

CAPABLE – Enhancing Capabilities? Rethinking Work-life Policies and their Impact from a New Perspective



CAPABLE newsletter December 2019

Project update

It's hard to believe, but the CAPABLE project has been going for 12 months already! We've had a fruitful, fun and productive first year. We've got a great team now, with the start of 3 PhD students, a methodological expert, a project assistant, interns, and a new student assistant. Their contributions are crucial to the project, and their enthusiasm is contagious. For more information on the new team members, keep reading below! We've also been working hard on the first sub-project, the collection of national level data on policies related to care for children, care for dependents, and working time regimes. A special thank you to all of the national experts working with us on the CAPABLE project (Barbara Hobson, Jana Javornik, Anna Kurowska, Margarita Leon, and Manuela Naldini) for their hard work this past year! The country case studies are also underway, with expert and policy interviews taking place in Amsterdam and Nijmegen, and the focus groups for Amsterdam will take place in mid-January. The new year will bring lots of opportunities: field work for

the other three case studies (Slovenia, Spain and the UK), the fielding of the CAPABLE survey (in the fall), and possibly a visit to the Work and Family Researchers Network conference in June in New York. We also continue to work with various societal partners to talk about issues around work-life balance, including participating in public debates on the radio and news media. Academically, we have the first paper under review and look forward to what 2020 will bring. For now, we wish everyone a relaxing and restful holiday season, and a healthy and happy new year!

The CAPABLE team

Samuel Briones, PhD candidate



Since the start of my PhD program as part of the CAPABLE project fourth months ago, I have been exploring the literature on work-life balance capabilities in Slovenia. The consequences of flexible working arrangements in different occupational contexts, diverse fatherhood experiences and the issue of scarce affordable care services for the



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elderly have caught my attention as factors impacting work-life balance capabilities in Slovenia. In mid-November, I travelled to Slovenia for the first time to participate in an intensive language course and to do expert interviews for the case study. During this trip, I had the opportunity to interview

Carla Brega, PhD candidate



I started my PhD program as part of the CAPABLE project three months ago. During this time, I have been exploring the literature on work-life balance in Spain. In many western European countries, flexible work arrangements (FWAs) with secure employment conditions have helped men and women to combine employment with non-paid work. In Spain, however, flexible working takes the form of non-standard work, increasing employment precarity and intensifying gender inequality. Considering this, my next steps involve investigating the way in which structural factors interact to shape individual's perceived ability to use policies such as FWAs. And, to examine how FWAs are translated into real opportunities for achieving work-life balance. Soon I will be traveling to Barcelona and Pamplona to interview researchers and municipality officials about the current national and local policies and services for work-life balance in Spain.

researchers and municipality officials about the current challenges and policies for work-life balance in Slovenia. This fieldwork trip has been a wonderful opportunity to discover the fascinating Slovenian language and exchange ideas with local experts.

Silvia Filippi, intern through Erasmus+



During this first month of my internship I have been looking into the concept of agency within, and beyond Sen's capability approach. The aim is to define a context-specific concept of agency and design a method to measure it, which takes account of its complexity.

The second project I'm working on aims to investigate people's attitudes towards non-work needs of voluntary childless women and men in different countries. Indeed, many studies focus on the role of both individuals as well as society as a whole to address work-life balance for women and men around the world. Nevertheless, the majority of existing studies focus on heterosexual couples with children. Moreover, little space is given to less traditional families or people that have voluntarily decided to not have children.

In the actual contexts of social, cultural and economic change, it is fundamental to take into account a deconstruction of the idea of 'family' and the heterosexual couple in our imaginations. This deconstruction is needed to better understand the current state of family, care, and work-life balance. It is also increasingly urgent to understand the feminine identity away from a mother-centered focus.

Mehri Zamanbin, PhD candidate



I started my PhD on the CAPABLE project in September, and am focusing on work-life balance in the UK. One particular aspect I am interested in is the position of parents with disabled children. Previous studies illustrate that affordable, good quality childcare creates opportunities for many parents to better reconcile work and care or reduce family care to enable meaningful contributions to society. However, these studies often overlook parents of disabled children. Our limited understanding of the availability of affordable, good quality childcare for parents of disabled children is problematic. Parents of disabled children spend a greater amount of time on caregiving, which exceeds that of parents of typically developing children. I am currently

working on a paper in which I will analyze the provision and design of childcare services for parents of disabled children in the UK and the Netherlands.

Roosmarijn Knopper, student assistant



I'm an Interdisciplinary Social Sciences student at Utrecht University. As a student assistant for Mara, I'll be focusing on data analysis and other research related tasks for the CAPABLE project.

Katharina Meitinger, methodological expert



I started my work as a methodological consultant in the CAPABLE project. In this

role, I consult with Mara and the team on a variety of different methodological topics, such as the focus groups and web surveys as well as various aspects of cross-cultural data collection. In this context, I also gave a presentation on "How to achieve measurement quality before collecting data" in the Brown Bag Methodology Seminar of the department of Interdisciplinary Social Science at Utrecht University and gave a training workshop on "Focus Groups" for the CAPABLE project team.

Robin Buning, project assistant



I work as project assistant on the CAPABLE project, having joined the team in April. I am responsible for the project's administration, manage the website and the social media accounts, act as a point of contact for external partners, and assist Mara in everything else that is needed, such as making a data management plan and organizing focus groups.

Keynote HAN: "Capability approach to social policy"



Mara Yerkes in discussion with Erik Jansen (HAN University of Applied Sciences) following her keynote at the mini-symposium Capabilities in Care and Welfare (Capabilities in Zorg en Welzijn). Erik and Mara are working together for the Dutch case study in CAPABLE.

Book launch *Social Policy and the Capability Approach*



Editors Mara Yerkes, Jana Javornik and Anna Kurowska at the celebratory launch of their edited volume Social Policy and the Capability Approach. Both Jana and Anna are national experts within the CAPABLE project. We enjoyed hosting them in Utrecht for meetings with the CAPABLE team!