

## Precarity in the Brussels-Capital Region: The Issues at Stake for Public Policy in Response to the Precarization of Single-parent Families in Brussels

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### Abstract

The process of precarization is analysed in different manners in most literature concerning contemporary stakes of western welfare states. In comparison to other countries, Belgium has known a rather specific and delimited effect of the economic crisis from 2008, but certain groups face rather an ongoing effect of precarization on multiple and intertwined aspects. The aim of the article is to analyse the situation of precarity of single-parent families in the *Brussels-Capital Region*. The attention to that group is related to its higher risk of precarity and poverty. Furthermore it allows analysing the limits of public policies in the fight against poverty and precarity, that are clearly inadequate.

Various options in terms of public policies and legal measures in the fight against poverty are discussed from three different angles of perspective: socioeconomic positions, social integration and the subjective experience (Dubet 1994). The tension between recognition and redistribution measures is central (Fraser 2011) in the argumentation for a balanced vision of policy measures to address single-parent poverty.

### Key words

Single-parent families; precarization; social injustice; subjective experience; social welfare state

### Resumen

La literatura científica sobre las apuestas contemporáneas de los estados de bienestar occidentales analiza de forma diferente el proceso de precarización. En comparación con otros países, Bélgica ha vivido desde 2008 un efecto de la crisis económica bastante específico y delimitado. Sin embargo, algunos grupos se enfrentan a un proceso de precarización continuo en numerosos aspectos, interrelacionados entre sí. El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la situación de precariedad de las familias monoparentales de la región de Bruselas capital. La atención a ese grupo está relacionada con su mayor riesgo de precariedad y

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pobreza. Además, permite analizar los límites de las políticas públicas en la lucha contra la pobreza y la precariedad, que son claramente insuficientes.

Se analizan desde tres puntos de vista diversas opciones en términos de políticas públicas y medidas legales en la lucha contra la pobreza: las posiciones socioeconómicas, la integración social y la experiencia subjetiva (Dubet 1994). La argumentación de una visión equilibrada de las medidas políticas para hacer frente a la pobreza de las familias con un solo progenitor se basa en la tensión entre el reconocimiento y la redistribución de las medidas (Fraser 2011).

**Palabras clave**

Familias monoparentales; precarización; injusticia social; experiencia subjetiva; estado de bienestar social

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## 1. Introduction

Precarization is to be understood as a complex process that encompasses not only socioeconomic aspects (Castel 1996), but also concerns housing (Marpsat 2008) and the way one constructs various sociability networks (Fol 2010, Pannecoucke and Wagener 2013). These different aspects intersect and can be mutually reinforcing (Van Regenmortel 2002). In this article we will study the process of precarization in the Brussels-Capital Region, first in a general manner and then by focusing on precarity among single-parent families.

In order to have a better idea of whether we can speak in general terms of precarization in the Brussels region we will analyse a longitudinal sample that followed the socio-professional situations of 60,000 residents from 2003 to 2010. As the hypothesis of an overall impact cannot be verified, we shall focus on the group that presently experiences the greatest risk of poverty: single-parent families (Fondation Roi Baudouin 2014). The attention to that group is not only because its higher risk of precarity and poverty, but mainly because it allows us to analyse the limits of public policies against poverty and precarity that are clearly inadequate.

The second part of this article will discuss various options in terms of public policies and legal measures in the fight against poverty from a perspective that looks at the social experience from three different angles: socioeconomic positions, social integration and then the subjective experience (Dubet 1994). The tension between recognition and redistribution measures will be central (Fraser 2011) in order to argument a balanced vision of policy measures to address single-parent poverty.

## 2. Recent tendencies in precarization in Belgium

The economic crisis of 2008 coincided with a period of crisis in the Belgian Federal government, which operated from June 2007 to March 2008 on a 'day-to-day matters'<sup>1</sup> basis. Contrary to other European governments, in the beginning no specific action was taken to counter the effects of the crisis. In addition to the bank crisis, the industrial sectors, and especially car production, were the most affected in Belgium.

Jan Vranken compares the different effects of the crisis in Belgium through a multi-level approach based on different researches in the federal yearbook on Poverty in Belgium (Vranken 2013, p. 38ff). Although it remains difficult to see the direct influence of the crisis on precarization, the author does retain different domains in which precarization is on the rise based on multiple indicators: *'The impact of this economic crisis on poverty becomes visible if we use a multiple poverty indicator that represents data on work, housing, education and health'* (Vranken 2013, p. 40). Over the long-term inequalities in income rose between 1990 and 2009 (Rademaekers and Vuchelen 1999, Vranken 2013). Other serious indicators refer to low-wage jobs, debt, health problems and the non-take-up of certain health issues. Concerning risk-groups the specific vulnerability of single-parent families can be highlighted: the average risk of poverty, 15% in Belgium, is double for single-parent families (Vranken 2013). More generally, Vranken argues that we are now facing a more structural process of precarization for different vulnerable groups in various areas.

One of the important domains regarding poverty remains the socio-economic position. The discussion that follows is based on a dataset obtained by the *Data warehouse* 'labour market and social protection' of the Crossroads Bank for social security (CBSS). These data are pooled through several sources of administrative data, social security institutions and the national register. From the CBSS we obtained individual, longitudinal and anonymized data with a sample size of 60,000

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<sup>1</sup> In Belgium, a government *'en affaires courantes'* - 'in day-to-day matters' designates the restricted competences of the former members of a government that lost the majority or that assumes the transition between two governments through an election period.

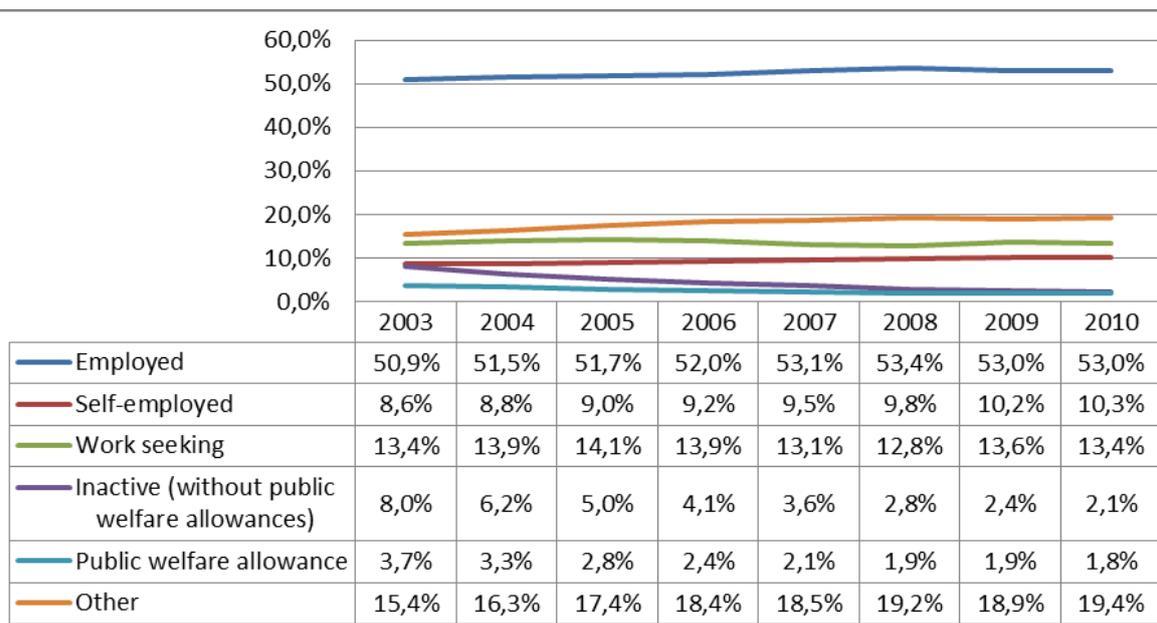
people aged from 18 to 55 years old in the Brussels-Capital Region, from 2003 to 2010. The data present socio-economic positions, income, family situations, and also the neighbourhood of residence (or possible emigration) per year.

The data of the 'Generations and Gender' programme of the EEC-UN (GGP) (Vikat *et al.* 2007) is also used to complete the statistical description. The GGP survey, conducted from 2008 to 2010 with over 7,000 people living in Belgium between the ages of 18 and 79, help us establish estimates for Belgium in relation to differences for three household formations: single-parent families, 'typical' two-parent families and reconstituted families.

Before we begin the analysis it is necessary to situate the specific situation of the Brussels-Capital Region. Based on EU-Silc data from 2012, the average poverty risk, measured at a level of 60% of the median income of Belgium, is 15% (Observatoire de la santé et du social de Bruxelles-capitale 2014). In Brussels 32.5% of the population are at risk. The other regions have a significantly lower rate (10.9 % for Flanders and 16.8% for Wallonia). Even if the proportion of people at poverty risk is relatively high in Brussels, other research has shown that the poverty levels in Brussels are relatively median compared to other big cities in Belgium (Francq and Wagener 2012). We should bear in mind that the Brussels-Capital Region is entirely urbanised while the two other regions are mostly rural and semi-urban.

The first figure shows the evolution of different socio-economic positions in the Brussels-Capital Region over eight consecutive years.

Figure 1: Overall evolution of socio-professional status in Brussels Capital Region between 2003 -2010 (sample follow-up)



Source: *BCSS-Datawarehouse*, Request for data, Data 2003-2010 (31.12.); N= 60.000; own calculations.

Nearly half of the persons in the sample are employed (part- or fulltime) and we can also see a slight evolution over the eight years. The number rises slowly until 2008, and then remains stable over the next two years. Between 8.6% and 10.3 % of the individuals are self-employed, the proportion rises slightly over the years.

The proportion of persons who are unemployed is the same in 2003 as in 2010, with a slight variation in the 8 years. The proportion of persons who are inactive (with or without public welfare allowances) is steadily diminishing.

The category "other" remains particularly problematic as this includes people who do not have an official status in various work and welfare related administrative sources in Belgium. These are primarily persons who are either studying, living with a partner without a socio-economic status or their own or else working with an international status.<sup>2</sup>

Note that these data were obtained through the follow up of a random sample of 60,000 people over 8 years<sup>3</sup>. For this population we observe a slight improvement of the socio-economic position. Even if the Brussels-Capital Region saw an increase between 2004 and 2012 (from 27% to 33.7%), the data do not show a particular impact of the economic crisis in 2008 (SPP Intégration sociale 2015).

The Brussels-Capital Region has a very high percentage of single-parent families. The following table shows that one third of all families with children are headed by a single-parent in the Brussels region, most often single mothers (86.6%).

Table 1: Proportion of single-parent families among households with children and by region in 2009

	Brussels-Capital region		Walloon Region		Flemish Region		Belgium	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Single-parent families</b>	56762	33,0	183364	30,0	211393	20,5	451519	24,9
<i>Proportion of women</i>	49183	86,6	153149	83,5	170128	80,5	372460	82,5
<b>Cohabiting perents</b>	115052	67,0	428648	70,0	820855	79,5	1364555	75,1
<b>Housholds with children</b>	171814	100,0	612012	100,0	1032248	100	1816074	100,0

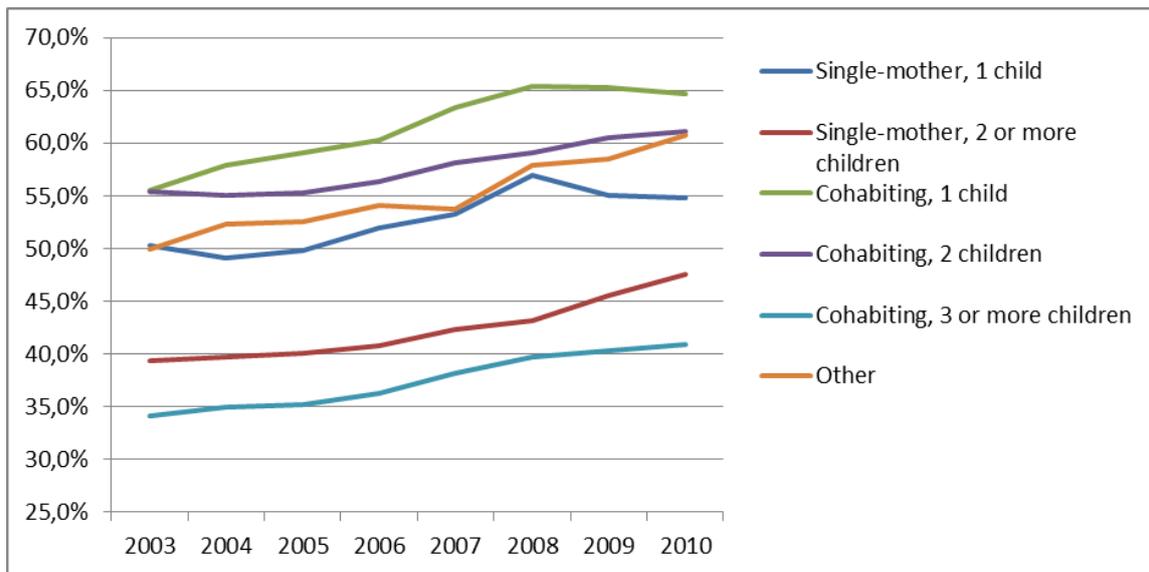
Source: BCSS-Data warehouse, Appl. 11, 2009 data (31.12.); own calculations.

In the following we take into account the evolution of employed women living in different household types.

<sup>2</sup> Officials from many European or international institutions are registered as residents in Brussels, but they do not pay taxes in Belgium and they are not recorded in labour statistics.

<sup>3</sup> That means that the sample is not open for young people who enter in these age categories. Other research has shown that young people in the Brussels-capital Region have particular difficulties to access the labour market (Observatoire de la santé et du social de Bruxelles-capitale 2012).

Figure 2: Evolution of the proportion of employed women per family status in Brussels-Capital Region between 2003–2010 (sample follow-up)



Source: *BCSS-Datawarehouse*, Request for data, Data 2003-2010 (31.12.); N= 27.648; own calculations.

First, there is an overall positive evolution in the rate of employed women in Brussels-Capital Region during 2003 and 2010. However, we can also see that after a peak of 56.9% of employed single mothers, the ratio dropped in 2009 and 2010 to 54.8%.

Similar to the rise in the categories of employed persons, we can also find a decrease in the percentages of people receiving employment or public welfare allowances. The same positive tendency regarding the diminution of work-seeking women can also be found regarding women who receive social allowances.

Accordingly, based on a random data set of 60.000 people of the Brussels-Capital Region aged between 18 and 55 in 2003 which were followed over 8 consecutive years, we have seen that there is an overall improvement in the socio-economic status. Even if we also see an improvement in the situation of single mothers, they have only had a slight impact on the employment rate between 2008 and 2010. We cannot speak about a strong impact of the socio-economic crisis in 2008. In the following section we will argue the existence of precarity among single mothers in different dimensions.

### 3. Precarity among single mothers

The frequency of situations of poverty among single-parent families (almost a third of these families have an increased risk of poverty) (Casman *et al.* 2006, Fondation Roi Baudouin 2014) resides in the existence of a vast social space of vulnerability located at the intersection of three dimensions: parental, economic and spatial (Séchet *et al.* 2003, Milewski 2005, Leray 2010). A specific moment in single-parent trajectories is when the couple separates, and the mostly pre-existing situations of inequality and precarity are revealed in all their harshness (David *et al.* 2004, Casman *et al.* 2006, Wagener 20134).

The table 2 presents the different socio-economic situations for single and cohabitating families based on the number of children in the Brussels-Capital Region. The position "inactive" incorporates people with a work-incapacity allowance or pension. This status also brings together different other positions that we cannot generalize.

Table 2: The distribution of socioeconomic position according to household status in 2009

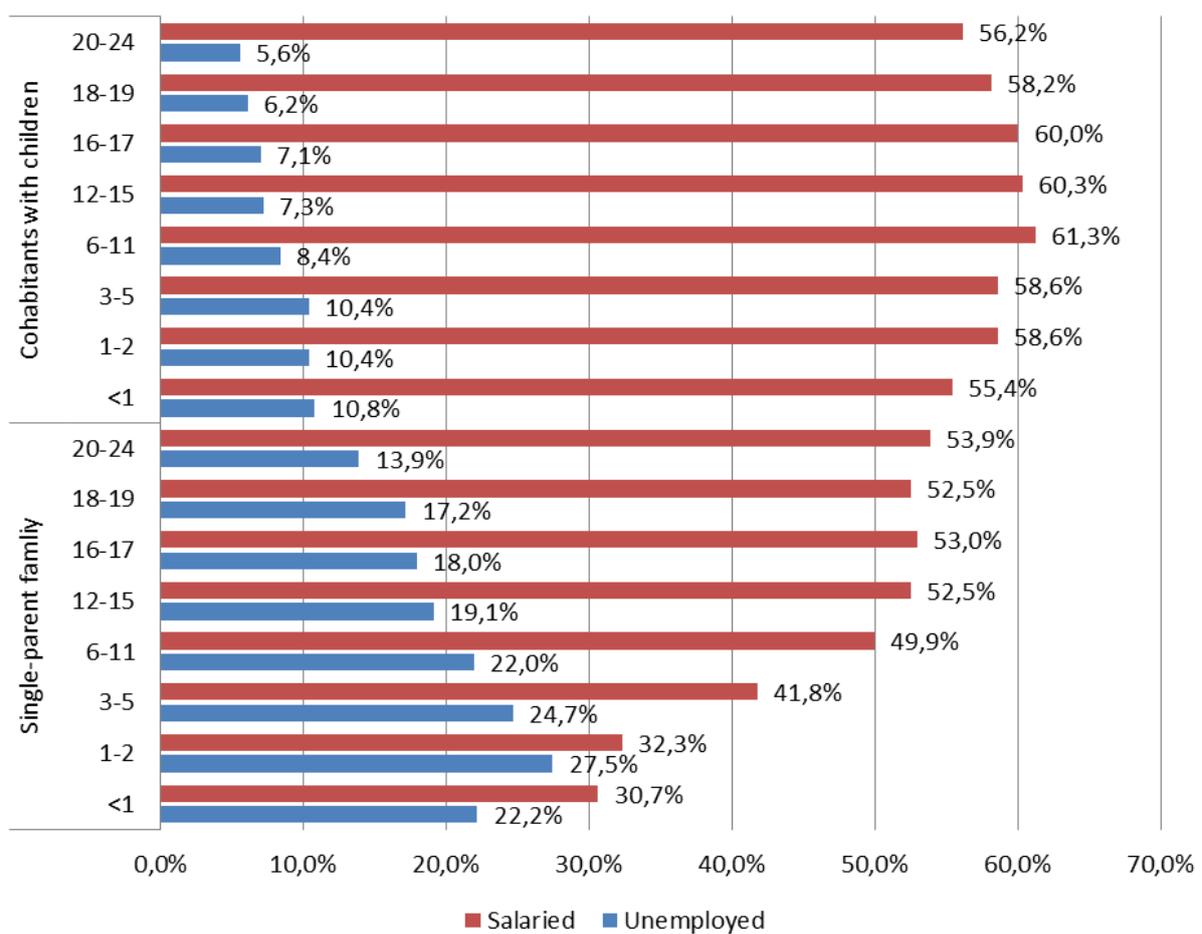
		Employed	Self-employed	Unemployed	Inactive	Public welfare allowance	Other	Total
<b>Single-parent family</b>								
1 child	N	12079	1966	5086	6178	2593	4916	32818
	%	36.8%	6.0%	15.5%	18.8%	7.9%	15.0%	100.0%
2 children or more	N	9215	1335	5110	1906	2772	3606	23944
	%	38.5%	5.6%	21.3%	8.0%	11.6%	15.1%	100.0%
<b>Cohabitants with children</b>								
1 child	N	40156	9656	6678	8171	1306	22757	88724
	%	45.3%	10.9%	7.5%	9.2%	1.5%	25.6%	100.0%
2 children	N	39414	10493	6545	3113	956	21472	81993
	%	48.1%	12.8%	8.0%	3.8%	1.2%	26.2%	100.0%
3 children or more	N	23213	6165	7092	2704	889	19324	59387
	%	39.1%	10.4%	11.9%	4.6%	1.5%	32.5%	100.0%
<b>Total</b>	N	124077	29615	30511	22072	8516	72075	286866
	%	43.3%	10.3%	10.6%	7.7%	3.0%	25.1%	100.0%

Source: BCSS-Data warehouse, Appl. 11, 2009 data (31.12.); own calculations.

The labour market situation of parents (and especially) women is strongly related to the household situation and the age of the children. Compared to cohabitants with one child, we can see that in over twice the cases single-parent families with one child are unemployed or inactive and they are four times more likely to be receiving public welfare allowances.

As we can see in figure 3, single mothers with younger children have a higher risk of being unemployed.

Figure 3: Activity and unemployment rate of parent per age category of their youngest child and household type in the Brussels-Capital Region in 2009

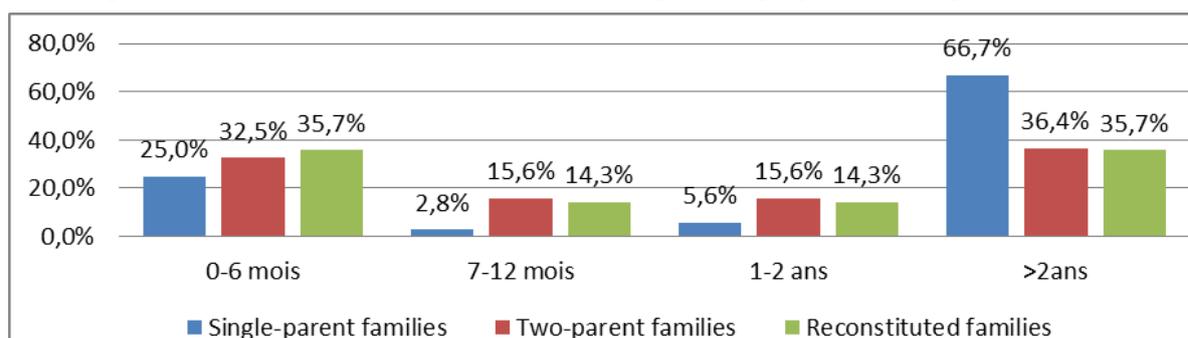


Source: BCSS-Data warehouse, Appl. 11, data 2009 (31.12.); own calculations.

We can see a strong effect of family type and the age of the youngest child regarding the labour-market situation of parents (and especially women). With a slight exception for single-parent families with the youngest child under one year of age, we can see for the other age categories that the unemployment rate falls and the activity rate rises with the age of the youngest child. The same effect can be found for cohabitants, although they have an overall better situation.

Especially as concerns long-time unemployment status, we can see the particularly insecure situations of single-parent families in Belgium (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Duration of unemployment by family type in Belgium (%)



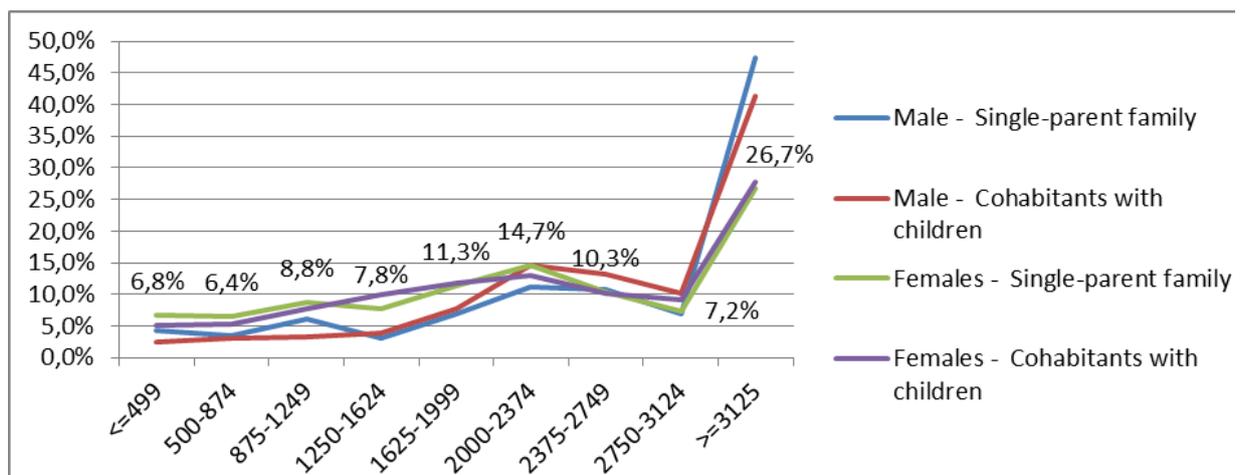
Source: GGP-UNECE, Wave 1, N=127, p<0,07; own calculations.

In Belgium among single parents who are job seekers almost two thirds have been unemployed for over two years. They are also in a position of short- or long-term unemployment, but are only slightly represented among the medium categories. Typical two-parent or reconstituted families show proportions that are quite similar.

As regards the social integration allowance we note an important age effect (not represented here). This mainly concerns families headed by the youngest single parents who apply to the public social welfare services. This observation is linked to a broader question of the transition to adulthood and the difficulties finding qualification training and work. And this leads to even broader questions of how to take into account the range of factors involved in precarity faced by the youngest people in Brussels (Observatoire de la santé et du social de Bruxelles-capitale 2012). In addition to this more specific difficulty for the youngest single-parent families we also see that the age of the children also play a role. It is the youngest women with the youngest children who most often apply to the public social welfare services for a minimum welfare allowance (Castel 2009). The chance that parents will need to resort to the public welfare diminishes as the youngest child grows older and increases with the number of children in the household (not represented here). The effect shows the same parallels for both women and men, even if the latter are less affected.

The figure 5 shows the distribution of gross monthly income for people employed in 2010.

Figure 5: Distribution of gross monthly income for employees, by gender and family type, in Brussels in 2010 (%)



Source: BCSS-Data warehouse, Request for data, Data 2003-2010 (31.12.); N= 15944,  $p < 0.000$ ; own calculations.

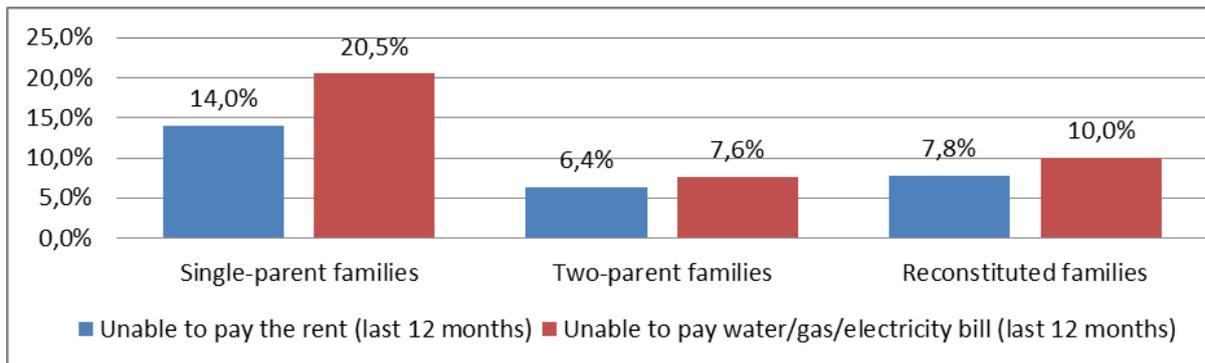
To avoid overfilling the table we have indicated the gross income of single mothers in percentages. The highest percentages are found among the most modest incomes, and the lowest among the high incomes. As in the above table, the curve for single mothers closely follows the same tendency as the curve for two-parent mothers. On the average the men have higher incomes. More precisely, we see that 13.2% of single mothers have salaries under €875 gross/month (and 22% below 1.250€)<sup>4</sup>. As these women are the sole wage earners in these families one may wonder how they manage to reach the end of the month without additional income. Unfortunately, this is something that our statistics cannot verify. If we can hypothesize that in a two-parent family other sources of income (partially) complete low salaries, in the case of a single-parent we find the uncertainty cited

<sup>4</sup> Note that this amount is still far below the at poverty risk level of 1605€ net income. 30% of single-parent families are below this level. (Observatoire de la santé et du social de Bruxelles-capitale 2014).

by Castel (2009). In other words, the low wages earned on a job do not enable one to live in dignity in today's society.

The differences in income are also confirmed when it comes to the ability to set money aside at the end of the month. The single-parent families (both fathers and mothers) have significantly less a possibility of savings (35.1% and 33.2%). This proportion is higher both for recomposed and 'typical' two-parent families. The presence of two parents thus enables a household to set money aside, the single income of the head of family is not enough to build up savings.

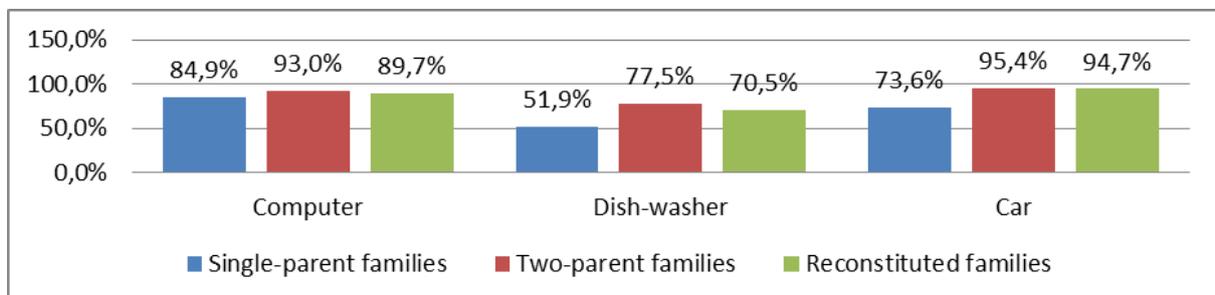
Figure 6: Problems paying for housing by family type in Belgium (%)



Source: GGP-UNECE, Wave 1, Rent: N=1279,  $p < 0.001$ ; Gaz N= 2828,  $p < 0.000$ ; own calculations.

14% of single-parent families were unable to pay their rent at least once over 12 months (Figure 6). This corresponds to 6.4% for typical two-parent families and 7.8% for reconstituted families. The situation is comparable and even more serious for problems paying the water, electricity or gas bill.

Figure 7: Household goods in Belgium, by family type and gender (%)

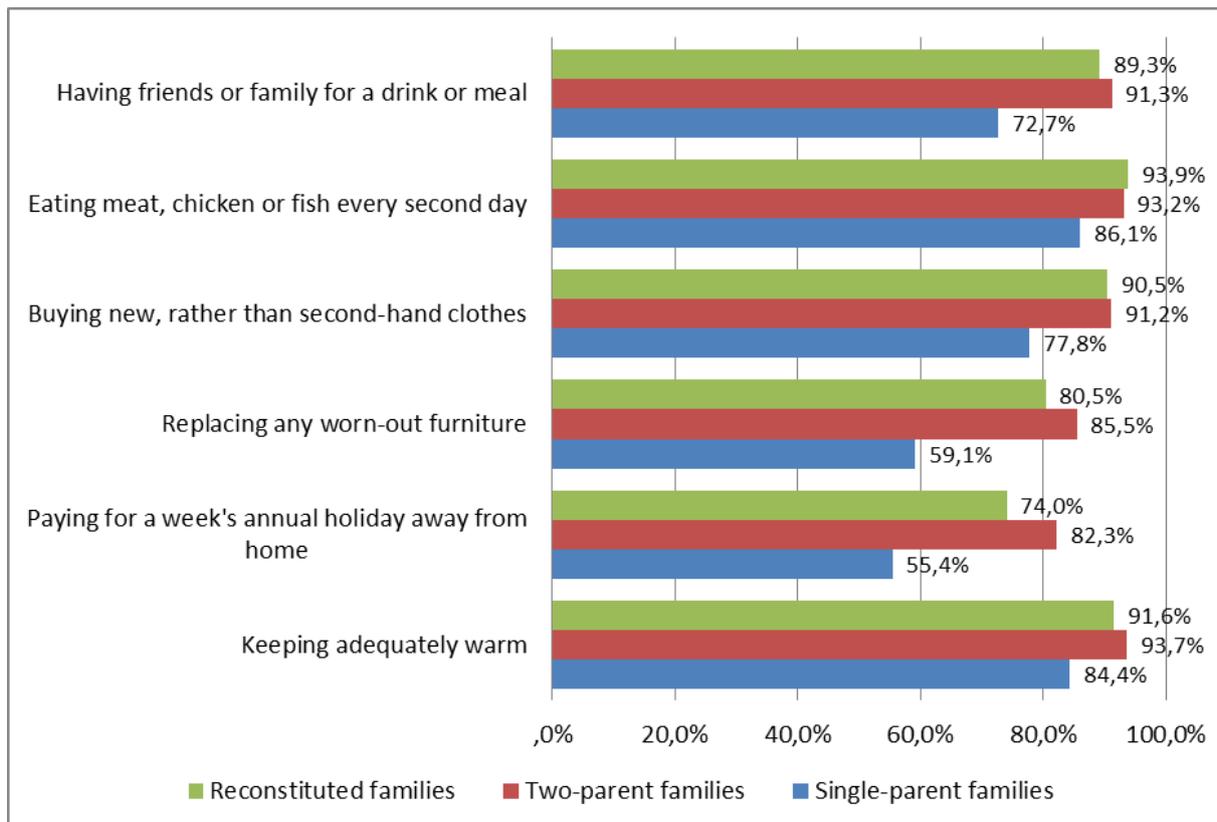


Source: GGP-UNECE, Wave 1, N=2850,  $p < 0,000$ ; own calculations.

Consumer goods (Figure 7) are distributed unequally depending on the family formation (but less according to gender). 84.9% of single-parent families are able to purchase a computer compared to 93% for typical two-parent families. Single-parent families also have less access to dishwashers or cars.

Other indicators helping to envisage household conditions also bring out the disadvantages faced by single-parent families are shown below:

Figure 8: Living conditions of households in Belgium, by family type, according to several indicators (%)

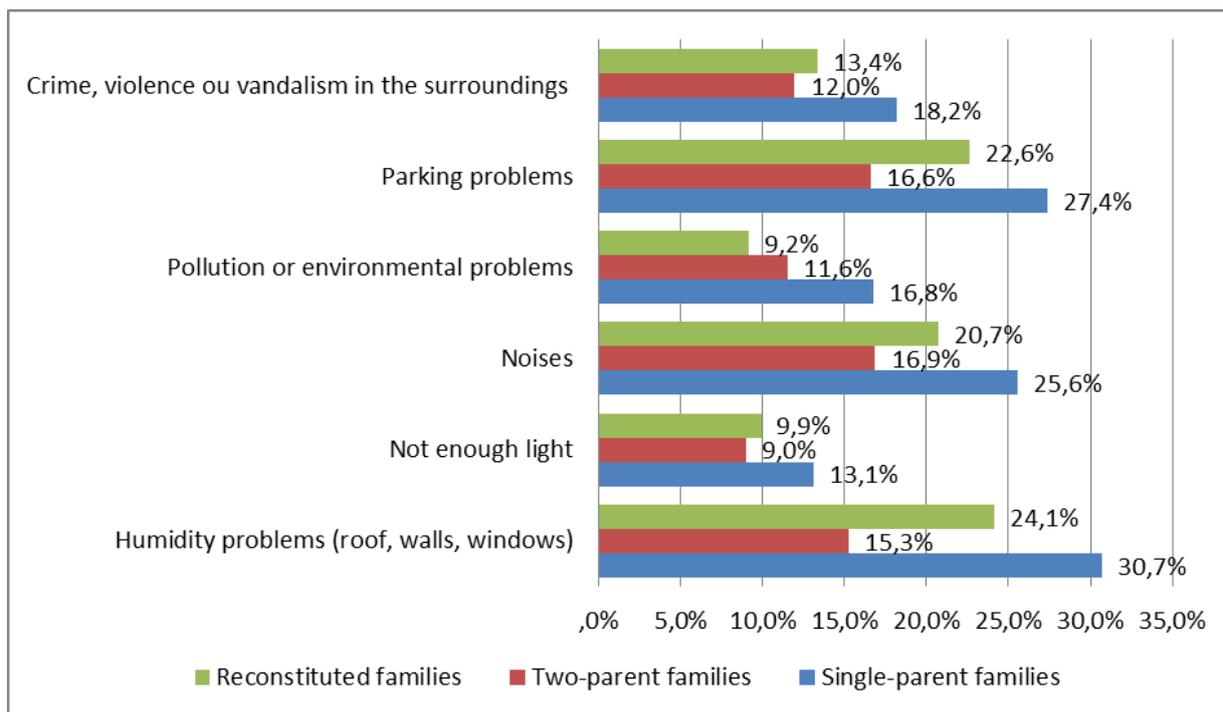


Source: *GGP-UNECE*, Wave 1, N=2831,  $p < 0,000$ ; own calculations.

Figure 8 gives an overview of a more pronounced precarity of single-parent families regarding to various indicators approaching poverty in living condition. To summarize rental situations, single-parent families are more often tenants in apartments located in urban areas. Nicolas Bernard discusses several problems (Bernard 2007): it is known that single mothers who rent pay twice as much for their housing as those who own their property. In Brussels, mothers alone with children often live in small accommodations (1.7 room/housing unit on average, and particularly high percentages of housing under 55m<sup>2</sup>), lower quality (unhealthy, including problems in renovating). They are also proportionally more costly than average (rent, charges, loan repayments representing a larger part of the budget). Housing is thus more poorly heated, smaller, offering less privacy, with more environmental problems (noise, pollution, vandalism, crime) and are not as well equipped.

These observations are confirmed in the data of the 'Generations and Gender' programme.

Figure 9: Observed problems related to accommodation in Belgium, by family type (%)

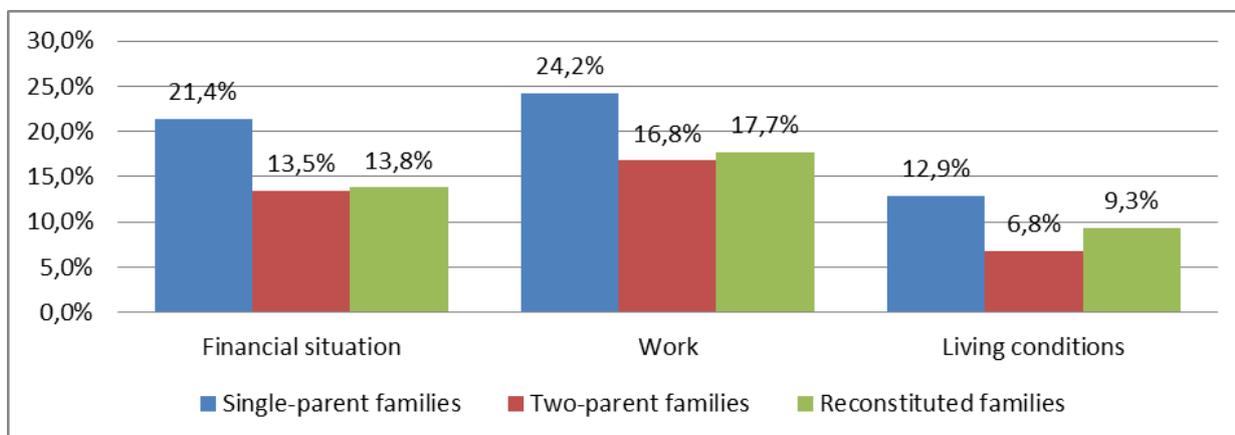


Source: GGP-UNECE, Wave 1, N=2853, p<0.000; own calculations.

Single-parent families display higher rates in all indicators that verify problems linked to accommodations or their environment (Figure 9). Almost a third of these families live in accommodations with humidity problems. The housing is more often dark, noisy, often located in zones with environmental or parking problems, or in neighbourhoods with a high incidence of crime, vandalism or violence. Reconstituted families hold a middle position (except for environmental problems) between single-parent and typical two-parent families.

The next table summarises the main difficulties over which people feel they have no control.

Figure 10: Proportion of persons in Belgium who feel they have very little or no control over their living situation, by family type and gender (%)



Source: GGP-UNECE, Wave 1, N=2830, p<0.001; own calculations.

Whether it is a question of the financial situation, or related to work or living conditions, single-parent families more frequently find themselves in situations where they feel they have no (or very little) control (Figure 10).

A recent conference on women and poverty summarized the situation quite well:

A study made by the Walloon CPAS [public social welfare services] effectively showed that the poorest man in Wallonia is a woman who has bears all the stigmas of poverty: she is unemployed, is a single parent, she has few qualifications, can count on a scarce or no social network, she is not in good health and her housing is in a bad condition (FPS 2010).

As confirmed by the study made by the national office for family allowances for employees (ONAFTS 2008), the frequency of poverty situations among single-parent families stems from a vast social realm of vulnerability situated at the intersection between three dimensions: family, economy and spatial. Social precarity, economic insecurity and poverty in living conditions form a system, posing a risk of mutual aggravation of the different facets and a cumulative destabilisation (Séchet *et al.* 2003).

#### 4. Major issues at stake in Belgian public policy

In order to address the quite telling observations on precarity among families, especially single mothers (Wagener 2013), in the following paragraphs we shall outline the more collective challenges. This relates to the way that public policies induce different experiences of active citizenship and on how to become a subject-actor (Touraine 2007). The following analysis should be considered as pointing to new ways to view the issues involved in public policies on families, and more specifically single mothers.

Major historical changes occurred during the time of the passage from early to advanced modernity and the 'new social question' (Castel 1996) and the passage from the welfare state to the active welfare state (Beck 2007). Although it is too long to repeat these analyses here, they shall form a basis to have a better understanding of the issues presently confronting public policies. In order to better articulate the experience of injustice with public policies in the area of single parenting, we shall refer more particularly to the work of Nancy Fraser, François Dubet and Richard Sennett.

The exchange between Fraser and Honneth on the principles linked to social justice revealed a difference in approach between redistribution and recognition. Although we cannot approach all the fine points of the discussion, we can summarise the main lines of thought. The premise shared by both authors is that '*adequate understanding of justice must encompass at least two sets of concerns: those cast in the Fordist era as struggles over distribution and those often cast today as struggles for recognition*' (Fraser and Honneth 2003, p. 2). The authors also underline that a simple view where inequalities are reduced to mere economics is insufficient to understand today's forms of inequality. While the centre of Honneth's epistemology is the struggle for recognition by different social groups (with redistribution being a derivative), Fraser doubts that struggles linked to redistribution can be subsumed under the broader category of recognition. She prefers a 'perspectival dualist' analysis that gives an irreducible part to each notion in order to understand social justice:

Unlike the identity model, then, the status model understands social justice as encompassing two analytically distinct dimensions: a dimension of recognition, which concerns the effects of institutionalized meanings and norms on the relative standing of social actors; and a dimension of distribution, which involves the allocation of disposable resources to social actors (Fraser 2011, p. 82).

The differences between recognition and redistribution are separated in order to understand analytically two concepts of injustice. The redistribution, as discussed

above through different variables, especially access to the labour market, a living wage and more broadly as social welfare, is a remedy for economic injustice. Recognition is suggested as the remedy that promotes cultural and symbolic change in favour of equality. Between these two remedies there can be an ambivalence or a dilemma, as Fraser states: '*People who are subject to both cultural injustice and economic injustice need both recognition and redistribution. They need both to claim and to deny their specificity*' (Fraser 2011, p. 15).' In the case of single parenthood this dilemma relates to the difficulty to claim greater economic justice by denouncing insecure situations and at the same time reinforcing the category of 'single-parent family' as a family that is merely different from others.

While the theme of distribution was largely discussed in countless social theories and collective struggles during the Fordist period in relation to the Welfare State, the theme of recognition is assuming greater importance. Although the question of a balance between recognition and redefinition cannot be discussed here at length, on the basis of our empirical results (Wagener 2013) we can nonetheless state that the realm of social protection, in Castel's (2009) sense of the term, is a crucial base on which to build more autonomous trajectories and unite the societal conditions so that the 'subject - woman' (Touraine 2006) can emerge. In the face of the subjective experience of injustice in different social situations the notion of recognition (and that of scorn) become important.

The works of François Dubet approach justice not only as an objectifiable category (Dubet 2006), but also as one of the very principles of justice used by social actors when they discuss their social experience. Principles of justice, for Dubet, are not based on abstract values, more or less conveyed by a researcher's political stances, but arise from an analysis of the actors' arguments. At the same time, as objective inequalities become entrenched it is also 'likely that we are also increasingly sensitive to inequality and injustice. For example, while the situation of women has noticeably improved over the past fifty years - access to jobs, equal rights, control over maternity, access to education -, never have the inequalities between the sexes been as sharply denounced as today' (Dubet 2006, p. 11).

Because of a stronger attachment to the principles of equality individuals more readily perceive and cite instances of injustice. This does not mean that everyone shares the same principles of equality. Individuals mobilise those ideas of justice that engage their capacity for critical analysis.

Dubet approaches injustice from three main action logics which the individual must articulate in order to achieve a coherent social experience (Dubet 1994). Firstly, the principle of integration relates to the way an individual belongs to a community (which can be related to the concept of socialisation). Then the individual establishes strategic action on a 'market' (strategy). Then lastly, the principle of subjectivation takes into account the subject's critical activity in relation with society. Dubet uses these three principles to explain injustices in employment. The notion of integration thus refers to the principle of equality at work:

the equality at play is that of equal chances and opportunities. Social inequalities are not criticised as such, but because they form a set of economic and social obstacles that bar access to positions they can claim (Dubet 2006, p. 87).

The principle of strategy refers more broadly to the importance given to merit:

merit is a mathematical principle, one of equivalence between the cost of work and its remuneration. Once it is admitted that individuals are equal and free, merit is necessary as the only way to construct fair inequalities based on each person's contribution to collective wealth, especially on the way each person makes use of their liberty (Dubet 2006, p. 127).

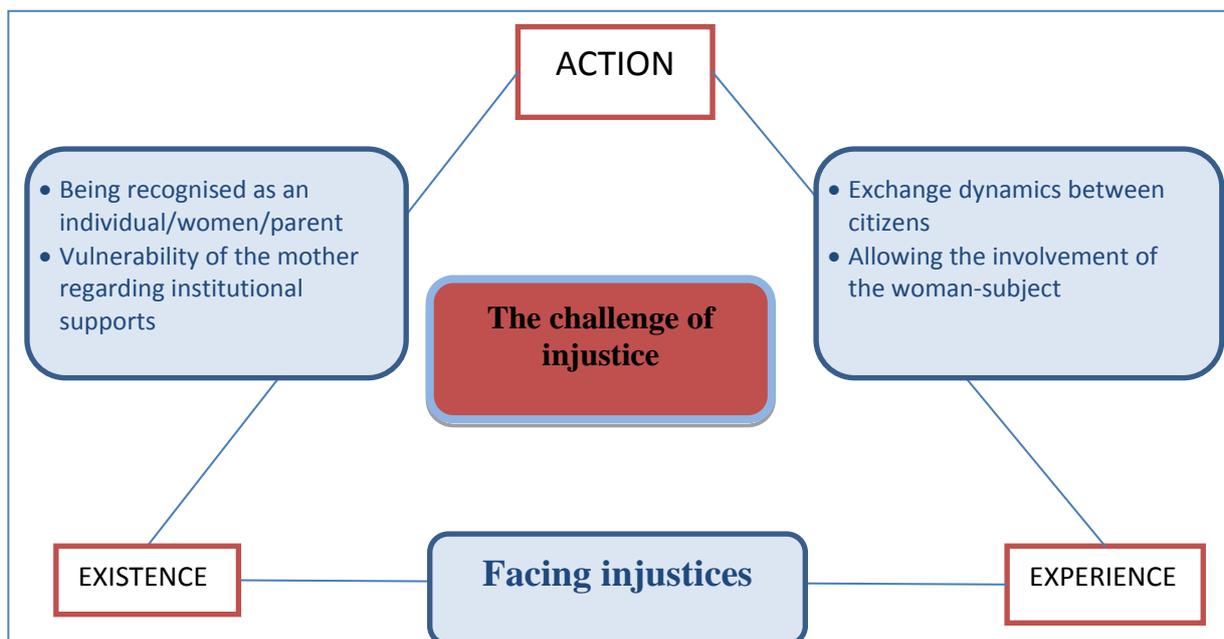
In other words, merit makes it possible to appreciate which inequalities are perceived as fair. This is the case, for example, when people state that it is fairer

for person who have better training or greater seniority at the workplace to be better paid. Injustice at work in terms of merit is rarely approached directly 'like all principles of justice, merit thus is seen less as a positive affirmation than as a set of criticisms towards all who prevent recognition: special treatment, pulling strings, favouritism, privileges' (Dubet 2006, p. 89). And lastly the principle of subjectivation refers to the way a subject perceives his/her autonomy at work, 'we speak here of subject, for the actor who formulates judgements is reduced neither to social position nor to interests; it is the representation of one's self-realization and creativity that underlie the feelings of justice or injustice' (Dubet 2006, p. 129).

According to Dubet, the arrival of the second-modernity and transformation of the welfare state profoundly altered concepts linked to social justice. Equality refers to the position that single mothers hold in society (integration); merit echoes their experience of the way they are treated in relation to their efforts (strategy) and then autonomy relates to ways that activities enable the individual to become a subject (subjectivation). It is now less a question of analyzing how women cope with experiences perceived as unjust, which we have mentioned elsewhere (Wagener 2013). Rather we shall link the experience of injustice with the issues at stake for public policies.

We place injustice at the centre of the experience as something that is a subjective and shared experience (Dubet 2006), a lack of respect (Sennett 2003) and an inequality in relation to redistribution and recognition (Fraser 2011). We shall first look at the outline of the experience before explaining the main tensions.

Figure 11: Schematic presentation of the space that defines the tensions of the experience of injustice in the single-parent situation



#### 4.1. Between existence and experience: coping with forms of injustice

In our thesis work we inventoried several areas where single parenthood and different social situations were perceived as unjust. The fact of being a woman, a single mother, left by her ex-companion, feeling abandoned (and occasionally tracked) by the State and its institutions, being constantly reminded of one's foreign origins, subject to harassment, frustrations or racism are thus all just different reminders of the importance of injustice as a subjective experience.

In order to establish public policies that can address single parenthood adequately, it is crucial to be clear as to what exactly is under discussion. Commaille's (2001)

works show that single parenthood is rife with contradictory injunctions in public policies: should one speak of women's rights or family policy? Must assistance be given to individuals (parents or children) or should the household itself be the target? Is it an employment policy to strengthen people's capacities or is it a family question? Martin and Millar well express the central opposition in the political approach to single parenthood:

Policies directed towards single-parent families raise another question: that of discrimination. In other words, should a specific policy be designed for these households, or should they be addressed in the framework of measures to fight poverty (at the risk of assimilating single parenthood with poverty), or even should one avoid all policies that target groups on the basis of family situation?' (Martin and Millar 2004, p. 40).

As concerns the Belgian situation, in view of the history of our social and family policies we do not think a clear and simple answer can be given. To begin with, single parenthood is not a uniform category and secondly almost all public policy sectors are concerned, be it social, family, fiscal, educational, transport, mobility, housing, and so on (Lemaigre and Wagener 2013).

There are different ways to address the challenges of single parenthood and not all women end up in precarity. Often looking at the woman's social and socio-professional situation and educational level before the couple was even formed (Barrère-Maurisson *et al.* 1984) or at the way the couple shared household activities (Méda 2010) are good indicators of the means available to her to meet the challenges of single parenthood. This relates to a more general question of gender relations (Tahon 2004) (or gender inequalities) and how they intersect (Bilge 2009) with other social relations linked to class or migratory origin, and the importance they are given in the vision of life trajectories. As a general rule it is the accumulation of different types of insecurity and vulnerabilities faced primarily by women that explain the most precarious situations of many single-parent families. As these forms of precarity do not originate in the state of single parenthood, the public efforts to be bolstered are those that fight to different sources of the problem. Our results show that single mothers are best served by an approach that links *gender* – (Alexandre *et al.* 2008, p. 186) with *poverty mainstreaming*. In order to reinforce women's capacities to act in the face of the challenges of single parenthood, efforts are needed to attack the broader inequalities in education, access to the labour market, sexual division of work, access to housing, to culture, to health, to mobility, and to service structures, and so on. The list of different levels of inequality balances out less favourably for women, especially when the list is quite long in the case of single parenthood. Although we cannot discuss all the different problems here, we have indeed seen that an approach that cuts more through all the different public policy sectors is essential in order to integrate the other issues that we shall present below.

#### 4.2. *Between existence and action: ensuring active citizenship*

The research on single-parent families and political responses in Europe show that, aside from all the national diversities, there is more or less widespread agreement on the need for a response to the precarity of households: '*Social policies directed at single-parent households target an essential question: the fight against the risk of poverty, and even beyond, against the precarity or vulnerability that threatens them*' (Martin and Millar 2004, p. 40). Historically, two main tendencies are at work. First a will to fight poverty based on a family-centred policy through social allowances where mothers can raise their children whilst remaining at home (Eydoux and Letablier 2009). This type of 'maternal salary' is nonetheless highly criticised (Lewis 2009), for it traps women in a situation of dependency on allowances, turning them into second rank citizens. The other option encourages a greater involvement by society in child raising by promoting access to daycare and other centres whilst enabling women to remain on the job or fostering their

professional integration. In summary, the basic question according to Millar and Martin, lies in the alternative between minimum income offers and jobs:

Should women who are alone to raise one or several children receive state support so they can fill their role as carer, at the risk of a degree of dependence on the welfare state? Or should one endeavour to make them autonomous economically thanks to access to jobs and an adequate salary? (Martin and Millar 2004, p. 39).

Achieving autonomy and social protection through employment is the main objective retained, but through social policies that are situated between the two extremes:

they combine these objectives so that parents can find a response adapted to their specific situation - access to full-time salaried job, part-time supplemented by other forms of assistance, or else remaining outside the labour market (Martin and Millar 2004, p. 39).

In Belgium it is hard to truly speak of a specific policy towards single parenthood. These families are primarily covered by general social policies, occasionally with specific forms of assistance.<sup>5</sup> The evolution over the past two decades is to give more consideration to the specific difficulties of single-parent families, which has led to adaptations in different sectors of social, fiscal and family policies. However we cannot speak of a transversal and coherent policy. Among the different levels of power (federal, regional, linguistic community and township) with their specific competencies it is more a mosaic among different new policies that have been added to the old structures. Although single mothers are not targeted by policies globally, looking at different policies separately we can see that they are present in policies to fight poverty, or those addressing gender inequalities, in policies against discrimination (or for equal opportunities), in different social assistance programmes and in various initiatives to improve access to jobs or even in social action and continuing education. Single-parent families appear both as the 'poor' and as 'unemployed', or as 'beneficiaries of the Social Integration Revenue', 'victims of discrimination', 'women' and so on. Although their situations cannot be resumed by these adjectives, occasionally they are indirectly targeted by different sectoral policies with piecemeal competencies.

#### 4.2.1. Support to achieve a better balance among different spheres of activity

At the European level, the central model is 'welfare to work' (or workfare), in other words an activation towards or through work which is the most widely shared objective in order to improve the economic situation of women in the jobs market:

It is certainly a 'noble objective', and if 'salaried employment is almost the sole vector for social integration and acquisition of social rights' then 'without a massive investment in these policies to reconcile family and professional life, the [possibility] for single mothers to move into work in all probability is an lure, which would serve only the objective of imposing on women an obligation in return for obtaining a minimal protection (Martin and Millar 2004, p. 71).

The 'maternal salary' system does not exist as such as a specific policy and we have seen that the assistance provided by the social integration revenue is (still) a basic protection that is more or less guaranteed. As regards unemployment allowances, there is a risk of seeing another evolution in the coming years with the installation of a sliding scale and reinforced logics of activation. It is clear that for women who have been unemployed for a long time, this points to greater insecurity in their income along with activation schemes that show little understanding of their situations. The relative inaccessibility of daycare and other extracurricular facilities highly compromise plans for improved protection of trajectories through employment. In this area Belgium (or Brussels) is one of Europe's bad students:

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<sup>5</sup> On this subject we draw attention to the increase in family allowances, career interruption allowances and 'head of family' allowances in the framework of unemployment benefits.

In some countries, single mothers can find themselves in a very difficult position when they are incited (or ordered) to have a salaried job, yet without having the necessary services and support, nor the required salary level to assume these constraints (Martin and Millar 2004, p. 70).

In relation to the work-family articulation, single-parent families are fundamentally no different from families with two working parents. Even though single parents cannot count on the support of their partner, the institutional supports to cope with the work-family challenge are overall the same. The need to obtain them, however, is more important to enable a single-parent to stay on the job. We should also bear in mind that gender inequalities remain in efforts to find a better balance between work and family. It is often women who have shouldered an unequal share of parental and domestic tasks and have stopped working, who find themselves in the most vulnerable situations when seeking a job. From this point of view we can say that policies that are *parental-choice based* can certainly sometimes be a way for couples to articulate their lives, but in the case of a separation the situation turns directly against women (Hakim 2000). We know that single parenthood makes the job-family balance harder to achieve, not only because the people are alone, but also in relation to uncertain job situations or atypical work hours (Milewski 2005).

The issues at stake for public policies thus consist in both supporting families that are - temporarily - jobless, and fostering their return to the workforce with assistance that is respectful in Sennett's (2003) sense of the term.

The major problem of work-family articulation and inequalities between men and women nevertheless still lies in hosting facilities for children and adolescents (Meulders *et al.* 2010). Daycare not only enables someone to keep working, they also provide essential support in the daily and necessary steps required to look for a job:

Families need facilities where they can place their children when they need to visit an administration or are in the hospital. They must be able to count on care possibilities when they move or when they are summoned urgently to court. But the facilities for children are also useful when the parents do volunteer work, an important way of getting to know other people and acquiring skills. Placing children, lastly, is necessary when one is called urgently for a temporary job' (SLPPES 2001, p. 108-109).

Another difficulty arises from 'job traps' and low wages. These salaries often are not enough to cover the additional costs incurred by the new job (childcare<sup>6</sup>, transportation, food, etc.). At the same time taking the job causes the parent to lose certain social benefits and specific assistance available to welfare beneficiaries. It appears important to integrate the notion of 'working poor' or precarity in understanding of the job market and to guarantee certain social benefits for those with low wages.

Part-time work may be a possibility for entering the work market gradually. The mothers who remain available for a fulltime job can benefit from a guaranteed income to compensate partially the loss of income compared to unemployment allowances (Bogaerts 2010).

In the framework of activation policies, criteria such as 'being available on the job market' and 'decent job' are subject to discussion. Not finding daycare for one's children and not being able to pay for it are not criteria for exemption from the job search obligation, so single-parent families run the risk (and actually are) sanctioned more directly by criteria that fails to take into account both the

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<sup>6</sup> We should clarify that we did not have information in our methodology about how the possibility to deduct day care costs from taxable income can be a factor for redistribution. Lone mothers who spoke to us were pleased with the measure but this is not enough to allow a detailed discussion. The authors of '*Familles plurielles*' (national conference on family policy) point out that for low-income households it would be advisable to provide direct assistance rather than aim for equality through fiscal systems (Casman *et al.* 2007).

availability of jobs near home and the lack of child care. We have already pointed out on several occasions that half the persons sanctioned in Wallonia in 2010 were single mothers (Cherenti 2010). According to our sources the policy of exclusion based on this criteria is less strictly applied in Brussels, but we have no figures to prove this.

The limitations in all these approaches to improve access to jobs and, especially, the problem of single-parent families settling long-term into jobless precarious situations, lead us to partially question this will to not 'target' single-parent families. Several criteria for 'actively seeking employment' directly work against single-parent families. They are thus indirectly 'targeted' by measures that reinforce the tensions and the risk of temporary loss of the unemployment allowance. Policies that are 'falsely universalist', blind to gender relations and to differences in family types, often lead to de facto exclusion of single-parent families. Frankly speaking, activation policies are intended to convey and sustain a new image of the citizen who is 'proactive' in a world where the old certainties are becoming less and less certain. In the light of our results we see positive outcomes in terms of access to jobs, but we also more clearly see that the State does not invest enough in the necessary counterpart (Seynaeve *et al.* 2004), that is, the institutional supports that enable someone to return to work. This leaves single mothers in an uncertain relation with employment all the while brandishing the threat of exclusion.

The redefinition of policies in the context of the active welfare state, according to Castel (2009), show on the one hand a transformation in social protection, forced to adapt to more individualised and flexible trajectories, but also the greater risk of pushing large sections of the population into precarity. A unilateral and genderless recognition of care activities, of child raising and minding, runs the risk of possibilities available to single mothers being reduced to the domestic sphere and a 'maternal salary'. As Beck (2007) recalled, there is a large risk of ushering in a society of nomadic multi-activities where mankind's common destiny would be to survive through uncertain, unrecognised and non-enriching activities.

We repeat, without investing massively in care structures for children and adolescents while fostering access to qualification training, the activation policy will remain void of its initial goal which was to build the capacity of citizens to be able to cope with a flexible economy (Giddens 2001). An activation worthy of its name should not only invest in access to employment and training, but also take into account the multiple hurdles found in the organisation of the jobs market, family policies, the articulation between family and jobs, in care and more generally in relation to all sorts of structures that host children and adolescents.

#### 4.2.2. Access to housing and to the city

Finding adequate housing and access to the city is another area where single mothers are burdened by considerable inequalities. When a couple separates this often leads to a negotiated or abrupt loss of accommodations, with quite varying repercussions on the experience of single parenthood and being able or not to maintain stability. As the rental market in Brussels is quite tight (Corijn and Vloeberghs 2009), the risk of losing one's housing is different depend on the person's level of protection from want. Problems finding housing that is affordable are compounded by discrimination on the basis of other 'criteria' (skin colour, being a woman, having children, depending on public social welfare) (Bernard 2007, Wagener 2013). Through this climate of distrust built on stereotypes, the search for housing seems to be a losing battle. Many situations of ill-adapted accommodations arise from this context of uncertain access to housing. In this area women encounter difficulties that are directly linked to the fact that they are women and mothers.

In view of the discrimination that single mothers encounter directly on the private rental market it seems an unlikely prospect to change the mentality of private owners who are 'wary' of renting to single mothers. The first approach lies in heavier investment in social housing which would give access to a larger part of the population. This measure would both diversify social housing and have an effect on the rise in market prices. The Social Estate Agencies (AIS/SIK) approach should be supported for it proposes access to housing while guaranteeing an income to the owners. More consequential measures could also be found in the State's following of market prices (ex: fixing maximum rents), or in specific assistance to people (ex: rent allowance that takes into account the average rents in the area). It is clear that different measures must be well adjusted to support access to housing yet prevent the State from directly financing property owners. The different policies towards access to housing and their articulation is beyond the scope of this article. We refer interested readers to the regular evaluation of the 73 measures announced by the Regional Government through the Brussels Assembly for the Right to Housing (RBDH/BBROW)<sup>7</sup>.

Settling into one neighbourhood or another involves more than mere access to housing, as living nearby is an important variable for single mothers faced with limited budgets, pressed for time and trying to maintain a work-family balance (Leray 2010). Women wish to find the best access to quality schools, open to communication with parents. They wish to find daycare and facilities for children and adolescents, social services and socio-cultural activities. These are all things found in the urban environment, which allows for interaction with other people and leaves room for parental and children's activities. Women wish to be able to control their mobility and rely on a dense public transportation system, well adapted to the needs of parents. These urban amenities or nearby institutional supports not only make it possible to find the adequate assistance and appreciated activities (for parents and children), they also open more possibilities for sociability so that the single-parent is not isolated (Kaufmann 1994) and can find new ways to relate to other people in the city. This leads directly into our discussion on involvement.

#### *4.3. Between experience and action: making involvement possible*

In order to consider social policies globally in link with society and a larger process of individualisation, these policies must at the same time integrate the more 'classical' view of social protection and open towards a vision of the citizen who builds his/her life with others and who is also faced with varied forms of inequalities:

Recognizing the multiple facets of the individual comes with intolerance to new inequalities, to forms of inequality that seem new because of the "objective progression" of equality, which recomposes the stances of the actors.' In a historical vision we can say that 'assigning women to be forgotten in the private realm, itself forgotten, made it possible to see the public realm as the realm of interest for sociology [...]. The private realm was forgotten because it was limited to domestic life, with rare exceptions since Parsons (even for "feminist" sociologists)' (Tahon 2004, p. 4-5).

Single mothers must not only find a balance between their parental and domestic tasks and their professional life; they also search for other ways to become involved and find a place in society. This search also implies a different way of seeing the 'domestic and family sphere'.

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<sup>7</sup> The nine central points of this approach are: 1. Control rent ; 2. Help renters find decent housing; 3. Preserve and develop social housing; 4. Increase the public stock and rebalance the regional distribution in the development of social and public housing; 5. Develop a housing offer accessible for average incomes; 6. Fight against empty and unhealthy housing; 7. Foster energy bill savings for tenants and occupant/renter owners; 8. Continue producing new housing; 9. Support new forms of habitation and assist in their acquisition (RBDH 2012).

The emergence of the woman-individual means that one must make the suitable distinction between public and private. For this distinction to be suitable, one must first distinguish between the private and the domestic and situate the family in relation to one and the other. In other words, one must refrain from making the family either a place where one does housework or does parenting, or else a place where one loves (or no longer loves)' (Tahon 2004, p. 7).

The State recognises family types differently, and different redistribution systems lead to other relations with citizenship. While women have gained different rights and equality as regards inheritance or divorce, or in relation to parental authority, and while various legal changes have aimed to ensure that neither gender nor family form grounds for unequal treatment (Casman *et al.* 2007), this equality is far from acquired for single-parent trajectories.

Political modernity has led to an image of the abstract individual who is a full-fledged citizen regardless of various qualifications (age, religion, social class, sex):

nothing justified the failure to immediately include women in the statement that "All men are born free and equal in rights." It is their non-inclusion that has placed them in a political category. Gender, which was abstract for men, was presented as something concrete for women. This construction is so telling that it is now hard to escape (Tahon 2007).

Marie-Blanche Tahon considers that in the past these differences in treatment and the inability to experience one's full rights as citizens derived less from 'being a woman' than from 'being a mother'. Women experience different forms of injustice that are linked to their role as mothers.

We tried in our thesis to provide an up to date view of the woman-subject (Heinich 2003, Touraine 2007) who is capable of rebuilding her life after a separation and giving new meaning to her life as an individual (Wagener 2013). These women-subjects, through activities that offer social protection (autonomy) attempt to make use of their skills and knowledge and achieve social recognition. They try to experience their single parenthood differently by freeing themselves from isolation and practicing other forms of sociability that are closer to and more involved with others in the city. These are not innate abilities; women must be able to find a social position that is better protected. This calls for reinforcing different forms of support and institutional backing as well as a network of family and friends who can help the individual keep going and cope with the challenges of single parenthood.

We can envisage citizenship in two different ways, as discussed by P. Rosanvallon (2011). The first considers the citizen as a member of a collectivity and protected by laws. Different laws, procedures and institutions recognise and protect single mothers, in the aim to allow each family type and each income level to benefit from a fair assistance (Casman *et al.* 2007). The concrete implementation of these rights is related to different types of social inequality and other measures, structures and institutions that are intended to offer a more equitable social justice. Based on a historical vision we can indeed affirm that the situation of single mothers has improved in Belgium. However, observing their experience of many forms of injustice, we can see that various forms of inequality still subsist and that others have become worse. The second version, according to Rosanvallon, reflects a more interlinked and active approach: '*The citizen in this context, is no longer an individual endowed with personal rights, s/he is also defined in the relation to others and is thus considered to be a citizen* (Rosanvallon 2011, p. 381).' The citizen is thus someone who is involved with others to build a common world.

How can the welfare state adapt to this evolution in society in the context of single parenthood? We have already mentioned, in relation to the work-family balance, that a 'false universalism' fails to take gender relations into account and which in practice reinforces inequality in single-parent situations.

The insecure socio-economic conditions faced by many single mothers make it hard to become a subject in Touraine's (2007) sense of the term. A transversal policy that aims to reinforce the ability of subjects to live autonomously cannot concentrate merely on bolstering social protection. It must also include the idea that living also means sharing experiences with others. If individuals are to 'get out of the house' perceived as a cage, then assistance measures must be developed that enable subjects to meet each other, participate, become involved and live in relation with others.

In this area R. Castel (2009) lays out two challenges to redefine the Welfare state, all the while integrating the importance of social protection and public services. In view of the growing insecurity and the decline of the condition of the wage earner, he describes the central challenge for the Welfare State:

The welfare state is thus placed before a double injunction: to redeploy its intervention modes so that they more closely mirror the needs of their users in the specific situation in which they find themselves (the proximity imperative) and to involve the beneficiaries in order to make them responsible and to have them cooperate with the services provided to them (users' participation imperative)' (Castel 2009, p. 214).

These two imperatives take into account the evolution of the welfare state and do indeed lead on from the theories of the active welfare state. We should point out that in our view, participation does not mean that people are obliged to give something in return for access to social assistance, nor that the State should establish programmes that resemble forms of punitive responsibility (as is now the case for certain activation programmes). The question is one of respecting the individual's autonomy so that s/he will be able to also contribute something personally. We should be clear here, in relation to recognition of an active and interlinked citizenship, there is a high risk for the measures to lose their meaning and turn against the individuals.

One of the first conditions to lay the foundation for active citizenship is to act on social isolation ('being closed up at home') by promoting forms of hospitality that are open and high quality, along with investing in collective projects that will enable women to find other areas to invest their time and interests. This not only has the positive effect of rendering ECEC<sup>8</sup> services more social (Vandenbroeck and Geens 2011) and helping mothers fight their social isolation. It also has a positive effect on reconstructing one's identity after a time of hardship in order to launch into new life plans. Parents appreciate different associative areas where they can become involved and have their voices (Jans *et al.* 2011). Several daycare centres organise occasions to meet the parents and enable them to interact and discuss ways to raise and educate their children. Schools are even more appreciated when they 'open their doors' to speak with the parent, and it has an immediate effect on their relations with the school. At the same time this fosters local sociability and mutual assistance among parents. In general parents are searching for places that both welcome their children and allow the parents to participate. Toy libraries, parent cooperative centres, neighbourhood centres, socio-cultural activities, cooperative projects among women, etc. are things that go beyond the 'assistant/assisted' relation and create more active and interlinked forms of common relations. As we have seen through several local projects involving women in their neighbourhoods, often it takes very little management and infrastructure to enable them to get together, talk, share their joys and problems. More specifically, in relation to certain situations marked by the 'guilty feelings' linked to single parenthood, these encounters help parents share their experiences, refuse certain stereotypes and think collectively about ways to improve their lives.

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<sup>8</sup> Early Childhood Education and Care.

The possibilities of a 'woman-subject' (Heinich 2003, Touraine 2007) to emerge are closely tied to the support and encouragement that can be mobilised and the degree of autonomy offered by a job. Women who have better means available or who receive the help they need and who can count on various types of child care, have a more developed personal life and mobility. When the question of child care is under control and their budget is not so tight, the women are more often able to take some time for themselves. We have seen that the ambivalence between being a woman and a mother then tips more towards being a woman. They get out to meet people, stop for a drink with colleagues, go to a cafe, meet friends and participate in cultural and athletic activities. Without improvements in the assistance provided for single-parent families, there is a risk that many will remain in a second level citizenship. Even if women officially have the right to be protected and recognised, there is a risk that for many life will be resumed as 'staying at home' with neither the means to get out, nor any enriching experiences for her children. Many of them will find it hard to become involved in life shared with others, something offering more than the experience of isolation and abandonment, the fate of the 'alone woman'.

## 5. Conclusion

Even if a clear link cannot be found between the 2008 financial and economic crisis in analysing the impact in the Brussels-Capital Region through our follow-up data, this in no way lessens the urgency of addressing precarity in the Region. Single-parent families are confronted with the process of 'precarization of single parenting' (Neyrand and Rossi 2007) in many areas of life: income, work, housing, living conditions and space. Single-parent families have twice the risk of falling into poverty. These observations suggest the need for a deep-seated discussion on the challenges of single parenthood and public policies.

The analysis of public policies in the light of the dynamics between recognition and redistribution in Fraser's (2011) sense of the term is an invitation to go beyond the strict context of class relations to open to a vision better adapted to our advanced modernity. We have situated the injustice experienced by single mothers. We have then shown how they resonate in issues for public policies, analysed in a framework inspired by Dubet's (1994) three action logics. Equality is linked to the position that single mothers hold in society (integration); merit echoes their experience of the way they are treated in relation to their efforts (strategy), and then a subject's autonomy refers to the way activities enable a subject to construct oneself (subjectivation).

In the absence of a specific recognition of the situation of single-parent families grounded in a universalist vision, there is a risk that different policies to fight poverty will merely intensify the stigma effect. On the other hand under a false universalism that ignores the variety of social relations, these families may fall through the net. Either they are bypassed, or worse are subject to a reinforced selection process through exclusion in the context of the active welfare state. The very aim of the argument has been to discuss the concepts and legal ideas underlying this new form of public policy organisation in order to highlight the biases that contribute to precarization and also point out the shortcomings that are barriers to people wishing to become active citizens involved in society. The issue at stake primarily lies in the need to rethink policies on assistance to families, on jobs, policies that fight poverty and aim to improve access to housing and institutional supports in a transversal framework that accounts for the intersectionality of social relations and which enables citizens to invest their efforts differently.

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