RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE STRUCTURAL FAMILY CHANGES IMPORTANT TO THE CHANGES AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW SUPPORTING SOCIAL POLICIES

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Abstract
This study gives us a theoretic panorama, based on the up-to-date literature, of the problematics related to the family structural changes phenomena all over the world. This is a theoretical study which treats in details the factors causing the social and demographic changes reflected in the family structural changes. Data reviewing report that during the last decades the interest in marriage in Europe has decreased whereas the interest on other alternative forms of long-term relationships has increased. Marriages have lost their stability leading to other forms of families, different from the traditional ones, and family life organization. The number of children of European families is getting smaller and the size of European families is even smaller. The fertility decreases as well as the aging of the population have become tender issues in the European agenda because of their direct connection to the economic power, the political and cultural influence reduction and to the role that Europe plays in the international arena. Therefore, these changes in new family structure during the last decades, in the families of societies going through the second transition require new supporting strategies, social policies which encourage these changes. The new input of this study in the analysis of the data gathered from the literature.
Key Words: *structure, family, transition, social policies, social security, social welfare*

Changes in The Family Structure Worldwide

The so called "second demographic transition" in the western society implies the decrease of the mortality and fertility rate during the 19th and 20th century, followed by many changes in the family structure by the end of the 20th century, including non-family changes of living and the separation between marriage and having children. The characteristics of the second demographic transition includes the increase of divorce rates, the decrease of fertility, the increase of the marriage age, the increase of the number of single people or of those who live alone, the increase of the individuals living together without being married. These new characteristics are to be found in every society in the world. Self-maintained and personal autonomy are primary ideal goals followed by a big number of people in global level, these together with the structural factors define the direction of the structural changes in family structure worldwide.

It is probable that the second demographic transition will be spread in all of the world societies. Nevertheless, it is difficult to distinguish between the effect of the structural and ideal factors in causing the increase of the marriage age and in the decrease of the fertility. This has never been so simple. Furthermore, we have to understand that mass media is "producing" a "world culture" where the personal autonomy and self- actualization are playing a dominant role, and all these facts give us the motivation and the justification to implement the second demographic transition. The political, religious and ideological debates are of course possible to happen, but so far their reaction have not been able to stop these tendencies.

The Tendencies and the Variations in the Family patterns

Data analysis suggest that during the last decades in Europe the marriage interest has decreased whereas the interest for other alternative forms of long-term relationships has increased. Marriages have lost

their stability leading to other forms of families. The number of children of European families is getting smaller and the size of European families is even smaller. The fertility decreases as well as the aging of the population have become tender issues in the European agenda because of their direct connection to the economic power, the political and cultural influence reduction and to the role that Europe plays in the international arena. Probably, the only stable tendency spread out in the whole Europe is postponing the family creation moment. There is a large number of variations and of course those are affected as well by other factors like the education, religious faith, economic and social class and ethnicity. The division East-West is still stable when it comes to marriage and children raising and educating. Eastern Europeans are younger when they create their family in comparison to their counterparts from Western Europe. They start living together after getting married, different from what happens in the West. This kind of difference is found even when comparing the North with South. Other differences are evident when comparing the fertility level where North and West Europe have relatively high fertility levels and the trend is a family with two children, whereas South and Central-East Europe have low fertility level and the trend is a family with one child. Anyways, in all Europethe fertility level has decreased causing changes in the family structure and the increase of divorce rates has increased the family stability.

We can distinguish four groups of countries based on the family patterns of contemporary Europe: 1) the group with high level of fertility and high rates of divorces, such as Scandinavian countries, France and England; 2) countries with low fertility level and high rates of divorces such as ex-Communist countries of Central and East Europe; 3)countries with high level of fertility and low rates of divorce represented by Ireland; 4) countries with low level of fertility and low rates of divorces such as South Europe and Slovenia. The two extremes are: Scandinavian countries (fragile families with many children) and Mediterranean countries (stable families with a few children).

These changes in the family structure may have different effects on their members. Their membersare though as not having clear goals and objectives without the classic family pattern made of father, mother and children. Singleness, not having children, postponing the time to have children, the break of the family relationship and other complex patterns non-traditional such as mixing families, families with a single parent, or same-sex households, are thought to be the cause of emotional, social, health and financial instability.

There are still some optimists sustaining that the increase of freedom of choice, the ability to make independent decisions concerning the intimate life probably have not weaken the family but have made it more democratic. Nevertheless, beside the increase of the freedom of choice how to live our life, the individual choices depend largely on the social pertaining context: the structure of a demarcated society defines the borders of the personal choices thus making the freedom of choice relative.

The change of family patterns has opened the debate whether the family as a central social institution has lost its importance for the individuals and the society. It is very important to understand which elements of the society cause the changes in the family. Individuals and families do not live in a vacuum. The context and the political, economic, legal and cultural circumstances and their changes influence not only the individual behavior towards the family but also the family concept of the society and how it should be. At the end, the political, economic and the legal aspects are not the ones that define the social circumstances. The globalization and the European integration process define the economic, political and legal conditions reflected on the social reality of the European countries and of those trying to be part of the European Community.

The Change Of Family Structure – Implications For The Social Policies

As discussed previously, many aspects of the family patterns and its formation have been extremely transformed during the second part of the last century. The main changes consist in postponing the moment of creating a family and the birth of the first child, the changes on the number of children and the term between them, the time limit of “partnership” and its legitimacy as well as the new patterns of divorce and re-marriage. The number of women working is getting bigger, only a few people get married and most of them get married in their late middle age, actually more people get divorced at a certain point of their life and only a few from them re-marry. The number of different or same sex adults living together is increasing every day.

The changes in the family structure has its effect on the goals and values of social security systems as well. In general the major changes in the family structure have not been reflected in the changes of the social security systems. Let’s take as an example the divorce phenomena. The divorce issues is completely connected to the number of children living together with only one parent and to the

duration of this situation as this implies directly on the social policies. The data show that in 1980 there were almost 1 million of single-parent families in England taking care of almost 1 million and a half of children. In other words, one out of eight families had only one parent, most of them were women. In 2012 almost 11% of all the families in England are single-parent families, representing a substantial and significant increase from 1996 and 91% of these families were headed by women.

When we discus about divorce it is important to consider the need of the children living in sinlge-parent families and their financial situation. In general, single-parent families are in almost always in financial difficulties in comparison with the families with two parents and they rely greatly on the governmental support or social assistance schemes to survive. Data show that almost two third of single-parent families live in poverty. On the other side, when the single-parent remarries this means that she will not benefit any more from the social security scheme which place a heavier burden on the shoulders of the spouse.

On the other side, since old women are considered to be one of the most vulnerable groups of the society this means that the way they should be treated by the social security systems makes it another major issue which should be treated with priority.

Family Policies In Europe

The social security policies are closely connected with the role of the family in the society, including delicate issues such as employment, transport, food and education policies. Social security policies motivations include, among other things, economic and social-politic motives which aim to compensate directly or indirectly the cost of family responsibilities and the fight against poverty. Law-makers have at their disposal several means to reach these goals, including regulations and legislations, information and finance. Legislation includes different aspects of the family, different leaves from work as well as the equal employment rights laws. Information should include supporting programs for the family and performance indicators. Financing includes care for the children, payment of the leaves from work, family allowances for the children or other dependent family members, social security, tax reduction and housing payments.

We can outline some welfare or social security systems in Europe

- In Nordic countries these policies are influenced very much by the Protestant Church and left-wing governments focusing gradually on gender equality, women integration in the labor market through non-family policies, as for the legal aspect there have been many improvements reflecting the changes in the family structure as the couples living together and same-sex couples have the same rights with the couples officially married. A special care is shown to the children's welfare. The family allowances are taken from the taxes and the collaboration between the government and the NGO-s is really great.
- In the continental Europe the social security policies are influenced by the Catholic Church, the right-wing partied and the principle of subsidiarity, which means making decision in the lowest level possible and closer to the citizens possibly. In those countries where the applicable social security policies are the Bismarck type (such as Austria and Germany), women and children social security depends from marriage and family relations. These countries together with Luxemburg have special ministries for family issues whereas France and Belgium have the most explicit and detailed family policies in Europe. In the legislative aspect many similar improvements with Nordic countries have been carried out, whereas the cooperation between the government and the NGO-s is not consistent: civil society plays an important role in the compilation and implementation of the social policies.
- Countries with Anglo-American social policies orientation such as Malta, England and Ireland are characterized by weak governmental intervention, need based, and market role. They differ greatly from the other countries. Malta and Ireland have strong family traditions in comparison with England; in Ireland family protection is included in the constitution, and there is a dedicated ministry only for family issues. In Ireland divorce became legal only in 1996, whereas in Malta divorce is still illegal. Family issues are not part of the government obligations therefore their main support comes from the private sector or voluntary support. The financial support for the families come out from the tax system in England and Ireland, while in Malta the financial support is mixed. The cooperation between the government and the NGO-s is smaller in comparison with Nordic countries, but in England the social society organizations are well integrated in the social security policies.
- Mediterranean Countries (South Europe countries, Portugal etc.) have similar systems with those of continental Europe with strong influence of Catholic Church. Regarding the legislation, the state offers its support only when the family resources, regulated by laws, dry out. State obligations are included in the constitution in Spain, Greece, Italy

and Portugal, while the authority is often delegated to the local government thus causing regional discrepancies and fragmentation of this model. The family financial support normally is very low and the cooperation between the government and the NGO-s on these issues is very weak.

- Ex-communist countries are an interesting case to study since they have experienced dramatic changes in the social policies. Before the Second World War most of these countries based their social policies on the Bismarck model and reflected all the characteristics of the family pattern. After the 1990's and the abolishment of central employment system and the universal coverage offered during the communist regime, some aspect of the social policies changed radically by being re-compiled completely in most cases. Data show that all the ex-communist countries abandoned the non-family social policies model and try to apply family social policies. Family security is mentioned in the constitution of Hungary, Poland and Estonia, while in other countries such as Rumania, Slovenia, and Latvia there are dedicated ministries for family issues (104). Legal obligations of the families are strong, but those of the government are weak and there are no explicit family policies. Slovenia, Czech Republic and Hungary have a laws on the partnership of same sex relationships. The financial support for the families comes out of the tax system and are very low. The cooperation between the government and the NGO-s is weak and under the influence of communist philosophy. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that this cooperation is slowly improving.

Based on these, concerning the social policies of European, national and local level we can distinguish these tendencies:

- Social support policies concerning the family are becoming more important during the recent years thus initiating institutional processes.
- Temporary leave from work policies are being consented for men too, aiming the equal separation of work and family responsibilities between two partners.
- Children care services cover the main part in the social policies measures and the tendency is to institutionalize these services and increase the professionalism in the children care system;
- One of the future tendencies is the globalization and the internationalization of the care system;
- The increment of local government role, which will increase its responsibility and autonomy on important social policies issues;
- The increment of NGO-s and other actors' role involved in the social policies.

The Challenges Of Social Security Policies

In many countries social security or social support systems are under pressure, where more than half of working force and their dependents are not included in these schemes. The percentage of the persons working in the informal sector or the who have instable jobs (working on demand, household works or other types of self-employment jobs) is increasing in industrialized countries and especially indeveloping countries, creating new risks for the working class.

The reforms undertaken by the developing countries have caused the salary reduction of the public and private sector thus weakening the financial base of the social security schemes and the reduction of the social policies funding. This fact together with the bad management of funds granted has caused the decrease of the public confidence and of the number of contributors of social schemes. On the other side, complex challenges reduce the effectiveness of the social security policies: financial crises, armed conflicts, different epidemics' such as HIV/AIDS, natural disasters, or reforms aiming the transition for central planned economy to market economy (as in the case of Central and East European countries), have caused the loss of many job positions, informal employment and instable housing and incomes.

The goal of social support schemes is assuring the access to health systems and income stability. Everyone has the right of social support and security. Of course, the level of social support is different in different countries. Social support has different forms, for example:

- Health care support, aiming to offer health protection for the employees and medical treatment when sick;
- Retirement pensions, which facilitate the retirement of the old people from the employment market when their productivity has decreased;
- Direct payment on special diseases cases, eliminating the need to work from the employees even when they are sick;
- Insurances or direct benefiting after child birth, encouraging reproduction among the working class and health care for economic active mothers;
- Security schemes for work accidents, preventing job related sicknesses and accidents and the treatment of the workers suffering from them;
- Direct financial benefiting or services (for example: assisted employment and trainings) in case of unemployment, supporting the unemployed until they find an appropriate job position;

- Financial benefiting or services (child care through public kinder gardens, access to basic education etc.) for the children and other direct financial benefiting for the unemployed parent, which create the optimal conditions so the families have appropriate incomes for food and living.

In industrialized countries the benefiting system in case of unemployment differs very much. In some countries such as Austria, Denmark, Belgium, France, Germany, Finland, Holland, Switzerland etc. the unemployment benefiting are high and longer terms. They have other supporting systems for the unemployed going beyond the terms of receiving this support. The other group of industrialized countries (Canada, Australia, USA, England etc.) has lower unemployment payment.

These social benefiting were applied in East and Central Europe countries at the end of'80, and at the very beginning were very generous, but later on were reduced in quantity and duration and only a small part of unemployed benefit from it.

Lack Of Social Services Coverage

A big part of world population benefit partially or do not benefit at all from any kind of social services coverage. This situation is actual in most of developing countries and even in some industrialized countries where there is an increasing vacuum related to the social services coverage.

Person employed in the informal sector are not included in the social policies schemes for different reasons: the difficulty to collect the social contributions from them and their employer, their difficulties to pay the social and health security premiums and the lack of willingness to do it in cases when the social services schemes do not meet their basic needs such as health care, lack of real evaluation or no evaluation at all of their need for retirement pension, lack of good knowledge on social security schemes and its benefits, etc.

Furthermore, the coverage of social services is very poor in those countries where most part of the population works in agriculture, which is considered informal sector of employment especially in developing countries. Informal employment sector is present, on different levels, in all the human activities sectors, including workers of every category: employed, self-employed, those who do household works, unpaid house workers etc. informality is part not only in small enterprises but even in whole systems where payments are not regulated by law such as Brazil, where almost half of the workers in the urban areas are paid informally. For reasons that have mainly to do with gender discrimination and easy combination of the work with family responsibilities, the percentage of women employed in the informal sector is really high.

The work in the informal sector, beside the lack of benefiting from the social security scheme, is characterized by the job position and income insecurity, high risks and unsecure work environment.

Approaches ofthe Social Security Services Coverage Enlargement

Researchers have identified different approaches to ease the lack or the insufficiency of the social security, which is as a result of inappropriateness these policies, not enough efforts have been put in their implementation or in a complicated economic, social and politic context. It is understandable that the last element is very important because it can predict the success or the failure of these efforts. The political context and the nature of the government on power should be receptive for the enlargement of these social policies; the economic system should be dynamic and employment offer should be high because a larger number of people will demand higher salaries and better system of social security; the expectation from the social security systems should not maximal and not real, it should be reasonable, aiming not only the distribution of the incomes from the rich to the poor, but also offering social insurance for people when they get sick, unable to work, retire etc. Lastly, the public should be confident of the proposed social policies- and this depends deeply on the efficient management of the system and high standard management of the finances.

Some approaches of the coverage enlargement of the population with social support services are presented below:

1. Enlargement of the existing social insurances;
2. Encouragement of micro-insurances (mainly for the informal sector employees);
3. Application of the universal benefiting or services offered by the general taxation;
4. Application and the enlargement of the benefiting based on checking the needs (social assistance), which is funded by the taxes too.

In Albania, one of the most applied forms of social security is the social assistance. In fact, this form of social security exist in almost every industrialized country, and it is used to fill the vacuum created by the social security schemes and to ease the poverty. Usually the social assistance includes a small number of population categories, normally elderly people. In industrialized countries the social assistance schemes are badly funded.

The social assistance aims to support only those persons in absolute need and identification of the

last ones is done through strict evaluations and control of the incomes and other indicators so the only beneficiaries of these schemes are the one who absolutely need those. This is only theoretically because practically is very different because the control can never be absolute, therefore there are persons who benefit from the social assistance wrongfully – especially in those places with a high level of informal economy (like in Albania, for example). These mistakes are very important because they carry a high financial cost and decrease the public confidence in the social security system. On the other side, the social assistance so very much used in Albania, usually fails to meet the needs of the people who are really entitled to benefit from it for these reasons:

- These people do not want to apply for social assistance because of the stigma related to it;
- They are not informed about their legal right to benefit social assistance;
- May have difficulties to apply for the social assistance benefiting because of the complicated procedures which need a long time to be applied;
- Social assistance is highly influenced by the administrative freedom and flexibility, thus opening the way to different favoritisms and clienteles and discrimination.

On the other side, when the requirements and the control for benefiting the social assistance are really very strict this discourages the people to apply for it therefore even the people who really need do not benefit. In the case of industrialized countries self-selecting mechanisms are more appropriate them the strict control of the incomes and other means of living. Furthermore, social assistance based on the control of the benefiting requirement lacks to encourage people to safe money (increase of the expenses) because people think that these savings will be subtracted from the social assistance.

Of course, social assistance is very useful for unprotected groups such as children and elderly people. Social assistance maybe the only available solution for the widows who have not completed necessary years of work to benefit from the retirement pension or whose husband have not been included in social security schemes. It is a possibility to assist poor families and small children and in many countries this service is related to the children attending the school.

None of these approaches should not be excluded, depending from the country where they are applied, but their combination will depend from the national context and relevant national strategies. Furthermore, the selected approach depends very much from the economic and social development of each country. In some developing countries, especially in those with average income level, institutions of social security have been created and developed. In these cases the main purpose is the enlargement of the compulsory coverage for all or the most part of the population, by using the existing schemes of the social security or by modifying the requirements to comply with the needs of the new groups of targeted population. Whereas in the countries with low income level a combination of studied above elements is needed to make progress in covering their communities with social security services.

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