

NEGOTIATING WORK-LIFE BALANCE, GENDER EQUALITY AND PARENTING: DRIVERS AND AMBIVALENCES IN DUAL-EARNER/DUAL-CARER COUPLES*

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Abstract

Work-life balance of couples with young children is a recurrent topic in Portuguese policy since the 1974 Revolution, which led to a growing promotion of the dual-earner/dual-carer model within an inclusive gender equality agenda. Drawing on the analysis of Portuguese family policies evolution, quantitative data (official statistics and ISSP 2012) and on the narratives of two dual-earner/dual carer couples, we depict the *exogenous* and *endogenous forces* that are driving a less uneven work-life balance, but also gender ambivalences that are slowing down the pace towards equal sharing of home production and parenting for men and women. Results show that public and private spheres are becoming less gendered, owing to the strong commitment of women with full-time paid-work and

Resumen:

El equilibrio entre la vida personal y el trabajo en las parejas con niños/as pequeños/as es un tema recurrente en las políticas portuguesas desde la Revolución de 1974, que condujo a una promoción creciente del modelo doble ingreso/doble cuidador dentro de una agenda inclusiva en materia de equidad de género. Basándose en el análisis de la evolución de las políticas portuguesas sobre familia, en datos cuantitativos (estadísticas oficiales y ISSP 2012) y en las narrativas de dos parejas con doble proveedor/doble cuidador, describimos las fuerzas exógenas y endógenas que están conduciendo a un equilibrio trabajo-vida menos desigual, pero también las ambivalencias de género que están desacelerando el ritmo hacia un reparto equitativo de la producción hogareña y la crianza de los/as hijos/as entre hombres y mujeres. Los

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to the increasing involvement of men in early childcare, and this comes along with a new sense of entitlement, for men and women, to negotiate gender roles in family life. On the other hand, they show that even if gender equality as a societal desideratum is a pervasive norm for young generations, and even if it's evident the developing shift towards more equal sharing patterns among young dual-earner/dual-carer couples, ambivalences regarding gender roles in mothering and fathering (and inherent gender privileges) are operating as a reflex of an *incomplete revolution* in Portuguese society.

Keywords: Dual-earner/dual-carer couples; Gender equality; Gender roles; Parenting; Work-care balance.

resultados muestran que las esferas pública y privada se están volviendo menos generizadas, debido al fuerte compromiso de las mujeres con el trabajo remunerado a tiempo completo y a la creciente implicación de los hombres en la crianza, lo cual conlleva un nuevo sentido de derecho, tanto para hombres como mujeres, que los habilita a negociar los roles de género en la vida familiar. Por otro lado, muestran que incluso si la igualdad de género como desiderátum social es una norma generalizada para las generaciones jóvenes, y si bien es evidente el desarrollo del cambio hacia patrones de co-responsabilidad más equitativos entre las parejas jóvenes de doble ingreso / doble cuidado, las ambivalencias con respecto a los roles de género en cuanto a la maternidad y la paternidad (y los privilegios de género inherentes) funcionan como un reflejo de una *revolución incompleta* en la sociedad portuguesa.

Palabras claves: Parejas de doble proveedor/doble cuidador; Igualdad de género; Roles de género; Crianza de los hijos; Equilibrio trabajo-cuidado.

Introduction

Relevant changes have been taking place in Portuguese society in a set of structural and relational factors that are changing the work-life balance in dual-earner couples with young children (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007): the increasing lifelong participation of women in paid-work; the political commitment to the dual earner/dual carer society (Gornick and Meyers 2003) by a longstanding support of women's full-time work and by a more recent endorsement of shared parenting (including in early childcare through a more gender neutral parental leave scheme); and, finally, the substantial responsiveness of the population to gender equality in public and private domains, especially among young generations in family formation years (Ramos, Atalaia and Cunha 2016, Wall *et al.* 2017).

Work-life balance of couples with young children is, therefore, an appealing topic in Portuguese sociological research, owing to these societal changes that have been gradually shifting the gender contract during the last decades. In fact, norms, attitudes and practices regarding gender division of labour and parenting are in constant renewal, triggered by “exogenous forces” at the institutional level and “endogenous forces” at the individual level (Esping-Andersen 2009) that challenge men and women to accommodate ‘new’ roles and novel ways of displaying ‘old’ ones (Aboim and Marinho 2006, Marinho 2011, Wall 2015, Wall, Aboim and Cunha 2010). The gradual consolidation of a dual earner/dual carer society has been given to Portuguese men and women the sense of entitlement to negotiate gender roles in their family lives, putting into practise ideals of gender equality in paid work, home production and parenting (Deutsch 1999, Dienhart 1998, Marinho 2011, González and Jurado Guerrero 2015, Wall 2014, Wall, Cunha and Marinho *forthcoming*). However, changing gender cultures hosts tensions in regard to gender roles and identities, infusing ambivalences at the institutional level, in the expectations and objective conditions provided by the labour-market and public policy for men and women to cope with work-life balance (Esping-Andersen 2009, Lewis and Lewis 1996; Pfau-Effinger 1998); and at the individual level of gender-role attitudes, wherein support for gender equal ideals may be blended with essentialist beliefs (Aboim 2010b, Knight and Brinton 2017).

In order to enlighten this all-embracing process of social change that is taking place in Portuguese society, we start by debating the theoretical relevance of framing it in the discussion of a Southern Welfare Regime and its likelihood to apprehend the historical-political singularity of Portugal from mid-1970s onwards. Subsequently, we move into the analysis of the interplay between *exogenous* and *endogenous forces* (Esping-An-

dersen 2009) that is underpinning the shift from a gender-unequal male-breadwinner/female-caregiver society to a gender-equal dual-earner/dual-carer society since the Revolution of 1974, but also the symptoms of ambivalences and tensions in gender-roles attitudes and practices.

To clarify the rationale, we draw on different sources of data: firstly, on public policies advances concerning work-life balance, official statistics, legislation and ISSP survey data that tracks recent developments in paid and unpaid-work, and in attitudes towards gender equality and the role of the father in childcare¹; secondly, on qualitative data in order to depict how this social process is being seized and enhanced in conjugal life.

In fact, qualitative research from the first decade of 2000s on men's roles in family life, based on in-depth interviews with men in dual-earner couples with young children, have already highlighted changes in their attitudes, practices and identities as partners and fathers. Briefly, these changes encompassed men's attempt to cope with women's double-burden and with conjugal companionship ideals, on the one hand, and to bring about a 'new father' by building emotional closeness with children and greater involvement in parenting, on the other hand. By displaying more "caring masculinities" (Elliott 2016), these men were turning couples' work-life balance less uneven, even if this pathway doesn't fully reject essentialist beliefs (Aboim and Marinho 2006, Marinho 2011; Wall, Aboim and Marinho 2007, Wall, Aboim and Cunha 2010). In a more recent comprehensive research, heterosexual dual-earner couples with young children were extensively interviewed on work-life balance and parenting practices, on how they envision gender roles and assess the extent of their inputs to family dynamics².

1. An extensive and in-depth analysis of these indicators was carried out in a previous publication (Wall *et al.* 2017) drafted as part of the project 'Men's roles in a gender equality perspective' (2014-2016), undertaken in a partnership between the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment and the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon. The project was funded by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area, EEA Grants, Programme Area PT07 – Mainstreaming of Gender Equality and Work-Life Balance, with the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) as the programme operator. More information on the project and main outputs, including the abovementioned publication are available at: http://cite.gov.pt/pt/acite/projetos_eea_grants_002.html.

2. The research project '*The double postponement: men and women coping with childbearing intentions in their late 30s and early 40s*' (2012-2015), funded by the National Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT – PEst-OE/SADG/LA0013/2011), was undertaken within a partnership between the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon and the Interdisciplinary Centre for History, Cultures and Societies from the University of Évora. Childbearing intentions and decisions, in the framework of fertility postponement and decline, was the theme of the project and the central topic of the interviews. However, since work-life imbalances and gender inequalities may be contributing for childbearing indecisions and low fertility, along with other ingredients (Cunha *et al.* 2016), the interview script covered these topics as well. The fieldwork took place between 2013 and 2014 and mainly in Lisbon Region. Within an all-encompassing approach to childbearing intentions in the context of low fertility and postponement, the study gathered four samples: couples with one child, childless couples, lone-parents with one child and childless single men

Drawing on two case studies of this sample of dual-earner/dual carer couples through the accounts of both partners, we will enlighten the *exogenous* and *endogenous* drivers that are being triggered in their fairly symmetrical sharing of responsibilities in paid and unpaid work; but also the ambivalences in their negotiation of mothering and fathering and how this impacts in *doing gender* in specific domains of home production and parenting. Indeed, these two case studies are exemplary of the way essentialism is resiliently omnipresent in the daily life of couples with young children, hindering the pursuit of gender equality ideals as a conjugal project.

Portugal within a Southern Welfare Regime: an insight

The influential work of Esping-Andersen from 1990, which set forth a typology of welfare regimes in developed countries, brought about an incessant and all-encompassing debate on the relationship between the structural conditions provided by the State in each regime and its ability to *decommodify* individuals' well-being. Two main reproaches were made to this author's work: one, concerning the narrow scope of the typology to grasp the situation of economically peripheral European countries, such as the Southern ones (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007, Torres *et al.* 2005, Wall and Escobedo 2013); and the other, concerning the non-inclusion of a gender perspective in his conceptualization, a missed opportunity to disclose the linkage between different welfare regimes and the *gender contract* that underpins social relations among men and women (Aboim 2010b, Cousins 1999, Trifiletti 1999).

In fact, academics soon realized that Southern European countries didn't accurately fit in Esping-Andersen's typology, which was much more comprehensive of the welfare regimes of affluent countries, for instance Sweden, Germany or UK as examples of the Social-Democratic, the Conservative-Corporatist and the Liberal regimes. Alternative views, which have been developed since then in order to apprehend the singularity of a Southern, Meridional or Latin-Rim regime (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007, Ferrera 1999, Torres *et al.* 2005, Trifiletti 1999), were moved by the awareness of the similar historical and socio-economic circumstances that had imprinted a different path to countries like Portugal, Spain, Italy or Greece. Cousins highlights three chief

and women. Interviewees' recruitment implied several sociodemographic criteria. In the case of couples with one child (12 couples in total), two interviews were carried out, one with each partner (24 individual interviews in total), and it was required a prior manifestation of availability and consent from both. More information on the project is available at: <http://duploadiamento.wordpress.com>.

common traits “first, the late timing and qualitative different form of industrialization and modernization processes; secondly, the central role of the Church; and thirdly, the nature of the ‘despotic regimes’ through which all these societies passed” (1999: 18-19). In fact, while Western Europe was undergoing a massive economic recovery and an overall social progress after the Second World War, Southern Europe, in particular Portugal and Spain, remained internationally isolated and submerged in lifelong authoritarian right-wing dictatorships until the 1970s’. This shared historical legacy had enduring and severe effects in these countries, which had to cope with the democratization process within a socially and economically endemic lagging (Cousins 1999, Pinto 2013). But if this represented a disadvantage for the development of a strong welfare state (Ferrera, 1999, Santos 1990, Torres *et al.* 2005), the truth is that it also embodied a challenge for the consolidation of a dual earner/dual carer society, precisely when the male breadwinner/female caregiver (homemaker) model was being dismantled all around Europe (Aboim 2010b, Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007, Esping-Andersen 2009).

As a matter of fact, the rising of the male breadwinner/female caregiver model in post-war Europe turned out to be an important ally of the *Fordism*, by guaranteeing stable and lifelong full employment for men (Cousins 1999, Pfau-Effinger 2004, Ramos 2015). Through a strict gendered division of paid and unpaid-work, men’s ‘family wage’ and women’s caregiving and domestic duties were perceived as the most *natural* and *functional* articulation of the instrumental domain of men’s roles in society with the expressive domain of women’s roles in the family (Parsons and Bales 1955). So, the development of the post-war welfare systems was closely engaged with this gender regime (Connell 1987): the economically productive men were the legitimate recipients of welfare, but they were kept apart from being involved in parenting activities and in family daily life (Castelain-Meunier 2002); while women, *naturally* excluded from the labour-market, were supposed to gain “benefits, often indirectly, as wives and mothers” (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007: 3). But in the 1960s and 1970s, the economic slowdown and, afterwards, the oil crisis brought the climbing of unemployment and families’ need for a second income (Ramos 2015). Due to this macroeconomic context, along with feminists’ emancipatory movements (Aboim 2012), the male breadwinner model started to lose prominence, leading to a wider spectrum of possibilities for families to face market/family responsibilities and to “a continuing debate about the relationship of women’s paid and unpaid-work and their access to welfare” (Cousins 1999: 1) within the reform of welfare regimes in Western Europe.

The male breadwinner/female caregiver model: the ideological project of Estado Novo

This doesn't mean that the particular political and social framework of Southern Europe was not favourable to the male breadwinner/female caregiver model. Actually, it was. However, and now going into the Portuguese context, this conception of family life based in the economic role of men and the domestic role of women, and in the superior value and authority of a male 'head of the family' to whom the housewife and children owed strict obedience, was an essential ingredient of the ideological project of *Estado Novo*, the Portuguese four-decade conservative dictatorship (Torres *et al.* 2005, Wall 2011, Wall *et al.* 2017). This Regime relied on the Church to moralise family conduct and extensively inscribed gender inequality, the hierarchy of men over women and the authority of husband over wife in the legal framework that lasted until the Revolution of 1974 (Aboim 2011, Rêgo 2012, Wall 2011, Wall *et al.* 2017). In fact, the main legal documents that regulated family relations – the 1930s Constitution and the 1960s Civil Code – wrote down in the law the patriarchy, but also the “ideology of domesticity” (Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007) of a “housewife model” (Pau-Effinger 2004), by explicitly assigning housework and childcare to women, according to “the differences resulting from their nature and the good of the family” (article 5 of the 1933 Constitution). The very rudimentary welfare system from *Estado Novo* was in line with the male breadwinner/female caregiver model, since the main benefit, the family allowance, was to the 'head of the family', consisting of a supplement to the 'family wage' earned by the male breadwinner (Wall 2011). In this context, 'good parenting' was, back then, broadly understood within this non-interchangeable gender specialization, with maternal hands-on care and emotional maintenance and paternal economic, moral and disciplinary supervision as complementary contributions for childrearing.

However, in the 1960s Portuguese society was already hosting cumulative conditions that were in conflict with the Regime's ideological project for the family, as the labour-market was growingly claiming for women's presence: on the one hand, the shortage of male's workforce, owing to the Colonial War (1961-1974) and the substantial migratory flow to Europe, pushed women into the industrial and agricultural work; on the other hand, the emergent economy of services, together with the increasing higher education of women from the elites, was responsible for the feminization of the tertiary sector (Aboim 2010a, Torres *et al.* 2005, Ramos 2015).

*The democratic gender equality agenda at the epicentre of the dual-earner/
dual-carer model*

The male breadwinner/female caregiver model was only ultimately challenged after the transition to Democracy, when gender equality was enshrined as a fundamental right in the new Portuguese Constitution, with the State assuming its observation as a fundamental task. The new legal system established at that time was definitely committed to a radical social change regarding gender relations, by no longer conceding “to nature the power to hierarchize human beings according to sex and (...) [by building] its equal social dignity” (Rêgo 2012: 60). This fundamental task implied, first of all, improving women’s rights, autonomy and power in the private and public realms: in the first one, by levelling the rights, duties and authority of spouses in conjugal life and parenting; and in the second one, by ensuring equal conditions and opportunities in education, paid-work and civic participation.

The first step: women’s rights and the challenge of the public sphere

Within this gender equality agenda, there was from the outset a political ideological commitment to the dual-earner model, which implied for the State to assume public obligations in order to promote women’s participation in the labour-market to the same extent as men, as well as work-life balance for couples with young children³ (Wall 2011). So, the very first policy measures were aimed at working women, and their protection and economic empowerment in the labour-market: in 1976 it was established the universal entitlement of working mothers to a well-paid maternity leave of 90 days; and in 1979 the ‘Equality Law’ came to accomplish the constitutional principles

3. Despite this political recognition, the development of public childcare facilities since the transition to Democracy has been random, giving room to the penetration of a profitable private sector and of a non-profitable third sector, which by no means were sufficient or affordable for all the families (Wall 2011). Nonetheless, the prevalence of formal childcare for pre-school children (3-5 years) has been steadily increasing: in 2016 more than 9 children in 10 were enrolled in pre-school education and more than half attend a public school (Sources: DGEEC/MEEd-MCTES, INE, PORDATA, data available at: <http://www.pordata.pt/> and consulted on October, 2017). For the under 3, the coverage rate of *crèches* and childminders is above the European Council’s ‘Barcelona target’ (33%) since 2010, and more than doubled since 2000: in 2014 almost 50% of the under 3 were enrolled in these childcare solutions, most of them from the non-profitable third sector (Sources: Conselho Nacional de Educação, GEP/MSESS, data available at: Wall *et al.* 2017). Therefore, families in Portugal are definitely ‘defamilializing’ childcare (Esping-Andersen 2009), even if public responses are still insufficient to cope with social and territorial inequities (Wall *et al.* 2001, 2017).

of non-discrimination of women in the labour-market⁴ (Ferreira 2012, Rêgo 2012). Portuguese women steadily embraced this ‘new’ role and currently they are among the most economically active women in EU, notably with regard to mothers of pre-school age children. In 2016, the employment rate of Portuguese women aged 25-49 and with children under 6 was 80%, a figure that places Portugal closer to the reality of Scandinavian countries, like Denmark (81%) and Sweden (83%), than to the reality of Spain (63%), Italy (55%) or Greece (54%); and even more remarkable is the employment rate amongst the least educated mothers (72% for ISCED 0-2), definitely the highest in EU⁵. In fact, the employment rate of Portuguese women in family formation years has been growing quite consistently and it doesn’t differentiate the behaviour of mothers of pre-school children from the general behaviour of women in the same age group. In this context, dual-earner couples working full-time are by the far most prevailing reality among economically active couples in Portugal, while the arrangement in which one of the spouses (typically women) works part-time (a common situation in many EU countries), is quite marginal⁶: in 2014, these two types of conjugal division of paid-work represented, respectively, 71% and 7% (in Spain they represented 46% and 18%); and if we take into account couples at the peak of family formation (30-44 years old) in the beginning of the 2000s and more recently, dual-earner/full-time couples’ prevalence increased from 70% to 81%⁷. These trends attest for the strong and longstanding normativity of female labour-market participation in Portugal (Ferreira 2012, Torres *et al.* 2005, Wall *et al.* 2017). Indeed, still according to data from ISSP, 93% of the Portuguese population in 2002 and 94% in 2014 agreed that both men and women should contribute for household income (Aboim, 2007, Ramos, Atalaia and Cunha 2016). Like some authors have been claiming (Escobedo and Wall 2015, Wall and Escobedo 2013), the outstanding contrast in women’s and couples’ employment patterns in Portugal within the South regional context, pose a challenge for a deeper

4. The ‘Equality Law’ (Law 392/79, 20 of September) was responsible for the creation of the Commission for Equality in Labour and Employment (CITE), the official body that has as main mission to pursue the observance of gender equality in the labour-market (http://cite.gov.pt/en/about_us.html).

5. Source: Eurostat | Labour Force Survey (data available at: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-datasets/-/lfst_hheredch and consulted on October, 2017).

6. It’s important to highlight that during the period of economic crisis and austerity (2008-2014), Portugal faced a swift increase in unemployment that affected men and women in a very similar degree (Source: INE, Labour Force Survey). However, we cannot ascribe the growth in dual-earner/full-time couples to this depressive conjuncture, since this type of conjugal division of paid work has been climbing consistently along with women’s growing enrolment in paid work.

7. Sources: ISSP 2002 and ISSP 2012 - ‘Family and Changing Gender Roles’, Wall *et al.* 2017.

discussion on the Meridional Welfare Regime, which tends to overlook these striking singularities in most common approaches (ex: Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007, Esping-Andersen 2009)⁸.

The second step: *men's rights and the challenge of the private sphere*

The political commitment to the dual-earner model, as a proxy of gender equality in the public sphere, required a great change in women's lives, leading to the "masculinization of women's life course" (Esping-Andersen 2009: 20). However, the role of men for the full accomplishment of this goal received little attention from public policy for some time. Indeed, the mediating role of paid work in fatherhood, which underpinned hegemonic masculinities, remained untouched, albeit the democratization of family relations, enshrined in the new legal order, was claiming for a more present, warmer, and less authoritarian husband and father (Marinho 2011, Wall, Cunha and Aboim 2010, Wall 2011). Therefore, the degree of men's involvement in daily family activities did not fully comply with this process of women emancipation. That is why home production and caregiving remained trapped to its gender mark. Accordingly, women's had to cope with the double-burden of paid (full-time) work and unpaid-work, and with a demanding work-life balance (Amâncio 2007, Torres *et al.* 2005).

In the 1980s, however, it became quite evident that the gender equality desideratum demanded a second step, which was to include fatherhood and men's contribution for work-life balance in the political agenda. In the first constitutional amendment of 1982, "paternity was levelled to maternity as an eminent social value, including in regard its protection by society and by the State" (Rêgo, 2012: 68); and in 1984 this was translated in the 'Maternity and Paternity Protection Law' (4/84, 5 of April), which explicitly acknowledged that "Parents are equal in rights and duties regarding the sustenance and upbringing of their children (...) with the guarantee of professional fulfilment and participation in the civic life of the country" (Article 68). This agenda also introduced the very first paternity leave, but just in the extreme case of mother's decease or incapacity. Indeed, in the mid-1980s there was still considerable social and political reluctance in recognizing that the father could be, like the mother, a primary

8. Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette portrayed Portugal "as a mixed corporatist/familialist welfare regime" (2007: 7), even if Portuguese families are increasingly distant from the male breadwinner/female caregiver model, not only in their practices but also in their attitudes (Ramos, Atalaia and Cunha 2016, Wall *et al.* 2017).

caregiver of a baby, and it took more than two decades to change this state of affairs⁹. In fact, albeit the steady strengthening of fathers' rights in the Portuguese parental leave policy, within a growing acknowledgement of their role as secondary caregivers or 'maternal helpers' (Marinho 2011, Wall, Aboim and Marinho 2007) (even if fundamental rights had a broader understanding as equal parents), it was only in 2009 that there was a 'paradigmatic shift' (Marcelino *in* Wall *et al.* 2017: 51), with the legislator levelling the role of the father and the mother in early childcare with the explicit aim of reinforcing gender equality and work-life balance among dual-earner couples with young children. This implied paramount changes in the parental leave scheme, with the *degenderization* of the new initial parental leave (previous maternity leave), and the encouragement of parents' sharing through a bonus of an additional month, as the most symbolic measures (Wall *et al.* 2017).

So, the growing political demand for fathers' involvement in early childcare was a challenge that was gradually embraced by fathers and couples: in 10 years (2005-2015), the take-up of the 'exclusive leaves for fathers' increased from 40 to 71% for compulsory days and from 30 to 63% for optional days. Concerning the sharing of the 'initial parental leave', it also has been rising, from 21% of total initial parental leaves granted in 2010 (soon after its implementation in 2009), to 29% in 2015¹⁰. If studies from the 2000s were already noticing the changes that were taking place in men's practices and identities, and how they were impacting on the work-life balance of dual-earner couples with young children (Aboim and Marinho 2006, Marinho, 2011, Torres *et al.* 2005, Wall, Aboim and Marinho 2007, Wall, Aboim and Cunha 2010), recent studies are highlighting the current leave policy as a crucial *exogenous driver* for endorsing the dual-earner/dual-carer model in Portuguese society (Leitão 2018, Wall 2014, Wall, Cunha and Marinho forthcoming, Wall *et al.* 2017). By challenging men to immerse in primary and more autonomous caregiving, and by challenging women to share this realm of hands-on care and inherent emotional rewards, policy is backing-up the reshape of fathering and mothering in a more far-reaching way.

9. A detailed overview of the evolution, from the 1980s up to present, of the protection of paternity in the Portuguese parental leave policy is available at Wall *et al.* 2017.

10. Sources: Wall *et al.* 2016 (own calculation based on numbers supplied by the Social Security Data Institute and by the Strategy and Planning Office of the Ministry of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security - GEP/MTSSS, updated at 18 March 2016).

The ‘incomplete revolution’ in Portuguese society

According to Esping-Andersen’s theory on the ‘Incomplete Revolution’ (2009), today’s configuration of gender social relations in each European society falls somewhere in between two ‘equilibriums’: the one that underpinned the post-war gender-specialized male-breadwinner/female-caregiver model and the one that is underpinning the building up of the gender-equal dual-earner/dual-carer model, with Scandinavian countries at the forefront of this societal transition, and the Southern countries in the laggard positions. In the author’s standpoint, the latter are having more trouble at the institutional level, to accommodate women’s new roles, contributing for “sub-optimal outcomes” in their life-trajectories (2009: 11). Despite the fact that Portugal, within Southern Europe, is standing out in the pace toward a dual-earner/dual-carer society, largely endorsed by more than four decades of a pretty consistent political commitment to a gender equality agenda (Escobedo and Wall 2015, Ferreira 2012, Rêgo 2012), this explanation is nonetheless plausible to outline the ‘incomplete revolution’ in the Portuguese society. In fact, there is substantial evidence of persistent gender inequalities that fall on women in paid and unpaid-work: on the one hand, income disparity, horizontal and vertical segregation and higher vulnerability to unemployment or job precariousness are major symptoms of gender inequality in the labour-market (Casaca 2012, Ferreira 2012); on the other hand, home production remains highly feminized, especially in regard routine and time-consuming tasks, bringing on a considerable disparity in the amount of time allocated by men and women to unpaid-work (Perista *et al.* 2016, Ramos 2015, Torres *et al.* 2005, Wall and Amâncio 2007, Wall *et al.* 2017).

But concerning men and women from recent generations, and especially those in family formation years and with secondary and higher education, it is incontestable that they are *undoing gender* in the public and the private spheres and gradually becoming less unequal, which is improving work-life balance in dual-earner couples with young children and mitigating (but not abolishing) women’s double-burden. Data from ISSP point out a remarkable converging trend, from 2002 to 2014, in the practices of men and women at peak ages of family formation (30-44 years old): regarding paid-work, women are allocating slightly more time (+1.9 hours/week) and men are allocating considerably less (-5.1 hours/week); regarding household tasks, women are allocating less 4.3 hours/week and men are allocating more 6.5 hours/week. But if the disparity between men and women in paid-work is only of +1.7 hours/week for men, in home production and care work (caring for children and other family members in need) disparities are still higher (respectively +8.6 and +4.8 hours/week for women); and if men

are more enrolled in tasks, including time-consuming ones (as cooking, cleaning and caring for the sick), this is taking place within a conjugal sharing arrangement more than in an autonomous way, which means that women remain as the managers of home production (Wall *et al.* 2017)¹¹.

This state of affairs must be understood within the framework of ambivalence towards gender roles that is instilled at the institutional level. As it is extensively recognised in Western societies, one of the most important institutional setting that shapes the daily existence of individuals and families and (re)produces gender inequalities in paid and unpaid-work (with more or less complicity with the State's policy) is the labour-market (Cousins 1999, Crompton, Lewis and Lyonette 2007, Lewis 2010, Lewis and Lewis 1996). This is also accurate for Portugal, as many authors have been claiming (Casaca 2012, Ferreira 2012, Torres *et al.* 2005), even if the progressive labour regulation has the hallmark of the Revolution (Monteiro 2012, Rêgo 2012). Indeed, the dominant organizational culture at workplaces – especially, but not exclusively, in the private sector (Guerreiro, Abrantes and Pereira 2009, Leitão 2018) – still endorses the “androcentric career model” (Lewis 2010: 350), that is, the “representation of the ‘ideal’ worker as not having family responsibilities” (Casaca in Wall *et al.* 2017: 72), engendering a double pattern of full-time employment. The massive feminization in time-off from paid-work to cope with family needs (Rêgo 2012) is a consequence of the gender divide that still encloses ultimate gender-specific obligations for men and women. So, as Monteiro elucidates, in the Portuguese labour market there is “a clear disjunction between (...) progressive and egalitarian juridical-social conceptions and conservative and unequal social practices” (2012: 53).

However, the ambivalence towards gender roles is not only ingrained at institutional level, it is also echoing in the attitudes of men and women (Aboim 2010b). There is, indeed, a substantial support, among Portuguese population, of the dual-earner/dual-carer model, enclosing the recognition of the right of women to work and the right of men to care, as well as the duty of women to share the economic load and the duty of men to share unpaid work. Indeed, according to ISSP 2012, 78% of the interviewees agree that “in a couple, men and women should divide equally all household tasks”, and

11. Sources: Wall *et al.* 2017. Own calculations from ISSP ‘Family and changing gender roles’ 2002 and 2012 (2014 for Portugal). Data for care work was only available at ISSP 2012. Even if it's tempting, it's not accurate to sum up both indicators of unpaid-work, since several individuals declare an overall unrealistic amount of unpaid-work (more than 24 hours/day). This means that subjectively it's difficult to separate the time allocated to both activities and that objectively they can be performed at the same time. Data from a recent national time use survey confirm these converging trend in the time allocated by men and women to paid and unpaid work (Perista *et al.* 2016).

the level of attitudinal commitment to gender equality is even higher for young men and women (Ramos, Atalaia and Cunha 2016). However, at some extent, this cultural normativity lives together with essentialism regarding women's ability to care (Gaunt 2006, Knight and Brinton 2017). Still according to ISSP 2012, there is a pretty larger consensus on the relevance of the father in childcare (75% of the interviewees agree with the statement that "the child is harmed when the father does not participate in their children's care"), than in their equal parental skills to take care of a baby (60% of women and 53% of men agree that "the father is as competent as the mother to take care of baby up to 1 year old")¹². Even if the levels of agreement are higher for younger men and women, the narrative of mothers' *natural* superior competency is a powerful stereotype that legitimates women's primacy in childcare, if not precludes men's greater and equal involvement in their children's lives (Cunha *et al.* forthcoming, Wall *et al.* 2017, Marinho 2017, Marinho and Correia 2017).

Therefore, the 'incomplete revolution' of Portuguese society towards a gender-equal dual-earner/dual carer model seems to be grounded on the weakness of the *endogenous* "force that alters the core fundamentals" and of the *exogenous* "enabling conditions" (Esping-Andersen 2009: 12); the same is to say, grounded on normative tensions at the individual and institutional levels (Aboim 2010b), that refrain the rhythm of social change, by challenging individuals to display new social meanings and practices while assigning them ultimate gendered roles and responsibilities (González and Jurado Guerrero 2015).

Negotiating work-life balance, gender equality and parenting: drivers and ambivalences in two dual-earner/dual-carer couples

Even if dual-earners/dual-cares couples are engaged in attaining a successful career or pursuing self-realization in other realms of life, and even if they may hold gender-equality ideals that intend to pursue in their family lives, achieving a work-life balance based on equal sharing in home production and parenting may be a work in progress. A hard one, full of ambivalences regarding the negotiation of both doing and undoing gender roles, entitlements and rewards in daily interactions. The following cases will enlighten the drivers that are turning work-like balance less unequal in couples, but not necessarily exempted from normative tensions that refrain the gender equality desideratum.

12. Sources: Wall *et al.* 2017 (own calculations based on the especial Portuguese module from ISSP 2012 'Family and changing gender roles').

“I always saw life together as sharing, not as it used to be”: Vasco and Filipa

Vasco and Filipa are a dual-earner/dual carer couple, both working full-time. They married 8 years ago, after a long dating that started when they met at the university. She got pregnant unexpectedly soon after the marriage and their baby girl, Alice, was born the following year. Presently, Alice is 7 years old and attends the first year of compulsory schooling in a public school.

Vasco is a qualified civil servant, a tax professional with a stable career. He usually works from 9:00 am to 5:30 pm. Filipa works in the private sector as a secretary in a technical department of a construction industry firm. She works from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm, but on Fridays there is a reduced working schedule, so she leaves at 3:00 pm. She's not as fulfilled as Vasco in professional life and she earns considerably less than he does, but the work schedule gives her room to invest in a particularly rewarding sphere of life, an artistic career as a ballet dancer.

Concerning home production, they outsource time-consuming tasks, such as ironing and cleaning. What remains for them to do in terms of housework is quite split, but both recognize that Filipa has a slightly bigger share. On the other hand, they are not completely in tune regarding childcare, as he undervalues his own contribution more than she does.

Vasco and Filipa's current work-care balance is structured around five main drivers:

A first driver is related to Vasco's more family-friendly workplace, which enables him to play the central role in Alice's weekday routines. Indeed he is always the one who wakes her up and helps her preparing for school, makes breakfast and her afternoon snack, drives her to school and fetches her in the evening (either from school or from his mother-in-law's), and supervises her schoolwork when they get home. As a civil servant, Vasco is also more available to respond to family needs, so he is also the one who takes Alice to the doctor when she is sick and who takes the leave to provide sick care: “I can take a few days off, if needed, to stay with the kid. For her it is more complicated, because she can't miss work as easy. I can manage that kind of situations. So, regarding these family situations, my job is easier than hers” (Vasco).

Filipa tries to compensate her lesser implication during the week, by being the one who is more involved in parenting during the weekend. However, on Sundays Filipa also assumes, in between, some cleaning and laundry, with Vasco's support, and cooks in advance the meals for the week: “Cooking is more hers. Then other things such as doing the laundry, washing the dishes, cleaning the house, we divide the tasks. It depends, it has to do with who is at home. We have it more or less divided” (Vasco).

A second driver is related with their financial capacity to outsource some housework. Every two weeks they have a cleaning service undertaking the house cleaning, and all the ironing is outsourced as well. By maintaining the house tidy every day, Filipa, Vasco and even Alice are responsible “for the mess each one makes”, as Filipa explains. She also stresses that Vasco is more tidier and organized than she is, keeping everything in place. This organizing ability is also at the service of family finances and inherent paperwork, as well as shopping: “Shopping is his department, because he is very good with money, very price-aware. The money management is his thing”.

A third driver is the appreciation of each personal autonomy to pursue self-realization outside work and family life, which they fulfil in alternating days. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, Filipa has dance classes after work, and sometimes rehearsals and performances. In those days, Vasco is responsible for all the evening routines, like heating the already prepared dinner, cleaning the kitchen, supervising Alice’s bath and putting her to bed: “Even if I have to make a sacrifice [in my professional and family life], that does not prevent me from attending my dance classes and (...) perform in one or other show, to keep that part of my life present” (Filipa). On Tuesdays and Thursdays they switch, and Vasco has his own activities with his friends, like playing football, poker and PlayStation games, while Filipa stays in charge of the evening routines.

The fourth driver is Filipa’s sense of entitlement, as full-time worker, to demand an equal sharing commitment since the beginning of the conjugal life. She established a standard of work-life balance based on equal investments in paid and unpaid-work, and Vasco was responsive to her claim: “I left it clear from the outset that if we were both employed there had to be a mutual commitment. But I never felt he held back on it. He always shipped in (...). [And] he always helped tremendously with the baby. I think that everything was always fairly well shared” (Filipa). Vasco, by his side, expresses how he is proud of his homemaking skills: “She did not need to reproach me because this was not on the right place, or that was not done”.

A fifth driver is, in fact, Vasco’s ideal of conjugal life, which is in deliberate rupture with the traditional model that his own parents had displayed in his childhood. He always longed for an equal partnership and for becoming a hands-on, emotionally involved, caring father since the very first day Alice was born before the implementation of the current parental leave scheme, but even so, Vasco made an effort to be more involved by taking a vacation break: “I always wanted to be involved in everything regarding the house and my children. (...) I always saw life together as sharing, not as it used to be with the woman doing everything and the men seated on the sofa” (Vasco).

But even though Vasco and Filipa had achieved a quite balanced work-life arrange-

ment that fulfils their family ideal as well as their individual pursuits, for Filipa sharing unpaid work is not necessarily embedded in gender equality regarding parenting. For her, despite recognizing the importance of fathers' involvement in childcare as Vasco does, mothers are naturally entitled to be the primary parental figures and to have its emotional privileges, from which fathers have to step aside: "I think it is important for them [fathers] to collaborate, for them to be part of. However, I also think that she is more mine than his (...). I think that mothers are more mothers than fathers are fathers." (Filipa).

Her ambivalence regarding gender entitlements and rewards in parenting is, in some extent, supported by Vasco. For him, being a sharing partner and a co-responsible father (González and Jurado Guerrero 2015) doesn't necessarily imply to level the shares in a 50/50 scheme. "Have it more or less divided" seems sufficient. Indeed, he perceives men's contribution to unpaid work more as a sort of altruistic support to ease women's double-burden and to improve family's wellbeing: "She is very lucky because I do a lot of things at home. I help her because together is easier (...). I try to contribute in what I can. However, I also know for sure that she does more than me" (Vasco).

For Filipa, Vasco's smaller share of housework seems also sufficient, probably because it's a tacit trade-off for being the 'guilty' less involved parental figure in Alice's daily life, which is compensated by her sense of entitlement to be perceived as the most emotionally connected with the child even if less present. Therefore, the equal sharing commitment they have made "from the outset" remains incomplete, largely owing to this protection of the maternal emotional privileges and rewards that both consider as natural entitlement of mothers.

"Step by step we are trying": Lia and Vicente

Lia and Vicente are cohabiting for 5 years and have a two-year-old toddler, Lucas. They met at a party given by a common friend. At the time both were living alone, and from dating to living together it was a quick step.

Both are full-time employees from the private sector in coordination positions. Vicente coordinates a commercial team in a telecommunication supplier and has a flexible work-schedule from 9:30 am to 6:30 pm, which means that he may be available to respond to some family needs during working hours. Lia is an accountant. Until Lucas was one year old, she worked at a pharmaceutical laboratory outside Lisbon (40 minute drive in commuting) in a system of weekly shifts: one from 9:00 am to 6:00 pm, and

other from 11:00 am to 8:00 pm. Currently, she works at a financial company as chief accountant. Her work schedule is from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, but she hardly ever leaves work before 7:00 pm, and often has to work overtime. Lia and Vicente earnings are similar and they are strongly and equally engaged in pursuing a successful career.

Regarding home production, likewise the previous couple, they too outsource cleaning and ironing, which is done by a housemaid once a week. They also have some help with Lucas's daily routines during the week, as Lia's mother, who is already retired, fetches him from day-care at 4:00 pm and entertains him until Vicente gets home. She is also available to take care of Lucas when he is sick, so the parents don't have to miss work. Taking into account what is left for them to do in relation to daily household and parenting tasks, Lia and Vicente assess the contribution of each other in a quite different manner, since Lia understands that she has a bigger share in housework and a slightly bigger share in parenting, while Vicente says that he is as engaged as Lia in both domains.

Lia and Vicente's current work-care balance is structured around four main drivers:

The first driver is the interplay between Vicente's workplace enabling conditions and his willingness to be a nurturing father. In fact, his less time-consuming and more flexible working schedule, gives room for his involvement in fathering and in co-parenting. It allows him to share with Lia morning routines, to take Lucas to day care and to be alone with him for some time before Lia returns from work. At the end of the day, when she leaves work before 7:00 pm, they share tasks: "He bathes Lucas while I'm cooking dinner, but sometimes he also starts preparing dinner. After dinner, he washes the dishes and cleans the kitchen. I put Lucas to bed" (Lia). Vicente is also involved in responding to their son calls at night: "He [Lucas] wakes up during the night once or twice, and it used to be worse! I get up and go to his room, so I do not sleep a whole night or eight hours in a row since he was born" (Vicente).

His bigger availability entitles him for fathering alone when Lia works overtime, and when she had the 11:00 am to 8:00 pm shift in her previous job. Instead of profiting from the grandmother availability to extend his own working hours, he makes a point in going home for caring alone for Lucas. This daily involvement in childcare by his own required from him to learn to be an "independent" and "autonomous" caregiver (Marinho 2011, Wall 2014): "Our family organization after work depends much more on me than on her. (...) I was compelled to take care of him alone. (...) I give him a bath, I watch cartoons with him a little, give him his dinner and try to put him to sleep between 9:00, 9:30 pm, so that he has a routine" (Vicente).

However, even if Vicente was eligible to share with Lia the initial parental leave when Lucas was born, he only took up the compulsory days for fathers during the first month.

Following the masculine norm, he felt that, as team coordinator, no one could assume his responsibility and he didn't want to let down the employer that was counting on him.

A second driver is Lia's strong ideal of equal parenting that she longs to accomplish:

We became parents together and learn how to parent together. A child is both the responsibility of the mother and the father. It implies a lot of changes and I think it is important that we help each other, because there is a lot to do. It is foolish to be the mother that has to do certain things. It's the *I'm scared* thing... If the mother is afraid, no one gives the child a bath? (Lia)

She puts her commitment to equal parenting into practice by encouraging Vicente's efforts to be an equal involved parent. When their son was born, she was pleased to share the caring tasks and pass on some of them, in order to compensate biological differences: "We bathed him together. Then I would breastfeed Lucas and he would take care of the rest [change the nappy, calming down and putting him to sleep]" (Lia).

The third driver regards Lia taking the responsibility of being the driving force behind the *degenderization* of their work-life balance. In the beginning of their conjugal life this implied establishing the leadership in order to be entitled to define the rules on the division of housework:

"He had those habits of men who live alone. Thus, a woman has to impose some rules regarding both the organization and help in housework. He had to adapt, as he didn't care whether things were tidy or not and I wanted things to be more organized".

However, up to the present she didn't have the intended feedback from Vicente: "I had to impose, and sometimes I still have".

Currently, even though Vicente performs housework and childcare related tasks, Lia takes on the most routinized and time-consuming ones, like cooking, doing the laundry and keeping the house tidy and clean in between the housemaid's day. She also bears more responsibility for the management and planning around Lucas's needs and activities. Over time, she had to face the fact that involved fathering is not necessarily linked to equal sharing in home production. Vicente's willingness to be a nurturing and co-responsible father did not comprise worrying as much as her about keeping the house clean and tidy, or taking on the amount of work, detail and initiative as she would like him to. For that reason, she started to impose her own standards and to coach and supervise his performance, thereby treating him as a "junior trainee" or even as a "guilty student" (Meuser and BehnKe 2012):

I always had to give him the coordinates of what to buy for dinner and of what to cook (...). Sometimes things are so messed up with toys everywhere... but they [men] do not see it at all, they look to the side. So I have to give him some guidance and to say: *Vicente, help me to tidy things here or to tidy things there.* (Lia).

In this way, she is seeking to achieve equal sharing by assigning her practice to traditional norms, both of maternal expertise and men's inadequacy at home (Hawkins 1997, Gaunt 2008), thereby bringing into work-life balance and parenting identities the social and cultural contradictions and tensions of 'undoing gender'. Somehow, she is aware of her ambivalence regarding the *degenderization* of mothering and fathering and recognizes how she is imprisoned in the old-fashioned *ideology of domesticity*: "There are things I have to change in myself, change values. I'm too organized and tidy and sometimes I have to tell myself to be calm, because it does not have to be everything so perfect" (Lia).

Finally, the fourth driver is how the negotiation of involved fathering can imply the interplay of being a hands-on caring father, who moves away from the image of the father as a playmate and as a breadwinner, with believing that the mother has natural skills and a special link with the child:

The differences between mother and father are biological, innate. I speak for myself, I am more of worrying about if he ate, slept, and is dressed; if everything is ok with him. I do not go a little further. A mother has concerns about the child that a father does not have and cannot have. Concerns about the child's well-being, in clothing for example: *He needs this and that.* (Vicente)

Moreover, his support for some traditional gender lines shows that involved fathering can come along with deliberately self-exclusion from the management of home production and from sharing less pleasant tasks. Thus, despite Lia's active efforts to push him towards equal sharing, Vicente resists her attempts:

I am a person who is very unconcerned about the situation of the house. She has an authoritarian character in terms of having to deal with or having to do this or that thing. Sometimes it's complicated, because I'm more relaxed about things and also a bit rebellious, so I do not care what she says.

Nevertheless, he seeks to curb his rebellion for the sake of harmony between the couple. Thus, gradually he is giving in to Lia's demands: "Step by step we are trying and by now he already takes the initiative of doing some household chores." (Lia).

Conclusions

In Portugal, since the mid-1970s, it is in steady development a dual-earner/dual-care society (Gornick and Meyers 2003). This consistent societal process is evident in several fronts, as indicators on attitudes and practices regarding paid and unpaid-work, gender roles and parenting underline, and it has been broadly endorsed by a political agenda strongly committed to gender equality, a hallmark of the 1974 Revolution (Ferreira 2012, Rêgo 2012, Wall 2011), a powerful *exogenous force* that has been imprinting a diverging path to the *degenderization* (and *defamilialization*) of Portuguese society within Southern Europe (Wall and Escobedo 2013). The promotion of women's full-time employment and mothers' protection in the labour market, was the *first step*. If women were responsive to the challenge of the public sphere, there has been, however, a pitfall: the dual-burden of (full-time) paid and unpaid-work, owing to the lack of a prompt public awareness of the need to defy hegemonic masculinities. Gender equality desideratum was, in fact, demanding a wider scope, and meanwhile public policy engaged in a *second step*, which was to recognize the right of men to care for their children and their responsibility in sharing work-life balance. Like women, men have been responding to the challenge of the private sphere and of co-parenting, even if at a slower pace.

These overall developments are not exempted of setbacks, which result from conflicting standpoints on gender roles that intersect all social existence from the institutional level to the individual. The dominant organizational culture at workplaces, which resists to assimilate caring masculinities and therefore underpins women's inequalities in paid and unpaid-work (Wall *et al.* 2017), is a major institutional obstacle to *complete the revolution* in Portuguese society and constitutes an *ultimate work-family challenge* (Lewis 2010, Leitão 2018). In effect, for Esping-Andersen *completing the revolution* "requires a powerful exogenous trigger and that the welfare state remains the only credible trigger available" (2009: 173). The same point makes Rêgo, when she asserts that the law can "build" equality between men and women: "the law is the foundation and structure of this construction, but it is also decisive in defining the pace and quality of the conclusion of the work and is indispensable to the sustainability of the building" (2012: 57). According to this author, the *conclusion* of the gender equality desideratum in Portuguese

society reclaims an ultimate driving force: “(...) the recognition of a new legal status for men and the clear sign for them, for women, for economic activity and for society in general, that Portuguese law refuses to understand human reproduction and its inherent care work as (...) a ‘task’, or ‘a burden’ or ‘a privilege’ (...) exclusive, or specific or even principal of women” (Rêgo 2012: 68). Therefore, this recognition must be consequent with both conjugal and post-divorce families. Indeed, there is an institutional strained and incoherent relationship between traditional and late modern models of mothering and fathering after marital dissolution (Marinho 2017). This can be seen in a growing mismatch between the development of equal sharing in dual-earner/dual-care couples and the Divorce Law, in which the legal presumption of maternal primary residence and paternal visitation is reinforcing parental inequality in the access of men to parenting time, involved parenting and nurturing relationships with children, as much as reinforcing the *costs* of childcare for women (Marinho and Correia 2017, Wall *et al.* 2017).

But if there are ultimate challenges at the institutional level, the same may be said about the individual level, where ambivalences and tensions in gender cultures (Aboim 2010b) are refraining the pace towards the new *gender-equality equilibrium* (Esping-Andersen 2009): ambivalences in regard the entitlement of men to claim for their equal share of rewards and privileges from co-parenting; and the entitlement of women to claim for being relieved from their bigger share of home production, like the narratives of Vasco, Filipa, Lia and Vicente have evidenced. The traditional trade-off between the public and the private spheres, where the bargaining power of men and women was normatively unequal, seems to be moving into the private sphere of co-parenting and home production. Therefore, in dual-earner/dual-carer societies, among normatively equals, the trade-off is between gender equality and gender essentialism and entitlements. And this ambivalence is accomplice of persistent *imbalances* in work-life balance.

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