

# Power structures and traditional division of household tasks within couples: A comparison of European countries

Ruth Abramowski, M.A., PhD student, Paris-Lodron-University of Salzburg



**Starting Problem: The paradox of egalitarian attitudes and traditional behaviors**  
- the (modified) male breadwinner and the female housework model –



## Research questions

How do power structures and empowerment determine the division of household tasks within couples in different European countries?

- Which connection exists between power structures and domestic job-sharing?
- How far determine societal dimensions of power the division of household tasks?
- Which connection exists between job-participation and domestic housework?

## Research goals

- 1) to create a theoretical meta-analysis of central studies with reference to the state of the art;
- 2) to develop a theoretical typology of power dimensions;
- 3) to carry out a multilevel analysis that integrates the dimensions societal empowerment and the power division within couples;
- 4) to explain the division of household tasks within couples in selected European countries.

## Theoretical framework

Micro-level - Inter-role-conflict

Macro-level - National differences: value- and norm system

Theories	Individual Indicators: 'functionings'	Dimension of power	Theories/Macro-Indexes	Contextual indicators: 'capabilities'	Dimension of power
<b>Symmetrical resource theories:</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic theory of family (New Home Economics)</li> <li>• Intrafamily bargaining and household decision</li> <li>• Social exchange theory</li> <li>• Time-availability theory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• income (+relation man/woman)</li> <li>• educational background (+relation man/woman)</li> <li>• employment status (+relation man/woman)</li> <li>• work quota: full-time/part-time/unemployed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interactional power</li> <li>• cultural power</li> <li>• power of participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GDI (Gender-related Development Index)</li> <li>• GGG (Global Gender Gap Index)</li> <li>• GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure)</li> <li>• GEI (Gender Equality Index)</li> </ul>	Differences men/women: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• health: life expectancy</li> <li>• education: years of schooling for children, years of schooling for adults ages 25 and older, literacy rate of adults</li> <li>• estimated earned income</li> </ul> equal sharing of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• economic participation and opportunity</li> <li>• educational attainment, health and survival</li> <li>• political empowerment</li> <li>• paid work, money, knowledge, power, time</li> <li>• health</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• structural power/empowerment</li> <li>• power of participation</li> <li>• cultural power</li> <li>• structural power/empowerment</li> <li>• power of participation</li> <li>• cultural power</li> <li>• structural power/empowerment</li> <li>• power of participation</li> <li>• cultural power</li> <li>• structural power/empowerment</li> <li>• power of participation</li> <li>• cultural power</li> </ul>
<b>Asymmetrical Gender theories:</b>					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doing Gender</li> <li>• Work and Family identities</li> <li>• Honeymoon-Hypothesis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• birth of the 1st child/birth of the last child, number of children</li> <li>• attitudes</li> <li>• marital status: marriage vs. cohabitation duration of marriage/partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interactional power</li> <li>• power of participation</li> <li>• cultural power</li> <li>• institutional power</li> </ul>			

Source: Own description.

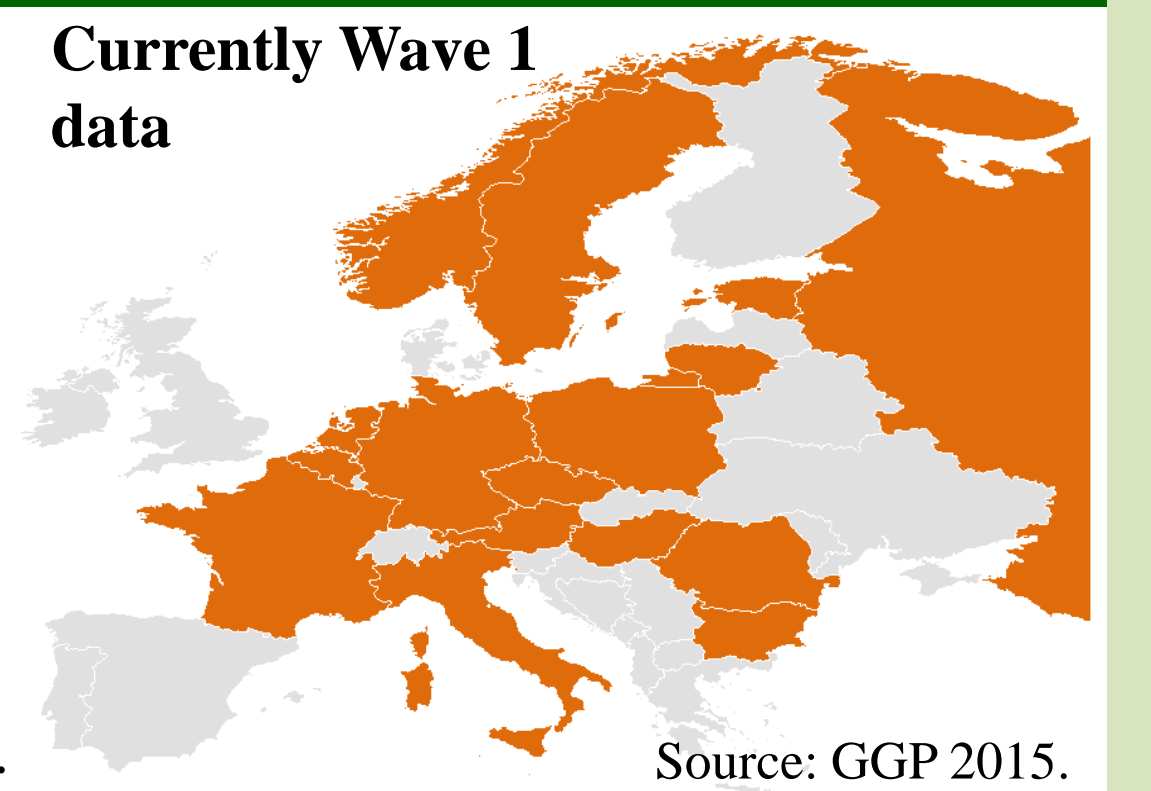
## Hypotheses

- H1: The division of household tasks could be explained by structural conditions, institutions, participation, cultural values, attitudes and individual differences.  
 H2: Between European countries are differences prevalent, however communalities could be observed for regime typologies. Communalities will be expected for South and East-European countries, as well as for North and West-European countries.  
 H3: The modified breadwinner model is predominant in West-European countries.  
 H4: Micro sociologically explanations are dependent on the context: Within countries, where a lot of people live below the poverty line, Gender theories have stronger explanations. Within countries, where a lot of people live in prosperity, rational choice theories have stronger explanations.  
 H5: The longer the marriage, the more traditional is the division of household tasks (Honeymoon-Hypothesis).

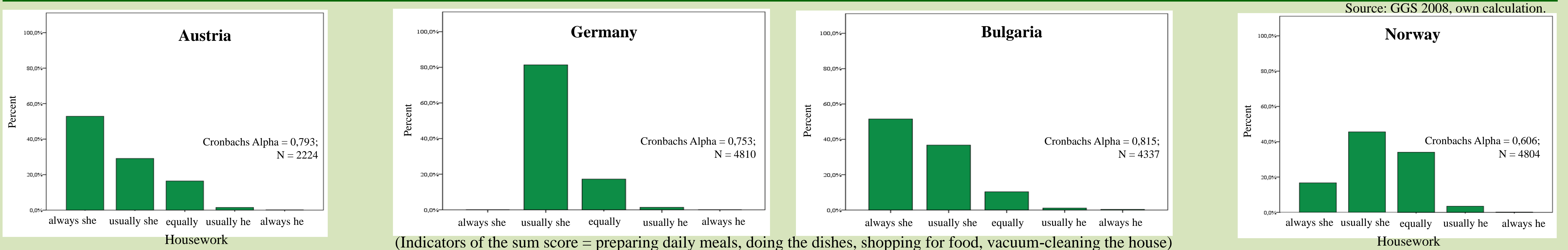
## Data and method

The Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) is a panel survey, including a contextual database with macro-level information and national Generations and Gender surveys (GGS; representative sample of 18-79 year old population) with micro-level information (GGP 2015).

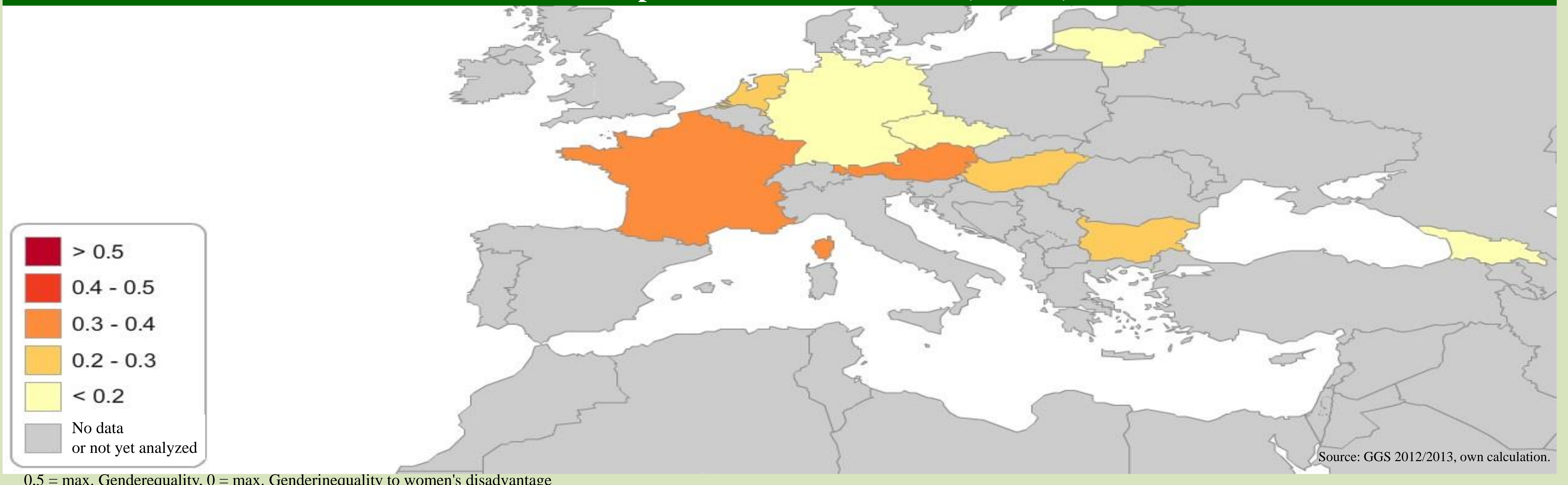
In our analyses of the division of household tasks we will integrate all European countries, as far as practically possible, for which the first and second wave of GGS data are available in order to develop an appropriate multilevel model for longitudinal, nested data.



## Task-Participation-Index in 2008 (Wave 1)



## Task-Participation Index in 2012/2013 (Wave 2)



## Conclusion

**The traditional division of household tasks:**  
 Comparing European countries, our 'Task-Participation-Index' indicate country-specific differences, however, in all countries women do more housework than men. Which factors determine the division of household tasks? The analyze of this question is currently a work in process. The division of household tasks is a social topic which was often analyzed. However, there is a central restriction: there exist hardly any analyses that include micro- and macro-level power-indicators to explain the gap between liberal attitudes and traditional behaviors in European countries. Our future plan is to develop such a multilevel model to explain the division of household tasks.

## Contact

Ruth Abramowski, B.A. M.A.  
 Supervisor: Univ.-Prof. Dr. Beat Fux  
 Paris-Lodron-University of Salzburg  
 Institute of Political Science and Sociology,  
 Department Sociology and Cultural Science  
 Email: ruth.abramowski@sbg.ac.at

