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Occupational Social Policy in the Field of Reconciling Employment and Elderly Care: Sons caring for parents[1]

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Abstract

Reconciling work and family life in the field of elderly care is one of the new social risks welfare regimes have to deal with. Its importance emerges due to demographic changes, increased female labour market participation and changing family patterns. However, reconciliation takes place in a policy context that is characterized by retrenchment, activation, and ideas of social investment. As a result, occupational welfare programs are becoming more attractive. In our German case study, we focus on occupational social policy towards reconciling gainful employment with elderly care, especially for caring sons.

During the last decade, the share of men who are responsible for taking care of their elderly relatives has remarkably increased in Germany, although at the state level there have not been many political measures which have fostered such a development. Therefore, our study emphasizes the (growing) importance of occupational social policy at the company level. We ask such questions as: Which measures help men better reconciling the responsibilities of working and caring? What is the role of companies – in the light of changing family models and limited state policies – in the support of eldercare? Are care policy measures at company level a substitute or a supplement to state social policy?

In our qualitative research, we carried out case studies in eleven companies. We conducted around 60 interviews with male employees caring for an elderly relative as well as with members of the works councils and human resources departments in different kinds of companies. The results of our empirical study show that even smaller companies play a decisive role in some aspects of occupational social policy for caring relatives. At the same time it is clear that a lack of comprehensive measures at the state level can be counterbalanced at the company level only to a very limited degree.

1. Introduction: Welfare State Transformation, Social Investment and the Company Level

Since the 1990s the welfare state has come under increasing pressure in most European countries. Economic globalization, national competitiveness and scarce financial resources have triggered a debate over the exact areas the welfare state should make social investments in. Welfare state activities which are geared towards creating, maintaining or regaining employability as well as developing human capital have become more and more prominent (Rothgang/Preuss 2008; Evers/Heinze 2008; Tayler-Gooby et al. 2004). In the context of welfare state restructuring and retrenchment, investive social policy has become one of the guiding principles of the "new welfare state" (Giddens 1999; Esping-Andersen 2002). On the one hand, investive social policy should foster economic development, growth and competitiveness while on the other hand it is judged by its contribution to the modernization of society. This is especially related to changing family structures and gender roles: Higher female employment rates go hand in hand with new challenges, e.g. the inability to reconcile work with family life, a greater risk of poverty for single mothers, or precarious employment relationships (Taylor-Gooby et al. 2004). Investive social policy has become a prominent political strategy to tackle these new social challenges or "new social risks".

New welfare state priorities like education or family policy are justified by the positive impacts on the economy or on society as a whole. Investive social policy should bring about higher fertility rates, an improved use of the human capital of women and mothers and a more qualified future labor market (Evers 2008; Rothgang/Preuss 2008;

Nullmeier 2004). This makes reconciling work with family life one of the main issues of recent social policy initiatives. But feminists have also criticized the investive approach for being "too instrumental" through its emphasis on human capital formation and productivity, and "too uni-dimensional" by focusing on female employment and reconciliation (Saraceno 2015: 265; see also Jenson 2009;Bothfeld/Rouault 2015). On the one hand, the investive social policy approach neglected the 'right to care', that means the wishes of men and women who would like to actively care for their children or frail elderly relatives at home (Saraceno 2015). On the other hand, it is considered one-sided and socially selective if not combined with 'traditional' redistributive social policies, like e.g. tax-based protection schemes to tackle income inequality (Bothfeld/Rouault 2015).

In Germany, the "investive turn" in social policy and the focusing on the so called "new social risks" has meant in particular an increased awareness of the relevance that (public) care policies have on the growing labor market participation of women and an expansion of investment in public childcare facilities. Therefore, most of the research is focused on women, the reconciliation of work and childbearing, and social policy at the state level. In this paper, we will concentrate instead on *men* who reconcile gainful employment with *elderly care* and focus on investive social policies *at the company level*.

Elderly care is a social policy field that "cannot be easily translated as a social investment opportunity" (Saraceno 2015: 261). Elderly care is only insofar of investive social policy interest as labour market participation of relatives could be maintained. It is rather redistributive than investive. Apart from reconciliation policies and labour market participation, elderly care is outside the investive policy framework of (early childhood) education and human capital development, fertility issues, and employment activation. In line with a growing general emphasis on investive social policies, policies at the company level have gained in importance, above all in the field of childcare (e.g. Fleckstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011). However, company-level policies on elderly care lag behind, both in actual policy development and in research focusing on

this issue (for some exceptions see Franke & Reichert o.J.; Kohler & Döhner o.J.; Kümmerling & Bäcker o.J.; Keck & Saraceno 2009; Keck 2012). From the investive policy perspective, there is possibly a contradiction between employer's interest in using the "human capital" of their employees, and employees' wishes to care, and therefore reduce their working-time. According to the (modernized) male breadwinner model, male employees are not expected to care for their parents in a way that influences employment negatively. But the share of men, in particular sons, who are the primary caregivers for their elderly relatives has markedly increased in Germany over the past few years (see section 3).

In this paper, we present the results of the case studies we conducted of 11 companies in Germany. Our focus is on both the companies' actual role and limitations in helping male caregivers reconcile work with their eldercare responsibilities. We start by giving an overview of German public policy on elderly care because company-level policies are likely to be affected by the public policy framework (Section 2). Section 3 gives an outline of the possible role(s) that companies can play in (investive) social policy, which is derived from studies in other social policy fields. In Section 4 we present the research design and method of our study. Section 5 presents our empirical findings of what companies actually do and offer to help reconcile work with elderly care. We also consider the reasons for and driving forces behind the implementation of elderly care support at the company level. Section 6 looks at the measures offered from the perspective of the men who make use of them. Section 7 summarizes and discusses the opportunities and limitations of company-level care policies in light of our empirical findings.

2. Public Policies Concerning the Reconciliation of Work and Elderly Care

As one of the first European countries in the mid-1990s, Germany introduced a long-term care insurance scheme (Rothgang 2010; Theobald 2012). Although the system has been reformed several times, the basic structure is still the same: people in need of care can choose between an attendance allowance, home care or a nursing home

whereby the principle of furthering "outpatient rather than in-patient care" was strengthened in 2008. As most elderly Germans favor a traditional care model, most elderly care is provided within the family. Nevertheless, over the past few years politicians have begun to support policy measures aimed at reconciling an employment relationship with elderly care. In 2008 the legal right to home care leave was introduced, as caring relatives can interrupt their employment relationship or reduce their working-time for up to six months. Generally, there are no wage replacement benefits but social security is guaranteed. In 2015 a wage replacement benefit for ten days was introduced. Another elderly care measure was established in 2012. Caregivers can reduce their working time for up to two years. During this time they receive a higher salary in relation to their working time but after the time of care ends and the employee is once again working full-time, the salary stays lower until the wage advance has been fully compensated. Until 2015 employers had to give their consent but now most employees have a legal right to this system. This company-related policy measure aims at helping families care for their elderly relatives, but the rules are less strict and more flexible than those in other fields of family policy, and there is hardly any financial support on offer (Auth et al. 2011). Companies can supplement these policy initiatives with their own support systems, but there is no legal obligation for them to do so. If they do not do so, elderly care above all remains a familial responsibility.

3. Companies' Roles in Social Policy: Expectations and Evidence from other Social Policy Fields

3.1 Elderly Care as a Field of Company-based Social Policy

The ongoing changes in the relationship between the state, society and the family in social policy play out differently in different areas. In areas like old-age pensions and health care, where the role of the state and public social insurance was traditionally strong, it seems that the state is at least partly backing away from its traditional policy functions. Here we can observe a marketization of social policy and a shift in the state's

role from being the provider to being the regulator – the so-called purchaser-provider split. The new regulating and ensuring state rather gives a policy framework within which societal actors should provide benefits and services (Schuppert 2005). This shift implies that company-level social policies have grown and will continue to grow in importance. Titmuss (1974: 139) has called the expansion of employer's based benefits in cash and in kind "occupational welfare". In Germany for example, company-level policies on old age pensions traditionally had a role complementary to public policy; today, however, against the backdrop of cuts to public programs what was once only a complement has now become a substitute.

In Germany with its (still) comparatively centralized collective bargaining system, the growing importance of the company level in social policy also implies a changing role for collective agreements. These agreements are increasingly being used not only as an instrument of wage bargaining, but also of compensating for holes in the social insurance system which result from budget cuts by the state. This is what Fehmel (2013, 405) calls "'Vertariflichung' sozialer Sicherung". This describes the increasing relevance of social security and social insurance issues within the system of industrial relations, which is a system that clearly differs from social welfare programs on the state level in terms of negotiation patterns and content-related arrangements. Bispinck (2012) shows that certain aspects of social policies and labour market policies have been a part of collective agreements since the early days of the modern welfare state. Today, collective agreements cover a broad range of social policy issues, mainly concerning fields such as health (disability and sick leave), unemployment (job security, vocational training and further/continuing education), and old age (early retirement, occupational pensions).

The relationship between the collective bargaining system and the state is traditionally a dynamic one as they work together to reduce or relieve the social and financial burdens each one faces (Fehmel 2013, 406). However, Bispinck as well as Fehmel claim that the new substitutive role of collective agreements in social policy entails a high risk of unequal access to social security. This affects in particular the most vulnerable

group of labour market outsiders. But growing tensions and conflicts of interests are also expected between different groups of insiders. Both authors are also rather skeptical of the general ability of collective agreements to compensate for social policy cutbacks. Trampusch (2005) is less skeptical; by historically comparing the German to the Dutch model of industrial relations, she claims that collective agreements may serve as a "resource of flexibility of corporatist welfare states" also in Germany. The so-called "volume dilemma" is central to Fehmel's (2013, 406) skeptical perspective. Because trade unions do not actually have the power to extend the volume of redistribution, they have to bargain wage increases *and* social security issues within a relatively fixed redistribution volume.

In the field of care, in particular eldercare, the development has played out quite differently. In the conservative German welfare state, it is not the state but the family which has traditionally been the key provider of welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999). The growing importance of the company level in recent years is connected not so much to retrenchment, but to the idea that an expansion of social services is necessary in order to complement or enhance women's (rising) labour market participation. Family policy has become a major field of social investment policy in Germany, both by the state and by companies.

In the field of childcare, the state provides public services as well as cash benefits to a considerable degree. In addition, transfer payments, the expansion of infrastructure and family-friendly human resources comprise the support given to families. The interlinking of different agencies, actors and institutions, especially companies, are a key factor in German family policy. Important measures are the "local pacts for the family" and the policy program called "Success Factor Family."

Although elderly care policies can be considered a part of family policy, this care issue may still play out differently in regards to the role that companies have. In the field of elderly care, both state-level and company-level measures for relatives are less well developed than in the field of childcare. Long-term care issues are rarely a part of collective agreements. Also studies on company level agreements show that the topic

of elderly care is still of a limited, although growing importance at the company level (Kretschmann/Reuyß 2010; 2012). In addition, elderly care processes are less predictable and a very sensitive issue related to death – a topic that is often taboo in society, and probably even more so at the workplace. Our study will contribute to the discussion on the possible role(s) that companies can play in this policy field.

3.2. Reasons for Companies' Engagement in Social Policy

The existing literature on company-level family policies also gives us some clues as to the possible reasons why employers engage in this practice. One important approach is the *welfare state theory* approach. In welfare states with a high level of state engagement in public family policy, companies have no incentive to invest in company-level family policy measures. This is quite different in conservative or liberal welfare states, where state family policies are traditionally weaker or less well developed; it is here that company family policies are more likely to exist (Esping-Andersen 1999: 176; Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011: 134). Fleckenstein and Seeleib-Kaiser's study (2011: 144) proves this to be true: "Insufficient public policies can be assumed to be a key motivation for corporate engagement in family policies in German companies […]." Also comparative sociological research *on corporate social responsibility (CSR)[2]* hints in this direction by concluding that CSR is particularly strong in countries where state regulation is rather weak. The higher state regulation is, the smaller is the competitive advantage a company gains with its social engagement, or, as Jackson (2014: 27) puts it, "it will be harder and harder to be better than the other guy […] as regulation increases, the very rationale for the business case becomes weaker". It is even argued that historically, one of the main motives for CSR activities on the employers' side was the anticipatory prevention of state regulation (Jackson 2014).

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[2] According to Jackson (2014: 20), the concept of CSR "generally refers to policies and practices adopted voluntarily by individual corporations with the aim of addressing social or environmental responsibilities vis-á-vis its stakeholders", and so called diversity policies (which might include policies towards caring employees) are an important issue domain in this respect).

A lack of encompassing state engagement is also true for elderly care policy in Germany. As shown in section 2, in comparison to childcare policies, public support for caregivers lags behind. Therefore, we can expect companies' engagement in elderly care issues.

In addition, several authors conclude that family policy became a company issue, because companies are interested in the human capital of their very well qualified (female) employees and because of the decreasing labor force potential (Auth et al. 2011; Auth 2007; Leitner 2007). Theoretically, such *functionalist arguments* are based on a reduction of costs through extra-statutory company support for employees, and occur in management literature (Osterman 1995; Glass/Fujimoto 1995; Evans 2001: 24ff.). The importance of the workforce's skill set, as a specific part of the human capital argument, is stressed by the *Varieties of Capitalism (VoC)* approach (e.g. Estéves-Abe et al. 2001). According to this approach, corporations which rely on general or basic skills would not be expected to provide extensive care support, as these skills are widespread and portable. These employees can be replaced more easily thus, fewer (social policy) incentives to make them stay can be expected. However, Fleckenstein and Seeleib-Kaiser (2011: 152) found in their comparative empirical study on occupational family policy in Germany, the UK and the US that companies which rely on high and general skills tended to provide occupational care support. Thus, in stressing skill retention rather than skill formation, they characterize company-level family policy "as an instrument to 'lock-in' highly qualified employees". The underlying reason for companies to engage in such family policies is to become more attractive for highly skilled employees, especially women. The company's size – due to economies of scale and administrative capacity – is considered an important structural factor in this respect (Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011: 137, 146).

In contrast, organisational sociology focuses less on rationality and efficiency of companies but assumes that the *normative environment* companies operate in influences strategic company choices, thus shifting attention to agency and the role of the perception of HR and management. Accordingly, Fleckenstein and Seeleib-Kaiser

(2011: 140) found out that "there is a strong association between management's support for WLB [work-life-balance] policies and the institutionalization of firm-level family policies." In addition, they stress that the perception of management as to whether support for care makes good business sense is highly contextual, raising doubt that purely functional accounts are sufficient to capture such complex developments as the introduction of company-level family policies.

The study of Goedicke and Brose (2008) covers functionalist as well as organizational sociologist approaches by differentiating between *different ideal types of personnel policies and human resources strategies* that are based on different business strategies of the companies. They point out that employers' rationales in providing family policy strongly depend on the different company types of personnel policies. Company policies which belong to the ideal type called "marketization" do not incur long-term obligations or liabilities towards their employees, especially non-core workers. This also refers to family policy issues which are considered as private matters. Functional arguments of the business case literature and the skill based arguments VoC approach fit well with this human resource strategy. The second ideal type, "bargained stability", is based on standard employment relationships and collective bargaining structures. Within this human resources strategy, family policies can be institutionalized through formalized company policies and routines of utilization, often in large companies. But in the context of increasing flexibility expectations, family interests are often neglected within bargaining processes, especially regarding traditional work sharing concepts that are linked with male dominated standard employment relationships. Within this ideal type, functionalist arguments are weaker, but still existing, especially with regard to high qualified employees. The last ideal type of human resources policies is called "collectivization" and ties in with organizational sociological approaches. These companies include their employees and promote long-term commitments to the company. Company-based family policies are an instrument to promote such a loyalty. The authors refer negatively to this ideal type because collectivized employees (can) have less private life and limited social relations.

Again, *sociological perspectives on CRS* may complement this picture. As Jackson (2014: chapter 2) argues in line with functionalist "business case" arguments, CSR will only take place in fields where a positive sum game of private interests and social goods emerges. Thus, almost naturally, the scope of such kind of voluntary regulation is expected to be more limited than state regulation based on law. In line with this reasoning, we can expect company-level elderly care policies to be restricted to certain domains.

Another agency-based theoretical approach in this field concerns the *influence of trade unions* on a company's family policy. In companies where labour is well organized they could act as protagonists in initiating company-level policies: "Organized labour might influence management to adopt policies that they would not have introduced merely from a 'business case' perspective" (Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011: 135; for England see also Budd/Mumford 2004; for the US see Glass/Fujimoto 1995). However, the results here are inconclusive. While Beblo and Wolf (2004: 563ff.) found that work councils play a decisive role in occupational family policies, Klenner (2008) and Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser (2011) take a more skeptical view: "Organized labour was typically a 'consenter' rather than a 'protagonist'" (ibd.: 153)[3], although its role in Germany – in line with country-specific systems of industrial relations – was more pronounced than in the UK or the US. Also, the role of *female agency*, e.g. female employees, executives or equal opportunity officers, as well as the *personal experience* of key actors with care duties are highlighted by the literature as important explanatory factors (Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011: 135; 145).

In our empirical research, we will study the reasons companies have in introducing elderly care policies, which actors dominate and which strategies lay behind the introduction of elderly care-friendly measures.

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[3] For the original distinction between *employers* as possible 'protagonists', 'consenters' and 'antagonists' see Korpi (2006).

4. Research Design and Method of the Study 'MÄNNEP' ('Men between Gainful Employment and Elderly Care')

Today, there are about 2.6 million people in need of care in Germany. Two thirds of them are cared for at home, the majority, i.e. 1.25 million, solely by their relatives without any support by professional services (Statistisches Bundesamt 2015). The share of men who define themselves as the primary caregiver for their relatives has increased between 1998 and 2010 from 20 to 28 % and the share of sons doubled from 5 to 10 % (TNS Infratest Sozialforschung 2011, 27). If not only the primary caregiver is taken into account but all the relatives who spend at least one hour per day on care duties, the share of men in 2010 was even 35 % (Rothgang et al. 2012, 82ff.).

Against this statistical backdrop, identifying the preconditions conducive for men to take on primary care responsibilities became the core aim of MÄNNEP, which was conducted from June 2013 to January 2015 and supported by the Hans Böckler Foundation in Germany. In this study, we wanted to learn about the typical care arrangements and coping strategies of caregiving men who are still active in the labour market. Accordingly, we aimed at identifying familial, social, professional and occupational networks and resources used by men in caregiving situations. In this paper, we would like to discuss our research findings in connection with the theoretical approaches on investive social policy.

Our research is based upon 11 case studies of companies, thus allowing a double focus on occupational frameworks and the personal experience of the caregiving men interviewed. With regard to occupational reconciliation policies, we conducted 25 semi-structured guided interviews with both experts from work councils and HR managers. In order to find out more about the subjective caregiving experience, we conducted 44 guided problem-centered interviews with the caregiving men who are working in the companies of our sample group (36 of them were sons, 1 was a nephew; these 37 cases provided our sub-sample of "caregiving sons", who's situation is expected to differ from caregiving spouses).

For our research task, we sought to select companies which describe themselves as caregiving-sensitive.[4] Additionally, personal contacts and the networks we developed during a more practice-oriented workshop held in the opening phase of the research project were used to access the field. Thus, the final result was a wide variation with different types of companies and individual care arrangements with male caregivers while assuming a broad understanding of the concept of 'caregiving'.

All the interview material has been fully recorded, transcribed and analyzed according to 'theme-centered coding'-methodology (Schmidt/Hopf 1993; Kuckartz 2010: 84ff; Schmidt 2012) using a coding guide and MAXQDA software.

5. Company-Level Elderly Care Policy: Measures Offered and their Driving Forces

Company-Measures Concerning Elderly Care

In this section we will describe our sample of companies, the measures they offer employees to reconcile work and care, and the possible driving forces behind that. It is important to note that for our study we chose to select companies that are characterized as caregiving-sensitive. Thus, what we describe is not a representative sample[5] but rather the best that employees can get under exceptionally favorable circumstances.

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[4] Evidence for such a profile was supposedly given by membership in relevant networks, such as the network "Success Factor Family", certification as a family-friendly company by such authorities as the Hertie Foundation, and participation in company competitions on family-friendliness.
[5] On the contrary, a recent study (zqp 2015) shows that more than 70% of the companies larger than 15 employees do not offer any measures to reconcile work and elderly care and they do not plan to do so in the near future.

Table 1: Sample of Companies

No.	Size	Sector	Extent of Measures	Evidence of Application Problems
1	Large company	Industrial, private	High	Yes
2	Large company	Industrial, private	High	No
3	Large company	Services, public	High	No
4	Large company	Services, public	High	No
5	Large company	Services, public	High	Yes
6	Large company	Industrial, private	High	Yes
7	SME	Industrial, private	Medium	No
8	SME	Services, private	Medium	Yes
9	SME	Industrial, private	Medium	No
10	SME	Industrial, private	Low	No
11	Large company	Industrial, private	Low	No

Source: own compilation

Table 1 shows that large companies have almost always a high level of elderly care-sensitive measures while small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) achieve only a medium level of measures.[6] Nevertheless, a large range of measures does not always guarantee that their use is free of conflict. We found evidence of application problems in four of the 11 companies. In short, there are two paths to successful application and implementation. Large companies are successful if they are able to combine elderly care-sensitive measures with a care-friendly company culture. That means that they are able to create an environment of confidence which enables their employees to

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[6] In our study, we differentiated between seven areas in which measures of reconciling working and elderly care at the company level can be found: (1) provision of information, (2) naming of a special contact partner for elderly care within the company, (3) cooperation with external institutions and services, i.e. counseling, (4) flexibility of working time, (5) flexibility of workplace, (6) manager training and (7) cash benefits. The extent of the elderly care-sensitive measures is classified 'high' if a company offers measures in at least five of the seven areas. Companies are classified as 'medium" if they have implemented measures in three or four fields. Companies which received the label 'low' make information available and allow a (partly restricted) flexibility of working time.

really use working-time reductions, home office or care leaves. The second path is related to SMEs. They are often successful in combining informal arrangements with a care-friendly company culture. SMEs have more problems implementing extensive care-friendly measures because of their limited financial and personnel resources. They often use information seminars and flexible working hours in the context of informal arrangements that could be a functional equivalent to care-friendly measures.

Our 11 case studies show that companies may offer a great variety of support for caregiving employees. The extent of the measures differs from company to company, as Table 1 has shown.

- All of the 11 companies offer flexitime and many of them enable home office as well.

- 10 of the 11 companies organize lectures or workshops which provide information on the German elderly care system and the long-term care insurance.

- 6 of the 11 companies nominate a person who assumes the function of a so-called 'care-counselor'.

- 6 of the 11 companies offer manager trainings to sensitize their executives to elderly care matters.

- 5 of the 11 companies cooperate with support services. Some of them use lectures or workshops, one company uses a counseling service, and several service providers help employees find day care centers for elderly persons ("Tagespflege") or short-term care. Cooperation with support services is advantageous because even small companies can support their employees at comparatively little cost to them.

- Cash-based benefits are a very rare measure and only offered in 3 companies. One company offered an interest-free loan, another five days of paid leave to organize care for a family member and a third had a so-called 'demographic fund'. This was regulated by collective agreement in the chemical sector and offered the opportunity to reduce working time in the pre-retirement stage without a loss of

wages. In order to finance this measure, companies deposited 300 € per year per employee into a collective fund.

- One company offers a guided supervision group in which caregiving employees can suggest the topics they want to discuss. Periodically, the participants visit e.g. short-term care or residential care centers in order to gain information about the professional support systems in the region. This also leads to an exchange with other caregiving employees. Another company provides for a network of employees with experience in caregiving in order to facilitate self-help.

Overall, the expectation from the CSR literature that companies' engagement is rather limited in scope to certain (positive sum) issue domains was confirmed by our material, especially as far as the rare occurrence of cash benefits is concerned.

Management's Perception and HR Arguments

There are two different trends in the reasons management gives for introducing measures to reconcile work with caregiving responsibilities. The first focuses above all on the economic benefit companies expect to gain from such measures:

> "Finding a balance between career development and the family is important if you want to have a motivated and happy employee. If the employee takes his problems to work with him every day, then he is not effective, motivated or happy. And I believe that is an important aspect of employee satisfaction, to say, ahem, that is something that benefits the employee because he can have a better grasp of his life. It is also an advantage for the company because then we have employees that can develop and demonstrate their full potential." (IHE_U_01, translated from German)

From an HR perspective, a company gains a high level commitment, loyalty and better work from its employees by implementing employee-friendly, in particular elderly care-friendly, measures. In addition, the company may experience a benefit at the hands of potential customers by advertising its family-friendly and employee-friendly measures. In times of demographic change, employee-oriented HR management is also seen as a potential advantage over competing companies:

> "We are of the opinion that we need to make this topic a priority because we will not only be able to recruit good workers. Because if we don't offer flexible working hours and are

not family-friendly, then we cannot maintain our competitiveness because we will not get enough workers that can do a good job." (IKRS_U_01, translated from German)

Another HR argument for companies is related to demographic change. Many companies have to deal with a high average age of their staff and a possible future shortage of skilled labor. They make use of reconciliation measures in order to prevail in competition and to optimize their employees' efforts, a situation which is described in the following way by a company's HR executive:

> "I think that more companies should be doing it than required to by law because I believe, well, I want to be attractive as a company and I want also, because we might have a problem finding qualified workers, I want to support these workers, offer them something so that there is the incentive to work for this company. And I think that if a company supports this, they will also get something back as a company." (IRI_U_01, translated from German)

However, in our sample we also had employee-friendly companies which did not act on the basis of a purely functionalist rationale. Functionalist rationales were present also in these enterprises, especially the skill-shortage argument. Nevertheless, our respondents described those companies as traditionally social-oriented or as a family-owned and family-oriented enterprise in a wider sense. Those companies seem to take a different approach towards social investment. They did not only want to increase efficiency but they also attempted to implement a company culture based on a feeling of responsibility for the workers. The "collectivization type" of Goedicke and Brose (2008) have much in common with our socially oriented family-based companies, but not in the negative sense the authors describe their ideal type.

> "B: In reference to a codex, I would say we have one that guides our actions. A codex is for us / we have adopted a codex which contains different, I'll say, guiding principles, such as respect and appreciation. And I think, as our company philosophy, if we promise that to our employees, we should also deliver on it. I think, part of that is career and caregiving, that we can reconcile them. And from a business perspective, it's clear, the motivation of our employees so that they perform on the job. And a reduction in time missed. (…)
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> B2: Yes, we are a family-owned company. That does not only mean that our boss is the fourth-generation owner of the company but that we as a company are a family and it is important to him that we are like that." (IRI_U_01, translated from German)

In short, there is a broad consensus that a company's commitment to the reconciliation of caregiving and work is important from the company perspective. Although the issue is generally discussed as a middle or long-term economic investment which is

subordinate to short-term economic matters, social motives, particularly in family-based enterprises, also play an important role in the implementation of elderly care-friendly measures.

The Role of Organized Labor

Our study also considered the role of organized labor in reconciling caregiving and work. The existing research pointed out that social policies concerning family issues in general play a minor role in the agendas of works councils and are rarely regulated by company agreements (e.g. Klenner 2008). We found the same in our study: Only 2 of 11 companies had company-level agreements specifically related to elderly care.

The non-existence of specific company agreements does not necessarily mean that there are no employee-friendly conditions for caregivers. Measures can also be undertaken in the context of other company provisions, e.g. concerning flexitime, teleworking facilities or occupational health management. Indeed, we found such regulations in most of our companies. Additionally, companies can also force the issue of reconciliation in the context of certification programs such as the program „Work and Family". Nevertheless, a company agreement specifically for caregiving employees highlights the importance of the issue for both works councils and company management. The two existing work agreements on caregiving have been described as very important instruments for the reconciliation of work and caregiving in both of the companies.

Accordingly, some of the workers' representatives emphasize the need of such agreements to encourage employees to assert their specific needs. Others are more skeptical of that:

> "And if things can be taken care of on an individual basis and the employee can comprise and we can find solutions to his problems, which until now has always been the case, there is no need of a company-wide agreement. The moment when a company-wide agreement is put in place (...), that's when I have to take into account all possibilities and eventualities and then that's difficult. It is difficult because of all the details that have to be included and that's a huge deal. Therefore, maybe it's better to keep everything as it is since our

company is open and receptive to the needs of caregiving employees, it even initiates measures to reconcile work and care, measures which are free for employees." (IB10_B_01, 99, translated from German)

On the other hand, one company was successful in negotiating a very innovative company agreement on caregiving which is characterized by a high level individual flexibility for employees.

Even if in most of the cases the issue of caregiving was recognized as a serious challenge for the future, it was more often management rather than the representatives of work councils that were the driving-force behind the implementation of reconciliation measures. In general, workers' representatives did not promote the subject on the company level to a great extent – unless they had experience with caregiving themselves. Even in large companies that consider themselves caregiving-friendly, the issue of caregiving is "of secondary importance" to work councils (IB4_B_01, 73) and neither childcare nor eldercare play a "large role" (IB2_B 01, 74). The topic is definitely on the agenda but on account of the difficult financial situation of the company, it is not the company's "number one priority" (ibid). In fact, works councils mostly concern themselves with this topic when there are conflicts between employees and their superiors. Here they act in their official capacity as an advocate for the employee's demands. Furthermore, social investment on this issue has an impact on how effective an employee is on the job. This was highlighted by representatives of the work councils we interviewed in our study:

"If by implementing such measures I can keep employee A and motivate employee B and harmonize the needs of work and family as much as possible – obviously the employee needs to get the job done, that's understood – and I have satisfied employees working here, then the work environment is better and the success and effectiveness of the employees are markedly better. I am definitely convinced of that. That is our goal – do as much as possible to retain our employees." (IKRS_B_01, translated from German)

In short, our study supports findings from the field of family policy where organized labor is described more as consenter than a protagonist of care support.

Female Agency and Personal Experiences of Key Actors

Although female agency does play a role, it is not a major factor in terms of implementing elderly care-friendly measures at a company level. In two of our cases, equal opportunity representatives played a central role. In one company, the issue of reconciliation was promoted by a very committed equal opportunity representative although a company agreement existed:

> "To be honest […], the works council simply pawned these issues off on me. And the works council has not played a large role, admittedly, ever since we have a company agreement which the works council put in place, they have become more aware of this issue. But it is often the case that when these issues come up they say: 'You'll take care of it.' When it comes to caregiving, logically the works council put an agreement in place for the company and I think that then they concerned themselves with it a little more. But this issue was never really a major concern for the works council." (IB4_G_01, 95-100, translated from German)

Another company succeeded in putting into place a company agreement relating especially to elderly care, thereby implementing a process that guaranteed a high level of individual flexibility. The initiative came from a concerned employee who contacted the works council. In this case, the equal opportunity representative was also an important initiator.

Our sample shows in general that caregiving as a subject at the company level is often brought to the forefront by individuals who are directly affected by and therefore concerned with it. In one company, for example, both the chairman of the works council and a HR manager had themselves relatives in need of care. In another company, it was the owner and a member of the HR department who had experience with relatives in need of care. Such individuals can be found in almost all of our case studies, especially in SMEs. Personal concern is decisive for the implementation of elderly care-sensitive measures.

6. Company-Level Social Policy in the Field of Elderly Care from the Perspective of Male Beneficiaries – Perceptions and Use of Measures

First, it must be taken into account that most of the caregiving employees we interviewed directed their demands and claims primarily at the state and society in general rather than at companies. This was done because they believe that although companies should do something for their employees these companies cannot be expected to take action here, as the following passage from an interview shows:

> "Well, I'll put it like this: (…) In the first place the employer doesn't really have, I mean, I don't want to say an interest, but it's not his job (…), he doesn't think he's responsible for it. I'll say that he can offer some support if there is a prior agreement. […] I think it's good if an employer just comes out and does it, that's for sure. […] You can't force him to do it, that's obvious, but it would be great if they supported stuff like this, that employees can, you know, care for their relatives, that something like this is possible." (IME_M_01, translated from German)

Nevertheless, we found a variety of measures suggested by our respondents to support caregiving employees on a company level. These aspects can be grouped into three categories which in fact are strictly related to each other. The first category refers to *flexibility demands of caregiving employees including time flexibility and workplace flexibility*. The second category refers to *measures at the company level besides questions of flexibility*. This includes specific work agreements, increasing the awareness of executives and improved access to information services on issues related to caregiving. The third category comprises *demands concerning workplace culture and social relations*, as in increased cooperation between colleagues as well as between superiors and their team, and a corporate culture that does not taboo the care responsibilities of employees.

Autonomy by Flexibility in Working Time and Workplace

Flexibility in working time and workplace is generally seen as helping to support the reconciliation of employment and home care. All the companies that participated in our study offer flexible working time models and 6 of 11 offer home office or teleworking facilities. While the home office is rarely used in our sample, 29 of the male employees make use of flexitime, flexitime wage records or similar instruments (n=37).

Time sovereignty grants them increased autonomy. For example, one employee stresses the importance of being able to begin work one hour later for his care arrangement, whereas another starts work earlier so that he could leave earlier and have more time for his mother:

> "I started at 7 a.m., later – I'll get to that in a moment, we'll get to that later – after we made an agreement, I started a little earlier so that I had some room at the end of the day to stop earlier." (IKRS_M_01, translated from German)

> "I: And how does the dual task of working and caregiving affect you? (...)
> B: I never had any problems with it because I started later in the morning, an hour later. And I added that to the end of the day (…). So (….) in the morning I had no problems […]." (IFR_M_06, translated from German)

Part-time work also ranks high as an accepted reconciliation measure (e.g. Keck & Saraceno 2009; Reuyß et al. 2012). However, only five of 37 men decided to work part-time as four men reduced their weekly working hours to 30 hours and one to approximately 20 hours. The motives are different and sometimes the causes are multiple burdens resulting from childbearing, work, care and illness. For all these men the reconciliation of work and care was easier once the decision was made to reduce working time although one man reported that he felt excluded in his team. In addition, three other men asked to reduce their working hours and their proposals were dismissed. Corporate business interests in these cases had higher priority than the caregiver's demands. Generally speaking, part-time work is not the key strategy men prefer. Also the public care leave options presented in section 2 were only used once in 37 cases. One of the main reasons was the concern over lost income:

> "As to caregiving, we all know that it is unpaid. That means that the employee must have a financial cushion to be able do that. In my opinion only a handful of employees can afford that. That's why very few employees have made use of this option, if anyone has at all." (IHE_B_01, translated from German)

Advisory Services and Information Transfer on Care Issues

Advisory services and information transfer on care issues are also important for caregiving employees. Ten of our interviewees took part in information sessions on caregiving and they all agreed that this was very useful. In addition to the information

they got there, it was helpful for them to share their experiences with other employees in the same situation:

> "I believe in all of the years, now in September that'll be about five years, I've missed at the most four or five sessions. Because it was always really important for me to go there and swap experiences. And most important was the contact with people in the same situation. Because we all have our worries and concerns and you go there and think, wow, that guy is going through the same things. And that was really important for me to go there and talk to people." (IHE_M_01, translated from German)

Male employees also attended personal counseling sessions with social workers or care experts. Topics such as the financial support offered by the long-term care insurance, conflicts with siblings and dissatisfaction with the current support services were discussed:

> "The discussions I had with the counselors were interesting and they gave me lots of good information, I could have found this stuff online but what they gave me was more directed towards me and my situation." (ISPK_M_01a+b, translated from German)

This also points to another result of our study: Because of men's strong propensity to work, they are particularly satisfied with companies' support measures which can be utilized without any great loss of time and without much effort.

Demands Concerning Recognition and Social Relations

In addition to making use of such services at the company level, male caregiving employees describe the need to feel recognized; in particular, they want that their needs and the struggles caused by their caregiving responsibilities are acknowledged and accepted. This concern is addressed to both colleagues and superiors. In the end, they require no more than empathy, cooperation and recognition of the effort they bring as a working person with familial care responsibilities:

> "I must say that a nice word or two or a new task at work would be for me personally a lot more important. [...] I can't say that out loud, that's something just for you (sc. the interviewer). Yeah, because I think that life consists of many small gestures like that." (IHE_M_06, translated from German)

This points to a corporate culture in which the topic of caregiving is not taboo as a key factor in helping male employees reconcile their work with their responsibilities as caregivers:

> "I think that if someone has problems, he should be able to go to his employer and say that I have this and that problem. Just talk about it and say: 'This is what I want.'" (IFR_M_04)

When dealing such demands for recognition and other needs that caregiving employees have, our study shows that the attitudes of line managers and colleagues have a major influence on how successful the reconciliation of work and care is. Some men report that certain line managers have internalized very traditional gender roles which are not compatible with men as caregivers. They only see the reconciliation of work and care as a female issue. One man also experienced that line managers who never provided care themselves or whose real life experiences have little do to with elderly care are not able to recognize how important this care is. These statements prove that caregiving men want superiors who have a more egalitarian view of gender roles. Employees also want line managers and HR staff to be more proactive in communicating the existing portfolio of measures offered by companies:

> "Yeah, I wish that for example in the moment (…) when I told my boss, when I said to him: 'Boss, I have a problem', that he then says: 'Don't worry (…) sit down and we'll talk about it, we'll get it taken care of. (…) Maybe you know, maybe you don't but our company offers this and that. Talk to the HR department, talk to this or that person (…) and listen to what they have to say.' I wish that would have happened, that someone said to me: 'You can talk to these people and get what you need.' (…) But that didn't happen, I had to go seek out these people and everything the company had to offer on my own." (ISPK_M_02, translated from German)

7. Conclusion

This paper deals with occupational social policy at the company level and examined eldercare support measures, a field that has so far been generally neglected. In the conclusion, we will first summarize how and why companies invest in elderly care-sensitive measures and second, how this investive social policy at the company level fits within the social policy framework given by the state. We will ask which

opportunities are opened up by company-based measures and what the limitations of such policies are.

In general, there are only a few companies which explicitly engage in measures supporting caregivers; our research refers only to such companies. From this perspective it is clear that occupational social policy measures are socially selective as they only benefit those employees who work for one of the companies that offer such measures. All the others – and in the case of elderly care – most of the employees are at a disadvantage as they depend on the employer's good will and on fragile informal arrangements.

Those companies which are concerned with reconciling work with elderly care offer a great variety of elderly-care sensitive measures. They range from flexible working hours or working places to information seminars and executive training. Cash benefits, however, are very rare. It is important to note that not only the quantity of measures offered is decisive, but also the actual possibility to use them. Large companies tend to offer a broad variety of measures, but only those companies with a culture that acknowledges and respects caregiving and caregivers are really successful. In SMEs, where the range of measures is limited, flexible working hours are often combined with informal arrangements. Here once again cultural issues are crucial as a positive company culture that takes employee demands into consideration culminates in successful but more informal arrangements.

The reasons why the most successful companies were involved in company-based reconciliation policies vary. In general, economic arguments dominated: companies want to retain their (skilled) employees in the face of demographic aging and they expect more satisfied employees to be more efficient. However, several companies truly appeared to have a social conscience which went beyond arguments for efficiency and better competitiveness; these companies really seemed feel responsible for their employees and were concerned with social policy issues.

As economic reasons dominate, HR staff are often the decisive actors within companies. Members of the works councils only get involved if they are personally

affected or if there are internal conflicts between employees and their superiors. Therefore, organized labour does not yet play a decisive role in company-level eldercare policies. Management is a protagonist and works councils are consenters (see also Fleckenstein/Seeleib-Kaiser 2011: 147ff). The argument from personal concern does not only refer to works councils. Elderly care-friendly measures are more likely to be implemented if key decision-makers in the company have experienced relatives in need of care. These decision-makers could the owner of the company, HR managers, members of the works councils and a women's or diversity representative. The latter is also connected to female agency in a certain sense.

Considering the opportunities opened up by company-based reconciliation measures, our results show that companies play a decisive role in flexible working hours, flexible working places, provision of information, and providing a contact person if an elderly relative needs nursing care. As many care demands are often unforeseen and employees are confronted with a short-term emergency, companies are important for an easy access to reliable information. This requires, however, that the company culture is based on trust and is care-sensitive as well. Informal arrangements are also a flexible instrument but here there are also problems. Employees do not have a legal claim to working time flexibility or a home office and only the state can implement social policy rights which are universal, comprehensive, and financially secure. Part-time work, for example, could be more attractive for caregiving men if there was a wage replacement. And (more) men would participate in elderly care if there were sufficient and affordable social services. Thus, company-based reconciliation policies in the field of elderly care may serve as a resource of flexibility in some respects, as Trampusch (2005) emphasized as well. On the other hand, their effects are limited due to unequal access to benefits, scope limitations to positive sum issue domains, and the little chance of generous financial support (see also Fehmel 2013; Bispinck 2012; Jackson 2014).

All in all, at both the company and state level, support measures for the reconciliation of work and care are still in their infancy and lag behind developments in childcare.

Companies may play an important role in some aspects of elderly care support, in particular in enabling easy access to reliable information and flexibility in working time and workplace. Even smaller companies may play a decisive role in elderly care support as long as the company culture is care-sensitive. Educating or sensitizing managers is thus a key task, and such measures may also be a key to make elderly care support more widespread among companies in the future.

At the same time, the lack of comprehensive measures at the state level can be counterbalanced at the company level only to a limited degree. Company level policies need to be complemented by respective state-level measures. As our results suggest, in particular access to high-quality care services and tax-based financial support for care leave are important state tasks in this respect.

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