

## DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES AND PRO-NATALIST POLICIES IN THE WELFARE STATE

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**Abstract:** *The demographic changes of the contemporary world towards (alarmingly) lower rates of both fertility and mortality represent a key feature of the European countries. One of the most fascinating manners of approaching natality rates is represented by the statistic mechanisms of their predictability. The extent of such process is also a determinant of the political agenda and of designing pro-natalist strategies that can positively contribute to regulating the demographic transition. Therefore, we have considered analyzing the evolution of pro-natalist policies from more interpretative frameworks – demographic, politological, economic and statistic- as instrumentally useful.*

*A first analysis of the theoretical framework underlines the relevance of the tripartite polarization of elements that, according to Bloom, form the “virtuous spiral” of the political agenda’s functionality: public sector- civil society- private sector. The second theoretical approach sketches an explanatory foray referring to the dominant perspective of the research conducted by Easterlin and Becker concerning the relevance of the “social group” in regulating fertility levels and, in the second case, of valuing “child utility” in various economic contexts. Furthermore, the approaches of Lewis, Bartky and Morgan reconstruct the frameworks of patriarchal domination of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century and of the social roles’ metamorphosis of family members in the context of industrialization and urbanization. The last subchapter of this article uses the socio-economic positioning so as to present “the pivotal role of women”, as well as the importance of the incentives concerning the changing of the partners’ reproductive behaviour.*

**Keywords:** *demographic changes, fertility, gender, pro-natalist policies, welfare state*

### **1. The theoretical context and the demographic relevance of fertility in the political agenda**

Conducting studies whose analytical themes are primarily concerned with the interpretation of statistical data about the evolution of the population is more than significant. However, special attention should be given to defining the demographical transitions which have occurred in recent years. The selective nature of statistical data reorients contextual attention towards levels of progressive evolution of fertility and mortality indicators. This fact is proving to be essentially stringent when it comes to understanding the underlying, and thus causal mechanisms which address the current trend in studied statistical populations. From a primarily politological stand point, the demographic analysis of afore-mentioned indicators is dependent on the fluctuation of institutional regulations or on

demographic planning programmes encountered in state political agendas. As a consequence, the context of the discussion regarding the assisting initiatives of the welfare state is interchangeable with the context of the discussion annexing the interest awarded directly to the qualitative analysis of fertility rate evolution, and the larger context of the demographic phenomenon of natality.

As previously mentioned, the interpretation of contextually apparent statistical data is performed primarily within political and demographic parameters. From the first point of view, the multiplicity of factors which are cumulative to the larger majority of mechanisms which affect the societal developmental level is generally seen as being undeniable. The simple fact of listing the factors which interest and affect the statistical rate of birth on both micro and macro levels (especially the crude rate of natality) refers to: the economic evolution of per capita annual income, the fluctuation of the employment market permeability, the rate of equal access to various functions of the occupational segments, individual education and reproductive behavior, and quality of life as part of measurements regarding average life expectancy. In short, it is abundantly obvious that, regardless of the interest stand point, state government intervention can be concrete, and can thus expedite assistance programmes regarding such a thematic orientation.

Above all, the consistency in phrasing problems on the political agenda stems from the pragmatism of associated programmes. In other words, social assistance and, more concretely, the *family welfare* programmes urge applicable solutions to the problems in current political agendas. One example comes to mind in support of this, occurring during post-war Britain, in which the debate concerning the dual role of the woman (career woman and mother) represented not only a delicate subject, but also one of the most extreme forms of feminist lobbying in the age. In Buttafuoco's<sup>1</sup> words, such "initiatives, especially by employed women (...) were a way of political action: feminist associations were putting into practice forms of assistance which originated in their own way of thinking" regarding the intrinsic significance of maternity faced with the ability to perform work in order to provide sustenance for the family and for oneself. Although such events can easily be linked to poignant ideological contexts of the referenced period, the issue of "maternity" is now militant in regards to the political agenda to continuously reevaluate the social value and the performed function of maternity<sup>2</sup>.

Provisioning minimal qualitative and quantitative standards in regard to the target population - the family, mothers, children or any other segment of the

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<sup>1</sup> Annarita Buttafuoco, „Motherhood as a political strategy: the role of the Italian women's movement in the creation of the *Cassa Nazionale di Maternità*” in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, p. 181

<sup>2</sup> Jane Lewis, „Models of equality for women: the case of state support for children in twentieth-century Britain” in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Routledge, London & New York, 1991, p. 82

population thought of as disadvantaged from a social, economic, political or any other stand point - is dependent on their correct aggregation, more so since the pressure exerted by lobbying groups does not appear to be centralized. In this case, determining maximal and minimal limits of these "standards" mostly regards the analysis of demographic fertility evolution trends and, even more importantly, the intrinsic determinant phenomenology. Thus, the role played by *the human capital* is anything but negligible<sup>3</sup> when it comes to the particular or general interpretation of the phenomenology of current demographic transitions. From this point of view, the standards which power the validity of social programmes (policies) can be verified in contrast with the minimal content of this "human capital" element, namely: the degree of flexibility of the employment market and average life expectancy by age groups<sup>4</sup>. Based on this, it is necessary to state that, in the case of policies aiming to encourage fertility, such measurements take into account the position of the woman, whereas the man is thought of as a rather "uninteresting entity in the demographic analysis of reproduction within a population"<sup>5</sup>. This fact is relatively easy to explain, taking into account that the position and social status of the man have been historically subject to a mostly static trajectory, fixed both from an economic and from a reproductive perspective. As a consequence, the recently acquired flexibility of the role of the woman in the employment market and in everyday social life, in the context of the decay of the patriarchy, has stirred a massive wave of ideological reprogramming. Thus, the initiatives for the emancipation of women's positions have had an indisputable contribution to the rearrangement of governmental priorities and to the redefinition of equal participation social standpoints within a family context. Further along this path, *pregnancy* and *the maternal role* have been qualitatively defined as "social functions"<sup>6</sup> of the woman, with initiatives requiring the attention of political agendas.

Up to this point, it is obvious that the encouragement and the education regarding reproductive behavior has a qualitative demographic contribution at the level of the total population annexed to a given territorial unit. However, the degree to which this contribution can be determined to be positive or not is correlated to the short, medium and long-term visible effects of the modification of social structures (based on age, sex and occupation). Easterlin's<sup>7</sup> remark offers a first analytical vector in this sense: "The effect of generational size will take different

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<sup>3</sup> David E. Bloom, David Canning, Jaypee Sevilla, *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change*, RAND, Santa Monica California, 2003, p. 29

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Traian Rotariu, *Demografie și sociologia populației: fenomene demografice (Demography and sociology of population: demographic phenomena)*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2003, p. 244

<sup>6</sup> Jane Lewis, „Models of equality for women: the case of state support for children in twentieth-century Britain” in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Routledge, London and New York, 1991, p.79

<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Easterlin, *Birth and Fortune. The Impact of Numbers on Personal Welfare*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 27

forms in different media, due to the national differences existing in the regulation of the employment market and other institutions." In the same context, a series of interpretive hypotheses can be annexed, again, with particular differences, but based on a multiple analysis of state collectivist practices and measures for the fructification of equal opportunity<sup>8</sup>. Not less important is the principle of allotting resources based on the afore-mentioned practices. As an illustrative example, the controversies regarding the management of allotting state assistance resources during post-war Britain regard the selection of women who may have benefitted from maternal leave, and the afferent remuneration received during the leave of absence from the workplace. In a correlative analysis of the British social policy trend in relation to the permeability of the employment market, O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver highlight the existence of stringent and restrictive eligibility criteria for the allotment of maternal leave, dependent on the place of employment<sup>9</sup>. In other words, the rules of aristocracy are still functional in a contemporary context, being encountered primarily within the occupational sphere of public servants and corporate employees.

Regardless of the theme which these assistance programmes approach, the idea of individual and collective valuation of demographic subjects remains valid. From this point of view, the demographic relevance of fertility as encountered on the governmental political agendas acquires not only great amplitude, but is also imbued with the value of indiscriminating objectivity. Still, the idea itself remains open to discussion, insofar as the universal application principle of programmes designed to favor population segments between 18 and 45 years of age (considered fertile periods in the human reproductive cycle) also regard eligibility by legally fining other institution, organizations or industrial conglomerates involved in such actions. The legal span is truly colossal, if regarded according to Reich's suggestion<sup>10</sup>, namely on a tri-polar line extending over the public sector, the civil society and the private sector. However, beyond the numerous such possible combinations regarding the success of collaborative methods and the encouragement of governmentally guided programs, Bloom<sup>11</sup> stresses the idea of so-called "*virtuous spirals*". The alternative highlights the importance of public, private or mixed agencies, whose context of action regards the areas of health and education, these ultimately being fundamental to pro-natality and fertility' encouraging policies. Thus, insofar as the above mentioned agencies work together

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<sup>8</sup> Fred C. Pampel, *Institutional Context of Population Change: Patterns of Fertility and Mortality Across High-Income Nations (Population and Development Series)*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, pp. 59-61

<sup>9</sup> Julia S. O'Connor, Ann Shola Orloff, Sheila Shaver, *States, markets, families: Gender, liberalism and social policy in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1999, p. 88

<sup>10</sup> Michael R. Reich, *Public-Private Partnership for Public Health* in "Nature Medicine", vol. 6, no. 6/2000, p. 618

<sup>11</sup> David E. Bloom, David Canning, Jaypee Sevilla, *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change*, RAND, Santa Monica California, 2003, p. 71

through the mediation of a constant informational flow, they essentially produce a cycle in which effect is always followed by counter-effect, or in other words, they are always in a position to consider further development stemming from their initiatives. Following this reasoning, Bloom's "spiral" acquires notes of "virtuousness" attributed to agencies which contribute to the practical realization of initiatives within an agenda.

The implementation success of agenda programs is, as we've seen, tightly constrained by the degree of participation of public institutions, but also of private agencies which generate visibility and offer pertinence to the governmental initiatives. It goes without saying that there is no guarantee of success, but the risks can be mitigated by appealing to the criterion of conditional participation. When it comes to the initiatives favoring fertility rates, they are mainly aimed at the family environment. As a consequence of this, their success rate is dependent on the implication of the consent of the parties, namely the legislators and the target population. In accordance with Lesthaeghe's<sup>12</sup> suggestion, in the context of a post-materialist age, in which the centralization of children is minimized, *consensus* and *the promise of accessible and reasonable health services*<sup>13</sup> are a good starting point for creating policies which are both pragmatic and aware of their application environment. Bloom<sup>14</sup> contextually adds to the idea of policy functionality by imposing the promise of "welfare" as given by the emancipation of health services, which should regard: special medical care for children under the age of 3, providing women with easy access to fertility clinics and stressing the educational coordinates regarding self-care. Contextually, the policies of encouragement of demographic processes regarding the rate of population growth must show democratic resource management via financial distribution amongst the participating institutions and agencies. Following this trail of thought, the utility of assistance policies is materialized by the ideas of visibility, ease of access and ease of use within the target population.

There are two implicit elements to take into account when formulating agenda issues: persuasion and consensus. These are, without a doubt, subsumed to the larger domain of pro-natality policies and are universally applicable to their subjects. However, as the domain of action of pro-natality policies is part of the wider area of social-assistance policies, the indirect forms of materialization for consensus must also regard, amongst other things, covering the costs of maternal leave, allotting family housing through national distribution systems for such buildings, allotting food subsidies, the democratic distribution of child-care subsidies and establishing a realistic quota in relation to per capita and per family

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<sup>12</sup> Ron Lesthaeghe, „The second demographic transition in Western countries: An interpretation” in Karen Oppenheim Mason and An-Magritt Jensen (eds.), *Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries (International Studies in Demography)*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 37

<sup>13</sup> David E. Bloom, David Canning, Jaypee Sevilla, *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change*, RAND, Santa Monica California, 2003, p. 71

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

income<sup>15</sup>. These problems are the subject of family welfare policies and indirectly engage the importance of domains connected to the social-demographic sphere, such as the economic-financial and the socio-biological (in cases which regard detailed analyses and medical studies on the causes of impotence, genetic mutations and other phenomena which are auxiliary to reproduction). Summarizing, the impact of pro-natality policies on fertility can be measured by appealing to the modifications brought upon the employment domain (the work schedule becoming more flexible), the medical-assistance domain, the family domain (family planning programs), the social-assistance domain (facilitating couples' access to services and products regarding child care). In short, in the sense corroborated by Gauthier, Hatzius<sup>16</sup> and Walker<sup>17</sup> respectively, the public benefits for family welfare are meant wither to reduce the cost of child care, or to increase the income of child rearing couples.

## 2. The contribution of statistic indicators to the analysis of the natality phenomenon

Statistical interpretation of data regarding the demographic trend of natality is one of the cardinal aspects contributing to the formulation of pertinent assistance programs. The modality of linking statistical data with social stimulants of the daily routine of statistical subjects is a cardinal determinative of the interpretation being performed. In the same context of processing family assistance policies, the phenomenology of natality must be understood on the basis of reproductive behavior analysis in the target population, which is in turn determined by the real manifestation of fecundity taking the socially agreeable form of fertility. Each of the afore mentioned concepts - natality, reproductive behavior, fecundity and fertility - contribute to the consolidation of the demographic trend within a set time scale.

Insofar as the demographic phenomenon of *natality* is understood as a parameter resulting from reporting live newborns per thousand inhabitants, within a set time period, and indicating the frequency of births within a given population<sup>18</sup>, understanding the concept of fertility becomes a complementary routine to the phenomenon of natality. Given the definition of natality, it is understood that the phenomenon itself is not self-regulating as much as it is determined by the convergence of quintessentially social factors, both on a macro level (norms, values and traditional behaviors) and on a micro level (conscious actions by individuals

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<sup>15</sup> Fred C. Pampel, *Population and Development : Institutional Context of Population Change: Patterns of Fertility and Mortality Across High-Income Nations (Population and Development Series)*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, p. 64

<sup>16</sup> Anne Hélène Gauthier & Jan Hatzius, *Family Benefits and Fertility: An Econometric Analysis* in „Population Studies: A Journal of Demography”, Volume 51, Issue 3/1997, pp. 295-306

<sup>17</sup> James R. Walker, *The Effect of Public Policies on Recent Swedish Fertility Behavior* in „Journal of Population Economics”, vol. 8 (3), August/1995, pp. 223-251

<sup>18</sup> Traian Rotariu, *Demografie și sociologia populației: fenomene demografice (Demography and sociology of population: demographic phenomena)*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2003, p. 248

which regulate and manifest their own fertility)<sup>19</sup>. As a consequence, the *rate of fertility* becomes the primary statistical indicator when it comes to formulating assistance programs in this case.

Regarding the statistical indicator of *fertility*, the study performed by Richard Easterlin is one of the most relevant, both from a theoretical and from an empirical stand point, insofar as it aggregates the dimension of the "cohort" or the "social group" as being the value acting like a yardstick for the fluctuations in fertility, allowing them to be reported and understood as such. Above all, "the social group" can be perceived as the total population registered to a certain territory at the time of the analysis. The degree in which this total evolves - grows, decreases or stagnates - strictly associated to the fluctuations in natality affects the couples' decisions regarding the exploitation of their potential fertility<sup>20</sup>. The theoretical paradigm in question is decisive to the same degree as in Fred Pampel's explanations: couples take decisions regarding the exploitation of fertility based on the calculation of monthly potential income, compared to the standard of living which they understand to be closest to their own perception of welfare<sup>21</sup>. Defining this "standard of living" within the discussion is derived from their own experience in terms of economic socialization during childhood, and the style of life the adults have become habituated with, in the time since. It is evident that, in their desire to propagate the value of this "standard" throughout generations, couples are a definite contribution to the self-regulation of their fertility, either in a positive sense (if they can maintain the same values of the standard) or in a negative sense (if the probability of maintaining the standard is too low). These are the foundations from which we can derive the logical inference according to which the quantitative growth of the "social group" affects the fertile potential of couples by overstressing the state's economy and thus the (limited) employment market.

The argument of "the cohort" is thus decisive to the method of calculation and decision regarding the real manifestation of fertility. It is interesting to observe the demonstrable fact that there is a directly proportional link between the quantitative growth of the social group and the probability of "social contagion" or propagation of loyalty transfer from one extreme to the other. Often times, statistical empiricism has intervened via this fact, in order to prove the permeability of the practical ethos of one social state or another, or, alternatively, of the unitary population of one state or another. Ermisch's<sup>22</sup> empirical arguments have proven how Easterlin's theory regarding the rational calculation of fertility based on the "cohort" parameter has a strictly contextual validity. One of the most powerful hypotheses shows that the impact of population growth can be mitigated either

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<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Richard A. Easterlin, *Birth and Fortune. The Impact of Numbers on Personal Welfare*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 34

<sup>21</sup> Fred C. Pampel, *Population and Development : Institutional Context of Population Change: Patterns of Fertility and Mortality Across High-Income Nations (Population and Development Series)*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, p. 55

<sup>22</sup> John F. Ermisch, *Time costs, aspirations and the effect of economic growth on German fertility* in „Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics”, no. 42/1980, p.139

based on an ideological-value background (within a consolidated belief system), either by denying demographic and/or economic determinism of fertility rates. Thus, the direct proportion between the size of the social group and the relative inertia of the reproductive behavior cannot be universalized, and can only be applied on a case to case basis. Furthermore, this fact is conditioned by institutional structures and the regulation of their activity<sup>23</sup> in regard to the scope of a simple equation of market supply and demand.

From a realistic point of view, this time derived from a neo-classical economic orientation, Becker<sup>24</sup> reconsiders the reproductive inertia or activity in relation to the economic factor of "child utility". In another trail of thought, the decision to exploit fertility is comparable to the utility such an act could consequently bring to the couple's welfare; to the measure in which investing in the rearing of a child (financial costs, time parents sacrifice to its education) can exceed the cost of the initial decision<sup>25</sup>. On the other hand, the relevance of the "utility" calculation can also be regarded from a cardinally opposed perspective to the first. An illustrative example comes from the "personal relation deregulation"<sup>26</sup> and thus of the reformulation of the traditional constancy of marriage in the light of the *Family Reform Legislative Act* in Great Britain (1969), approving the legality of marriage annulment in cases which are considered irreparable. The family model is inevitably distorted, once such an institutional regulation occurs. Given the characteristics of this last aspect, on the one hand, the family tradition is subject to the new opportunities for self-realization, and on the other hand, the circumstances of non-marital fertility tend to evoke a new orientation of reproductive preferences.

Beyond all empirically verifiable arguments, Lesthaeghe's<sup>27</sup> hypotheses come to confirm the foundations of reproductive behavior in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, in large European metropolises (highly urbanized as an effect of industrialization). Overall, the new quasi-consensus of the common law promotes the values of individualism (economic autonomy under the growing empire of market opportunity), antagonistic non-conformity to traditional social models of numerous families, and post-materialism, favorable to reevaluating consumerism and to a wider exploitation of the employment market (careerism). Such personal life management, guided by a new, contemporary ideology, regards, amongst other things, the accommodation of equal participation for both sexes in the employment

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<sup>23</sup> Fred C. Pampel, *Population and Development: Institutional Context of Population Change: Patterns of Fertility and Mortality Across High-Income Nations (Population and Development Series)*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, p. 59

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Howard Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, USA, 2000, p. 147

<sup>27</sup> Ron Lesthaeghe, „The second demographic transition in Western countries: An interpretation” in Karen Oppenheim Mason and An-Magritt Jensen (eds.), *Gender and Family Change in Industrialized Countries (International Studies in Demography)*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, p. 46

market. Oppenheimer<sup>28</sup> himself reconsiders the variability of social roles, a widely characterizing aspect of urbanized societies in the 1960s and 1970s. Moreover, his position tends to confirm the applicability of the "cohort" principles stated by Easterlin (see above). In other words, "as long as the participation of the spouses in the employment market is limited"<sup>29</sup>, the reproductive potential of the couple is materialized all the more. Furthering this trail of thought, Pampel<sup>30</sup> highlights the fact that women's lack of participation in the employment market represents a compensating measure in regard to an overly crowded employment market, and thus promotes a much lower income per family.

On the other hand, theorizing in contrast to Easterlin's predictions, insofar as the market economy mechanisms are self-regulating to a varying degree, the effect its numeric overstrain will collapse under its own weight, thus allowing women to reorient themselves towards revaluing their own fertility<sup>31</sup>. Through the lens of the statistical pressure of indicators such as rate of employment and rate of fertility, the statistical curve known as the "U-Shape" is revealed. In this context, the plausibility of institutional regulation of reproductive choice mechanisms can be tested, along with the variability of Easterlin's theory regarding the influence of the size of the social group. However, regardless of the situation being analyzed, the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century is characterized by a strong deregulation of common law norms and a new ideology of "infertility", as far as the statistical indicator of fertility is concerned.

Inevitably, the demographic transition towards an aging population is certain, under the influence of distribution numbers calculated on the basis of fertility rates taken by age group, with a maximum distribution focused on the 15-24 age group<sup>32</sup>. It is the Malthusian option itself, promoting an "inevitable natural law", from which populations can emancipate themselves by correctly assessing their own welfare in relation to the sustainable potential of their family hearth<sup>33</sup>. Even though it doesn't promote contraceptive methods for the regulation of reproductive behavior (due to relatively constricting religious choices),<sup>34</sup> the version of reproductive choice is present in this case as well. Based on the above discussion, the contemporary reproductive choice tends to materialize in ages which, inevitably, cannot control their choice from a qualitative perspective. Thus, the primacy of the economy tends to reorganize the age and financial welfare

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<sup>28</sup> Fred C. Pampel, *Institutional Context of Population Change: Patterns of Fertility and Mortality Across High-Income Nations (Population and Development Series)*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2001, p. 61

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 70

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>33</sup> David E. Bloom, David Canning, Jaypee Sevilla, *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change*, RAND, Santa Monica California, 2003, p. 3

<sup>34</sup> Joseph A. Banks, *Secularism and the Size of Families*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1981, p. 19

conditions under which fertility can be approached on the basis of unrestricted judgment and rational, practical and justifiable behavior, as George Holyoake<sup>35</sup> had suggested.

### 3. Social position of woman and “sphere separation” ideology in construction of welfare state

Regarding the problem of liberalization of public agenda, the contribution of lobby activist groups was and still is a major compound of the democratic process of pluralist position formulation. The very same idea has been taken under the larger frame of feminist interests in manifestation of the concept that the state should offer a bigger attention to the role of women in society. The ideological feminist avant-garde has been manifested in larger pithiness beginning with the XX<sup>th</sup> Century, mainly in Western highly developed countries. Along with the metamorphosis of the occupational spectrum, the urbanization process created new opportunities and new perspective for women, who have been up until then, financial dependent to the family patriarch – head of the family. In other words, the pivotal frame of the family needed to be readjusted to newer conditions of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century. In this regard, the archetype of family legislation, mainly in Great Britain, progressively took distance from the trap of a monotonous approach. Regarding this aspect, Jane Lewis<sup>36</sup> distinguished two main specific features: the legislation treated adult women from a dependent position towards their husbands and, secondly, the legislation characterized their social path as being strictly defined in accordance with the double role of wife and mother. In this context of dual function of the woman, the delimitation of public and private frames – where *public* represents the commitment of the patriarch on the labor market and his financial contribution and *private* means the generations of family values and the dependence towards the patriarch – retained the omnipresent value of the patriarch, which was distinctive for the emergent societies, precedent to secularism.

The historical evolution of woman, imposes a major change of direction as far as that goes to reproductive fertility numbers and, later on, to the degree of concentration of the population in different, specific areas of earth globe– the density of the population on the globe. The steadiness of these kinds of reproductive forms, actually strongly covered by laws under contraceptive factors, can be found mainly in states in which the industrialization rate has determined the evolution of standard of living and, therefore the *per capita* economic situation. This is a demonstrable thing regarding the statistic situation of total distribution of population on regions that have the economic development ratio as the main factor of population density. On the path of the same logical argument, empirically demonstrable on the ground of Easterling’s *cohort theory*, it is not surprising that the highly developed regions of the world

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22

<sup>36</sup> Jane Lewis, „Models of equality for women: the case of state support for children in twentieth-century Britain” in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Routledge, London & New York, 1991, p. 77

(mainly Central-Western Europe) have a relatively minimal percent – of 19,5% - of the total global population of the world in 2001<sup>37</sup>.

Regardless the direction of the debates, more or less ideologically marked, there is a certainty of a demographic transition. In this background, stronger in the XXI<sup>st</sup> Century, the theoretical problem of the role of the woman in society stays in a central point and is more difficult to approach in terms of political agenda. The relevance of this position is grounded on a new formula of the “sphere separation”<sup>38</sup> ideology. The opposition with one of the most relevant explanations of feminist orientation regarding the alienation of the role of the woman in society is prevalent. Embracing a generous conceptual rank which comes from foucaultian theories, Bartky<sup>39</sup> says that the alienating impairment of the woman and her objectification are parts of a larger project, that of “oppression of the woman” conditioned by the hegemonic patriarch. The pithiness of “power dividend”<sup>40</sup>, as it was presented in Bartky’s study, can be integrated as a statistical measurement of distribution more or less uniform of the sexes on the labor market. The applied research of Platt<sup>41</sup> statistically shows how, in 2009, in Great Britain labor market context the pay gap between female gender employees and male gender employees has reached an average rate of 12%. Under these circumstances, the conclusions touch two central problems which are interesting in the context of fertility evolution conditioned by per capita income: firstly, the assumption that the influence of the patriarch attenuates the complete professional possibilities of the woman becomes valid and secondly, the strive for equal rights reduces in a significant way the attentions towards maximizing fertility chances.

Despite the importance of the individual or family profit, Helen Bosanquet<sup>42</sup> stresses the role of the woman as comparable with the man’s through the fact that the image of the marriage institution is functional due to the sacrifice of the woman for the welfare of the members of the family. The importance of the home is therefore higher than the importance of the wage income, given the fact that a diligent wife’s manner to maintain the household is crucial and can determine the transfer of the comfort in favor of a working husband who has a smaller wage income than others<sup>43</sup>. Although these kinds of assumptions have been made at the

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75

<sup>39</sup> Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression*, Routledge, London, 1990, p. 56

<sup>40</sup> Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1990, p. 74

<sup>41</sup> Lucinda Platt, *Understanding Inequalities: Stratification & Difference*, Polity, Cambridge, 2011, p. 53

<sup>42</sup> Helen Bosanquet, *The Family*, Macmillan, London, 1906, *apud* Jane Lewis, „Models of equality for women: the case of state support for children in twentieth-century Britain” in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity & Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Routledge, London & New York, 1991, p. 76

<sup>43</sup> <sup>43</sup> Jane Lewis, „Models of equality for women: the case of state support for children in twentieth-century Britain” in Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity & Gender*

beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> Century, their importance is still noticeable as decisive for quality evolution of the present homes but much more rare in this regard. The reasons underlying deregulations of the marriage institution and the relation of its members, can be reported to causes belonging to the XXI<sup>st</sup> Century: the necessity of financial independence of the woman, the influence of governmental taxes on the family, which are leading to the depersonalization of the family home.

As a result of extrapolation of the significance of the genres and the separation of their role under the stigma of feminine emancipation, the fertility paradigm decreases in importance. Despite all these, as Morgan<sup>44</sup> says, on the substance of depersonalization of the family frame, the “idea of dependence” from the patriarch has been progressively transferred to the idea of “dependence” from the welfare state. In these circumstances, the family welfare policies follow a subject agenda slowed by the current order of disintegration of mutual (financial) interdependence between the partners of a reproductive circle. Inevitably, these kind of personal choices impose major pressures on state economic planning, even more as in the process of sustaining both sexes, the state has to open the spectrum of occupational recruitment. Alternatively, the family policies have to financially support family planning programs which can strengthen the fertility ranks, when the demand for child care services evolve as well (nurseries, kindergartens, playschools). To the extent that the principle of *demand-offer* ensures the well-functioning of welfare programs (financially supported by the state) there is a problem axiom: “any help redirected to the families has to be financed by the families themselves”.<sup>45</sup> This thing can be done through the taxes system, applied per capita and dependent from individual or household income.

On this premise, it becomes very clear that, regardless from the target population for the welfare financial programs, the state itself has to adopt the position from which it has to create a minimal wage guaranteed for any employee. Figuratively speaking, this “safety net” in Beveridge<sup>46</sup> terms, gives priorities to administrative capacities of the state for avoiding marginalization and poverty. Therefore, the assistance programs of the welfare state intend to effectively contribute to general welfare and positive amelioration of fertility. On this line, the masculine and feminine positions are rather aggregate to the same state interest through which “the utility of the child” is a sufficient prove of its up keeping from the couple and reasonable enough for the state in order to improve economic and demographic capacities.

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*Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s-1950s*, Routledge, London & New York, 1991, p. 76

<sup>44</sup> Patricia M. Morgan, *Farewell to the Family? Public Policy and Family Breakdown in Britain and the USA*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Institute of Economic Affairs (Great Britain). Health and Welfare Unit, London, 1999, p. 22

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35

<sup>46</sup> Howard Glennerster, *British Social Policy since 1945*, Blackwell Publishers, Malden, USA, 2000, p. 37

#### 4. Reproductive choice and the new family frame dynamic

Put on the background of an increasing interest towards favoring policies for family welfare, the fertility seems to be a maximal opportunity of its chosen time or a failure in term of non-fecundity. While the first option is nevertheless the preferable one, the second draws attention to the eventuality of a "fertility crises".<sup>47</sup>

The demographically approach of XXI<sup>st</sup> Century is the wave of demographic transitions predominated by a stable standard of fertility regress. The predictions regarding the demographic continuity of numerical evolution of overall population are made on parallel line. Shortly, from the neo-malthusian view, the relatively stable decrease of fertility ranks does not represent a somber prediction for the demographic future of overall population. The motivation argument is more plausible as we hold in regard the case studies of industrial and post-industrial societies of which evolution is specifically distinctive from that of the third world's evolution. Of all things, the reproductive choice is regarded as predisposed to changes to the extent that "public policies and institutional responses can assist women in obtaining intentional fertility, easing the combined tasks of parental, work and participating in other activities",<sup>48</sup> as well as encouraging to becoming pregnant at younger age on practical grounds.

As Esping-Andersen<sup>49</sup> highlights, institutional adjustments of the political welfare initiatives, represent a crucial moment in representation of the continuum of the fertility digits. To avoid the over-dramatizing of seeing fertility as a reproduction choice in the XXI<sup>st</sup> Century, Morgan<sup>50</sup> introduces in his study several circumstantially statistical data on two time segments: the 1960 and the 1990. He represents in this way the statistic sign for TFR "Total Fertility Rate" which is relevant for 22 member states of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD). The basic intention of the study was to demonstrate that there is a correlation between the variables fertility and participation of women in the labor market, correlation which is proven under the conditions of the study. The numerical differences (notable major differences) between the two mentioned time periods regarding the evolution of the variable called fertility are conclusive at least in one regard: exploitation of fertility as a problem of individual choice is favored on the grounds of policy formulation area. In this context, the demography as a science has an important part in managing the previsions related to certain national and overall interesting phenomena as natality.

The causes concerning low fertility ranks cannot be restrained to the level of public policies context, as they are mostly a response to the existing individual preferences. Beyond the break of post-industrial states from the old model of

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<sup>47</sup> Philip S. Morgan, *Is low fertility a twenty-first century demographic crisis?* in "Demography", Vol. 40, No.4/2003, p. 591

<sup>48</sup> Wolfgang Lutz, Brian C. O'Neill, Sergei Scherbov, *Europe's Population at a Turning Point*, in „Science”, vol. 299, no. 5615/2003, p. 1991

<sup>49</sup> Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Social Foundations of Postindustrial Economies*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1999, p. 243

<sup>50</sup> Philip S. Morgan, *Is low fertility a twenty-first century demographic crisis?* in "Demography", Vol. 40, No.4/2003, p. 596

traditional society<sup>51</sup> and promoted family model, the present family structure can be a reply addressed to the self-construction. Numerically speaking, the small family structure, with an average of two children, can be considered as satisfactory and feasible in terms of economic, educational and other kind of demands of the XXI<sup>st</sup> Century. In order to clarify this aspect, Morgan<sup>52</sup> attaches a motivation to every child in order of their appearance. The motivations are spiritual, emotional or, on the contrary, material. More precisely, if the parents tend to attach to the first child of the family an affective dimension as a priority, the appearance of the second child can be grounded on totally distinctive reasoning which care about the sexual composition of the family and /or on “family construction”, meaning the numeric expansion of the family. In the event of the third child in a family, the author says the reasoning is different, mainly based on social-economic arguments, or such as the economic potential of the family, the necessity of sex balancing within the family, the maximization of the fertile period of the couple. Regardless to the arguments that shape the personal option of the couple, Hrdy<sup>53</sup> thinks that the emotional-maternal attachment is conditionally, alternative and additional to all the above list of arguments.

In more specific terms, during the modernization process of the industrial societies, the biological predispositions of the subjects can be attenuate. As a consequence, the biological predispositions effectively contribute to the numerical reorganization of the family. Bumpass<sup>54</sup> considers that on the family reorganization analysis, the components that have a causal contribution are both structural and ideological. As previously demonstrated, the importance of macro social factors can be subsumed to structural composition of individual choice. In this regard, the social-reproductive behaviors are influenced by the costs of raising a child, and beyond it, the manner in which the investments in his education and proper raising could affect the life standards of the parents. Shortly, it is about re-analyze, in a different context, of the variable called “group dimensions” as it was imagined by Easterlin. But, beyond the inevitable of the demographic transition, as it has been suggested under the influence of modernization, in Bumpass’s acception, there is a possibility of reversibility of low fertility values. The motivation is not well grounded in terms of argumentation, as such a “mirror” on phenomenon is determined by base regarding the uncertainty and impossibility of demographic predictions. Campbell<sup>55</sup> completes this assumption by sustaining the hypothesis of a “baby boom” in terms of major demographic modifications as consequence of

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<sup>51</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1991, p. 125

<sup>52</sup> Philip S. Morgan, *Is low fertility a twenty-first century demographic crisis?* in “Demography”, Vol. 40, No.4/2003, p. 593

<sup>53</sup> Sarah B. Hrdy, *Mother Nature: A History of Mothers, Infants, and Natural Selection*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1999, p. 444

<sup>54</sup> Larry L. Bumpass, *What’s Happening to the Family? Interactions Between Demographic and Institutional Change* in “Demography”, vol. 27, no. 4/1990, p. 489

<sup>55</sup> Philip S. Morgan, *Is low fertility a twenty-first century demographic crisis?* in “Demography”, Vol. 40, No.4/2003, p. 592

changing the reproductive preferences under the impact of great social phenomena (the best example is the interwar and post war “baby boom” generations). The predictability of these kinds of phenomena is, beyond the optimism attached to this idea, poorly verified and poor in grounded empirical values.

The empiricism of Morgan’s study and its centrality is based on a number of factors – statistical variables with the support of which he succeeds to reconsider real arguments from behind the low ranks of fertility, in a pragmatic manner. Among the most visible and plausible factors are referred to the hypothesis of unfertility understood as the capacity of the woman and more generally of the human species to multiply; of competition – precisely of decisions to review of the plans regarding fructification of fertility and also the educational level and the will to avoid non-marital pregnancy. In addition, the decisions regarding fertility recovery are considered approximately plausible as an option for the 25 years old social segment. The computing model of Bogaarts<sup>56</sup> regarding the variables members of determination of the total rate of fertility ( $RTF = IFS * F_u * F_g * F_r * F_t * F_i * F_c$ ) represents a welcome method as a mathematic alternative. In fact, the model represents a fragmented explanation of the motivations presents in Morgan’s study. They are significant and determinable factors: IFS - required dimension of the family;  $F_u$  - unintended fertility;  $F_g$  - sexual preference for the child;  $F_r$  - substitution effect (of the initial intention regarding fertility);  $F_t$  - tempo effect or the moment of fertility capitalization;  $F_i$  - un-fecundity;  $F_c$  - competition or reversibility of decisions regarding capitalization of fertility. Analyzing in a cumulative way, the computing model of Bogaarts explains in mathematically and deterministic ways the sociological and analytical models already presented and also appreciates the evolution of fertility rank.

## 5. Conclusions

The demographic transition of the population towards lower fertility ranks and a reorganization of the distribution of the population in the 45+ age segment are inevitable. The problem put in this manner is a pessimistic version of the possible „crisis” of the population regarding the global evolution of demography. From Morgan’s point of view, of neo-malthusian orientation, the low levels of the fertility predict a stabilization of overall population growth in areas of the world such as North America and Europe, areas where the old population age segment is going to evolve in the same manner.

Additional to Morgan’s point of view, Bloom’s<sup>57</sup> idea seems to be promising in that the regulation of social economic position of the woman can return to the political agenda’s attention, her reproductive behavior depending on

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 598

<sup>57</sup> David E. Bloom, David Canning, Jaypee Sevilla, *The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change*, RAND, Santa Monica California, 2003, p. 48

this. Last but not least, „the death of morality”<sup>58</sup> framed to post-traditional societies represents a deconstruction of the family code on the ground of new intentions of capitalization of self social position. On this back cloth, the political agenda can state programmes which might give the promise of collective accountability regarding the fertility ranks, but the provision of a guarantee which can avoid the limit threshold of total fertility rank is unlikely.

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<sup>58</sup> Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*, Thomas Dunne Books – St. Martin’s Griffin, New York, 2002, p. 126

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