even around the clock, but access was granted only to children of parents in paid employment (e.g., Michel 2006: 146-7; Kamerman 2000; Bicskei 2006).

It was only from the 1970s onwards that these countries – in tandem with the surge in female employment – laid the foundations for a more universal public childcare system; they established municipal day care centres, in order to arrange for day care of the youngest children and to secure a swift return of mothers to the labour markets (Kamerman 2000; Unicef 1999; Černigoj Sadar 2003, 2005). That notwithstanding, countries differed in the extent to which they supported families by public childcare, which put them on different paths. By and large, the states in the Eastern Bloc adopted a familialistic approach, i.e. relying on families to produce childcare, whilst Slovenia had laid foundations for a defamilialistic policy model, thus acknowledging the importance of the society for childcare.

Countries in the *Eastern Bloc* largely provided childcare services through early day care for children under the age of 3 (crèches), and through pre-school education (kindergartens) for older children (Unicef 1999; Kamerman 2000). The governments directed the supply and set the price of day care services. Alongside the establishment and enforcement of the regulations, they also planned curricular programmes and any financial subsidies to parents, both directly and indirectly, i.e. in the form of cash benefits and allowances for services, tax benefits to offset the costs of childcare (Kamerman 2000). Only more specific policy decisions such as the waiting lists were made at the local levels (Aidukaite 2005, 2006; Domsch et al. 2003; Kamerman 2000; Křižková et al. 2005).

Crèches were administered under the ministries of health and largely employed medical nurses (e.g., Haney 2002 for Hungary, Křižková et al. 2005 for Czechoslovakia; for overview see Einhorn 1993: 35; Kocourková 2001). However, the initial state commitment towards public crèches for the youngest quickly waned (Saxonberg and Szelewa 2007). Generally, these were chronically overcrowded, and rather unfavourable child-staff ratios in the hospital-like low-quality

crèches resulted in a regimented day, lack of individual attention, and frequent outbursts of communicable diseases (e.g., Bicskei 2006; Heinen and Wator 2006). Services for toddlers had low reputation, and fragmented the 'constituency' for public day care for toddlers (Heinen and Wator 2006: 194, 203-4; Michel 2006). Although comparable data on service provision by country is scant for that period, the earlier literature argues that the supply of crèches was very low across the countries, with strong urban/rural divides in availability of places in day care facilities (for overview see Domsch et al. 2003; Kamerman 2000). By and large, parents did not trust them, and unregulated care services in the second economy thrived, with mothers often using extended (unpaid) childcare leave to care for their children themselves (author 2010; Heinen and Wator 2006).

In contrast, childcare services for children aged 3-6 years were of considerably higher quality, with a well educated and trained staff (Kamerman 2006). They were under the education auspices (Kocourková 2002; Domsch et al. 2003), subsidized by public funds, whereby no adjustments were made to parental fees for many years (Bicskei 2006; Heinen and Wator 2006). Albeit services for older children were practically universal, they were more widespread in countries which once were parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, i.e. Hungary and Czechoslovakia (e.g., Kamerman 2006; Kocourková 2002; Szelewa 2007). Again, Poland stands out as a laggard in service provision (e.g., Heinen and Wator 2006: 192-5; Szelewa 2007: 6). During state socialist period, its childcare services never met more than a fraction of demand, not even in the period of high economic growth, i.e. between 1970 and 1975 (e.g., Heinen and Wator 2006: 192-5; Szelewa 2007: 6).

On the other hand, Slovenian childcare services were, similarly to Lithuanian, organised in unitary settings for children aged one and onwards. Rules of operation were set nationally, and service provision was under the auspices of national ministries, responsible for health and early education, but services were administered by local municipalities (Eurydice 2009; Lokar and Devčič 2008). Thereby, service catchment areas were founded on formal local government boundaries, i.e. all children in certain age group, who resided in the municipality, were eligible to attend a local day care centre (Lokar and Devčič 2008).

The Slovenian state adopted a novel strategy to public childcare provision (e.g., Jogan 2006; Lokar and Devčič 2008). Public infrastructure, including childcare provision, was by its nature a government function, a matter of state policy and state budget investment. But, contrary to other socialist countries, the employees had a pivotal role in the expansion of public childcare. To develop the public childcare infrastructure, and address the issue of early learning and childcare, the state endorsed a specific 'investment programme', which was characterized by a nexus of state subsidies and considerable financial participation from the citizens (author 2000; Jogan 2006). Between the early 1970s and the late 1980s, a number of referenda were held at the municipal levels, asking the people to vote and to show whether they would financially contribute towards setting up a local childcare infrastructure (Jogan 2006). The result of the extra money being earmarked for the childcare infrastructure was a growing network of purposely-built unitary childcare centres for children from age 1 to school age (Černigoj Sadar 2003, 2005; author 2000). The expansion of childcare infrastructure created new places for children, but also for (female) childcare staff, and both the participation rates in public day care as well as the number of well-

trained childcare personnel increased through the 1970s and 1980s (Černigoj Sadar 2003, 2005; Lokar and Devčič 2008).

With a symbiotic mix of enthusiasm, personal sense of responsibility and mutual supervision the Slovenian people paid for the childcare infrastructure from their own pockets, i.e. in the form of 'free' contributions. The economics of social ownership endorsed public childcare service as a common good, which its natural constituency, i.e. the working parents, supported wholeheartedly (author 2001; Jogan 2006). Public sentiment increasingly embraced the acceptability of public childcare of pre-school children. Thereby, government officials faced a stark choice whether or not to support any sectional interests in service provision during economic slowdowns, which reflects in continuous growth and investments in childcare services during socialist period (e.g., Černigoj Sadar 2005; author 2001; Lokar and Devčič 2008).

5. Discussion

Undeniably, state socialism had dismantled male-breadwinner family model, making paid employment both moral obligation and essential source of welfare for both men and women. Women massively entered the labour force in the early 1950s, i.e. about ten years before women in the West, and, in response to labour force and demographic needs, countries witnessed significant shift in the normative views and policies concerning female employment and social organisation of childcare.

Similar contextual history notwithstanding, this analysis reveals a compelling story of internal diversity during state socialism, and demonstrates how women's employment and social organisation of care were constructed around a contrasting set of normative fundamentals. States had endorsed contrasting social norms and values about acceptable and desirable gender roles, and national policy incentives reinforced, or upended traditional gender roles.

Countries broadly followed two trajectories: that of familialism in countries of the Eastern Bloc versus that of defamilialism in Slovenia. In the first group, women's lifestyle choices were more skewed by government dictates and social constraints as the states relied on women to produce care. Public support for mothers in paid employment was imbalanced and alternatives scarcely articulated. However, three subtypes emerge in this group. First, Hungary and Czechoslovakia made women more dependent on the state rather than their husbands, but their states were less in favour of mothers' employment. Therefore, they adopted supportive policies for stay-at-home mothers, at least for the children under the age of three. Women indeed became less dependent on their husbands and more on the state, but policy incentives did not attempt a broader transformation of gender division of labour. Second, the Baltic States were a mix case, providing shorter but well paid maternity leave, which was followed by extended yet unpaid childcare leave. In both groups, however, public childcare services were in scarce supply, with a strong urban-rural divide, especially for children under the age of three. And third, in Poland, direct state interventions were the most limited, with the state practically not engaging in the task of providing for childcare needs. After a very short maternity leave it limited direct public subsidies only to low-income families, leaving others with no public support.

Contrary to the familialistic group, the somewhat exceptional political context in Slovenia mirrors in specific policy features, with state's commitment to continuous employment of women. First, relative to the former group, forceful normative demands and exacting regulatory strictures were more limited, which emanated from the specificity of its (softer) socialist system. Second, the state explicitly prioritized female continuous employment, promoting it as the linchpin of gender equality. It installed defamilializing and more gender-neutral childcare policies, and the strong public sentiment in favour of public childcare left the governments with less room to manoeuvre. Pro-active intervention of civic and interest groups facilitated the expansion of public childcare services, whereby the families became less depended on family care but more on external childcare sources. And third, the cognitive shift in Slovenian father's responsibilities for childcare has been 'in the making' since 1976, when Slovenia installed parental leave and had, albeit conditionally, opened it to both parents, thereby upending the conventional gender roles. Ultimately, women in Slovenia largely maintained a continuous record of employment, punctuated only by brief periods around childbirth.

Based on the scope of their qualitative differences, countries share core characteristics with Korpi's (2000) and Esping-Andersen's (1990) typologies. (1) Slovenian practices towards female employment could be paired with the social democratic ideas of the Nordic states. In both instances states support "dual-earner"/"public-carer" family model (Korpi 2000: 144), and provide generous, gender-neutral childcare policies, viewing childcare as a social responsibility. (2) Policies in Hungary and Czechoslovakia resembled the socially conservative principles of a single-earner model family (Korpi 2000). Their childcare policies, too, were shaped by the 'subsidiarity' principle, which stressed the primacy of the family (i.e. women) for providing childcare. And (3), Poland clearly resembled market-oriented (liberal) model; its social benefits were largely organised to reflect and preserve the consumer (informal) markets, with most entitlements being means-tested (Esping-Andersen 2002: 44).

These findings demonstrate significant internal diversity, and challenge a 'shared common' legacy thesis. It is therefore essential to deconstruct this country grouping, if we are to avoid biased accounts of welfare state types, and to tease out distinctions among state de-familialism.

6. Conclusions

This paper addressed a call for researchers to attend to more finely grained analyses, in order to more fully capture nuances across countries and gauge varieties of state de-familialism. Depicting public policy-female employment nexus in a historical perspective, it provided a missing link in the earlier literature on policy change and dynamism in eight post-socialist EU member states. By making a historical scan, it located the institutionalization of childcare policies and family models in the period of state socialism, when government programmes emphasized the need to transform economic and social relationships, and had in turn compelled individuals to provide for their needs through gainful employment.

Early period of state socialism was a critical period for both women's entry into the labour force as well as for state expansion into the family life. That notwithstanding, this paper found significant historical-discursive divisions among countries. Its findings suggest that countries

departed the socialist period with different institutional legacies that had framed different social norms and collective experiences about social organisation of care and maternal employment.

Spanning six decades, this analysis suggests that the old and historical-discursive divisions are inscribed in contemporary practices, whereby post-socialism has neither fundamentally challenged countries' institutional settings nor spurred the *ascendancy* of neo-familialism. Building on previous studies that covered policy dynamics over the 1990-2008 period (e.g., Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; author 2010), this paper therefore contests the dichotomy between the 'socialist past' and the 'post-socialist present' in terms of social practices and state support towards mothers' employment.

On the one hand, studies that looked at the early post-socialist period, described it as a period of intensive policy re-adjustments and tumultuous trends in female employment (e.g., Unicef 1999; Kocourková 2002; Aidukaite 2004; Rostgaard 2004; Glass and Fodor 2007; Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; Motiejūnaite 2008). These largely mirrored the socio-political and economic climate marked by high total unemployment and fiscal constraints. On the other hand, studies analyzing a 1989-2008 period found that policy alterations were continuously taking place over the studied period. But, in retrospect, these largely remained within overall policy logics, with historical-discursive divisions re-inscribed in their contemporary policies (e.g., Szelewa and Polakowski 2008; author 2010). By adding the socialist period, this analysis recognizes symptoms of more sustained country differences, which challenge the 'distinct regime type' categorization and its premise that countries share a 'common socialist legacy'. Thereby, this paper calls for a reconsideration of state ("neo-/) de-familialism, as well as the more nuanced and careful analyses of "Eastern regime type".

This paper is, however, not without limitations. One limitation is availability of data on female employment and policy delivery and use during state socialism. Time series in international databases are short, administrative data flawed and often not translated, and hence less serviceable for country comparative research. A second and related limitation is the exclusion of differential statutory entitlements for different socio-economic groups of parents. Namely, national measures are often tailored to specific groups (e.g., single parents, parents with more children), but we lack any such information. Another extension could therefore be to include differential policy measures, as well as to uncover information on service provision on lower geographical areas.

Dual-earner family model has, historically, survived the transition from socialism, which reflects in comparably high female employment rates in these countries. But, given their most recent economic crisis, a more comprehensive examination of policy-process in the era of austerity and its social consequences is required. Recently, for example, state interventions in familialistic policies, rather than in the public childcare, have become a prominent mechanism supported, in principle, by new governments in these countries. Albeit policy change is part of "normal policymaking" (Hall 1993: 278-80), one relevant question is: Have their work-family policies witnessed a fundamental reshaping in the most recent political and economic climate? Are post-socialist countries reaffirming their post-socialist status or are, rather, transforming their post-

socialist character? If, what elements have been the most resilient? How gender equity is understood and how in any such policy interventions reflect in female labour force participation? Although preliminary, this analysis provides a window into path dependency and offers some perspectives for further research that could derive more generalizations about policy stability/change.

Notes

[1] These comprised the member states of the Soviet Union along with other members of the Warsaw Pact (i.e. a Soviet-dominated military organisation) and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (i.e. an economic organisation of the communist states).

[2] Which, in reality, was more of a 'rhetoric', used to limit alternative means of independence of women – more so of highly educated women, and to justify the wage gap.

[3] In Eastern Bloc, mothers who brought up from five to six children were awarded a 'Medal of motherhood'. Those, who brought up from seven to nine children, were awarded the state order of the 'Glory of motherhood'. And those who brought up ten children, were awarded the state order of the 'Mother heroine' (Aidukaite 2004).

[4] In contrast, measures to secure the emancipation of women in the Soviet Union were embodied in resolutions of the 1920 Congress of the Comintern, and the official constitutional position of women under state socialism was of equality with men also in other socialist states (e.g., Pascall and Manning 2000: 245).

[5] The *Socialist Alliance of Working People* was established in 1953 as the successor of the *Libertation Front of the Slovenian People* (established in 1941), to unify various political organisations during World War Two (Jogan 2001: 219).

[6] The first Slovenian women's organisation was established in 1887 in Trieste, followed by the *Association of Slovenian Women Teachers* in 1898, and by *General Women's Association* in 1901 (Jogan 2001: 233).

[7] It should be noted that their endeavours were not limited to public childcare policies; to challenge the conventional gender division of labour the school programmes and curricula were also reformed (e.g., housekeeping and technical education were mandatory for all pupils).

[8] Such normative assumption was not unique to the socialist states; in the advanced industrial world it was institutionalised with a single-earner family model, and continues to underpin the one-and-a-half-earner model.

[9] The socialist states introduced a concept of public laundrettes and kitchens, but the idea was not well-received (e.g., Einhorn 1993).

[10] Public childcare services existed before the period of state socialism, and have a longer tradition in countries comprising the Austro-Hungarian Empire. There, they were mainly part of 'Trivial Schools', which were founded by Maria Theresa in the 18th century (e.g., Szelewa 2007).

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