

BALANCING WORK/ LIFE TIME: AN EXAMINATION OF GENDER DIFFERENCES

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Abstract: *Over the past several decades, employers, societies, and individuals have come to recognize that the work and family lives of individuals are intertwined and consistently influence one another (Kanter 1977). The purpose of this paper is to highlight the allocation of social time and its impact on the balance of public and private life. The aim of this paper is to draw attention to the distribution of time use, especially by focusing on disparities between men and women. The lessons learned can enrich the debate on the articulation of social times and can contribute to question the roles of management and governmental guidance on the question of work-family conciliation.*

Keywords: work life balance, work, family, gender, Tunisia

JEL Classification: J1, J5

1. Introduction

By the 21st century, the traditional model of the working men and the women who should be subordinated to men is outdated (Burke & al, 1987; Fallon, 1997; Gutek & al, 1991). The most significant change in the labor market over the last five decades has been the increase in women's participation in paid employment previously reserved exclusively for the man (Sheree and al., 2013). Companies then quickly perceived the importance of the turnover of women staff, particularly following the arrival of a baby (Ollier-Malaterre, 2007). Leaders of companies begin to think about potential

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effects of living off-work on the careers of their employees and start the first experiments that have the motivation to help employees maintain a balance between their work and family responsibilities (Houle, 2008).

Our aim in this paper is to analyze the databases to compare the situations of men and women in the distribution of different social time, focusing particularly on their sexual dimension and questioning the impact of the management practices (working hours, time off work) on the conciliation work / non-work in Tunisia. In other words, we try to highlight the similarities and differences that could illuminate the roles of management and public policy of social time. The purpose of this comparison Men/Women is to highlight parallels and differences and to improve the reflection about the organization of social time and will contribute to the inquiry of the political roles of organizations and government to the harmonization between work and private life.

2. A new look at time in work

Time is a fundamental topic that exists in human affairs (Khanchel and Ben Kahla, 2012). In traditional or premodern societies, people have a relationship to time governed by ritual time, religious festivals, social rhythms and seasons. The organization of work alternated periods of intense work and periods of inactivity imposed by the will of individuals to maintain an independent scope of work (leisure, personal work) and fitting into a social organization of time (Boulin & al., 1992). The concept of working time had no meaning at that time (Genin, 2007). In addition, the clear separation between the sphere of work and private life as we know today did not exist: the farmers worked and lived in the same place. It is therefore unrealistic to determine exactly when begins and ends the work (Staehli, 2003). With the industrialization of society, this order of time "natural" is outdated. Time Clock replaces gradually the ritual time. Work is now set by time, and more precisely by the mechanical time of clocks (Gasparini, 1990). The work is parceled in unique primary tasks, and every gesture is chronometer to define the ideal time-span.

Work has become totally depending on a rigid time, with peak hours (Thompson, 1979). The concept of working time has gradually imposed as a measure of work (Morin, 2000). We move from a natural and cyclical time to an organized and linear time. (Grossin 1998). Thus time becomes a tool of control and enslavement (Louart & al., 2010). At that time, work

exceeded 72 hours a week (Grossin 1998). The 14 hours a day were normal and could even exceed 17 hours (Genin, 2007, p.27). In 1936, after a long battle, the employees get the 40-hours week and the first two weeks of paid leave. This downward trend of working hours will continue until the end of the twentieth century (Louart & al., 2010).

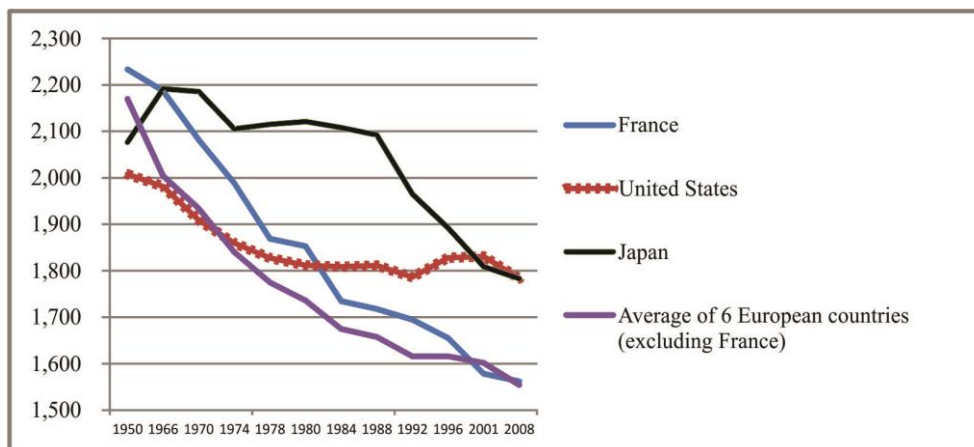


Figure 1: Historical evolution of working time (in hours and per year)

Source: Database of Groningen Growth Development Center (GGDC, 2010)

3. Gender inequality in work

The problem of reconciling working life with family life has become a social issue that affects its foundations (Fusulier and Tremblay, 2013). Several factors contributed to this development: The intensification in work; increasing of the number of women on the labor market; an aging population; the complexity of the forms of the family and the emergence of new normative around parenting (single parents, dual-earner couples); the service sector of the economy; the significance of intangible components in the output device, etc.

It is also noted that the feminization of the frames is done differentiated way (Bouffartigue and Gadéa 2000). Indeed, inequalities persist in access to positions of power and decision-making (Laufer and Fouquet, 2001). Women often are face to a "glass ceiling" and have less access to hierarchical positions (Ben Hassine, 2007). They often find

themselves restricted to administrative or relational activities (Gadéa, 2003). Thus, in the private sector, on 30 major Tunisian companies, only four of them have a woman in their works council (GIZ, 2013). Tunisia has between 14,000 and 15,000 women entrepreneurs, or 6.5% of all business leaders (Gribaa and Depaoli, 2014). Regarding the public sector, 15.2% of management positions are held by women (Ben Hassine, 2007). Bourdieu (1998) gives an explanation to this phenomenon by the fact that women are irrevocably confined to less prestigious than men by the universal principle of male dominance positions. For him, "formal equality between men and women tends to conceal that, other things being equal, women still occupy less favored positions." this is how the female employment rate is still very distant from the man rates despite the growth registered in the last years.

Another element strongly characterizes the Tunisian context. This is the unemployment of graduated people aggravated by the social and political events following the revolution of 14 January 2011. The National Institute of Statistics Tunisia (INS) and the International Labor Office (ILO) define unemployment by three conditions : The unemployed comprise all persons above 15 years who during the reference period were: - without work, that is, were not in paid employment or self employment during the reference period; currently available for work, that is, were available for paid employment or self-employment during the reference period; and - seeking work, that is, had taken specific steps in a specified recent period to seek paid employment or self-employment (INS, ILO, 2014).

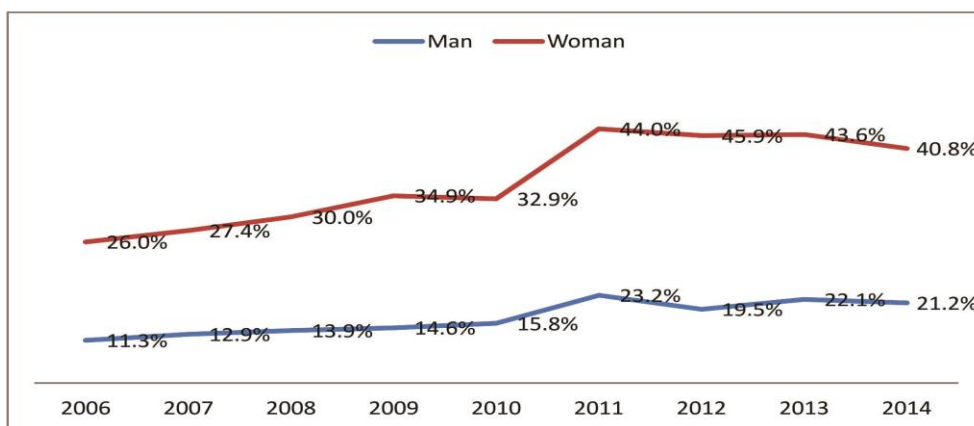


Figure 2: The difference in male and female unemployment rates

Source: INS (2014)

Since 2006, there has been a rise in the unemployment rate of higher education graduates reached 31.4 % in 2014 (INS, 2014). This can be explained, among other things, structural and functional constraints plaguing the Tunisian labor market due in particular to the small capacity of the economy to create jobs to reverse the upward trend in unemployment (National Observatory employment and qualifications, 2013) and aggravated by limiting a new recruitment imposed in the public sector in 2014.

The operating data of the national survey "time budget" developed by the Ministry of Women's Affairs in 2011 indicates that the average duration of work is quite differentiated between men and women, and it's depending on professional status. Indeed, men seem to work more than women whether they are employees of the public, private, or independent owner. These differences are all the more glaring for the boss service, where there is a difference in working time between men and women that exceeds 3 hours. Moreover, public employees work less than the private sector (with 5H29min per day for men and for women 4H11min (see Figure 3 below). Comparing this time worked by sector, we see that the employees belonging to the ICT sector are those who spend the most time at work with 8H26 min daily.

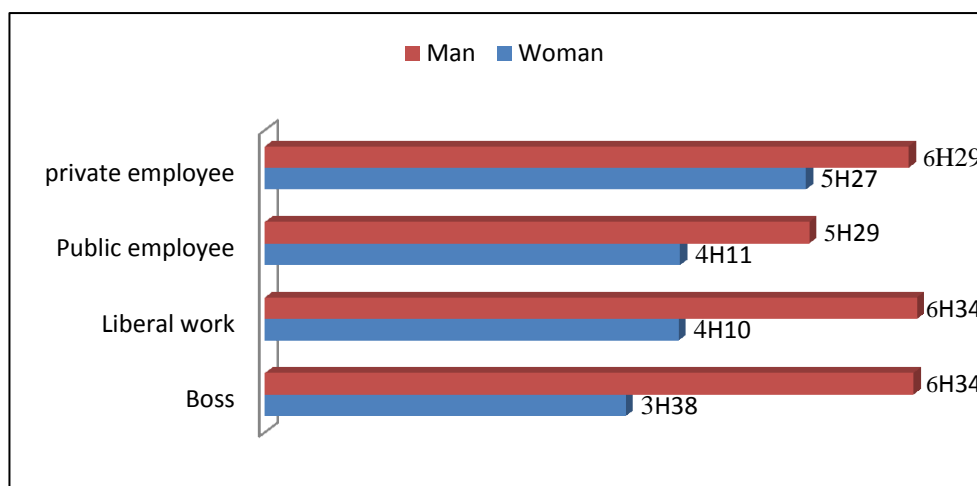


Figure 3: Working time according to the sector of activity and gender

Source: Mahfoudh Draoui and al., (2011)

These findings have led to suggestions that women spent more hours than men in unpaid work, and that this gender difference was evident across all employment groups.

4. Paid work and leisure time for Tunisian people

According to the survey of the World Values Survey (2010-2014) and in response to the question: "For each of the following, say whether, in your life, is very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all?" 87% of Tunisians said that they consider work 'very important' in their lives. This places the work in 3rd position in the order of importance of Tunisians after family and religion, well in front of friends, leisure and politics.

4.1. Time use for males and females

The survey of the World Value Survey also revealed interesting differences between women and Tunisian men. Indeed, the Tunisian man gives more importance to work, friends and leisure than women. However, they are tied in terms of importance given to the family and children. Moreover, according to the same study, 40% of Tunisians believe that when the woman works, children suffer.

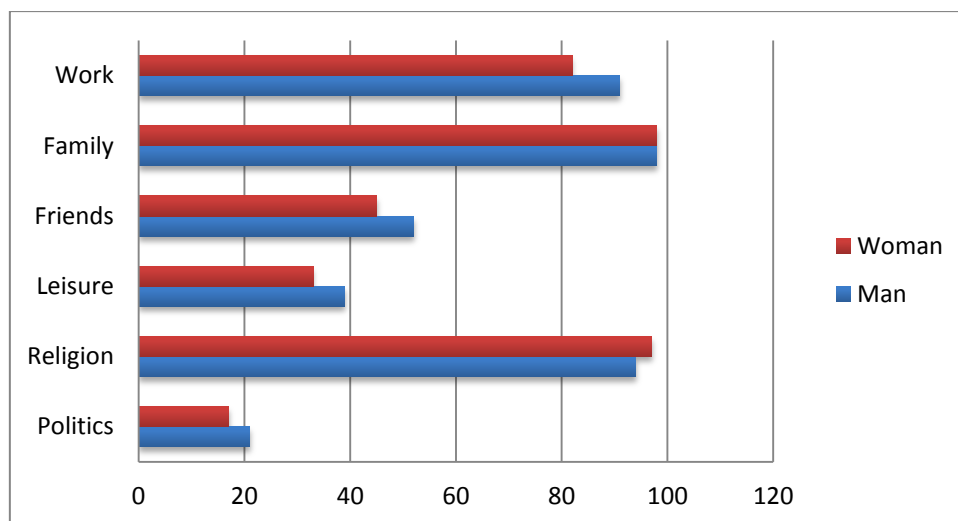


Figure 4: Importance given to each activity according to the gender

Source: World Values Survey (2014)

4.2. Free time

Leisure time is important for physical and mental health and contributes to the well-being of people. It can be defined as time spent free of obligation and necessity (OECD, 2009). According to the survey of the World Value Survey, 36% of Tunisians believes that leisure time is very important. The average Tunisian spends 4 hours and 26 minutes on leisure, associative and social activities. Watching TV is clearly the activity of free time most popular by Tunisian people (2h07 min), otherwise 50% of their leisure time. In Second place, we find social contacts witch representing 30% of the free time (1h16 min). These findings illustrate the importance of contacts and sociability in everyday life of Tunisia. These results are similar to those of our European neighbors to which the first two positions in terms of free time and leisure are spent on television and in social activities. In third position, we find the cafe which occupies a prominent place for Tunisian people with an average of 20 minutes spent in café every day. Thereby, café is a central space in the everyday life of Tunisian people (Ouannes, 2011, p.233).

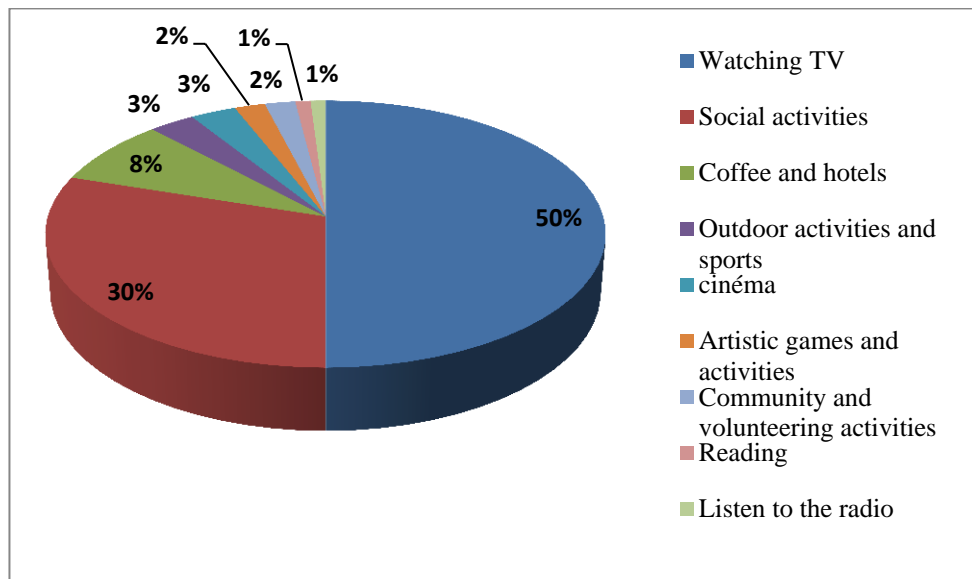


Figure 5: Types of leisure activities

Source: Mahfoudh Draoui and al., (2011)

5. A Budget time clearly gendered

Highlighting time spent on unpaid work is essential in the analysis of work time of men and women because of it impacts on the professional choices. The first observation to be drawn from the comparison men / women in terms of unpaid work, is that some activities has very low permeability, such as preparing meals or tinkering while other activities such as garden maintenance or the races are more permeable (Tremblay and Genin, 2012)

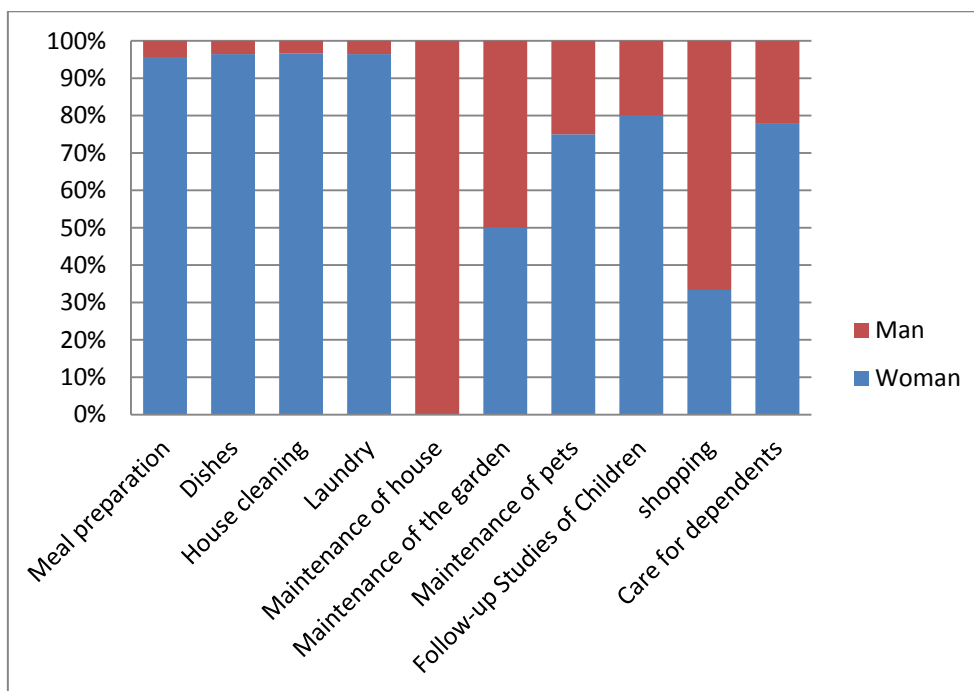


Figure 6: Role in the household within couples

Source: Mahfoudh Draoui and al., (2011)

We see that a traditional division of roles between men and women still persists. Shared responsibility continues to be deeply rooted in the kind of logic which directly affects the time spent at work.

4.1. Time distribution by occupation and gender

In order to look more closely at the timing of the housework activities and the market work, we calculate the distribution of time spent on market

work, housework and other activities (sleep, personal care, leisure time). By making a comparison of the distribution of the daily schedule by occupational category, we found, according to Graph 7 below, that executive and managers have the longest working hours and spend less time for leisure and social activities. A manager is working almost two hours more than other professional categories. While the woman, whatever the profession it occupies spends less time at work and leisure time than men. But whatever part against his professional category, Tunisian women spend more than 3 hours on housework. This leads us to think that equality in the sharing of housework between men and women remains a distant goal.

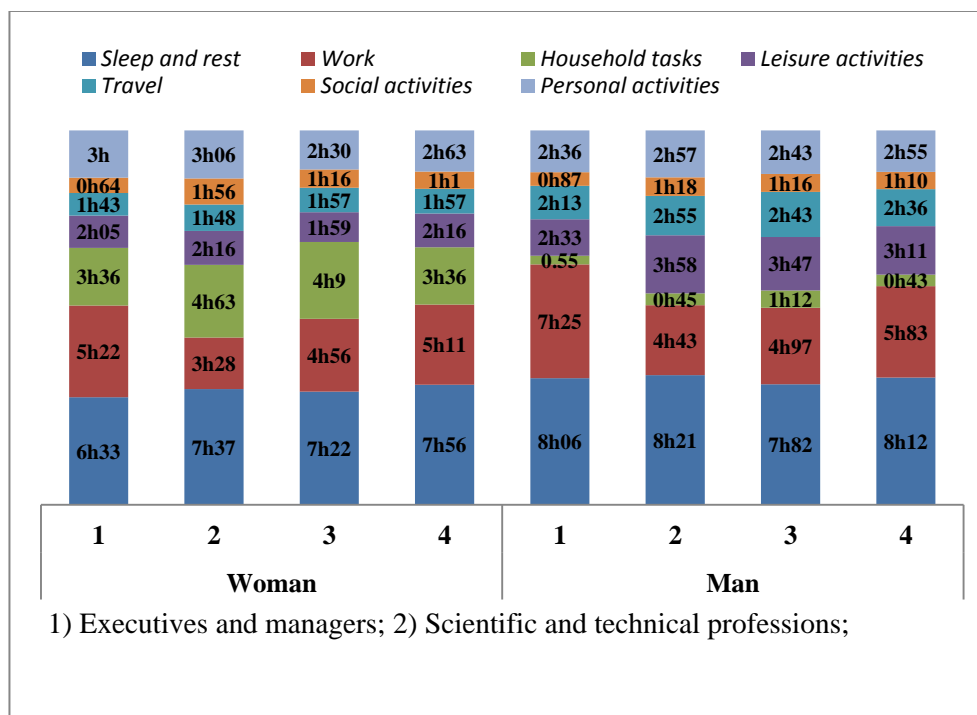


Figure 7: Share of time taken by leisure and other activities across an average day

Source: Mahfoudh Draoui and al., (2011)

Data on the time daily devoted to paid work confirm a strong gender difference. On an average day, employed men devote 6h03' to paid work while employed women dedicate 4h28' to it. We observed also that men

usually have more free time than women, and an increase of working hours at home for women all age. So what, although women's participation in paid work has increased substantially, women continue to have almost responsibility for housework and child care (Sheree and al., 2013).

4.2. Participation rate by number of children

The time spent on household tasks of women is increasing in proportion to the increased number of children. Indeed, the time spent on working home increases from 4 h 14 (for a woman without children), to more than 8 hours (for a woman with 4 children or more). The time spent on domestic work affects directly the time of rest and sleep that it decreases significantly with the number of children. From 9 h 40 min time spent on rest and sleep for a woman without children to less than 7 hours for a woman with 4 children.

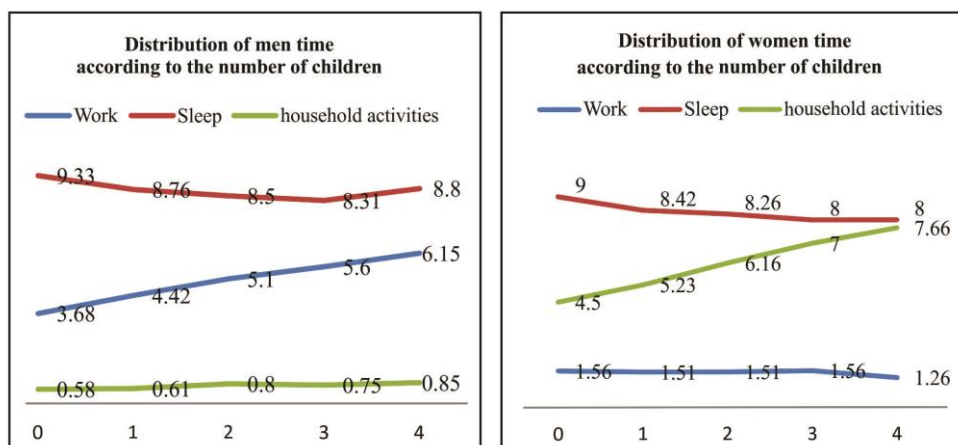


Figure 8: Allocation of time depending on the number of children and gender

Source: Mahfoudh Draoui and al., (2011)

On the other side, for a man, the number of children has not an impact on the time spent on housework or rest. But it influences his work time that passes from 3h41min to 6H09 min for 4 children or more.

The activity of men and women is deeply influenced by the presence of children. The greater the number of children is important most women spend time on household. In addition, women spend more time working

when they have no family workload. The fact having children, indeed involves a decrease in the time dedicated to paid work. So what, the family context strongly influences the presence of women in the labour market. In opposition to men whose business investment is proportional to the number of children.

5. Conclusion

On the basis of this preliminary research and analysis carried out here, we described the daily organization of activities and the difficult balance of social times of men and women and their choices of certain activities over others in the Tunisian context. Our aim is to measure the complexity of reconciling social times that is requiring combinatorial systems and a wide range of trade-offs from a family to another. Thus, it seems clear that the sector of activity, occupation and the number of children, are a key variables in the distribution of social time.

On another hand, discussions about work-life balance in Tunisia have tended to focus on women's difficulties balancing work and parenting (Byrne, 2002). Differences in the way that men and women allocate their time to various activities exist as well. So, gender inequalities continue to exist, and it seems resistant to change. But the real division is more subtle than a gender difference that social representations can leave glimpse (Lejealle, 2009). Indeed, the articulation of these different times is subject to the changing political, economic and social context. It is the product of a combined set of different logics that may conflict. It is for this reason that the question of the articulation of social times must be considered as a major issue in society. Indeed, government policies need to consider these issues and the key role they can play to allow for a better distribution of social time.

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