

Welfare state and gender inequality under capitalism: A social reproduction theory approach

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2021 – intersectoral social dialogue www.vbo.be

Overview

✓ Theories:

- Gender and welfare state
- Social reproduction theory

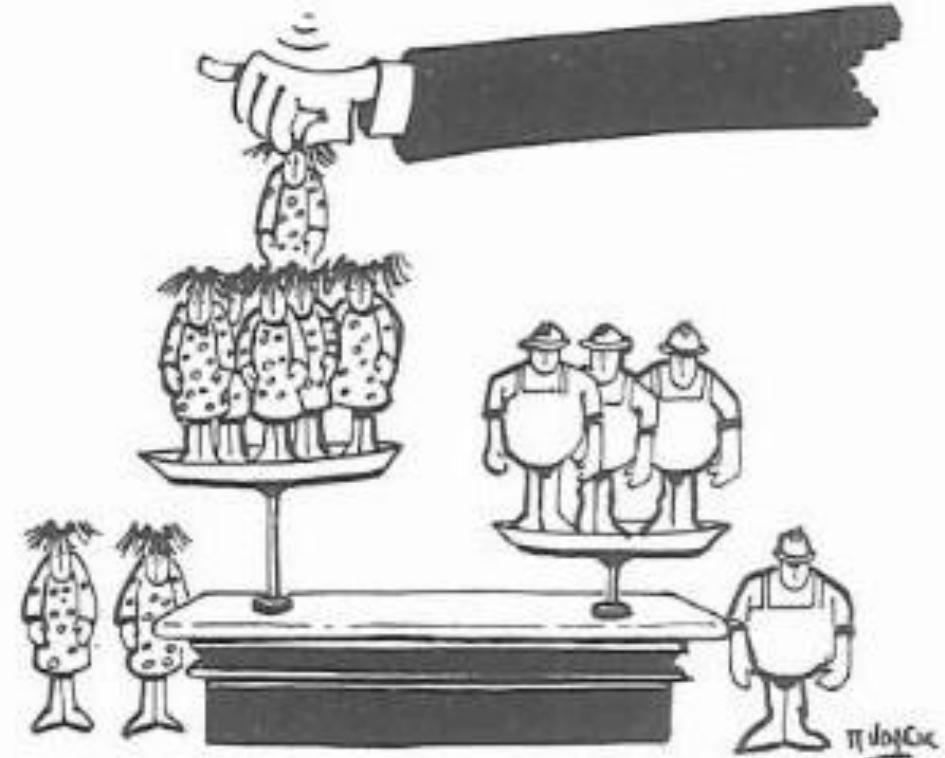
✓ Case study: Belgian National Labour Council

✓ Methodology: analysis of social dialogue documents (1953-to-date)

✓ Findings:

- ✓ Two periods of labour demand
- ✓ Two periods of restructuring

✓ Discussion: welfare state attuned to cyclical needs of capitalist economy



THEORY: gender, social dialogue and the welfare state

Gender and welfare state

- **Women's** access to employment
- Public-private **care** work

➔ Focus on **state-household nexus**

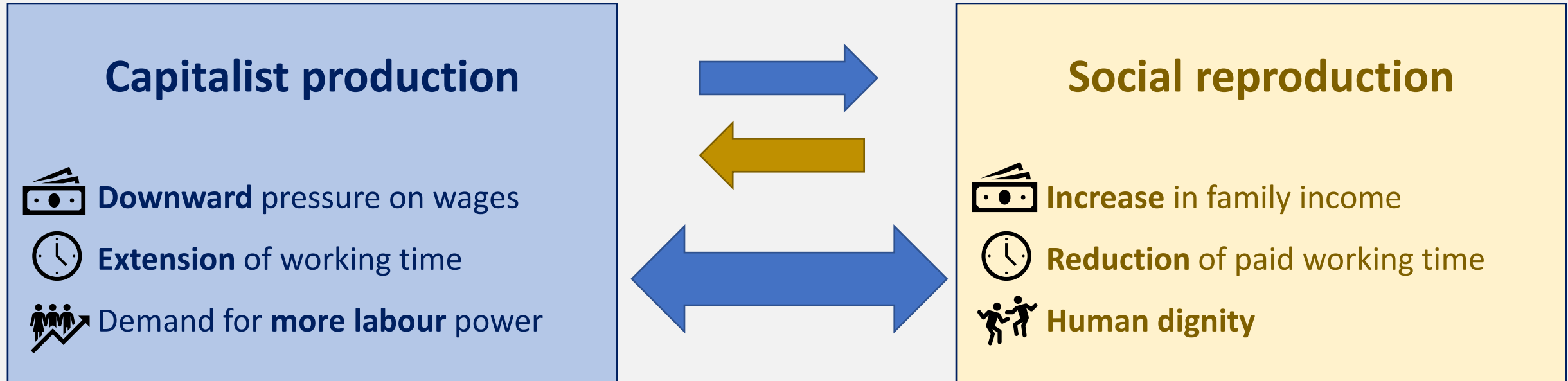
➔ Neglect of **capitalist pressure** on welfare state & households

Social reproduction theory (SRT):

gender & reproduction of life/labour power



Social reproduction and gender inequalities in capitalist society



THEORY:

Social reproduction and gender inequalities in capitalist society

Capitalist production



Downward pressure on wages



Extension of working time



Demand for **more labour** power



Welfare state
Social dialogue

Social reproduction



Increase in family income



Reduction of paid working time



Human dignity

Research questions

RQ: How do welfare state's policies addressing the contradiction between

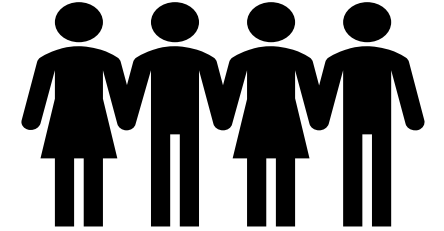
*the needs of **production**
for **labour power***



*the needs of **social reproduction**
for **care***



shape gender
inequality over time?



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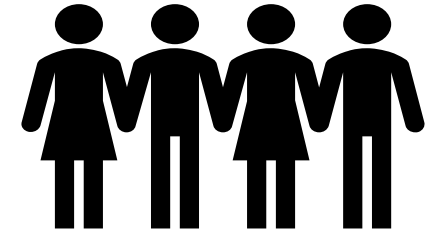
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shape gender
inequality over time?



Case study:

- **Belgian welfare state**
- **National Labour Council**
- **Time frame: 1953-2022**

National Labour Council



Bipartite composition (*private sector*)



2.311 Opinions since 1953 (*adviezen, rapporten*)



social policy (labour law, social security)



NAR

Nationale Arbeidsraad



CNT

Conseil National du Travail



METHODOLOGY:



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Data selection of opinions
Additional sources: documents,
expert interviews, statistical data

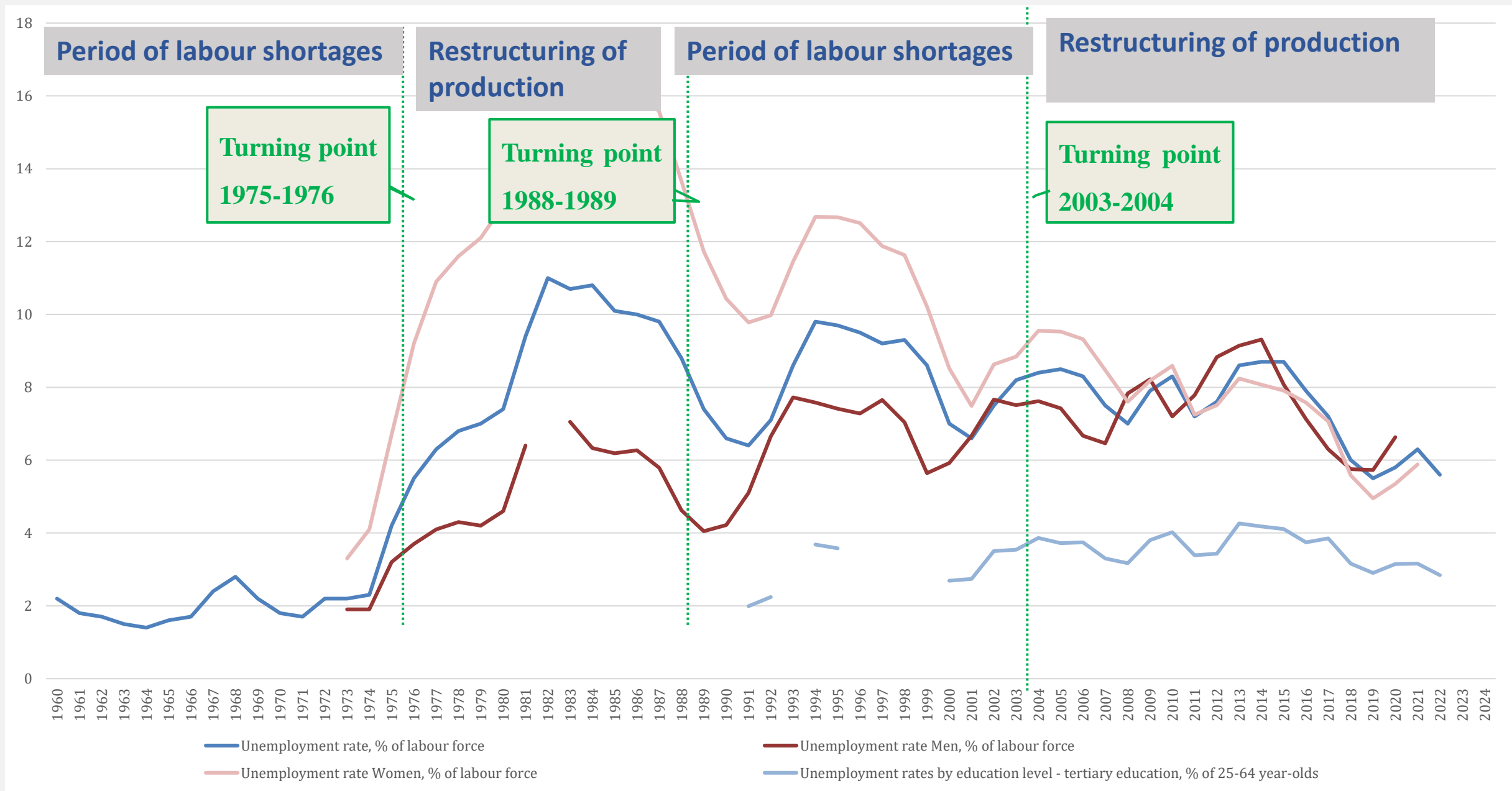


Data analysis
Welfare state regulation: women's
paid work, care work
Production context: turning points
in labour demand

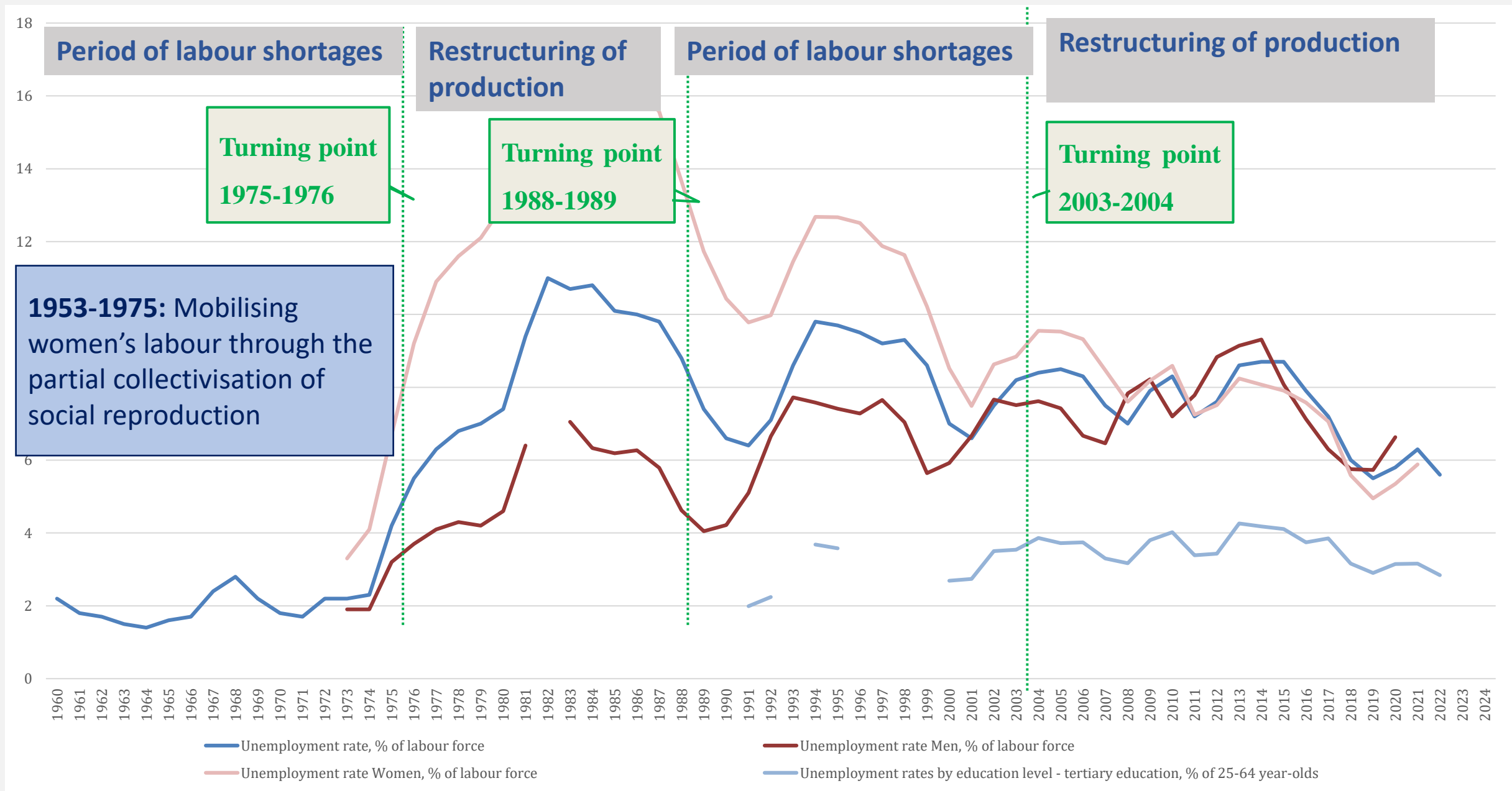


Interpretation
How policies mitigated
contradictory needs of **production**
and **social reproduction** during
economic cycles? Gender impact?

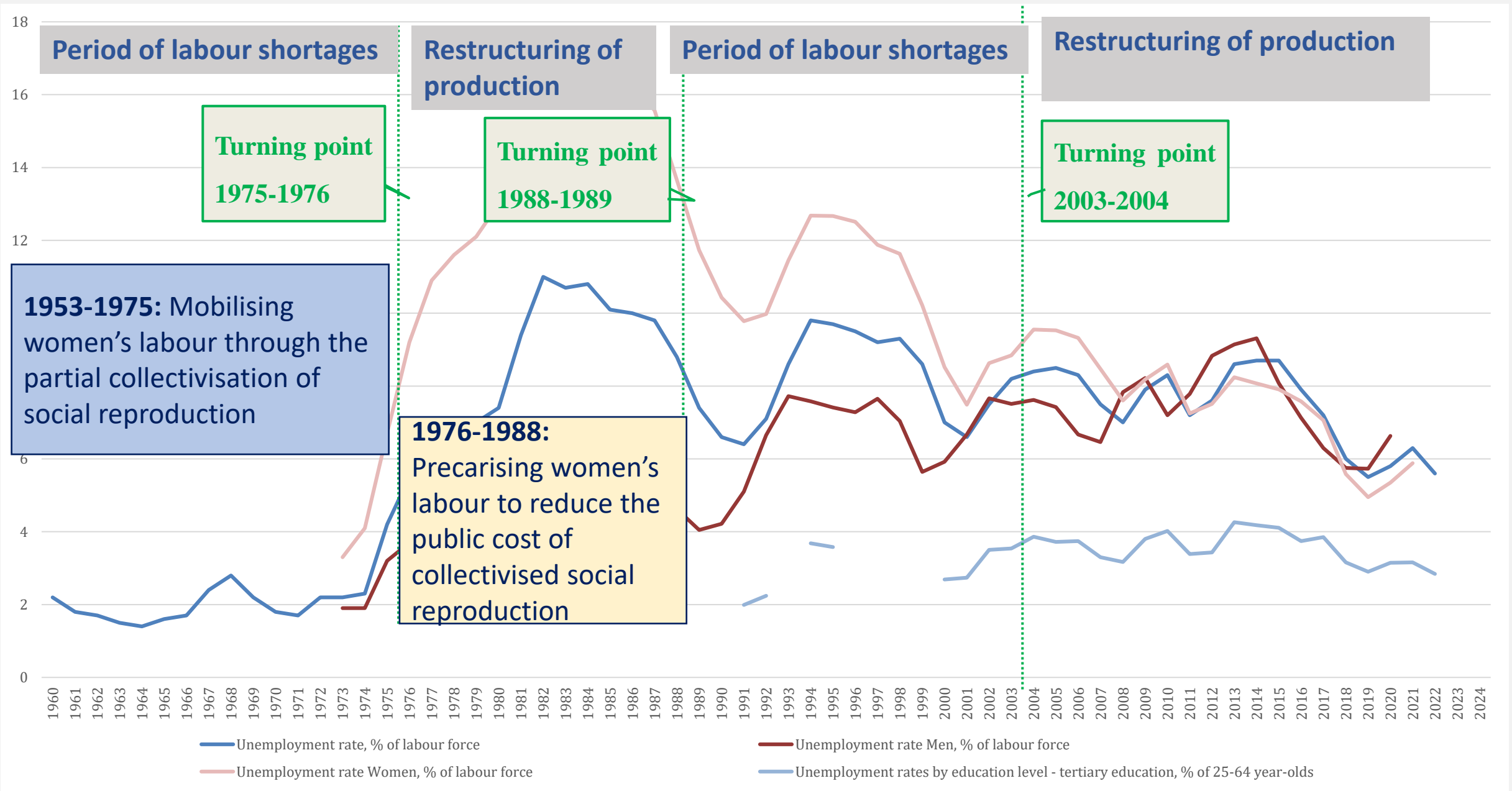
Topics of opinions	
Women's work, equal treatment, pregnancy, motherhood	81
Care work, work-life, family, atypical statutes related to care work, non-profit sector	114
General documents related to welfare state, public investment, social security	45
Total documents	240



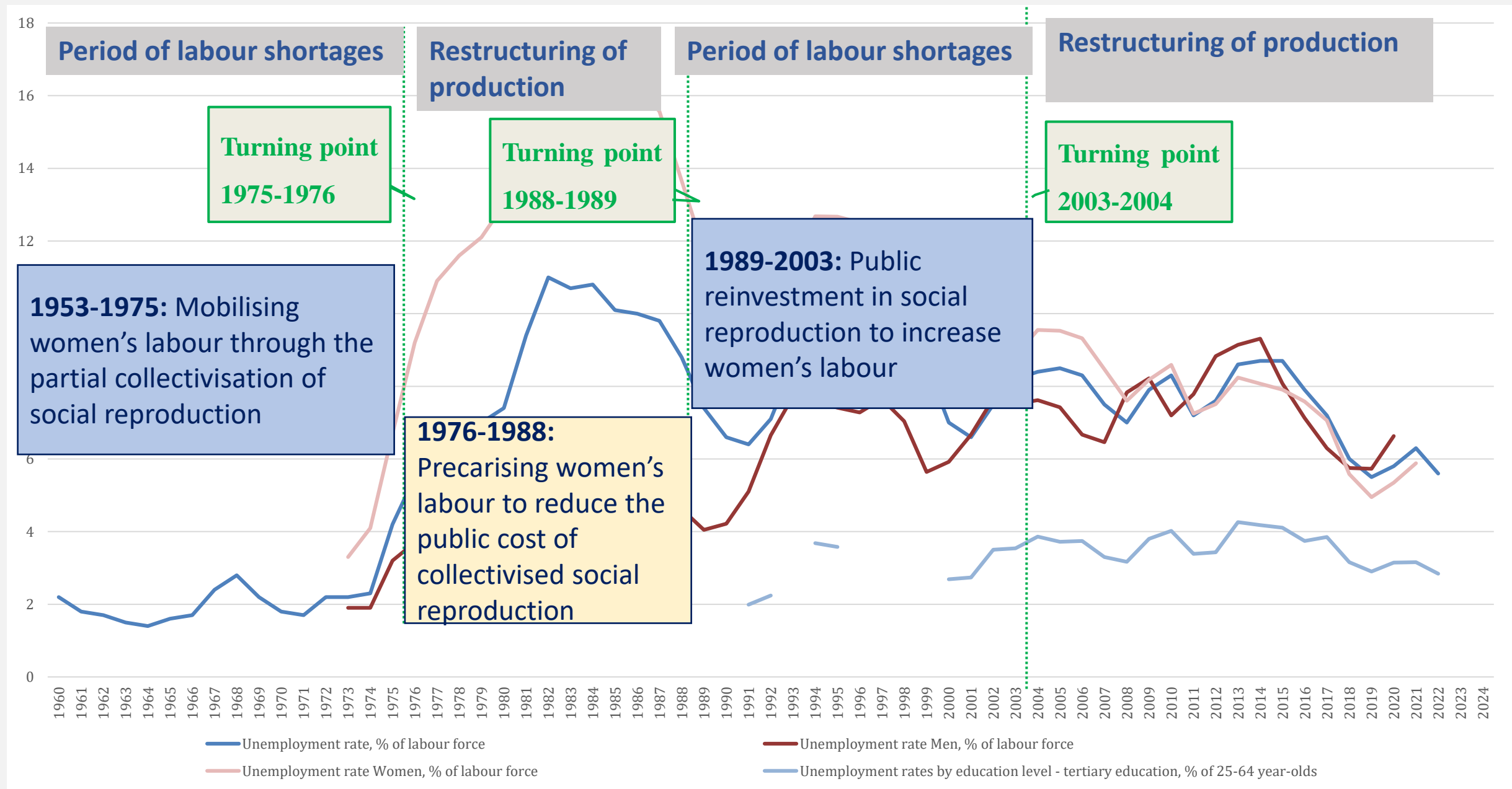
TURNING POINTS: changes in the production's need for labour forces



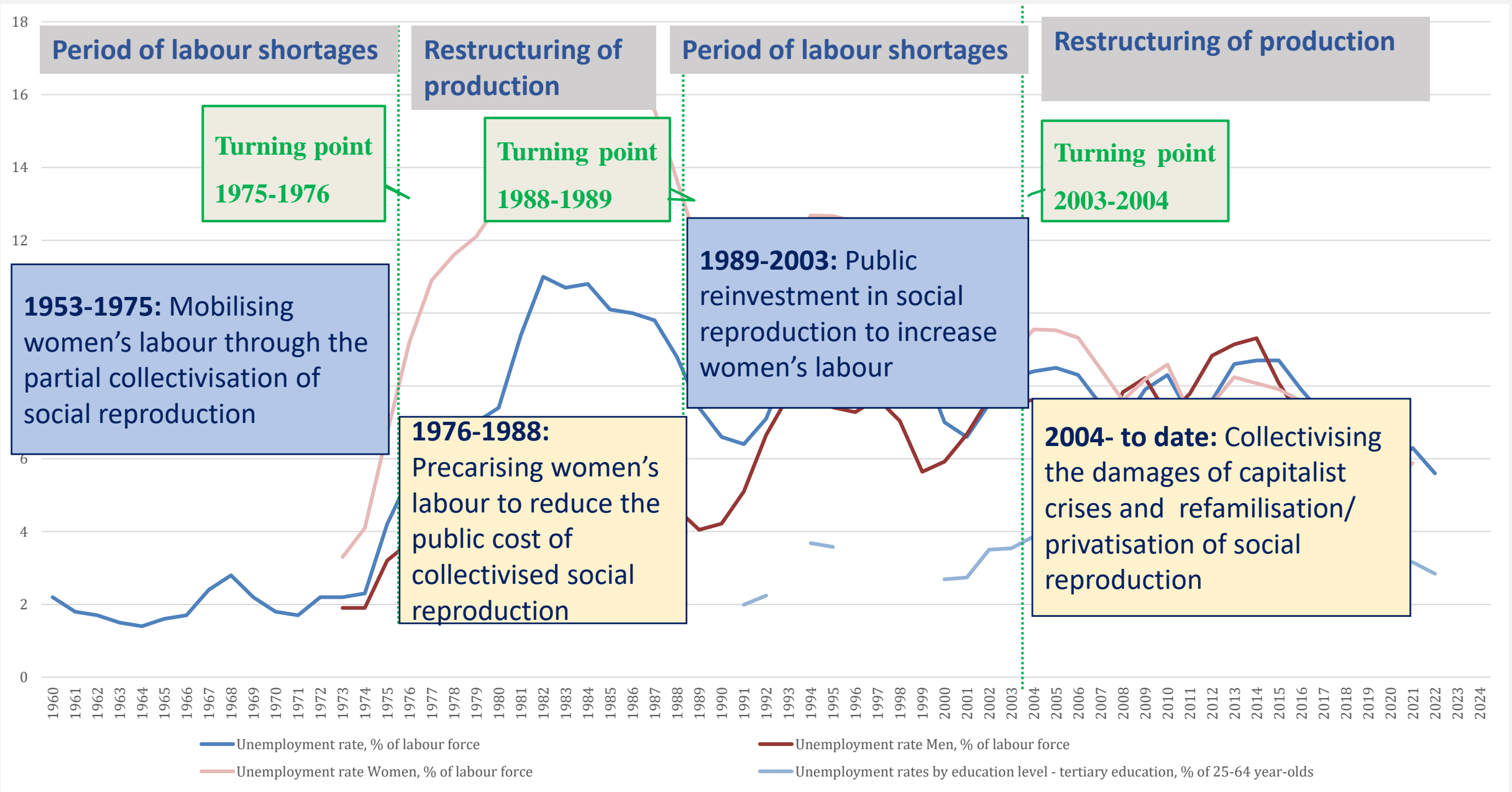
TURNING POINTS: changes in the production's need for labour forces



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TURNING POINTS: changes in the production's need for labour forces

DISCUSSION:

Welfare arrangements of CME attuned to cyclical needs of capitalist economy

Welfare regulation on care and women's work:

- mainly to respond to **labour force demands** of production to sustain capital accumulation
- Responded to changes in production needs
 - **Periods of economic expansion**: regulation and investment
 - **Periods of restructuring**: reorientation and reduction of care cost

Reduction of collective care:

→ **refamilisation and privatization of care: mostly felt by women** (low-skilled, migrant, single parents)

→ **subordination of care work to needs of production: un(der)paid**

Gender inequalities reshaped:

- to a **formal gender-equal 'one-and-a-half earner'** model
- Women still **subordinate** position in LM and society



Sander van Duppen kwam woensdag samen met zijn dochter protesteren. — © AMG

BRUSSEL - Een vijftigtal misnoegde ouders hebben woensdagvoormiddag kinderopvang georganiseerd in de onthaalhal van het kabinet van minister van Welzijn Hilde Crevits (CD&V). "Er moeten meer middelen naar de opvang gaan. Het

Thank you for listening!

Questions? Suggestions? Remarks?

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