



## ON WOMEN QUOTAS AND OTHER UNDESERVED COMFORTS

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### ABSTRACT

*According to the current political rhetoric, women are prevented from ascending to higher positions through discrimination. If they do manage to participate in the labour market this is celebrated as an emancipatory victory over discriminating men rather than as a result of successful individual female endeavours. Such an assumption implicitly belittles female potential and motivations for joining the work force.*

*Research shows that only 28% of women want to further their career. Among men, in contrast, it is 50%. The desire for professional change generally seems to be less pronounced among women than among men, which has given rise to the well-established division of labour between the sexes. This enduring state cannot be changed by state intervention but only by tacit decisions in partnerships over time. Quotas are an ineffective mechanism for increasing female labour market participation due to the underlying mistaken assumption that women are swayed mainly by means of successful models. Therefore, changes will not be achieved easily. Despite the political tendency to level essential differences between men and women, there remain male preferences for certain professions that are unattractive to women and vice versa. This explains why women, despite quotas and preferential treatment, have low participation rates in the IT sector, for instance, or become pilots as often as men. We have to accept that basic differences between men and women are reflected in their choice of professions and that they might always remain in place.*

**Keywords:** Labour market, female quotas, discrimination by men, discrimination of achievement, inferiority

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## INTRODUCTION

For many female academics with children, choosing a full-time job is subjected to two major considerations. On the one hand, there is the neglect of their children due to practicing a remunerated occupation. On the other, there is the personal loss of not being able to spend time with ones children in their early lives. The question here is: why have children at all, if not being able to enjoy their company? Many women are not prepared to accept the loss of a close relationship with their children - as fathers have done since the dawn of time. That way, many women's professional orientation today can - at least for those with a relatively privileged life-style - be subjected to critical consideration. This often leads to their decision against participation in the job market with full heart and force.

In Germany, this weighting is most likely the decisive cultural factor that prevents many women from investing time and energy in their careers for the long-term. But it is my belief that it is exactly this temporal commitment that is vital for any outstanding professional success. While this is self-evident for men and is part of their standard biography, this commitment is now to be imposed on women in a flattering manner. Yet this highly ambivalent decision only applies to educated women with a high marital living standard, the latter of which is a prerequisite for such a choice. We know from the USA that being 'only' a housewife with an academic education is merely possible if their husbands have top career jobs. For a large part of the middle class and the lower income groups, such a choice is non-existent any longer. Fathers and mothers both have to work full-time, sometimes even have several jobs, in order to afford their children's attainment of at least their own educational level.

The portrayal of market requirements as a measure for the advancement of women shows us that politicians are very aware about the fact that economic incentives - such as childcare assistance or competitive salaries - are insufficiently motivating for many female academics. According to the degree of esteem for children and empathy for children's needs, the non-working woman is therefore classified as politically conservative or reactionary. Behaviour that once would have been met reproachfully and described as that of being an uncaring mother, is now declared to be the inescapable norm. In the end, the question is whether women derive

larger satisfaction from their professional occupation while using public childcare. Or whether they, and their husbands, are more contented due to the increased togetherness of mother and child. Part-time work as the model of choice for many of women is thereby merely an intermediate form between those two approaches.

Politics, which does not recognise this decisive dilemma or fails to address it, instead finds a promising solution in promoting undeserving women into sensational top positions. In the Social Democratic and Green Parties' lines of thought, this quandary is concealed through an ideological preliminary decision according to which women's freedom and autonomy were only possible through full-time employment and socialised childcare. Part of this ideology is the destruction of the family as the supposed means of repression and oppression, as suggested already by Marx and Engels. Consequently, single parenting is declared as the complementary strategy to female autonomy; whereupon the concurrent burdens - such as isolation and feelings of guilt -, and especially those of the children, are being neglected.[iii]

In the end, this perspective bears a correlation with the Social Democratic Party's (SPD) programme, according to which the attainment of a human society is only possible by overcoming the male. Instead of freeing women from idealising ideologemes, which reach back from National Socialism to German romanticism, they are subjected to an aggrandising normativity once again. They are not expected to represent anything less than humanism itself. Social policy without idealising women is apparently not yet possible in Germany.[iv] And as every idealising is always complemented by a corresponding devaluation, we have also witnessed a defacement of the male and the fatherly in the past decades. [v, v(a)]

The drying-out of the labour market is to be avoided by luring academically educated women, with good arguments and symbolic gestures, into full-time employment. Massive tax-reductions would therefore be unnecessary. Equally, the impression should be avoided that the strategies of the imploded socialist systems are becoming an integral part of our democratic politics. However, it is apparently deemed impossible for women, who are enlightened about the future's labour market, to choose a binding occupation due to this particular discernment.

Above that, quota politics could generally become the established instrument for attributing status within the labour market. That is, interventions moving beyond the usual state fine-tuning - such as the prevention of lay-offs during the crisis in 2008. The right to freely choose and practice a career would be restricted in tendency. Above that, manifold quota models would promote a national restructuring of society. By avoiding educational standards and professional qualifications, members of politically relevant groups could be incorporated into specific professions. This could also apply to immigrants and refugees in order to speed up their integration.

In the USA, such quotas were introduced for Afro-Americans more than 30 years ago at elite universities in California and Chicago. Subsequently, these were abolished due to a lack of success of the measures, to the ensuing discrimination of better qualified candidates and to negative economic outcomes. As these state interventions favour women, it is obvious that only desirable professions - such as positions in executive and supervisory boards - are subject to quotas. This in turn entails a concentration of men in professions that are either not desired by women or are avoided by them because of their lack of qualifications or motivation. We would be confronted with the paradoxical reaction of women to continuously avoid technical professions despite multiple measures to encourage them. Not only would the existing disparities continue, but men alone would take on the technical development of progress, qualify for it and further perpetuate the disparities. A free career choice and quotas would drive the labour market toward typically male and female professions - divisions that initially were supposed to be abolished by means of the quotas. We would promote the very issue that we wanted to avoid. A quota for women would fast-track the process toward gender-specific career preferences. [vi]

## **QUOTAS AS AN ANTIPODE TO THE GENDER ARRANGEMENT**

The decisive questions we are dealing with here are about the implications of employment policies that are falsely portrayed as enhancing equality as well as their consequent impact on gender-relations and the sexes' lifestyles. The manifold lifestyles are described as a particular *gender arrangement*. [vii] Arrangement is referring to the countless reciprocal effects within the social, interactive, psychic, and psychodynamic domain; men and women enter this domain daily,

in every situation of life, within their own culture and social class, and thus they change their circumstances little by little, and according to a tacit consent. This approach is diametrically opposed to the expressed notion of a polarised world between bad men and perpetrators on the one hand, and good women as victims on the other, between helpless women and omnipotent men. The term gender arrangement, on the contrary, has the underlying assumption that men, as much as women, are responsible for their own success and failure within their mutual relationship. That counts for all areas of life. The term is opposed to the political defeatism that only perceives a bipolar society. In order to understand how the gender arrangement affects lifestyles, some arguments for the implementation of measures advancing women should be analysed. Particularly, as politicians expressly accept the fact that highly qualified women are more easily integrated into the work process if the polarisation between men and women is prevalent in the media.

According to the political rhetoric, women are prevented from ascending to higher positions by means of discrimination. If they do participate in the working life, then this ought to be celebrated as an emancipatory victory over discriminating men. However, this argument lacks convincing empirical backing so far. Therefore, the argumentation has changed. Now it is said that women needed to prepare for careers as a matter of principle. And this could be advanced by offering particularly successful women for identification purposes: that is, quota-women. The intergenerational transfer of withdrawal tendencies is accepted as a given. This, however, is simultaneously acknowledging that discrimination is not the essential factor for the quota. Rather, exemplary women in exposed positions - such as, erstwhile, the *Heroes of Labour* in the GDR - are supposed to stimulate women to seek promotion. The lack of such a pursuit of top positions is confirmed by a poll conducted by *Accenture*. [viii] It suggests that only one in four women are wishing to move up, as they are discontented with their present professional situation. Only just 28% of women want to further their career. Among men, in contrast, it is 50% wishing to advance. The desire for professional change generally seems to be less pronounced among women than it is among men. [ix]

## **IDENTIFICATION AS LIBERATION: 'GOLDEN SKIRTS'**

Quota-women in top positions are meant to seduce highly qualified yet work-resistant women so that they refuse part-time work and do not give a life with children priority. Rather, the desire for a complete professional integration ought to be fostered. The economic argument is that educated women, who are preoccupied for several years with childcare, are not only withdrawn from the labour market, but furthermore, their initial education is not profitable. This, however, is true to a certain extent only. For academic education is linked to a high degree to the development of extra-functional abilities that lie beyond the mere acquisition of specialist knowledge - such as history, pedagogy, technic, or medicine. And these former are conveyed to children through their upbringing. Among those are the ability to verbalise, self-reflexion, self-management, responsibility, systematic thinking, empathy and assertiveness; simply all the qualities that are less pronounced or non-existent in the lower strata.

Essentially, the differing parenting-styles are determined by the parents' own class and educational level. The transfer of a privileged upbringing from one generation to the next is thereby continuous. It does pay off economically. Incidentally, it ought to be an individual's decision whether he/she expects the cost of one's education to be partially or wholly amortised. Notwithstanding, it all suggests that coercion into the labour market is to be replaced by a seductive and narcissistically quickening type of recruitment. But what is the essence of this seduction? What are the underlying wishes of well-educated women? And what is the image of women that is nurtured by quota-supporters?

In Scandinavian countries, quota-women on supervisory and executive boards are labelled as 'women in golden skirts'. It makes sense that this term has become established and it initiated a rightly derisive commentary culture. That is because this term is ambiguous. The colour of the skirt, gold, recalls a valuable material, but simultaneously it is a fashion item and only seasonally significant for women. It is a valuable piece for embellishment, calling for admiration. It is fashion. It expresses a certain quality and a pronounced female one. It neither acknowledges nor symbolises any form of achievement, it just stands for stylish, everyday demeanour. Therefore, the acquisition of the highest salaries and social status is put on the same level as the purchase

and wearing of a golden skirt. At the core of this is something real, regarding the salaries and the status, but also something pejorative.

It is insinuated that highest job qualifications and determinedly working one's way up can be simply selected just as a fashionable item of clothing can. As if this golden skirt could be put aside any time, like an old accessory, to be replaced by the next fashion. Directorial positions are transferred into the realm of seasonal consumption of fashion. Constantly working one's way up to success, under stressful circumstances, is being equalled with the spontaneity of a shopping spree. This is not very flattering, as it insinuates that women neglect professional requirements and mistake their vocational responsibilities for consumerism. Apparently, these women, who call for the quotas politically, have a derisive or cynical view of the requirements for leading personnel and, in the end, of the principle of merit. That is why female politicians are behaving consistently if they try to seduce other women into leading positions by way of offering naïve identification - for instance, images of successful women in magazines such as *Cosmopolitan*. Hard requirements one has to master do not feature in their argumentation. The quota-protagonists' naïveté, averse to effort, could be linked to the fact that many of them only know to access the professional world by means of identification. They have their own fantasies about the men's world of work, how it looks like or functions, but they have not set foot in a factory, a mine, or an office. Identification is apparently the way of quota-supporters to paint the manly workaday life in bright colours. It is a fantasy world in which they do not partake. The identification with illusiveness functions as a protection from the severity of the working life.

### **IDENTIFICATION, JUST LIKE IN THE CINEMA**

The argument about successful women as role models for the younger generation of women draws from the simple mechanism of identification, alien to the sensual experience of the professional world. The supporters of the quota are evidently convinced by the notion that this mechanism alone is sufficient to motivate women to seek higher purposes.

The quota-protagonists' escapism suggests narcissistic self-involvement and superficiality. They transfer this onto women whom they want to see in top positions. This self-image does not draw from reality, but rather resembles idealising notions of femininity as perceived through the

mass media. These are identifications such as spectators may develop with the captain and his female officers of *The Dream Boat*, or female police inspectors at the *Coast Guard* (both German TV shows), and especially the protagonists in *Sex and the City*. This fantasy world has nothing to do with the life of either the personnel on a cruise ship or the managerial staff on the bridge. The narcissistic projection, the joyous emulation, prevents the acknowledgement of several necessary requirements for success, such as self-management, equanimity, assertiveness, stress-resistance and team-playing. It is subject to denial that the path to success is paved with exertions, with tough competition and frustrating back-lashes. [x]

This blindness for reality is probably due to the fact that quota-supporters are rooted in organisations where they have the status or fulfil the function of the quota-women themselves. Or they hark from political family dynasties and receive directly a post and dignity without having made some effort. Generally, it can be claimed: The readiness to accept quotas is relatively larger, if success or existence of a company or an institution is less dependent on market performance. That applies to public service broadcasting authorities, bureaucracies, especially within political parties, the church, schools and parts of the humanities. The relative neglect of qualifications and acceptance lower levels of accomplishment signifies a devaluation of the recruitment process. Contaminations such as these are the more established the less success has to be proven. Instead, factors can be the proof of membership to a party or religion, as much as social provenance, nationality or social class. Women obviously encounter these requirements, too. They have to fulfil these as much as everybody else as they are common and affect all applicants. They do not represent discrimination, but are typical selection criteria adjusted to the culture and tradition of the specific business. Admittedly, concrete discrimination does occur. Yet, discrimination is not exclusively suffered by women. For instance, it was far more difficult in the past for medical students from Austria's working-class to train as specialist registrars compared to the students from medical families. Upward climbers very often encounter the defensive culture of those enjoying a special social status. Just think of the exclusivity of the 'Rhenish capitalism' in the post-war era. All of this is well-established.

## QUOTA - AN INSTRUMENT OF ABSORBING QUALIFIED LABOUR? OR: 'THE GENITAL QUOTA' [xi]

The question of the actual suitability of the quota for women is increasingly pushed into the background within this exalted debate. If no structural change occurs, an individual promotion becomes part of an endless project of so-called 'equality bureaucracies', leading a parasitic existence parallel to productive structures. This can only be avoided if this individual promotion does not only serve cosmetic political ends. Rather, it has to convey to women further missing extra-functional abilities, now and for many generations to come. This is not possible through the perpetuation of equality bureaucracies, but only through the changing female life-priorities. The latter have been evolving successfully for a while, entirely unaided by these interventions.

Women cannot acquire their missing abilities through the short-term appeal of women's magazines such as *Brigitte*, *Elle*; of celebrities such as Claudia Schiffer, Naomi Campbell; of the identification with the career of Anne Marie Slaughter in Obama's government; or of female newsreaders. In contrast, such role models and media may be appeal enough for the purchase of a face cream, any kind of wardrobe, or cleaning products. It is out of touch with reality in as much as this mechanism is meant to be sufficient for the acquisition of professional excellency, although it only indicates: 'I want to be like her, I want to have what she has, I want to have her breasts, her make-up, her seat in the supervisory board or management, with a chauffeur and a golf-club membership.' The process of appropriation through identification is superficial because it only reflects appearances. It is a process of imitation rather than one of autonomy and effort. In terms of developmental psychology, it is much closer to the infantile. Therefore, this is not appropriate for adults and it is, furthermore, highly unfit to represent the corporate requirements for our top executives.

This process resembles the world of young children, who appropriate the alien world in its colourfulness. Later on, this is followed by more complex procedures to not only see this world but to understand it. However, when adults apply this pattern it is testimony only to infantile naïveté. Every cinemagoer identifies temporarily with the characters of the film and returns to reality afterwards. If teenagers become violent themselves after having seen a violent film, it

means that they could not find a way out of their state of identification with the violent heroes, thus continuing their game outside of the cinema. They misconceive reality and endanger themselves and others. As this is about a simple imitation of others, we can identify envy of the other's belonging. Such envy is by no means problematic as long as there is a willingness to work for the desirable through personal effort. This is not possible via identification alone. Particularly, as all requirements for top executives are arranged by law and not through the visualised golden skirt.

I believe this term took hold in Scandinavian countries as it focuses on the narcissistic smugness, as is common in women's magazines, for instance, in order to increase their sales. The fact that women are missing certain prerequisites for success in management is apparently insignificant, given that the quota bureaucracy is already taking care of it. As if women had found within this arrangement someone who is reading an intense desire from their lips. And that one does not have to fulfil oneself any longer. If women had to do this themselves, it would reduce the narcissistic enjoyment of wish-fulfilment considerably. That is why women have disproportionately higher esteem for gifted diamonds versus those acquired with their own money. Although women may intensely desire a transfer of this culture of gifting into the professional world (as we have indicators to believe they do), this yearning has no future despite Scandinavian golden skirts.[xii] Evidently, the majority of young women are oriented toward the professions' reality principle and do not expect the highest happiness to be awarded by men as in their grandmother's days. Culturally and psychologically, the quota-perspective is a regression toward traditional gender arrangements, which party politics aims to revive. This regression could well be attributed to a fear of too much unaccustomed responsibility as a consequence of new liberties (Bruno Bettelheim).

The quota debate is part of a wide-spread triumphalist rhetoric.[xiii] It does not only celebrate women's successes that have not even taken place yet, it furthermore is bound to the men's downfall. In effect, this only constitutes a transfer of traditions from the private sphere into the public domain. And as men sense this intuitively, they prefer to remain silent. [xiv] The old arrangements are not being altered if women skirmish on male terrain without becoming actual

competitors and carriers of responsibility. Were that the case, they would represent the highest risk to men's feelings of self-worth. And this is why quota-women cannot be regarded by the younger women as the embodiment of ardently acquired success. You cannot embody something you are not or do not have. Quota successes, therefore, do not impress the generation of younger women much. Among young men, however, this does not only lead to irritation, but even to protest - as was the case at the University of Vienna, where the admission to the medical faculty was not based on exam result any longer, but proportionally according to the number of male and female applicants.

### **THE IMPACT OF THE QUOTA ON THE GENERATION OF DAUGHTERS AND SONS**

Initially, quota politics had been justified with the reference to discrimination at the workplace. As the arguments did not uphold, they silently disappeared. Since then, the rationale has become more and more arbitrary. For instance, a journalist for the newspaper *Handelsblatt*, Tanja Kewes, attempted to conjure the 'angry female citizen'[xv] (in analogy to the 'Stuttgart-21-movement'), in order to forge a political alliance between upward climbers with adjustment issues on the one hand and the ecological movement on the other. Women were fed up at 'having to be twice as competent functionally in order to have a career, at having to make excuses for everything and nothing - such as their too short skirt, their childlessness, their severity, their structuredness.' This goes in hand with the higher expectations of newcomers such as fathers on the playground or at the domestic cooker with a demand for more participation in child rearing. The natural monopoly of influence on the world of the infant held by mothers makes it hard for them to compete in this domain. Owners of a status are always reluctant to integrate 'alien' newcomers into their group - whether these are men on the playground or women in executive positions. This is especially the case if novices offer promises of salvation,[xvi] representing themselves as the embodiment of a better future and claiming to have overcome the disadvantages of the past - whatever these might have been. According to this line of thought, the financial crisis of 2008, for instance, could have been averted through the mere presence and application of female virtues. Karl Marx had imagined the proletarian revolution as the beginning of the Empire of Freedom. The entry of women into supervisory and executive boards, in contrast,

is positioned into the realm of financial stability.[xvii]

The potpourri of random substantiations was widened by the Austrian family minister Gabriele Heinisch-Hosek with the reference to the 'double burden of the woman' through the combination of job and family. Missing qualifications should not be to the detriment of women, as these are lacking due to 'structural disadvantage' in the first place. Equally, additional salary payments ought to be introduced until the differential in salaries of alleged 23% has been abolished. The quota therefore ought to even out these salary imbalances; but upon closer inspection, the disparity shows to originate from the multifactorial better qualifications of men. Quite similar are the arguments of women's representatives on faculty boards who want to push through less qualified female applicants for professorships. It is secretly acknowledged among colleagues that this is often not about the bias toward women with similar qualifications than those of men, but rather a preference for women in general, be they sufficiently qualified or not.

The mentioning of 'structural disadvantages' indicates furthermore a problematic feature, dating back to the heyday of identity politics of sexual and ethnic minorities in the last decades. Women are - such as sexual minorities - classified as members of a deprived group. From this membership derives the right for all members of the collective to be supported. Initially one of the adamant supporters of this policy was the French philosopher Julia Kristeva, but she eventually distanced herself from this stance in 2001.[xviii] Yet the quota rhetoric stubbornly holds on to the belief that women ought to be assigned to an identifying collective of victims, whereas it is precisely this collectivising that robs them of their subjectivity and individual responsibility. As social moments do not have much impact any longer, it is their genital, their anatomy that constitutes the abstract collective in the end. Affiliation, education, ethnos and personal responsibility, and other factors as formative elements, are disregarded.

Seen in this light, social mobility is always a political success and never a personal one. Utterly in contrast with the women's movement, feminism established the loss of subjectivity as a mighty tradition and within this, women are generally perceived only as victims. The same is true for partnerships, family life, conflicts culminating in violence [xix] - such as divorce battles [xx]-, or disputes at the workplace. The unifying element that women can hold onto is their victimhood,

simply an all but biological essentialism. This resembles the notions of men and women, arguing in traditional terms. By modifying a statement about female sexuality by Luce Irigaray, the core of the homogenising of all women can be climactically described in the *Vagina Monologues*. Because for Irigaray, the man's penetration into the vagina is the source of violence and the destruction of woman's dialogue with herself. [xxi]

## THE ISSUE WITH ROLE MODELS

Simply seeing the golden skirt will not motivate daughters to achieve excellence in their professional lives, but rather the participation in the daily life of women who make an effort, who know their strengths and weaknesses, who deal with conflicts at the workplace, who enforce salary increases, who aim for higher positions during reorganisations and who can cope with crisis. Daughters have to experience this in a participatory manner. Men alone can rarely provide sufficient motivation for this. Unless, if fathers do it very early on in their lives.

At best, you can say of a quota woman that it was the quota bureaucracy that promoted her. Merely wanting to be like successful women and men in a company is not sufficient. Just as little as the wish to show men that you can do it just as well as they do. Motivations built on envy, malevolence, cantankerousness are not sustainable. It is important for young women to say 'That is what I am going to do, as it interests me; others should choose their path, I choose mine.' Only through this confidence and participation in a strenuous process can others be motivated to imitation. Most young women give preference to this path. Hillary Clinton had to experience in March 2016, during her quest for party nomination for the presidential election, that the rhetoric of victimhood is not successful among young women any more. Young women today consider themselves as individuals and not as members of an ominous collective of victims.

Despite the fact that the political mobilising for women's quotas has little public support, companies will have to continue to create token positions within their supervisory boards due to political pressure. These positions do not cause damage and the costs are just peanuts. It is in this spirit that the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* comments on March 9th 2011, on the executive position at *Daimler AG* awarded to the former judge and expert in constitutional law Christine Hohmann-Dennhardt. Such a habit of implementing token positions could be a political solution

with conciliating effect. A more thorough examination reveals this is simply a degradation of all capable women.

The fact that well-intentioned actions can have the adverse effect can also be seen in other contexts: the advancement of female pupils unrelated to their academic achievement and due to a personal preference by their teacher. Their grades may be good, but their self-esteem is being damaged in the process. [xxii]

In a similar fashion, universities undermine women's feelings of self-worth and confidence in their abilities. This is due to the premiums the institutions receive that are proportionally bound to the number of their female students, PhD candidates and professors. This causes self-doubt, which burden the women in their professional lives. 'What am I worth? Do I meet the requirements or am I being aided out of pity, because there is no confidence in my abilities?' Paternalistic forms of advancement counteract the intention to prepare women for the labour market and to convey experience onto younger women. This is stripping them of the opportunity to gain extra functional abilities. As token women are freed from the requirements altogether, they cannot pass these abilities on - neither within a company, at a university, within the family or any other social institution.

## **QUOTA POLITICS AND GENDER ARRANGEMENT**

Quota politics discriminates against everyone who is highly motivated. It violates against the principles of a meritocracy and undermines an essential source of self-assurance of both men and women. Secondly, it influences the way men and women encounter each other in their daily lives. Quota-women do experience an increase in status, but the downside is secret abashment. After all, they are aware that they have circumvented the principle of achievement. Humiliation is not only felt in relation to male achievers but also toward women who successfully followed the path of accomplishment. The omnipresence of the quota in public dialogue, as much as within the companies, subjects accomplished women especially to the lingering doubt of being part of the quota arrangement. This way, traditional notions are being revived according to which women's actual area of life is at home and at the stove, after all. This doubt is one of the consequences of the quota and hitherto not considered. That is, how women are viewed

reductively anew despite their accomplished successes. Likewise, the preference allocated by quota is mingled with the dark habit of entertaining a sexual relationship with a superior, as this can be profitable. Thereby moving the old model of 'sex in exchange for ascent' into proximity of the in-company quota woman. Occasionally, the mentor system in companies and universities are hiding a hybrid form of the old sex-related promotion practices. This is degrading for accomplished women. It insinuates that they are achieving something in exchange of sexuality, which they cannot through effort.

Within the Anglo-Saxon sociology, the researcher Catherin Hakim appealed to women to use their 'erotic capital' in order to push their careers. [xxiii] The competitive advantage resulted mainly from the fact that female sexual desire was less pronounced than that of men. The larger libido of men ('They only want one thing!') is said to be for women an inexhaustible resource of a perpetually renewing erotic capital, calling for utilisation by all women. The personal commercialisation of the women's erotic capital is nothing new. Yet it was not openly discussed in the past. And to offer it in exchange for promotion was considered as undignified. Beauty, however, was recognised as an aesthetic allure. It facilitated privately and professionally the upward mobility (sometimes through marriage). [xxiv] However, the premium on women's beauty (which is still offered by men today and which can be increased by women through a less developed sexual desire) [xxv] ought to be optimised through the target-oriented application of this erotic capital, according to Hakim.[xxvi] She recommends, admittedly, to change the order of things: first the promotion, then the sex!

## **THE QUOTA'S NEO-CONSERVATIVE CORE**

At the core of the momentous problem with women quotas lies the anachronistic notion of the nature of women. Simultaneously, an equally strong view of men is being revived. Women, as much as men, could feel reinforced to resuscitate their old life arrangements and consider these as the only true way. In accordance with this, women do need a supporting man and if he is useless, then the providing state has to intervene. That alters the life-style. It is just the same with a tyre change: all women are able to do it, yet there are so many obliging men along the roadside, impeding women to apply their abilities. And many women simply cannot pass on this offered

assistance. The resurgence of this increasingly inconsistent arrangement of relationships is revealing a considerable willingness to return to the traditional. Yet this stands in the way of both the men and women's ability to flexibly shape their own life-styles. As long as the men's purpose in life is fixed to having to bear the main responsibility in providing for the woman and children, then they will not be able to free themselves from that role and cannot increase the participation in the family life. More and more they are pushed into the position inhabited by women before they entered the workforce in large numbers: 'Do it all in order to have it all.' [xxvii]

The former courtesy of men toward women, however, is a ritual irrelevance. That is to say, men's support for the quota - occasionally coined as the Kimmel-Sattelberger-Syndrome - signals the transitions from ritual protection to patronising assistance. Perhaps this is why many men remain silent about the disadvantages that arise for them. Women, who are supporters of the measures, correspondingly embody the old-fashioned expectation to be spared of the hardships of professional life. Without having to renounce any of its advantages. They want to have that shiny success without being exposed to the dull efforts of career advancement.

The insistence on this kind of politics is an expression of a generational problem, still linked melancholically to the old. This ambivalence is reigning over women, who do stand their ground in the non-domestic world, but who simultaneously want to hang on to the family's protection within their professional routine. The fact that rather traditional men among this generation are supporting the quota demonstrates the awkwardness that has settled into men's complimentary roles.

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- xxv According to Hakim's hypothesis, women's economic advantage lies in not perceiving abstinence from sexuality as a loss. They allow for sex that they do not actually want or which they could easily do without. Thereby they are turning access to their bodies into capital.
- xxvi Some radical feminists have put forward the hypothesis that marriage with a classical role division between men as breadwinners and women as mothers and wives, was simply a form of thinly disguised prostitution. With a touch of sarcasm we can understand Hakim's appeal to women to use their erotic capital as a transformation from an indecent activity (as it was formerly regarded) into a pro-capitalist and diversity conform normality.
- xxvii See Aumann, K. and others (2011), *The New Male Mystique*. New York: Families and Work Institute.

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