CONTEMPORARY THEORIES AND MODELS OF THE HOUSEHOLDS

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Abstract

*The **household** is likely to base on one family structure – two spouses, sometimes together with a number of children. The latest are also likely to grow up, fulfil the age of majority, but sometimes stay further home, in the same old household with their parents while though they get some jobs around and earn some money in the labour market, as well as their parents. So, this might be the household restricted, versus extensive, but this actually isn't yet all about households – other kinds of human relationships than legal family might equally make it. And households of one or another kind are found to work similarly – notice that household is the typical area of non-formal human relationships within and its proper economy is quite informal as correspondingly. Moreover, given and besides all these above, household is unanimously admitted among economic entities – i.e. as manuals do explain that it is autonomous in its economic functions, never subordinated to anyone else, and enough influenced by its environment.*

Key concepts: *household, family, household models, household theories*

***JEL Classification:** B31, B54, C00, D12, F00*

1. Old approaches of the household. Natural economy and basics of economics

Actually it is about 'two doubles' when talking about the *household* – i.e. the one of the literature approaching and the other that is the household itself during human history. This is why the below lines will take it chronologically, namely first there will be about the 'old household' approached by corresponding references. This first chapter below will then belong to the *old household* approach that so accuses two concepts, i.e. the *natural economy* and *macroeconomics genesis*.

The ‚natural' economy is the economy or economic system in which money is missing from all transfer between people and/or between entities – barter and self-consumption are here considered among alternatives. The Belgian historian economist Henri Pirenne (1936, pp. 103-104) here points to whom he calls ‚German economists', who had invented their Naturalwirtschaft, which is, or more precisely was supposed to be that ‚natural economy' of before the existence of money – of all precedents of the today market economy -- and lasting up to the early Middle Ages Europe, in eras and areas where money was so week, sometimes even negligible presence. Significant in context here is that Karl Marx, the first classic of socialism-communism, with his Grundrisse or Capital was among them. He notes that what he calls ‚social production' would play against all ‚natural economy, economy of money and the one of credit...' Besides, it is not only about Marx, as communist ideologist in context, but about noticing a rather common view on all about economics between Marx (1975a, p.896; 898) and Lenin (1970) – e.g. several understandings of natural eonomy, of which the individual farm is actually the most important one. For both authors this is ‚a production unit', for the previous especially self-sufficient, this feature actually identifying the separation line of this unit from the rest of the economy, while the latter sees especially ‚the peasant patriarchal familly' getting promotion up to the real ‚ruleof law' of its time. It is as clear as daylight that these classics were equally aware of the variety that the simple farm evolved into during the so long while between Neolitics and the of Europe's early Middle Ages: large lands, including pastures, forests and fishing areas, enough cattle breeding, but also weaving, carpentry, honey production, the same for wines, eggs, vegetable-fruits and building materials. Land renting by farmers wasn't alien to natural economy and to that

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ancient family farm either. Just figure out all these quite off modern industry times, but belonging to both ancient world and self-sufficient economy (Andrei 2011, p.33).

Or, these above might be viewed as just the beginning of what is called household by contemporary literature, e.g. Sen(1985), Alderman and co.(1995), plus some substantial foundation features seem already done: this is first family stuff; the family of all time, the same as the today family. This family economy is economic entity by definition; its evolution makes it able to reach larger economic areas. Such an economy always based on production, the same as the whole economy. As differently, the household economy was in its past as opposite to the rest of the economy as the current household appears opposite to the much larger market economy. On the contrary, the old ancient farm seems to have been stronger than the today household in the same contest, thanks' to the weakness of the today market economy's 'ancestors'. Concomitantly, production makes all household an economic entity – i.e. not subordinated to anyone, but very influenced by environment. The household's relationships with the last always was enough complicated as well.

But it is the time in this above little digressional debate context to notice that meanwhile – i.e. in this so long one and a half century while, as between the above old classics(then 18th century end) and the capital paper of JM Keynes(1936) – *households<H>* came up to replace the individuals-population classic option and so the old classics' slight imprecision of terms in this topic area. Keynes seems to have equally updated his contribution to his contemporary debate about the household's higher representativeness as economic entity – e.g. the Charlote Perkins Gilman's book entitled "Women and Economics" (1898), in which this lady-author tries to argue about at least two aspects: (i) the sex based labour division and (ii) including some *household* works in the large market economy area. In other words, the Keynes' option for higher(than the individual's) representativeness of household, as economic entity was transparent.

Then, contray to the Marxian view the Keynes' Macromodel skips all ‚confrontation' between households and the rest of the economy, but sees the households as part of the economy as a whole. Interesting is equally that households (i.e. no one else) receive the whole current gross national income, all money that firms, banks, Government and rest of the world are betting in the aftermath within same short term. Households *consume, save* money, *pay taxes* and even access the consumption part of *imports.* Plus, since even the Quesnay's model – not yet aggregate macro-flows -- households also appear as feeding labour market and firms' jobs with corresponding flow of labour. So, production and labour in the Keynes' ‚Macromodel' stay off households, as opposite to all the author's precedent, contemporary and later theorists. In a word, these about production-labour, together with no ‚opposition' between household and the market economy and the highest economic flows receiving by the same households are the main features of the JM Keynes' contribution to the *theory of households*. Besides, the firmer the Keynes' option for households against individuals, the more interesting the post-Keynes debate evolving, as below developed – e.g. in the neoclassic thinking, where the individual's position will be still in question.

The below Diagram tries a syntheis of the *household* specific items in the pre-contemporary literature and partly on the historical household structure. Concepts appear promoted by the two above literature areas.

Table 1. Household specific concepts in the pre-contemporary literature

No.	Concept	"Natural" economy *	Macroeconomics**
1	Economic entity	x	x
2	Family based entity	x	x
3	Production	x	
4	Labour (factor):	…	…
	4a/ inside the household	x	
	4b/ for the rest of economy		x
5	Consumption	x	x
6	Confronting with the rest of the economy	x	
7	Saving for investments		x
8	Imports		x
9	Paying taxes		x

** Contributions of: K Marx and V.I. Lenin*
*** Contributions of Fr. Quesnay and JM Keynes*

2 . Today approaches of the household

This new chapter below will shape a certain ‚passover' from the old (see above) literature about households to the current literature as such which's content will be searched for its appropriate understanding. This chapter might also be called the *conceptual approach* of the household by contemporary literature. Just noting from the above Diagram that household presents the two economic functions of *production* and *consumption* and the quality of *economic entity*. It is below that other issues will be added and debated – e.g. time, human and ‚humane-human' capitals, household specific for its labour and goods.

2.1 Theory of the individual consumer

This ‚old' *theory* is viewed in the literature as the starting point of all later and contemporary *neoclassic* developings in thinking. Its primary theoretical assumption is the *individual utility maximising* – e.g. corroborated with the subsequent one of the consumer fully informed (Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.33). *Utility*, as one of basic economic functions, does benefit from a quasi unanimously accepted definition that sees it as the individual consumer's satisfaction provided by good's consumption(Eastwood (1985, p.48). *Utility* comes out of good *consumed* and that immediately, automatically and as the consumption *function*. Consumer is so seen as *rational* in his/her good picked from a range of goods to (better) satisfy his/her utility expected.

Time isn't part of the utility function, e.g. price does not change during the consumer's corresponding goods/utilities option done. On the contrary, *price changing* induces changes to the individual's options as correspondingly – i.e. see the utility function, once more – and this with direct impact on aferrent policies influencial in the same area. Or, consumer's *income changing* is expected with similar effects(Varian 1990).

Shortly, *consumption optimizing* – in the consumer's theory – keeps the exogenous of (1) individual preferences, (2) price level and (3) consumer's income. The consumer's decision draws the *demand* or *demand function* basing on these factors, then this function might see itself affected by goods' price and consumer's income(Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.9). Utility sees itself shaped by individual preferences – e.g. high utility for preferences at the same. There is no common utility measurement since the *plural* utility function – i.e. as well as utility measured in terms of the quantity of good. In practice such a measuring identifies/reduces to comparing, by the consumer subject, diverse goods packages(Estola 1996).

In a critical view, there could be striking limits for consumer's *rationality,* as assumed by this given theory – e.g. a number of authors doubt on both the *full information* about goods to be consumed and *utility maximizing.* Actually, utility maximizes and stabilizes itself along the *indifference curve* (Matilla-Wiro 1999, pp.7-8). The theory skips uncertainties related to market and technical goods' evolving – i.e. and both these always stay strongly influential factors for all consumer's options and for their changing during time(Gravelle & Rees 1981). As for the *household,* in particular – i.e. apart from general economics and corresponding judgments – other specific utilities are appropriate, plus, unlike the rest of economy, these household utilities might not devolve directly from resources allowance, e.g. leisure-recreation, friendships(Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.8). The same utilities are to be noticed as being even able to connect consumption to production.

Individual utility maximizing is admitted by the literature to be the household's imperative (Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.33). The *utility function* of household is seen as the *algebraic sum of individual utilities of the same household's members*(Sen 1985 and Alderman and co.1995), so neoclassics feel nearly forced to admit, or even notice the *uneven welfare distribution* within the household (Matilla-Wiro 1999, pp.7-8).

Similarly to cumulating individual utilities within household for the latest's proper *utility* accounted, the household's *welfare* refers to the one shared by its members either – i.e. and that in the *efficiency* related environment. Alderman and co.(1995) do not here exclude – i.e. they really consider – efficiency when *uneven welfare* within the household and Hannad&Kanbur (1990) do criticize those rigid policy decisions that ignore such circumstances, here and there dealing with some kind of *traditions* in the Third World. Though, these last authors also finally accuse welfare distribution within household – i.e. actually, its dysfunctions -- as responsible for the whole society's created needs of corresponding economic policy repairs.

Browning and co.(1994), in their turn, broadly admit that the consumer theory meats empirical verifying for the household cases, except for household behaving *like one single individual.* And this in the middle of critics' 'cross fire' – e.g. classics are criticized for limiting the household's need to the acquiring goods corresponding resources(Becker 1993). Hawrylyshyn (1977) argues that, despite the consumer theory's incomplete analysis or could be, on the contrary, just for such reason its appropriate reply was going to come up from not so far, namely from the(same) *neoclassic* thinking camp – i.e. the Gary Becker's and Kelvin Lancaster's distinct contribution models are seen by the literature as somehow shaping the 'Becker-Lancaster model' of the household.

In context, Lancaster (1975, p.9) adds assumptions to both *individual* and *household.* The *individual* is viewed as: (A) *traditionally* – i.e. goods are distinct parts ranking in the consumer's *preferences* system – and (B) in the system of *characteristics* – i.e. each presumable item of the latest is actually assumed to belong to several goods. Then, when *household*, in its turn, is taken like *the individual,* it is assumed that: (1) the individual stays efficient when the number of characteristics is lower than the one of goods (R<M) and so goods chosen will automatically be fewer than their total available number; (2) *substitution* predominates for the *consumption demand*, together with corresponding *budget constraint,* and so two further alternatives get equivalent: (a) *Slutsky matrix*, as symmetrical and *negative semi-definite*; (b) both the strong and weak *axioms of revealed preference*, as satisfied(Lancaster 1975, p.7).

In such a view, anyway and any-time the *household:* (i) is a number of individuals that is (ii) low enough and (iii) these individuals are 'close-knit'. The *aggregate consumption vector* in the household does result by cumulating the corresponding individual vectors of the household's members. The household's *aggregate consumption* vector is further assumed to correlate with the complementary one of *aggregate income* and separately with the economy's *goods' prices vector* the way the above (1) and (2) assumptions would be satisfied and concomitantly the household is assumed to act like one single individual (Lancaster 1975, pp.7 and the following).

2.2 The household's production function

The household is assumed as *rational economic entity* – a unique objectives/goals set aferrent to all members(Ellis 1988) and as such it is supposed to become a *production unit,* as all (production) firms working in the competitive market area. So, household is here assumed to have a proper *productions frontier* type function(Matilla-Wiro 1999, pp. 5 and the following). The same for *labour division* between household members – e.g. sex based – up to *specializing* – similarly to acting as nations, in the international trade area(Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.14), the example in which international *arrangements* are supposed to come out(Krugman 1991, p.11).

This *household-international market* topics comparison extends, in its turn, backwards in time to the early 19th century, when David Ricardo found the *comparative advantage* together with its basics leading to *labour productivity*(Matilla-Wiro1999, p.14). *Specializing,* for household, works as such on labour distribution first between market and household, according to the comparative advantage rule, and when so household is chosen by the individual, its labour division is to be equally considered. Reservations to come on admitting such economic communication fully working between household and its outside market economy (Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.34). Plus, in the same contest of facts the ‚old' sex based labour division might even be disadvantage for household members(Matilla-Wiro 1999, pp. 14-15).

The same as the above Lancaster's contribution to household on the consumption-consumer side, Gary Becker comes on this *production function* one. Simply, this production means acquiring market goods and combining them basing on the household's *time* resource to make specific *household goods* – e.g. children, healthcare, watching shows, other diverse pleasures and leisure (Bergstrom 1997). And this is a set of items that Manser&Brown (1980) do enrich by others that aren't material, like love and understanding – i.e. these last are supposed to be produced inside the household, where previously brought in by marriage and lastly made for strengthening the whole set of preferences.

The *Gary Becker's theory-model* on the household, that is called the ‘new theory', is actually seen as achieving what previously had been the *individual consumer* theory and this through a new thinking phase – i.e. this new thinking phase doesn't aim any true reply to the old thinking in the area. The scholar uses an *economic* research tools approach to the household's behavioural understanding – i.e. assuming: (1) *maximizing behaviour,* (2) market equilibrium and (3) stable preferences. Besides, there is to talk once again about this above mentioned *production function* of the household that is rather similar to the one of the firm working in competition area, but concomitantly both basic and non-material goods(new examples: sleeping, children etc.) are produced by household.

Ironmonger(2001, p.3) is the one who makes it explicit that specific *household goods* are done by household members for *their own consumption* and this using the household's proper *capital* and *labour* resource that isn't rewarded – i.e. unlike the market economy specific circumstances – and once more market goods acquired, as *intermediary goods,* are here used to produce these *final* household goods.

At the next page the author deepens the household's specific productions classifying: (1) *subsistence* (part of) production – e.g. hunting, fishing, seeding, farming --, (2) *volunteer* production – i.e. unrewarded, as well – to the help of other households, (3) *public* production – e.g. army, healthcare, education, justice, road building (Ironmonger 2001, pp.4-5). And going on this into a sort of Marxian ‘qualitative leap', the author suggests a Leontief(1941) type table (Ironmonger 2001, p.7) afferent to household internal activities(productions or industries) – i.e. even here using one of his own previous studies(Ironmonger 1989), associated to Eisner(1989), with an idea of *national accounts* extending, concretely for a study on Australian households. As effectively, the approach result was an *input-output table* with *satellite accounts* proper to household and containing *six industries* (i.e. common to the household and the whole economy): accommodation, food production, clothing, transportation, leisure, care, whereas shopping and cleaning account apart, for subsequent activities.

And about here Eisner(1989), once more, draws attention about the opposite idea to that the household made goods would be basically specific and quite 'different from market goods' – i.e. there are equally those household made goods that are quite the same as market goods, e.g. food meals, as in restaurants and related places, transportation, like by common transport means, healthcare, like by special care centers. So, the author touches on the debate on 'purely' household, versus 'purely' market goods, together with the alternative of 'mixed' goods, as between these two(Ironmonger 2001, p.11, also citing Eisner 1989).

Moreover, Eisner(1989) equally adds his proposal for *gross households product (GHP),* as cumulating *value added* of all households and so, once more, *households' production* would be underlined as the result of its 'specific' factors: (i) labour (i.e. not rewarded) and (ii) capital – e.g. technical means, time, supermarket and other market goods sources accessed. All these, compulsorily related to the national economic structure.

Back to Ironmonger(2001, p.6), where this author goes as far backwards into the literature's history as citing Margaret Reid(1934, p.11), he actually also goes on deepening the household *production* definition through the *production-consumption dichotomy*, e.g. the *third person criterion* – i.e. there is accepted as *productive,* in the *household,* that activity which is unpaid when made by members, but able to be assigned to somebody else from outside the household, as paid. Another criterion here in the same debate is the so called *market alternative* – i.e. an activity is taken as *productive,* in the household(as well), when it is able, as well as outside, in the economy, to hire labour and/or capital for its same productive aim (Ironmonger 2001, p.6).

Last, but not least, the author gets preoccupied by measuring/estimating the households' production – i.e. naturally, such a preoccupation comes to be shared by other scholars, as well (ibidem, pp. 9-11). It is actually for long time already that statistics stay likely to keep pretty off households' production(s) interest(Nordhaus & Tobin 1973 and Weinrub 1974). But there were also exceptions to be highlighted here and there -- i.e. it was before the last World War that some national statistics were providing such estimations, e.g. of Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In Norway, for instance, it started in 1912 and stopped in 1950, after the War, at the UN's suggestions for methodology to be changed(Aslaksen & Koren 1996).

There is equally a third group of studies to talk about in context. Boulding (1972) was estimating household purchases at about 60% of GNP, plus most of the whole economy's subsidies. Ironmonger(2001) cites names like Morgan and Baewaldt with a study made in and for 1971 seeing intra-household transfers, the year of publication, about three time higher than the US Government's charity(similar) transfers. Burns(1977, p.8) highlighted that such intra-household transfers – i.e. that usually are as unpaid as works done and labour used in the household -- might be higher value than similar transfers within the neighbouring market economy – i.e. those, of course, are paid. Waring (1988a,b) adds to these a different view point, the one of the *unrewarded female activity* that is supposed to contribute not only to the economy and economic life.

The same household production measuring as *methodologies,* the last's primary attempts were made just by multiplying costs of hiring individual servant by agricultural profile household with the number of such existing households(Hawrylyshyn 1976). Vanek (1975) and Szalai (1972) were further highlighting a real turning point of such methodologies in the sixties, once more, together with using the *time resource* method -- i.e. this was coming to be in the very favour of international comparisons in such a way, e.g. see first a study of this type on 12 countries funded at that time by UNESCO and the Council of the International Institute for Social Studies, then the 'Szalai method' was coming to be extended on studies about other OECD member countries at least for time data collecting and households samples done. Later on, Goldsmidt-Clermont & Pagnossin-Aligisakis(1995) found in statistics of 12 OECD member countries on the 1985-1992 year interval an *average household work time*(i.e. unpaid work) of about 24-26 hours a week *per adult individual.*

And back to Ironmonger(2001, p.10), for the last time in this paragraph, he proposes, in his turn, other two alternative methods for households production estimating: (a) unearned wage/salary of the household member on the neighbouring labour market; (b) reward to craftsman of outside the household hired for some household activities. Even the author finds that both these might be criticized.

Not to end this paragraph without a reference representative for the opposite skepticism against the household's production function – see Ruuskanen(1994) arguing that studying the household's production function rather makes things more complicate for market economy traditional analysis, than really helping economic policies, as so much expected.

II.3 The household's time factor

We are back to *time,* above considered*,* that in the household's case is atributted to Gary Becker (1993)'s contribution on both of the equally above described functions that are production and consumption(Matilla-Wiro 1999, pp. 11, 33-34). In such an order the household time breaks down into: (A) *work* time – i.e. production, that is out of household -- and (B)*consumption* time – that is inside the household. But, as the result it remains difficult to identify that part of *extra-time* – off the *work time* – that exactly matches the *household consumption time*.

One of consumption time assessment methods in the household could be its income that is ‚forgone' or actually lost(Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.13). Or, might be just this way that the fundamental idea comes up – according to Ruuskanen (1994) time finds its equivalent in *market goods.* But not only – when 'time is income in the household' the same time actually becomes that(single) limited resource which is for household what the whole basic natural resources portfolio is for the 'great' economy. Also notice that market goods – i.e. when statutorily compared with time – are never limited fund. Moreover, *time* may see its value rising inside the household(Becker 1993) – e.g. when leisure-recreation time in the household lowers, this might increase the household's access to market goods and services; on the contrary, the household time rise might equalize some ‚forgone' income, resource and utility(Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.12). Such an idea comes to re-confirm the above theoretical option for the time equivalence into market goods since also observing concomitance of enlarging household time with real wage diminition.

Last, but not least, Becker further considers technological progress and improvements able to rise ‚consumption time productivity' in the household –new access to supermarkets, to telecommunication.

II.4 Others on the household

Ironmonger (1996) introduces the household's good/service of *care* and here accuses the *feminist* literature's responsibility for the care's novelty in studying and new inclusion in the household specific theories-models -- they here see a sort of *maintenance* for the *human capital* and, of course, *care* would be equally viewed as a good produced with the help of the household's *labour* – i.e. unpaid, once more -- and *capital* – viewed in all means and spaces detained by. More deeply viewed, *care* would be of two kinds: (a) *physical* – exercises, healthcare, sleeping, food providing and feeding – and (b) *psychological* – education, recreation, dialogue.

What is '*humane human capital'* and even counteracts the old(just) 'human capital' concept – that, of course, isn't any about capital, but on the contrary, about its opposite labour – is finally something that belongs to the household only – i.e. and never to the economy beyond. Or, this is also why the neoclassic thinking perceives it as really 'strange' stuff. For both theory and practice *humane human capital* contains what all 'purely economic' approach won't ever be able to comprise – and this while the same concept stays undeniable source/factor of performance and productivity for the household. What is more than human capital in the 'humane human' capital includes linkages and all interactions among people – e.g. real networks shaped as such --, together with promoting these, plus ideas that so move around between people and always regard either economic substrate, unhindered decisions, here including about maximizing utility, or comparative advantage and so on (Matilla-Wiro (1999, p.17; 19). Even earlier Mattila(1992) was here giving the example of Tanzania, where women were shaping such kind of relationship networks, primarily with relatives, but further on also with other people, as extensively and this was even helping the labour market, besides households, with capabilities renewed. *Humane human capital,* despite its undeniable support to both the households' production function and market economy, never meets any market equivalent, not even for labour market (Matilla-Wiro 1999, p.19).

In another development let us recall that the *unequal welfare distribution* within the household is a reality recognized by all theories-models in the area – i.e. it is nearly about a kind of 'universal household rule'(Bourguignon et co. 1993). The authors so get preocupied of finding all rules with this kind of influence and impact – i.e. such an approach comes up the same as above, namely in favour of policy making – e.g. fiscal and direct transfers policies. Unfortunately, such examples are yet here expected.

Last, but not least, let us equally have in this end at least one of those that might be the most significant conclusions of Matilla-Wiro (1999, pp. 32 and the following). The Finish author finds that, despite its importance, even the *household* term – i.e. here in the center of debate -- isn't unanimously viewed at least by theories-models which's basics will be explained in the next chapter, be they all the same neoclassic matter.

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