

# The future of the welfare state: paths of social policy innovation between constraints and opportunities

Urbino, 17-19 September 2009

## Tracing the Story of the Gender Contract in Europe

*A cross national comparison of gender culture and gender role perceptions in  
European children families when coping with the work-life balance.*

**Yildiz Atas \***

Paper presented at the 7th ESPAnet conference 2009  
Session nr. 20a – Family policy, Gender and Work-Family Reconciliation

\* *Cand.scient.adm, Roskilde University, Ph.D. student*

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# 1 Introduction

This paper aims at describing how men and women cope with the work-life balance. More specifically, the analysis investigates to what extent the gender contract is practiced and experienced by fathers and mothers in European households with dependent children. The main question asked is; to what extent do we still see a gendered division of men and women in the public and private sphere, respectively? This is examined by looking at the different household strategies in coping with the work-life balance. Looking at the household strategies and the gendered division of paid and unpaid work, does the natural order, which reflects the historical and thus traditional division of men and women, still holds true? Is it possible to trace a still ongoing division of men and women's division in the public and private sphere, respectively, and thus in the paid and unpaid work. The countries included in the analysis are Denmark, UK, Italy and Hungary each representing a distinct type of welfare system and work-life balance in Europe.

The rationale behind understanding the variety between different welfare systems, is that it helps understanding how different types of welfare and family policies affect men and women's choices and practices. In other words, how do different cultures seem to be determined and structured by roots of the historical gender contract? The analysis is thus based upon the assumption that culture and gender norms play an important role in understanding how the different policies affect the gender equality (Pfau-Effinger 2005). It is on basis of gender norms that men and women make their choices, and thus also how they make use of family- and reconciliation policies - whether these policies are gender neutral or gender differentiated.

The focus of the comparative welfare state literature in relation to studies of gender discourses and gender equality have mainly been of a top-down perspective. Different welfare state policies have been analysed in order to outline gender- and equality discourses and in order to understand the inequality of men and women, in paid and unpaid work. Different gender cultures and gender discourses have often been analysed through welfare policies based upon the assumption that policies reflect the different societies and cultures. A bottom-up perspective, meaning an analysis of internal gender dynamics and perceptions in the family, has so far had little attention. Different forms of family policy typologies have been developed in order to describe different policy systems and how these policies affect men and women's choices in coping with the work-life balance (Antonnen and Sipilä 1996, Daly & Rake 2003, Pascall and Lewis 2004, Berttio and Plantenga 2004 Ejernæs og Boje 2007, Wall 2007).

The starting point of this analysis is the persisting inequality of paid and unpaid work, which has already been proved by much sociological research. The entrance of women on the paid labour market – despite variations between countries – has not lead to equivalent equality in unpaid

work (Crompton 2007; Lewis 2008 og Plantenga og Hansen 1999). The aim of this article is to move beyond this outcome – the general inequality across the European countries – and explore differences and similarities within this inequality (Ragin 1987). What determines men and women's positions, what are the differences and similarities of the gender role perceptions in the different cultures that are subject to this analysis? The main target is to outline the complexity and the differences of the gender contract.

The paper is part of the WORKCARE project involving 8 EU Member States and chaired by Claire Wallace, Aberdeen University. The paper relies on the qualitative interviews from four of the WORKCARE countries. By using qualitative interviews, the analysis is based upon men and women's articulation of their work-life balance. The analysis is based upon the biographical method, which encompasses studies on both men and women's personal (life) stories (Chamberlayne 2000).

## **2 Inequality in paid and unpaid work across Europe**

The starting point of this article is the inequality in paid and unpaid work. This is still a highly relevant issue across Europe. Despite women's entrance on the labour market, since the 1960s and 1970s, and thus the unravelling of the male-breadwinner model, women are still the main responsible for caring and domestic work. Even in Denmark, which is characterised by a relatively high female employment rate, we find a high inequality in paid and unpaid work. The employment rate for Danish women has reached 84 per cent (Bonke 2003). Combined with European sociological research on men and women's time use, this indicates that an uneven division in paid and unpaid work still persists. Women's participation on the paid labour market has therefore lead to a double burden (Plantenga og Hansen 1999). The inequality in paid and unpaid work is the first argument for writing this article. The second argument is that the inequality furthermore has lead to a reduced access to citizenship rights for women. Although men and women have equally formal access to citizenship rights, it is noticed that the access in practice becomes unequal; citizenship rights are still based upon paid work and income, and since women spend less time on paid work – due to this gendered division in households, they have lower earnings and therefore, in practice, make less use of their eligibility (Lister 2003). Despite gender neutral rights and gender neutral reconciliation policies that aim at assisting families coping with the work-life balance, men and women don't have real equal access to these rights, in practise. Finally, the third argument for looking at the gender inequality emerges from questioning European reconciliation policies. European family policies often have gender stereotyped effects with regard to men and women's positions when it comes to the positions in practice, even though the policies are gender neutral. In

Denmark, mothers and fathers are allowed a free and equal share of the last six months of the parental leave. However, only 5-7 % of the fathers make use of this eligibility (Statistics Denmark). European family – and reconciliation policies have mainly been targeted at families as a whole unit, neglecting men and women's particular positions within households. Moreover, EU equality legislation has primarily been instrumental: it has been implemented in the light of achieving higher economic growth, prosperity and competition. The policies have mainly been implemented from an employment perspective where the focus is on women's labour market participation more than of family welfare, child-well being, parental choice or gender equality (Lewis et al. 2008). When not actively intervening in the private- and domestic sphere and thus differentiating between the particular positions of the genders, it seems to be the already gendered and particular positions that determine the impact of these reconciliation policies. The unequal division on micro level and thus in paid and unpaid work in the households is one of the main barriers for real equal participation opportunities in citizenship rights. The effect of citizenship and the effects of different European family policies have been elaborated by Ruth Lister, who elaborated Nancy Fraser's theory of recognition and used it as a springboard for her argument (Lister 2003). According to Lister and Fraser, an ideal of justification in society is attained when taken particularities of different subcultures into account when developing political strategies (Fraser 2003). Only such strategies will eliminate gender differentiating barriers and lead to real equal opportunities in terms of participation on the labour market and in citizenship rights.

This aspect of gender equality will not be discussed further in this article. Instead, this article presents a micro level analysis, which I hope can contribute to understanding the complex relationship between policies, practices and culture and developing more gender-inclusive family policies. A final argument for taking this approach is that the bottom-up approach in sociological research has still been studied far too less. There is a need for taking a glance at the cultural norms at the micro level in order to understand how men and women make their choices regarding work-life balance and also in order to understand why gender neutral policies have gender stereotyped effects (Birgit Pfau- Effinger 2005). The assumption underlying this perspective is that a gender culture is reflected in welfare policies (Pfau-Effinger 2005). We need to understand the gender norms, their rationales and arguments from a micro level perspective, in order to understand the gender culture and moreover to develop political strategies that can take these particularities of men and women's choices into account and thus ensure both men and women a reel participation in parity.

## ***2.1 Theoretical perspective - Public-private divide***

In clarifying the meaning of the public and private sphere, I draw on Thomas Januski (1998) and Carole Pateman (1988). Thomas Januski divides society into four spheres; 1) the state sphere

(where the laws and rights are decided and developed), 2) The private sphere (the family and network among friends and acquaintances), 3) The market sphere (this is private companies and a few state institutions that are employed with production of income, good and economic wealth, and 4) the public sphere (charities, religious organisations, NGO's, unions). My definition of the private sphere is equivalent to Januski's definition of the private sphere. The public sphere, on the contrary, is a sum of all the other spheres. Having defined the two spheres, it is crucial to understand how the two spheres interact and how this affects men and women's positions in society. My main argument is that there still seem to be a rigid division of men and women in the public and private sphere, respectively. According to Pateman and her concept of the Wollstonecraft dilemma, a policy that support this a rigid separation of the public and private sphere results in a reproduction of the unequal division of paid and unpaid work. This has often been the case in European countries where politicians dissociate themselves from intervening and regulating the private sphere. By this, I mean intervening in men and women's priorities and choices in relation to their household strategies and when they cope with the work-life balance. Pateman argues that by not differentiating between men and women, the gender pattern and gender positions are reproduced. Evidence from Northern European family policies supports my approach. By transcending the private- and public sphere – i.e. entering and regulating the private sphere - and differentiating between men and women's positions, family policies in Sweden, Norway and Iceland, have achieved a higher degree of equality in paid and unpaid work. This has especially been achieved by implementing the so-called “father quotas” with regard to parental leave. This is supplemented with a high level of universal day-care facilities, which upholds a high level of female labour market participation (Leira 2002).

## **2.2 The gender contract**

Pateman explains this public-private divide and the reproduction as the masculine and feminine sphere.

According to Pateman, the public-private divide is to be explained by a deeply rooted gender contract that historically has been dictating men and women's positions in the public and private sphere, respectively. The concept of the gender contract stems from *liberal social contract* theory, which has its roots back in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to this contract, all inhabitants enter *a social contract* in order to ensure a safe and peaceful society, in contrast to an anarchistic society. Pateman opposes this argument and points out that only the public sphere was subject to regulation, and only men were entering this social contract. Behind this contract, a more latent contract – the sexual contract – is embedded and thus explains men and women's historical positions of the two spheres (Pateman 1988; 43). Historically, women were referred to the private sphere and men to public sphere, which explains the fact that women remained subordinate men and were represented through their me. The liberal contract theory thus, according to Pateman, justified civil subjection.

Until the 1950s, and then later in some countries men in full-time employment received a “family wage” and related benefits, women gained benefits, often indirectly, as wives and mothers (Pateman 1989). Thus, it is historical conditions that have been reproduced for generations. By exploring the degree of the gender contract, I firstly, mean exploring this division in paid and unpaid work, and secondly how it is expressed and rooted in men and women’s gender role and equality perceptions.

Therefore, I shall claim, the gender positions and norms and values that seem to dominate the different gender cultures are also changeable - however it seems as we actively must intervene in the private sphere and thus influence men and women's behaviour on the micro level. Otherwise, the gender contract will continue influencing and dominating men and women's behaviour. My approach is thus poststructuralistic and constructivistic where I see social structures and behaviour being produced through a dialectic relationship between structures and the behaviour of agents. Men and women are dictated by social structures such as norms and rules in the form of gender specific expectations. However, if they are provided with the right opportunities and framework for acting differently, it could be expected that men and women would have a greater possibility of changing their behaviour and thus changing rooted social structures in terms of norms and values. I put my emphasis on the individual, where I perceive the individual as the main producer of social structures that surrounds and therefore always to some extent dictate the behaviour of the individual. Moreover, I am inspired by Nancy Fraser’s normative theory of justice stating that policies directly aiming at differentiating between men and women’s behaviour may change social structures. According to her, taking social barriers, the deeply rooted structures which men and women act according to, must be taking into account when implementing policies, so that men and women would have higher possibilities of acting differently and more individually. The focus of the article is therefore written from a more empirical, political and normative theory of justice, where I put my emphasis on empirical evidence of men and women’s behaviour; I seek to explore the pervasiveness of the gender contract in order to develop more gender-inclusive policies that provide men and women with real equal opportunities, respectively. In this way, they will have the possibility of altering the existing norms and values and thus are not enshrined only to act upon already existing norms and values.

Although the theory of the gender contract was developed in 1988, I shall argue, that it is relevant on contemporary studies. As mentioned, the contract has been challenged and changed, meaning that both genders to some extent have crossed the limits to the “other” sphere. The male breadwinner model has begun to unravel. Women have entered the paid labour market, .i.e. the public sphere, and contrarily, a few of men in the Northern European countries take extended parental leave, which also represents a convergence of the two spheres. Family and reconciliation policies have, formally and legislatively, become more gender-neutral; women are no longer solely

dependent on and represented through their men when it comes to social rights. Women have access to education and child care facilities, which support women's participation on the paid labour market. And despite, the still persisting inequality in paid and unpaid work, I acknowledge that attitudes to gender roles and gendered identities are changing. This, nevertheless, differs across the European countries, and as mentioned, the gender equality is very far from having been achieved in any material sense (Crompton 2007). Carole Pateman herself, acknowledges this convergence, which was a fact already in 1988 when the book was written.

By analysing the gender relationship empirically on contemporary studies, this article takes the concept of the gender contract even further than Carole Pateman. Is the contract challenged and therefore less traditional in some cases than in others? Do we prefer a less traditional gender role perception compared to the historical division in the analysed countries? My aim is thus empirically and politically to illuminate the changing attitudes regarding gender roles and gender cultures and to shed light on to what extent the above mentioned institutional changes and changed attitudes have changed the gender contract. I.e. exploring the division of men and women in paid and unpaid work, and their attitudes and expectations towards the gender roles.

The concept of the gender contract has already been applied on the European case, and more specifically on Northern European gender culture, by Yvonne Hirdman. Her perspective is very similar to the perspective of this article. In line with Pateman, she argues for a historical organisation of men and women in society, and she goes even further and conceptualises that society is based on a specific "genus system" (Hirdman 2007). It is a gender pattern which has its expression in different arenas in society – the political institutional, and on the labour market. It reflects the fact that women have always been in a specific position next to men and been referred to "the other". This perspective is in line with Pateman that the order of the gender system is based on two logics: dichotomy (male and female are always opposites) and hierarchy (Male as the norm; the male as the primary individual that represents the norm). Taken from Gayle Rubin (1975), Hirdman separates gender from sex as being "social" and "cultural" by which we historically have been given men and women specific points, which we then know as "typical" masculine or feminine. According to Gayle Rubin, the gender system *is a set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity* (1975).

Hirdman, too, argues that the genus system is dynamic, and not static. The normative positions of men and women are historical conditioned, and culturally determined. The genus system is created as a result of processes and expectations that along its interrelation have resulted in cultural patterns and regularity. Behind this system is the genus contract – the gender contract – that has been reproduced and thus operated. This has created an overall system which implies gender specific positions for men and women.

The gender contract is specific imaginations and norms and values, and it is expressed in places and areas such as the work place, love relationship, how to dress, and in the language. The gender contract, which is her expression of the gender contract, is a way of operationalising the gender system. The gender system is thus expressed through the contract, in praxis. In fact, the contract is the gender system, in practice. And it is a concept that helps explaining behaviour, interactions, strategies and ideologies at different stages and levels of society.

The starting point of Hirdman is the same as mine; she is testing the contract empirically, and she identifies where the power and the contract *have its effect*. It is still understood as a *trace* from history. She, too, expresses that the gender aspect has been ignored in stating the fact that all men – and women – are equal.

### 3 Selection of countries

The selection of the countries is based upon Boje and Ejrnæs' five classifications of family policy regimes (2008). The aim of these classifications was to scrutinize policy interventions at both national and EU level designed to tackle issues relating to the reconciliation of caring and paid employment. It investigates how compatible and effective these policies have been at improving conditions for combining work and care responsibilities in practice. The five classifications have been developed on the background of the four variables; 1) Childcare take up among children aged 0-3 in percentage of the total number of children in this age-group. 2) Effective parental leave in weeks, which is the amount of leave takers. 3) Female part-time employment rate according to the EUROSTAT definition – self-declared part-time. 4) Total spending on family policy in percentage of GDP.

Based on these four variables, it has been possible to cluster 21 EU Member. The clusters are defined as

- 1) *The extensive family policy model* (Denmark, Sweden, France and Belgium)
- 2) *Short leave part-time model* (UK and the Netherlands)
- 3) *The long leave part-time model* (Germany, Austria, Luxembourg),
- 4) *The family care model* (Southern European Countries) and
- 5) *the extended parental leave model* (Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic plus Lithuania and Finland).

I only have countries representing cluster 1, 2, 4 and 5, which explains my final selection; Denmark, UK, Italy and Hungary. In the following, I shall give a short characteristic of the four countries.

The table below indicate that Denmark has the highest female employment rate among the four countries, and, due to a relatively short term on leave – a maximum of one year -, they early return to the paid labour market. The Danish female employment rate reaches 74.9 % and the part time rate is 36 %. Evidence show that the part time rate increases when the women have children, which is probably is to be explained by gender specific expectations of mothers being the main care givers.

The UK has the second highest employment rate among the four countries but most of the British women occupy a job on part-time

Hungary, too, has a relatively high female employment rate. In contrast to the UK, only 5.8 % are in part-time employment. Women in employment in Hungary are in full-time employment, and the rest is to be explained by a high unemployment rate.

Italy has the lowest female employment rate among the four countries, which is to be explained by a great amount being house keepers. The part-time employment in Italy imply very few hours compared to part-time in other countries. In Denmark, a part-time job is often a 33 hour job which other countries might perceive as almost being a full-time job, even in the UK.

DS-071661-table: lfsq\_ergan - Employment rates by sex, age groups and nationality (%) (Eurostat)

geo/time	Female employment rate (%) 2008Q04	Female part-time employment rate (%) 2008A00
DK	"74.9"	"36.0"
HU	"51.1"	"5.8"
IT	"47.2"	"27.8"
UK	"65.7"	"41.0"

In relation to family policies, Denmark has a 1 year long leave with 32 weeks reserved for the mothers and with 32 weeks for both of the parents that the parents can share equally. Additionally, the mothers are reserved 4 weeks before giving birth, and the father is entitled to 2 weeks straight after the birth of the child.

Hungary has a 3 year long leave system per child. The father is entitled to one year after the birth and also in this case, the parents can share a little more than one year of the leave. Italy has the shortes leave – 21 weeks – with only 16 of the weeks being paid by the state. None of the weeks in this country is paternity leave or leave that fathers, too, can be entitled to take up.

The UK has a 39 weeks leave with two of the weeks also being leave for the fathers. Also in this country, the leave is relatively short. Nevertheless, only 9.3 weeks are paid leave.

Paid maternity, paternity and parental leave in number of weeks, 2006/2007 (OECD)

geo	Maternity leave	Paid maternal leave	Paternity leave	Paid paternity leave	Parental leave	Paid parental leave	Unpaid parental leave
DK	18	18	2	2	32	32	8
HU	24	16,8	1	1	104	72,8	-
IT	21	16	-	-	12	-	14
UK	39	9,3	2	0,3	-	-	13

Combined with the leave arrangement, all countries have a high degree of enrolment rates for children aged 3-6. For children under age 3, the enrolment is highest in Denmark (70.2 %), which again supports women's labour market participation. In Hungary, mothers are, as mentioned still on leave at this point, and Italy and the UK make use of family and network and private care facilities, respectively when children are below the age of 3.

Enrolment rates of children under age 6 in formal care or early education services, 2006 (OECD)

geo	0-2 years	3-5 years
DK	70,5	90,7
HU	10,5	86,9
IT	28,6	99,4
UK	39,7	90,5

The below stated table indicates the above mentioned family policies. Denmark has the greatest spending on services in relation to family policies. This is first of all to be explained by a high frequency of universal, public day care facilities, on a governmental financial support of the day care tuition fees and of a relatively generous parental leave system. The public spending on family policies of the GDP is less in the UK and in Hungary. In Hungary, the mothers – like they are in Denmark – are also primarily full time workers. However, their 3 year old leave per child indicates a lesser need for day care institutions. The UK, who is also characterised by a short leave, to larger extent, relies on private care facilities. The amount of spending is even lower in Italy, where the care obligations primarily rely on family members and on network., and not even on private facilities as we see in the UK.

geo	Cash	Services	Tax breaks towards family	Total
DK	1,5	1,6	0	3,2
HU	1,9	1,2	-	3,1
IT	0,6	0,7	0	1,3
UK	2,2	1	0,4	3,6

Before describing my cross-national analysis of Denmark, Hungary, Italy and the UK, there are some considerations, weaknesses and criticism of my approach, which need to be taken into account. This I shall also return to, when coming to the conclusion of this paper.

Individual attitudes will vary; the extent of women’s employment, age and social class are all factors that contribute to how men and women are able to challenge the gender contract. They are all factors that may influence gender role attitudes and the sharing of domestic work between the sexes (Crompton, 2006). Moreover, different ideals of “masculinity” and “femininity” may vary across class as well as ethnic groups within a country (Connell, 1995). However, I shall claim that there are national variations, in both attitudes to gender roles, and the advisability of mother’s employment (particularly when children are young) as well as on wider normative questions such as what constitutes “good mothering”.

In line with these arguments, I argue for a cross-national comparison – despite some individual behaviour that relates to class, age and education. I therefore find it relevant to fulfill a micro-level analysis. Moreover, my selection of countries cleans partly, to the argument that family regimes are clustered on the basis on more or less equal family policies, but also partly on the fact that these family policies only reflect the overall gender- and equality discourse by which this micro-level analysis becomes relevant (Pfau-Effinger 2004).

## 4 Methodological approach

In my micro level analysis of the gender contract, I seek to study different gender cultures in terms of gender role perceptions. The project is based upon in-dept interviews with families with dependent children in each of the four selected countries. In each of the four countries, mothers and fathers have been interviewed, separately. The selection of families aimed at gaining insight into the diversity of the different family patterns and household strategies - also within the national borders. The article analysis different family types –male breadwinners, modified bread winners, and dual earners families (Lewis 1992). Moreover, it aims at covering different classes. The interviews have

been carried out and transcribed in connection with the WORKCARE project. About 20 interviews have been done for each country. This also includes interviews with single parents, which, I do not cover in this article. All of the interviews included in the study have been transcribed and translated into English. This article is based on six interviews from each country; three mothers and three fathers – all from different families. By this, six families from each country are represented.

The qualitative data have been a priority, because it in contrast to the quantitative data, give access to norms and values surrounding and influencing men and women's behaviour. It goes beyond the overall different patterns that we know of from the quantitative data, and it explains the rationales and reflections behind. By using this method, it is possible to illuminate the variety of the contract; first of all how it is practiced in the different cultures, and secondly, what are the processes and rationales behind these practices, and how do these vary from country to country? My methodological approach is partly inspired by Prue Chamberlayne's biographical method, and partly, by Charles Ragin's comparative qualitative method. Prue Chamberlayne takes departure in peoples' personal life stories. In the WORKCARE project, we have been asking families about past and present experiences in relation to work life and family life, including when they gave birth, worries regarding their career and work-life balance and rationales behind the choices they have made. This has been done for both men and women, and it provides us with information on rationales, arguments and reflections upon gender roles. In using the comparative qualitative data, I am aware of the different cultural contexts when coping with the work-life balance. The starting point - and my background for studying this - was the overall inequality in men and women's time use, where I use the personal stories in the different countries to gain access to the different cultural contextual meanings, and to understand the different cultural systems and settings regarding social gender norms and traditions. I assume that the gender contract has been a historical fact in all four countries; the question is the pervasiveness of the contract.

I shall claim that the traces reflect a structure that neither men nor women consciously are aware of. Thus, my perspective is to be more open for the fact that both men and women are dictated by gender specific expectations, and that it therefore have become an "evil circle" for both of the genders. This is even though the gender contract is a result of a *historical* subordination between men and women; I want to argue that this is a result of a *historical* hierarchical subordination. Moreover, I shall also be open for cases where men and women are not dictated by the traditional gender division or where they have challenged and acted against this traditional division.

In examining these structures, I shall look at negotiations in the families when coping with the work-life balance. Do they seem to *question* the gendered division of men and women in paid and unpaid work and in the division of the household task? Are there any *reflections* upon this? And

what are their *arguments*? My empirical analysis is thus centred around their *arguments*, *negotiations* and their *reflections* on the gender division and the gender patterns and roles – with the household strategies in coping with the work-life balance being the subject of analysis.

The household strategies and the work-life conflicts have become the centrifugal point in analysing these differences. Through this and through the related arguments, reflections and negotiations in a gender- and equality perspective, it is possible to illustrate the gender contract. In the interview guide from the WORKCARE project, we have focused on themes such as *household and children*, *household tasks* and *discussions with partner*. Additionally, I analyse the organisation of *work and childcare-obligations*, *a family-friendly work place* and *the ideal organisation of work and family life*. In going through my interviews, I have tried to develop new categorisations that go across the above mentioned themes. My new categorisations that go across all interviews have been coded in the software program, Nvivo, which helps systematising my findings and quotations of the mothers and fathers in the families. It removes many of the manual tasks associated with analysis, like classifying, sorting and arranging information, and it is thus easy to analyse and compare quotations on the same topic. Before presenting my main results, I shall briefly, go through my choices of topics that seemed relevant and that helped me covering my research questions. My topics and categorisations created are 1) *opinion on the division of household tasks* 2) *arguments in relation to the division of their tasks* and the 3) *overall satisfaction with the work-family balance*. In this code, it is possible to explore their gender role and equality perceptions. Do they seem to oppose against it? Have they tried to change and renegotiate the division or are their arguments and choices and opinion based on a full acceptance? It might also be that they don't seem to problematise the division, and that they haven't even reflected upon their choices. What are the differences and similarities of this?

## **5 Tracing the gender contract**

### **5.1 Unequal division of paid and unpaid work**

All of the four countries have same starting point; men and women's positions are all characterised by a still ongoing separation of the public and private sphere as being the masculine and feminine sphere. This is even the case for women having entered the paid labour market. However, due to less time spend on paid work and lower earnings, women, in practise, get reduced access to their gender neutral citizenship and social rights. This observation is first of all confirmed when studying the different household strategies and how they manage the work-life conflict; in all countries, women seem to be the main responsible of unpaid work. This is, for example, in Hungary, expressed when only the women's life seem to have changed after having children, "*I think that*

*only my life has changed. The father was working in the same way, he came home just as late*” (Hungarian woman 1). Also in Italy when prioritizing between paid and unpaid work, this is the case; it is more common for men to prioritise the paid work, and natural for women to work less when they have children. The paid work is definitely of higher importance to men than to women,

*“Yes, my husband goes to scouts, too. Until Carla was born, we both went and then after Carla arrived, I stopped, but he still kept going; he goes to camps, too, two years ago, he gave up, but now he has started again. He looks after the older ones and is a clan leader. In a way, he had to do it because they needed someone to organise the group of older ones”* (Italian women 2).

An Italian father, where the mother is a housekeeper, supports this statement, *“At first she used to work, before the second child was born....ever since the second child was born she had problems and didn’t work anymore...”* (Italian man 3). Although the child in this case has the La Tourette syndrome and therefore may demand higher needs, for the man it is obvious that the care responsibility is being the one of the mother. In Italy, an Italian mother explains that the father did participate in the household tasks. However, this was before having children. Now the responsible is hers,

*“And whereas before I would have said yes and would have worked even three afternoons a week, because when there were just two of us the house didn’t really get dirty and I didn’t have to clean the house every day as perhaps I probably should do now”* (Italian women 2).

In the UK, the division is expressed by women’s request of not having to work and not being dependent on the income

*“because I enjoy my job, it’s just such a rush that..I think you get quite a lot of pressure from like management to come to late meetings and early meetings and all this, give us all the extra stuff and sometimes you think ahhh, but wait and...so..no it would be nice to not have to worry about money and therefore not have to work* (British woman 1).

She seems to be in a dilemma; she enjoys her work but the care responsibility becomes the main obligation when coping with the work-life balance. In Denmark, I asked a Danish woman if having children has also affected her husband’s life, *“No not at all, my life has changed, totally”* (Danish woman 2). This undoubtedly reflects a still ongoing gendered division of the paid and unpaid work in all of the four countries, which was my springboard for this research.

## **5.2 Variations and modifications**

This was the general picture but there are variations and modifications. What we are going to explore in this article is the differences and similarities and how it is expressed in the different household strategies. In coping with the work-life conflict and their solutions, how can we trace the story of the contract? To what extent does the traditional division still play a role when deciding households strategies and gender division, and how does this differ?

The extent of how much the gender contract still has its effect in the four different countries varies but in all countries, as pointed out, there still are traces to find of the historical contract between men and women's positions.

### **5.2.1 Hungary**

The gender contract is most obvious in Hungary. Although women are working full time on the paid labour market, women, unconditionally, are the main responsible for unpaid work. Compared to Denmark, Hungarian women similar til Italian women don't seem to oppose against this division. The opposition to the inequality is least in Hungary compared to other countries. In Hungary, both men and women argue for a traditional gendered division in paid and unpaid work. According to their rationales, it is natural that the mother is the main bearer of household- and childcare obligations, and the mothers in this country do not seem to oppose against this positioning and norms and arguments, *"I think that the work is shared in a completely good proportion. Equality in work is not needed. Everybody should help in what he / she is the most effective"*(Hungarian women 1). In this case, the explanation of the gender division is naturalistic and functional. A Hungarian father supports the gender differences of gender roles as being the norm. This was expressed in a question of whether their first child was planned, *"Yes, we wanted it. G (the wife) planned it, mostly. Men are defenceless in this question; it is always determined by women. This is the way it is. This is natural. The instinct is awakened in the woman and the man's duty is to fulfil. This is natural"* (Hungarian father 3). With regard to care, it is women who have the power; it is their domain, which is something natural and biological.

*"We also talked about the change in women after birth. It is natural for the man that this happens, do not misinterpret me. There is an amount of intimacy he receives with his wife, and it is also natural that it is divided. But women are very often not attentive. Men do not become fathers, basically. Believe me, this is the way it is. It is a silly thing that the suffragettes claimed themselves the second sex. It is always the woman who determines because of the biology. It is another question that man power dominated earlier, when it was the question of power. But power does not dominate in a feminine society; it is rather caring that dominates. This is an important question which should*

*be thought over”* (Hungarian father 3).

In this respect, the father feels that he isn't allowed to take more part in the private sphere. However, he accepts it, and sees it as a matter of biology. He describes care as being women's domain and an arena that men need to stand out of. Firstly, they don't question the gender division. Another quote illustrates that she is responsible of the housework and the private sphere because she is the one being at home,

*“It changes for the mother because she is at home and as long as the baby is sleeping it is not difficult to do the washing-up. And after a while, you can get accustomed to the timetable. And it is natural that if daddy comes home at six o'clock p.m. that it is not him who should deal with children. And it develops in a way that who is at home, does the housework* (Hungarian women 2).

So they don't question the gender roles, it more becomes a matter of being home or not, *“Not really, because I spend at home more time that is why I do rather the majority because I am at home”* (Hungarian woman 1). The argument of the division doesn't go very deep; women are the main carers of the domestic work since they are the one at home during the leave. So in Hungary, we see an acceptance of this division which goes very well with the story of the gender contract and the historical traditional division of men and women in paid and unpaid work. It is so deeply rooted that they don't reflect upon alternatives. Another Hungarian father states that *“there are no quarrels”* (Hungarian father 2), and that only the mother should work part-time, if one of the parents or both of them were to work part-time, when they have little children (Hungarian father 3). The third father states that the mother was lucky that she could afford quitting her old and more demanding job in order to take care of the children, *“She is a very lucky person, she changed job in order to be able to have a child. She left her very high position with high salary in a big bank and started to live for this new situation”*. Thus, it is obvious that the lives of the mothers change drastically when having children. The Hungarian situation has similarities with both Denmark and Italy. The traditional gender role perception and their arguments lack of reflections upon alternative strategies go very well with the perception and arguments that we find in Italy. In Italy, however, the main part of the mothers are housekeepers, whereas Hungarian mothers are full time participants on the paid labour market. The Hungarian female labour market participation, matches the Danish female labour market participation. However, the Hungarian gender role perception is much more traditional than the Danish ones, which may be explained by the the 3 year-long parental leave per child. The Hungarian leave rules, compared the Danish one- year leave, keep Hungarian women out of the paid labour market for a longer time.

### 5.2.2 Italy

In Italy, we also find that they argue for a traditional gender pattern. However, they seem to be less traditional than in Hungary. The Italian women try to influence their men to work less and to take more part at home but they quickly fall back on justifying the traditional constitution of gender roles as a natural thing. Most of the Italian mothers are housekeepers. Among the respondents, two mothers are full-time workers and one is a housekeeper. In the case of the latter, the child has the La tourette syndrome, and before having the child, she was on the paid labour market, too. In the interviews, we also see that to a little extent, they try to influence their partners in challenging the gender order,

*“I don’t know, I think that on the whole it’s all right as it is. At times I think it would be nice if my husband could get back from work a bit earlier. But he puts his heart into his work”* (Italian women 1).

They reflect very little upon the division. It is mainly considered natural that the job can be very important for men and that it means more to him than to her. Another Italian woman also reflects upon the division and a suitable explanation,

*“suppose I do general housework better, in that, if the kitchen needs sorting out and things need putting away. I’ll get it done in an hour while it takes him two hours because he gets muddled, it’s inevitable, it’s probably just the way he was brought up, or maybe it’s genetic, I don’t know, maybe it’s just habit”* (Italian woman 2).

When complaining or trying to influence the partner, they quickly take it back. In this case, a women argues that she only complain, when she is tired in the evening,

*“I ask him to help me a bit more in the physical management, the practical, material things above all in the evening, putting the children to bed. It’s heavy work. But I find my self doing it when I’m the more tired one. I realise as it isn’t as if he has fun and I work: we both work..equally hard, I think, at different times and in different ways, perhaps but in the end”* (Italian woman 1).

The traditional gender role perception of my Italian respondents, that goes hand in hand with the story of the gender contract, are supported by an Italian father, *“I am the breadwinner, the*

*family leader. I have to care about money” (Italian father 1). And in order to manage work-life balance, they often get support from their families and network around them. This is often their solution in finding a strategy and a ease to the work-life conflict,*

*“Because they have always lived nearby (her family). They used to live opposite, now they are in the same building, so I had no worries that going back to work if I’d have to leave my daughter with a stranger after 3 to 4 months. I have never had worries in this respect (Italian woman 1).*

It is her responsibility but she doesn’t worry about gender roles since she has her family that can assist her. She doesn’t question the gender division. In Italy, you have the short parental leave and nearly no public childcare facilities, which may also explain why the main part of the Italian mothers is housekeepers. In Italy, they think more about the gender role constitutions but they quickly fall back on a natural explanation, and they don’t seem to really negotiate on the division of the household tasks,

*“No at times I might sort of complain saying “I’d like to..” and then we try to get organised, I come back a bit earlier in the afternoon, but I don’t always manage to in the end. Any way, we never have serious or frequent arguments about it” (Italian woman 1).*

The gender role perceptions in Italy are similar to tendencies in Hungary. The Italians may reflect slightly more upon the gendered division of their tasks but both countries possess a very traditional gender role perception.

### **5.2.3 UK**

In the UK, the division of household tasks are also based on a traditional gender pattern, where women are main responsible of obligations of the private sphere. Men, to a higher extent than women, are breadwinners. However, women in the UK seem to be more reflected upon this division and upon the fact that the situation could be different. This is expressed in terms of more outright frustrations about their double burden; the question asked here is how the tasks at home are organised, and the answer is, *“oh..that’d be me in everything (laughs) until I go on strike and then Doug gets annoyed that the place gets filthy (British mother 2).* Their frustrations are more outright than in Italy, which indicates that there, in British society, has been a greater challenge to the story of the gender contract than in Italy. But as in Italy, the responsible remains at the shoulders of the mothers,

*“but I don't think he really realises how much goes into it..he thinks that the only thing that he has to do is to look after J (the child, ed.), but he doesn't realise how much goes into organising things, clean everything..cause sometimes, I really think, I would like to be the one going to work and not havng to worry about organising everything, you know”* (British mother 1),

In the end, they see working less or not at all as a solution, although they enjoy their jobs and that they are well-established at the paid labour market. The solution of the dilemma and frustrations of the British women is that they often choose to work part time, which again proves that the gender contract, despite women's attempt to tighten up the traditional gender roles, still is relevant. Working is also a matter of financial reason. She argues that it would help to get paid for staying home a little longer. Here she acknowledges the fact that the children are the mother's responsibility, *“perhaps mums who choose to stay at home may be they can get a little bit more money because that's what it comes down to at the end; it's having money for things”* (British mother 1). The change in gender roles compared to their parents' generations is that they today are dependent on two incomes in the family,

*“ohh right, ohh right, the pressure, the pressure..well I don't think, they (his parents, ed.) used to have pressure because it was the man that went to work, the woman stayed at home, whereas now, that's not, 9 times out of ten, that's not possible; depends really, if you are earning 50- 60.000 a year then your wife can afford to stay at home, you know, but we don't earn that sort of money; if we did we wouldn't be here, you know what I mean”* (British father 1).

So it sounds as if had it not been for the money, the women would and should have worked less.

The challenges and reflections made by women upon to the gender contract are not supported by the men, which also might make it difficult to develop alternative household strategies, *“she is the mother, she does it all”* husband to British mother 2 that unfortunately briefly overheard and interrupted the interview), and,

*“I am quite lucky..personally..I think that B (the wife, ed.) is making all the sacrifices to work..ahhh..I can take time off and..when needed, but as a regular sort of routine change I did not have to make any sacrifices..I've never asked to be honest..I don't know Brenda with her job, she is quite keen to take time off from it (laughs)”* (British father 1).

So from the beginning, they might not have negotiated this division in their household and work-life strategy, *“yeah..and I don't think we have sat down and said you do this..you do this..its*

*just naturally happened..you get it done, don't you”* (British father 3). The frustrations of the women come afterwards, when coping with the double burden, “

*but sometimes S (the wife, ed.) cries out..I do too much of the cooking, can you do it for a while'..yeah..I think it is..pretty much a ok partnership..she might think different..we are just getting things done really..(British father 3).*

In Hungary, at least, they have an argument – naturalisation of the roles - for their household strategy and the division. In the UK, they don't seem to have reflected upon it from the beginning, it just turned out that way, which again indicates gender specific expectations that automatically dictates men and women's positions. However, the reflections and frustrations indicates a “softer” gender contract, seeing that they more openly question this division.

#### **5.2.4 Denmark**

In Denmark, parents more openly try to challenge the traditional structures. Here the mothers try and influence fathers in helping more out at home, and in some cases, they even go to the point, where they talk about men taking leave,

*“I wanted to have the leave for myself but I asked him if he wanted to have some of it, and he said, he didn't. I asked him a few times, and I said: I think you should do it..but I didn't mind having it for my self”* (Danish woman 2).

Talking about men and leave haven't seen to be an option in the three other countries. However, in Denmark, it often remains in theory. The Danish families are characterised by more reflections, more negotiations – and in some cases, these reflections and negotiations even take place before organising the work-life balance. So compared to the other countries, they talk about alternative strategies before deciding how to share the leave, for example. This, of course, is explained by the fact that the Danish parental leave rules are characterised by flexibility where the mother and father can share the last six months of the 1-year long leave. This in itself indicates a challenge to the story of gender contract, seeing that family policies also reflect a societal and cultural discourse. In opposition to the UK families, they, thus, try and negotiate but they, interestingly enough, also fall back on a justification of a traditional gender role constitution. And often, also in Denmark, the gender positions are justified and explained by natural and biological explanations,

*“It is also a natural that when you have a little child you also give breast, which the father, can't of course. So there are some biological explanations of why the mother has to stay at home. And then as the mother, you always think, that you are better at care obligations than the father (Danish woman 3), and, “ I mean it is me having the breasts, and we didn't feed our children with the bottle” (Danish mother 2).*

This was not the case in the UK but more the case in Hungary. This might indicate the difficulty in changing these roles – the erosion of the gender contract that still has its effect. The difficulty in changing their roles and the culture might cause a naturalisation and even an idealisation of the mother role. In Denmark, only 5 percent of the fathers take parental leave, and mothers often take the whole year.

But, generally, the Danish mothers are more reflected upon the division. Like, in the UK, the Danish mothers are along with the idealisation and naturalisation also affected by frustrations, even though they have decided to take the responsibility of childcare and household obligations from the beginning,

*“And then also to let him see what it means to stay at home (during leave, ed.) having to do all the household- and childcare tasks. He just had to get up, go to work, come back home, and he had not to think about childcare, tidying up or laundry. It would have been healthy for both of us had he also tried some of these things” (Danish woman 3), and,*

*“It is my responsibility, We have talked about that a lot, but J (the partner, ed.) does not spot the things that needed to be done. If he came own now, he wouldn't see the glasses over there at the dishes. He only realises it, when there is no clean laundry left. He does not see the laundry basket. So it is my responsibility. That's how it is, and I have been mad about that at times” (Danish woman 1).*

The Danish mother 2 that wanted the leave to her self, also see the consequences of taking the whole responsibility from the beginning, *“Now, I know how it is, now I have been hit by reality”, and*

*“and sometimes when I go to work, it's like suddenly wearing a stress-jacket, and that's when it gets really difficult for me. Then I get stressed over the dishwasher that needs to be emptied, the shopping and the cooking that I also have to take care of. Then there is the stress at work that I can't let go when I get home” (Danish mother 2).*

She realises that things might have been different had she taking a shorter leave and shared some of it with her husband, *“Of course, it would have been different, had I taken a shorter leave, and had we given the children bottles. Then he might have been more visible in taking care of the tasks at home”* (Danish mother 2).

The fathers also express a request of taking some of the leave. Here they don't negotiate it from the beginning, and if they had, the mothers as we saw, quickly naturalised the fact that the leave was the mothers' domain. So the fathers' request come in a retro perspective, *“He (the partner, ed) also wanted to take to leave, but he also wanted to make money”* (Danish woman 1). One Danish father would also have wanted to take some of it, seen in a retro perspective. So taking leave, however again often remains in theory, and they often only see it in retro perspective, which again reproduces the gender roles. A Danish mother also argues that many Danish men considers or wants to take some of leave, which again reflects a “tightening up” of the gender roles,

*“I guess there is still an attitude going on that taking leave is a girls thing. Like “real men” don't take the leave. But I think that there is a great amount out there that would want some of the leave”* (Danish mother 1).

But as mentioned, it remains in theory when it comes to at least considering taking leave.

Another thing that characterises Denmark is the fact that fathers to a greater extent are the helpers at home, *“ I (the wife, ed.) is definitely the one who is the organiser at home”* (Danish father 3), and a Danish mother argues that her partner is good *“at helping out at home”* (Danish mother 3). However, it is difficult to see how much this “helping out” is in practice. A father argues that it is difficult to help out when he is not used to it. It is difficult to erode the gender contract,

*“In theory, I could help out on the shopping and laundry but that would require that she (the partner, ed.) would have to tell me how to do it, but some times she is too stressed and tired to tell me how the laundry machine works, because she gets impatient”* (Danish father 1), and *“when you haven't cooked for many years, you don't exactly get better at it”* (Danish father 2).

Another mother, argues along with the frustrations mentioned above that it is difficult to change the gender roles, although they try and renegotiate their strategy,

*“If he, for example, forgot to do the laundry, then I just did it, and then our new deal was broken again, and then I just gave up and thought: ok, I broke the deal, I might as well just do it my self then”* (Danish mother 2).

So the reflections and alternative strategies often remain in theory. They seem to be wanting to change it but it gets too late. The routines have already been manifested. Compared to other countries, they try and break the contract, but it very little seems to succeed. This is a fourth way of observing the traces of the gender contract. Regardless what, both genders also in this country initially seem to act according to the traditional gender specific expectations – the gender contract.

### **5.3 Summing up**

In summing up, I shall briefly try and graduate the countries according to how powerful the traces of the story of the gender contract has its effect. The story of the gender contract, regardless country, are still relevant and therefore rooted in our social structures which we have reproduced and reproduce when making choices and priorities.

#### **5.3.1 Different strategies, different solutions**

The countries all end up having different solutions and different strategies when coping with the work-life balance. This all depend on their opportunities in terms of the institutional frame work such as public services, social benefits on leave and the length of the leave. Moreover, it depends on the internal and cultural perceptions of not only gender roles but also on care obligations in general.

The solution to the work-life conflict and women's' double burden in Denmark is the public day care institutions. Thereby mothers are able to take up participation on the paid labour market. As mentioned the Danish leave model is only one year and, and, compared to Hungary, who has a three year old leave per child, it brings women back to the paid labour market relatively early after having given birth. Returning early to labour market upholds a challenge to the gender contract but also their integration in the labour market. Women's labour market participation and a relatively early return to the labour market after a period on leave are elements that challenge the traditional gender role constitution; it combats the historical gender contract. In Italy, the women, who have chosen to work, depend on their network and family but in general care obligations is seen as a responsible of the family – the mothers. However, they also in this country return early to the paid labour market after having giving birth but as highlighted, they still possess a very traditional gender role perception. In the UK, women make use of private day care institutions and choose to work part-time when children are still in the pree-school age. So, in the UK, having children puts women back in terms of careier and participation on the paid labour market.

The convergence of the public and private spheres is weaker than in Denmark. In Hungary, women take three years parental leave. Although they work fulltime again after the three years on leave, they have been at home fulltime for three years, and sometimes, when they have

more than one child, they are out of the paid labour market for more than three years. This has definitely created and reproduced the traditional gender pattern, which we saw is also fully accepted in Hungary.

### **5.3.2 Different reflections and perceptions**

When comparing the countries, the countries are different in terms of perception of and reflections upon their gender role constitutions. Danish and British mothers are characterised by reflections and frustrations over their double burden whereas this is more or less non-existing in Hungary and Italy, which is more characterised by a support and acceptance of the gender roles.

As mentioned both Italian and Hungarian household strategies are based on a traditional gender role pattern and on traditional gender role and equality perceptions. In the UK and in Denmark, which is also very traditional in practise, the contract has been more modified and challenged. In these countries, women and to some extent the fathers – this is however mainly in Denmark - reflect upon the traditional gender role pattern. They reflect upon altering the traditional strategies, which is equivalent to altering or eroding the traces of gender contract. This is followed by frustrations over the unequal division that puts women into double work.

Frustrations that is more or less non-existing in Italy and Hungary, where they have a greater acceptance of the gender division. As mentioned, the gender contract holds true in all of the four countries. Both in the UK and Denmark, they express frustrations over the work load and try and challenge it. In opposition to the British families, the Danish mothers try and renegotiate and influence their men in taking leave and in helping out at home, and the fathers were more open to this change, too. However, this was mainly seen in retro perspective. The British fathers didn't take much part in this perception. So, all in all, when comparing the UK and Denmark, the gender contract seems more rooted in the UK, than in Denmark, although the changes in Denmark also often remain in theory. The problem in Denmark, when challenging the gender contract, is that the gender roles have already been reproduced, since the women took the responsibility from the beginning, and thus, the fathers don't know how to fulfil the childcare and household obligations, when wanting to help later on. This again reproduces the gender contract and upholds a public-private divide in society.

An interesting paradox is that Danish mothers tend to naturalise and even idealise the mother role and thus the traditional division from the beginning, i.e. when the child is born, and they often choose to take the whole leave themselves. In the UK, these arguments and reflections don't really take place. In the UK, the division of the gender roles just happens straight after the birth. The naturalisation is present in Hungary and Italy. Regardless, the process, choices and arguments and reflections, the outcome of gender inequality is the same across the four countries.

### **5.3.4 Conclusion - graduation of the gender contract**

Although, Denmark is most reflected and they try and negotiate *and* mothers quickly return to the paid labour market, the traces of the gender contract is a fact in Denmark. Even in this country, which is often used as a benchmark for gender equality, it has been difficult to challenge the gender role pattern and to create a higher degree of gender equality. In Denmark, too, the perception is that the private sphere is synonymous with the feminine sphere – even though the women seem to regret that they from the beginning took the whole responsibility straight after giving birth. But the conclusion, nevertheless is that, Denmark is the country mostly in progress when speaking of gender equality. Conditions for gender equality are better, meaning that public daycare institutions and a relative short and generous parental leave upholds the inclusion of women on the paid labour market. Women return to their paid work after only one year, and they are open about their reflections and frustrations in which they also give indication of being able to see gender role constitutions as being different. They often argue for a new solution to the household strategies, however, it often remains in theory. It seems difficult to change the gender roles, especially after having reproduced the roles by taking the leave and taking care of the rest of the tasks related to the private sphere. What we can see that confirms the fact that the traces of the gender contract still holds true in Denmark.

The British mothers seem to be aware of the fact that things can be different. This reflects a “looser” gender contract. However, they don’t take their frustrations to the point where they negotiate alternative household strategies, as they do in Denmark. And compared to the Danish fathers, the British fathers are not included in women's reflections and frustrations, which are also the case in the UK. Altering strategies are, compared to Denmark, to a lesser extent than women, supported by the men.

In Italy, they to a little extent reflect upon the gender roles but they very quickly fall back on a naturalisation of the gender roles and also of the fact that paid work simply is more important to men than to women. The slight extent of reflections, as mentioned, is only the case in families where the mothers work. As mentioned, the main part of mothers in Italy, are housekeepers. It might be even more traditional in the one-earner families, which represent most of the children families in Italy. So in this respect, it can be argued than the gender contract is even less challenged than in the UK and Denmark by which I would compare Italy to Hungary rather than to Denmark or the UK.

All Hungarian women, basically, are full-time workers. This represents a step towards breaking the story of the gender contract. However, they have a three-year-long maternity leave for each child, by which women often are excluded from the paid labour market for at least three years.

This upholds the very traditional gender role patterns, which, as emphasised in this article, had its strongest expression in this Hungary, meaning they had least or even no reflections on the gender role constitutions and thus a full acceptance of it. This traditional gender role perception was a fact for both mothers and fathers, although women are hard time double burdened when they return to the paid labour market. Thus, In Hungary, they are, roughly, beyond changes in the gender contract. All thing being equal, a discussion and reflections upon a change in gender roles – whether it becomes a realisation or not – always indicate a challenge to the gender contract. These reflections, we saw, were absent in Hungary. Hungary has still fully accepted the ostensibly dictating gender specific expectations towards men and women's positions.

## Resumé

	Paid labour market participation	Men's participation	Perception and arguments	Reflections	Result and graduation
<b>Hungary</b>	Primarily full-time	None	Traditional and naturalisation and a matter of biology	None, full acceptance of the situation	<b>Most traditional gender contract:</b> gender contract. Traditional roles and traditional perceptions.
<b>Italy</b>	Full-time (my respondents). <sup>1</sup>	None <sup>2</sup>	Traditional, after having had some reflections on wanting their partners to help them	More or less none, full acceptance of the situation	<b>Quite traditional gender contract:</b> Some women try and influence their men but quickly accept the division. <sup>3</sup>
<b>UK</b>	Primarily Part-time	None	No real arguments Had it not been for the money, women would have stayed longer at home when children are little.  Ambiguous arguments: 1) Prioritises care work, it is expected and a female responsibility and thus complains over having to work 2) Do enjoy their job which also imply responsibility and challenges	Women's frustrations about double burden. Which indicate some reflections but no negotiations with partner's however. They choose to work-part time	<b>Traditional in practice but less traditional gender contract</b> in their perceptions: due to frustrations and opposition against the division

<sup>1</sup> Italian mothers are just as often housekeepers

<sup>2</sup> Very little before having children, however, this is only observed for families with mothers that work

<sup>3</sup> Had my Italian data implied housekeepers rather than those who have chosen to work, the outcome of my analysis of this country might have reflected an even more traditional gender role perceptions, and I might have graduated Italy as being the most traditional country when it comes to gender role constitutions.

<b>Denmark</b>	Primarily full-time	Some when referred to by women	Initial naturalisation of the mother role	Reflections from both of the genders and some negotiations on alternative strategies, incl. men and leave – mainly in retrospective. Women's frustrations on their double role (retrospectively) which also indicate reflections	<b>Traditional but least traditional gender contract</b> : Initial naturalisation but women are also full-time workers, frustrations over double burden and reflections and negotiations with their partner on alternative strategies incl. men taking leave.

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