"It is the masculine values that prevail. Speaking rudely, football and sport are important; the worship of fashion, the buying of clothes 'trivial'... This is an important book, the critic assumes, because it deals with war. This is an insignificant book because it deals with feelings of women in a drawing-room ... everywhere and much more subtly the differences of values persists."
- Virginia Woolf -

7 Conclusion

As indicated at the beginning of this study, increasing egalitarian principles in society as well as the post-industrial restructuring of labour markets have offered women access to both the educational system and paid labour. Even though 'primary' sex segregation ceased to exist due to these developments, the phenomenon has survived in today's labour markets. In varying shapes, horizontal as well as vertical sex segregation can still be observed in EU Member States. The changing facets of the phenomenon seem still influenced by the two deeply-rooted ideological principles of *'gender essentialism'* and *'male primacy'* (Charles and Grusky 2004) which rest on women's 'exclusion' as an organising principle.

The 'exclusion' of women from specific domains in the labour market might often be less obvious and visible. Developments which, on the one hand, foster gender egalitarian principles on the labour market, may support new forms of occupational sex segregation on the other hand. As a consequence, even though occupational sex segregation proves to be a universal phenomenon, its multi-dimensionality frustrates attempts to capture it in a single parameter. For the understanding of different national patterns of occupational sex segregation, it is central to recognise that these patterns mirror individual preferences as well as nation-specific institutional constraints.

S. Steinmetz, *The Contextual Challenges of Occupational Sex Segregation,*
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7.1. Summary of the main findings

Against this background, the main purpose of this study has been twofold: First, it aimed to draw a detailed picture of the status quo and recent developments in horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation during the time period from 1995 to 2004 for EU Member States. Second, it sought to explain cross-national differences by clarifying how factors related to educational systems, post-industrial restructuring, family policies and 'gender cultures' impact on sex segregation processes. The overarching objective, therefore, was to arrive at a more appropriate and comprehensive understanding of institutional determinants of sex-specific occupational allocation processes.

The assumption that institutional characteristics of societies steer sex segregation processes on the labour market is by no means new. However, most scholars focused either on a broad theoretical conceptualisation or on empirical evidence with regard to single institutional factors, such as family policies or post-industrial developments (Nermo 2000, Charles and Grusky 2004, Estévez-Abe 2005). A theoretical and empirical model combining various macro-level factors, while also considering individual characteristics, was lacking. To fill this gap, a refined picture of micro- and macro-level processes as well as their interrelation, shaping the occupational allocation of men and women, has been drawn in this study by examining the different theoretical explanations of occupational sex segregation (*chapter 2*). This exercise testified to the complexity and multi-dimensionality of the phenomenon, and furthered the understanding of underlying macro-level mechanisms that enhance cross-national differences.

Besides the development of a sound theoretical concept, the methodological problem of measuring occupational sex segregation has been addressed (*chapter 3*). As the use of single number indices can be an appropriate starting point for the understanding of sex segregation patterns, it has been emphasised that the concept of occupational sex segregation has to be clarified theoretically and methodologically. This has been demonstrated, along the lines of experiences in mobility research, by distinguishing between the aspects of 'sex-typing' and 'occupational chances' as distinct but correlated aspects of segregation. The resulting theoretical differentiation allowed the allocation of already-existing indices to the distinct aspects of occupational sex segregation. On the basis of this approach, it could be concluded that, in particular, the marginal dependency of traditional indices becomes irrelevant and that the search for the 'right' measurement (i.e. the selection of the adequate index) largely depends on the focus of interest (i.e. the horizontal or vertical dimension of occupational sex segregation).

Against this theoretical and methodological background, *chapter 4* provided a detailed overview of the developments in respect of both dimensions of occupational sex segregation in Europe until 2004. The overview was placed in the context of women's increasing access to higher education and paid work, and devoted attention to changing institutional contexts. Results of previous studies have been taken into account that concern similarities of sex segregation patterns across Europe and the persistence of occupational sex segregation over time. It has been shown that the traditional differentiation between typically female and male occupations continues to exist. Women still constitute the majority of clerical, service and sales workers, while men remain the dominant sex among skilled production workers and machine operators. This pattern can be found in all EU Member States to a varying extent. In addition, it has also been revealed that further aspects, like 'working time' and 'sector of employment' are strongly related to segregation processes by sex. Women are rather concentrated in the service and public sector, and strongly directed to typically female occupations if they work part-time.

With respect to changes over time, the use of single indicators gave evidence of the high stability of the phenomenon between 1995 and 2004 in most countries. However, as segregation indices are inherently limited, this does not imply that no changes occurred. By contrast, when assessing patterns of occupational sex segregation across age cohorts, two developments can be identified: women increasingly entered typically male occupations, thereby strengthening integration tendencies. At the same time, however, they supported feminisation tendencies by also continuing to enter typically female occupations (see section 6.6.). This trend can also be observed at an earlier stage with respect to educational sex segregation (see section 4.1.2.). In chapter 4, it has also been shown that the unequal distribution of men and women across occupations becomes more problematic when it is accompanied by vertical sex segregation disadvantaging women with respect to income, occupational status and career prospects. In fact, the examination of the vertical dimension of occupational sex segregation confirmed previous findings concerning women's underrepresentation in top positions of the labour market from a cross-national perspective. As management positions are only one side of the coin, women's access to high-status positions has been examined as well. The results revealed that, in general, women are overrepresented in high-status positions in all countries. However, this advantage diminishes when differentiating between manual and non-manual occupations showing that the gender status gap, particularly in non-manual occupations where women are generally overrepresented, is high in nearly all countries. These findings reflect the fundamental vertical gender differentiation and the fact that women, generally, reach positions with a relatively good occu-

pational status, whereas men are to be found particularly in very high and low status positions. Finally, the developments of important contextual factors and their interrelation with occupational sex segregation have been presented. The analysis shows that the selected institutional factors are central to the explanation of cross-national variations. In this vein, it has also been demonstrated that the application of a multi-dimensional approach, distinguishing between horizontal and vertical dimensions, is of crucial importance because macro-level factors seem to affect the two dimensions of occupational sex segregation differently.

To assess the potential of the selected factors for establishing country groupings, a refined sex segregation typology has been developed in *chapter 5*. Based on a cluster analysis, four distinct sex segregation regimes (modernised, conservative, traditional and post-communist) could be identified. Even though results of previous studies could be confirmed by and large, some deviations became apparent with regard to the placing of former CCE countries. A joint clustering of these countries proved to be unrealistic. It seems that the development with respect to occupational sex segregation is shaped by the regional embedment of theses countries. While, for instance, Slovenia, like Italy and Greece, belongs to the traditional sex segregation regime, Estonia clusters together with Latvia and Lithuania in the post-communist regime. Furthermore, it could be demonstrated that the newly-defined typology is quite stable over time, even though the exclusion of single indicators leads to the reallocation of some countries from the heterogeneous conservative sex segregation regime to another sex segregation regime.

Against this theoretical and descriptive backdrop, a number of hypotheses were formulated about the influence of educational system characteristics, post-industrial developments, family policies and gender cultures on cross-national variation in the distribution of women and men across occupations and positions. These hypotheses were then tested empirically in a large-scale analysis covering 21 EU Member States (*chapter 6*). A multi-level design applied for the purposes of this large-scale analysis offers a significant methodological improvement over the research that has been conducted in this field so far. By including variables capturing the micro- and macro-level characteristics of countries into a single empirical model, as undertaken in the present study, the hypothetical influence of these characteristics on segregation outcomes of women and men can be assessed directly by taking into account the nested sources of variability.

With regard to the results of individual analyses, reference is made to the respective summaries at the end of each section. In the following section, however, the findings are merged in order to draw a complete picture of gender ine-

qualities on the labour market and the impact of the structural and institutional set up of European countries. Above all, the contextual challenges will be brought into focus. These challenges concern the organisation of the educational system, the post-industrial development, family policy and the gender culture. EU Member States seeking to attain higher 'gender equality' on the labour market have to deal with these contextual challenges.

7.2. Contextual challenges of horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation

7.2.1. The role of the educational system

As emphasised in chapter 2, the influence of educational system characteristics on occupational sex segregation has often been discussed theoretically. However, it has hardly ever been analysed in more detail. In the framework of this study, therefore, the attempt has been made to clarify whether education system characteristics, like vocational participation, short-term courses, tertiary participation and atypical fields, are able to explain cross-national variability in gender inequalities horizontally and vertically. In both cases, however, the results demonstrate that the selected educational indicators do not contribute to the understanding of cross-national variability in the field of gender inequalities. This finding might indicate that the cross-national variation of occupational sex segregation is much more attributable to individual choices with respect to field of study and level of tertiary degree than to system-related characteristics. This might particularly hold for the present analyses where the focus of interest has been on tertiary graduates.

Nevertheless, the role of the educational system as a stratification machine should not be underestimated. When considering the variance components of educational factors for the 'average distribution' of persons across occupations and positions, which was not the primary focus of this study, the results indicate that educational system characteristics may be an important factor for the explanation of cross-national variety in the average distribution of persons across occupations and positions. However, the findings also reveal that for the clarification of the interrelation between educational and occupational sex segregation, further research is needed.

7.2.2. The role of post-industrial developments

Based on previous findings (Nermo 2000, Charles 2005), it was assumed that post-industrial developments are important for the explanation of cross-national differences in both dimensions of occupational sex segregation. In this respect, the expectations have been confirmed that "…sex segregation far from being an ascriptive holdover, is actively advanced by dynamics that are integral to the functioning of contemporary labour markets" (Charles and Grusky 2004: 298).

The findings of the study have shown that cross-national differences in the distribution of women and men across typically female occupations and management positions is particularly shaped by post-industrial factors. Different factors strengthen the two dimensions of occupational sex segregation. Feminisation trends on the labour market seem to be strongly associated with an increase in female employment. As indicated in chapter 6, even though the driving forces are hard to disentangle, both an increase of women entering already-existing typical female occupations and a general increase in the feminisation of various occupations seem to be decisive. In this context, it is interesting that parallel observable flexibility trends, such as enhanced part-time options, are not necessarily related to the feminisation of the labour market. Therefore, the assumption could not be confirmed that a higher share of part-time options strengthens particularly horizontal inequalities. When considering recent developments in EU labour markets, this result might become understandable. Part-time options need not exclusively serve the purpose of bringing more women into paid work, but may also be offered to solve other labour market problems like, for instance, higher overall unemployment.

With respect to cross-national differences in the vertical dimension of occupational sex segregation, the rigidity of labour markets seems to be important. Countries where the labour force is divided between a 'stable' primary and a 'fluctuating' secondary segment seem to be associated with greater gender inequality in terms of career options. Furthermore, an interesting result came to the fore with regard to female public sector employment. Even though the effect vanishes with the inclusion of flexibility and rigidity measures, there is some evidence that at least in some countries, this area of the labour market offers women better career options. In sum, the study demonstrates growing evidence that the functioning of modern labour markets is associated with the erosion of some forms of sex segregation, while it simultaneously exacerbates others. Even with evolving egalitarian principles, it seems that both developments can coexist (Jackson 1998).

7.2.3. The role of family and gender policies

In the present study, it has been emphasised that national policy makers have various options to support and enhance gender equality on the labour market and reduce occupational sex segregation. Besides anti-discrimination legislation, various national state interventions related to childcare, parental leave and family taxation systems also influence segregation processes. The present study has also revealed that family policies are important to the explanation of cross-national differences in occupational sex segregation. Particularly in respect of the vertical dimension, the results imply that equalising processes are associated with childcare and parental leave policies. Even though these findings seem to be plausible, particularly for female tertiary graduates, it should be underlined that the causal mechanisms cannot be identified adequately.

With respect to the surprising finding that, against the expectations, a higher gender empowerment does not lead to the opening of typically male occupations for women, it can be criticised that the GEM indicator employed in this context constitutes a rather vertical measure. It includes particularly factors which refer to women's power in terms of income and high status positions. These outcomes, however, may also be realised in typically female or integrated domains. Gender empowerment in these domains need not necessarily contribute to the opening of male fields.

7.2.4. The role of the 'gender culture'

As the shape of the labour market mirrors cultural beliefs about appropriate gender roles, it has finally been assumed that the 'gender culture' of societies might also be crucial to the understanding of cross-national variability in occupational sex segregation (see also England et al. 1994, Crompton and Harris 1997, 1998). In this context, it has been argued that particularly the coherence of attitudes concerning different aspects of gender equality ('access' and 'motherhood') is important: it might indicate a 'common' perception of gender equality within society. The results of the variance component analyses confirm that the selected indicators (particularly those related to the aspect of 'access') contribute to the explanation of cross-national variability in occupational sex segregation. However, they also show that a high individual perception of 'gender equality' does not automatically guarantee reduced levels of occupational sex segregation. Furthermore, it seems that even within the different aspects of 'access' and 'motherhood', divergent segregation effects can occur. For instance, it became apparent that countries are more often associated with women's em-

ployment in typically male occupations if the majority in these countries disagrees that men should have more right to work if jobs are scarce. The same effect, however, also seems to be associated with feminisation trends. Hence it might be argued that a 'common' perception of gender equality within a given society does not really exist. It seems rather that even with a growing liberal state egalitarianism, individuals are not prevented "…from understanding their own competencies and those of others in terms of traditional visions of 'masculinity and femininity'." (Charles and Grusky 2004: 302). This means that individual choices with respect to occupations and career options are influenced by the direct 'social' surrounding, i.e. parents, friends, peers etc. who create a common frame of perceived possibilities. If this 'frame' still provides a traditional view of women and men's role in society, it becomes understandable that an abstract 'state-driven' definition of gender equality does not automatically lead to an acceptance of the phenomenon in society.

7.3. Open questions and future research

The clarification of one research topic often triggers new, still unanswered questions. In this respect, the present study is no exception. As emphasised at the outset, for a full understanding of segregation processes and cross-country differences, individual level factors impacting on occupational and career decisions have to be related to the broader social and economic context within a given society (Chafetz 1990, Molm 1993, Buchman and Charles 1995, Orloff 1996). The current study has mainly addressed the question in how far selected contextual factors produce specific gender stratification systems. It provided insights into the variability of occupational sex segregation by painting a global picture of gender inequality in different societies. However, less attention has been devoted to the question in how far these factors affect mechanisms underlying individual selection processes within countries. To enhance the understanding of the interaction between cultural beliefs, institutional manifestations and individual preferences, detailed country analyses with rich micro data are needed. With these instruments, country comparisons could also bring to light the reasons for differences or similarities in cross-national segregation patterns in more detail.

With respect to open questions that are closely linked with the current findings, there is a need to analyse more systematically the interrelation between education and occupational sex segregation (Smyth 2005, Reimer et al. 2008, Smyth and Steinmetz 2008, Reimer and Steinmetz 2009). So far, sociological studies have shown that countries differ in the way in which they match the output of the educational system to the demands of the labour market (Maurice,

et al. 1986, Allmendinger 1989; Shavit and Müller 1998). However, the aforementioned literature does not explore how, for instance, differences in the field of study or the type of degree influence horizontal and vertical segregation outcomes on the labour market. This link, moreover, is not explicitly addressed from a cross-national perspective that takes the characteristics of the educational system into account. In this context, it would be of particular interest to examine the extent to which the different mechanisms of '*pre-sorting', 'post-sorting'* and *'reintegration'* described by Borghas and Groot (1999) differ across countries.

As post-industrial developments turned out to be essential to the explanation of cross-national differences in the two dimensions of occupational sex segregation, it would be interesting to enhance the understanding of the influence of macro-level factors on individual occupational allocation processes within single countries. In this respect, particularly the (vertical) consequences of the interrelation between an increase in female labour market participation and feminisation trends needs further investigation. On this basis, it would become possible to test whether 'devaluation' trends of occupations occur if women enter them increasingly. A question that is closely related to this aspect concerns the role which different employment sectors play in enhancing or reducing occupational sex segregation. According to the present study, there is some evidence that the public sector may serve as a female 'niche' which is associated with better career prospects for women. Furthermore, as the study focused on tertiary graduates, mainly segregation patterns of the non-manual (service) sector have been clarified. However, it may be questioned whether, the results apply to the same extent when analysing the still male-dominated (manual) sector where higher education is not necessarily required. Finally, it should be underlined that, with post-industrial restructuring being essential for the understanding of cross-national differences in occupational sex segregation, future research should not only devote attention to the supply but also to the demand side of the labour market. In particular, there seems to be a need to explore in more detail whether, and to which extent, organisational structures and internationalisation processes of firms work for or against sex-segregated labour markets.

With respect to the findings related to the explanation power of family and gender policies, it seems important to analyse in more detail whether the 'childcare' effect holds also in case of a more precise measure of management positions. Furthermore, with more detailed data of the various types of childcare support, it might also be possible to study, at least for individual countries, how occupational allocation and career processes are influenced by the availability and quality of different childcare facilities. In this context, there is also a need to investigate in how far firm-intern gender equality programs are able to support

women not only in reconciling work and family matters but also in developing their career.

For societies' *'gender culture'*, the study confirmed that it is important to consider how gender ideologies and pre-existing systems of gender relations structure societal areas like the labour market, the educational system and the welfare state (Charles 2005). The analyses conducted in the framework of this study, however, could also give rise to further examinations. In particular, the relation of cultural beliefs about the adequate role of women and men in society with patterns of occupational sex segregation should be analysed in more detail. It would be worthwhile to clarify in how far gender beliefs restrict the individual choices of educational and occupational options of women and men. Furthermore, there is a need to analyse in which way and through which factors individual gender beliefs are created. In this respect, a country comparison could also shed light on the impact of different forms of state egalitarianism on individual gender beliefs and sex segregation outcomes. By the same token, it would be interesting to view demand side processes through a cultural lens. As indicated in chapter 2, employers may seek to reduce costs by favouring men (or women) for certain jobs. Research in this area suggests that such processes are often based on cultural beliefs concerning gender-appropriate roles. In this context, much attention has been devoted to 'discrimination' against women. However, there is a need for more research on the extent to which employers' prejudices may hinder men from taking over more family responsibilities.

Finally, questions evolving out of data and methodological limitations should be addressed. The European Labour Force Survey (EULFS) on which the principal large-scale descriptive and multivariate analyses of the present study were based, has been selected because it offers a comprehensive European coverage, large sample sizes and cross-country comparability. In consequence, it became possible to trace the main contours of sex-segregated labour markets in EU Member States - a task which could hardly have been fulfilled with any other data set. However, one important limitation of the EULFS is its restricted level of detail with regard to core variables.[178] In segregation research, scholars (see chapter 3) have underlined that for a proper analysis, at least information on the ISCO88 3-digit is required. Only on such a detailed level, gender inequalities can be identified adequately, particularly from a vertical perspective. A related, already addressed problem is the operationalisation of the vertical dimensions of occupational sex segregation (see chapter 6). In this respect, the application of the ISCO88 group 1 as an adequate representation of management positions is questionable because a standardised definition across countries is

[178] The limitation of the EULFS is largely due to the way in which the data have been delivered by Eurostat at the time of writing this study.

missing. The employment of the EGP class scheme as an alternative, however, also has its shortcomings. Due to the fact that the ISCO88 2-digit only allows for an aggregated application of the EGP class scheme, and information on central variables is incomplete, underlying facets of gender inequality might not have been brought to light by the current analyses.

A further weakness of the data results from their exclusively cross-sectional nature. In this regard, the analyses have provided only aggregated snap-shots of gendered labour market outcomes at a specific point in time. As emphasised above, it is not possible to empirically address the underlying individual career decisions or approach the outcomes from a dynamic perspective while using these data as a single source. Data sets like the European Community Household Panel (ECHP) or the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) might allow a dynamic perspective. These sources, however, have the same or other limitations when it comes to the analyses of gender inequalities.

7.4. Political implications

As gender equality in society and the labour market is high on the agenda of European policy makers, the findings of this study should finally be placed in a broader political context. It seems that the European Union, striving for a growing and competing economy on the one hand, and a more 'gender equal' labour market on the other hand, is trapped in an inherent conflict of objectives that cannot be solved easily.

As this study has shown, while the EU develops and supports desegregation and gender equality measures within its Member States, the liberalisation of the labour market does not necessarily contribute to removing gender inequalities in terms of horizontal and vertical occupational sex segregation. Accordingly, it seems advisable to reflect on the extent to which the aforementioned divergent objectives mirror two underlying and interrelated problems of EU gender equality policy. The first problem arises from the vagueness of the term 'gender equality' and the absence of a definition that is shared by all EU Member States. It seems clear that changing the gender structure of the labour market and eliminating obstacles to individual free and informed choices in 27 EU Member States is an ambitious project that is likely to imply a very slow process. As the status of women in the labour market is in so many ways tied to nation-specific history and culture, the commitment of Member States to gender equality must be strong and consistent, and be based on a clear formulation of aims.

The way in which the issue has been addressed so far gives rise to the further problem that the topic of gender equality is mainly treated as a quantitative problem. During the last decades, political ambitions sought primarily to change the mere number of men and women in sex-segregated labour market areas by various policies, laws and state-financed projects. However, it is questionable whether 'equality in employment' can be reduced to the mere increase of the female employment rate and the equalisation of the number of men and women in a given workplace. Furthermore, it is doubtable whether these ambitions can really be taken as a guarantee of more gender-equal relations and practices.

When seriously addressing the topic of 'equal opportunities', it seems indispensable not to confine the term to the 'level of employment', but to attach the same importance to aspects of 'quality', 'intensity' and 'continuity' of employment. In this context, the term 'quality' is used as a synonym for different aspects of sex segregation, including the social standing of jobs which women typically attain during their life course, the status and prestige they acquire, and the income they receive. In this line of reasoning, changing the sex-segregated labour market is also a question of how 'women's and men's work' is valued and perceived in society. As long as typically female occupations are regarded as less worthy, and skills required by many typically female jobs are not perceived as skills but as 'natural' female characteristics, women's entry in male domains is accompanied by a devaluation of occupations (Reskin and Roos 1990, Cohen and Huffman 2003). Men crossing the gender border are either 'punished' in terms of salary and cultural prejudices or advantaged by riding the 'class escalator' (Williams 1992, Heintz et al. 1997). In consequence, the establishment of a more equal labour market seems out of reach.

Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that the kind of work and the positions available for women are often linked with the dimension of job 'intensity'. This refers to the increasing need for flexibility and deregulation of labour markets in a globalised world that is measured through the number of hours employees typically work and the contracts they hold. In this respect, part-time work has been regarded as a promising way of enhancing female labour market participation while allowing the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities. Even though this study has revealed that part-time work does not directly support the feminisation of the labour market, it is, nonetheless, obvious that part-time measures impact negatively on the vertical dimension of occupational sex segregation. They are likely to limit women's career options.

The third dimension concerning the 'continuity' of work is closely related to the previous aspect. It raises the question of employment interruptions during women's life-course, and the way in which their labour-market participation is affected by familial burdens. When aiming to fully realise the potential of Euro-

pean workforce productivity, it seems essential to promote women's long-term participation in the labour market. Therefore, it has to be ensured that women, as well as men combining work and family duties, are not directed to the 'secondary' labour market or specific female niches. In this context, the findings of the present study indicate that appropriate childcare facilities are an important factor, particularly with regard to the vertical dimension of occupational sex segregation. However, it should be pointed out that, besides allowing women to reconcile a career with family responsibilities, reforms seeking to shift care into the paid economy can also increase gender inequality when, because of unchallenged gender roles, resulting jobs in the care sector are predominantly taken by women and badly paid for this reason.

In sum, it should be pointed out that the interplay of these dimensions is of particular importance. Strategies of tackling gender inequalities must always be considered in a broader context. Isolated political attempts to cope with the phenomenon will hardly ever produce meaningful and lasting results. If, for instance, women are encouraged to choose occupations in technical fields, while considerable discrimination at the workplace continues with regard to career options, results are likely to have only partial success when the problem of unequal career prospects does not receive simultaneous attention. Hence, only a comprehensive consideration of the various aspects of inequality will guarantee the equal treatment of the future female workforce in the labour market, as envisioned by the EU.