

APPARENT

International and national studies of norms and gender division of work at the life course transition to parenthood



TRANSPARENT WORKSHOP, STOCKHOLM 2012, Maria Reimann, University of Amsterdam

The New Father, the New Mother and the Scary Ghost of a housewife

How Polish couples at the life course transition to parenthood plan to divide paid work, housework and childcare

The Study:

- semi-structured interviews with 19 co-habiting/married couples expecting their first child (conducted in 2011/2012)
- 18 mothers / 5 fathers entitled to maternity/paternity leave
- both partners work, their level of education and income is higher than Polish average (the couples have resources to divide labour in non-traditional ways)

Polish Institutional Context:

- post-communist country, still in transition
- 24 weeks of fully paid for employment based maternity leave: 13 weeks of the leave are compulsory, the rest can be transferred to the father
- 2 weeks of fully paid employment based “daddy leave”.
- up to 3 years of parental leave which is not paid for and can be taken by the mother or the father (if employed)

-

Couples’ plans for future division of labour

FOR THE DURATION OF MATERNITY LEAVE

breastfeeding mother and father “the helper”:

- the mother is home with the child, the father “helps”
- breastfeeding for the first 6 months in undisputable, as it is “best for the child”
- the fathers plan to stay home for a couple days after the childbirth (up to 2 weeks) to “help the mother” and “create a bond with the child”
- the mother is the best carer by “nature”

AFTER THE MATERNITY LEAVE

Torn between the good mother and a fulfilled women

- conflict between child’s best interest (full time mother care) and mother’s best interest (career, fulfillment, independence)
- part time work as the most sensible solution that enables both caring for the child and having a career of her own – parents have different scenarios:
- full time mother care (3 couples), parental sharing (6 couples), mother works part time/father works full time + grandmother or a babysitter (10 couples)
- very important role of the grandmother