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Since I am creator of father groups in nature fair south Stockholm have I had the blessing, the commission, to speak with hundreds of proposed fathers, maybe including thousands of fathers. Once I even had a mom group. We talked all the time about cleaning, cleaning and it was *she* who all the time works and works. The man was mostly absent.

Once in Helsinki I saw a sign, a good one, “mum give birth to children, and children give birth to the father”. So when does a man become a father, a dad? That’s the key question in my eyes.

Some may say – and they are not so many – that a man become a father immediately when the woman gets pregnant. More say one becomes father at the time of childbirth. But most – and that is also my point of view - say that fatherhood is established in the daily caretaking and the responsibility and in love between the father and the child.

One young Swedish author writes in his book (Johan Nilsson, “koka makaroner”) that he became astonished over the explosion of feelings and his strong love. And in taking care for his daughter the young writer’s life changed totally. A good and nice book. It is in the daily routine and in the closeness to the child that the life of men is changed and that they really become fathers.

And the entire society will change in depth, too. But it takes time, time, time and more time. But it is worth it. The new generation of dads are slowly becoming better and better at that – to take care. Every day, every week. It's hard work. And it's all about – yes – responsibility.

But a lot of fathers are still conservative. And women too. 1/3 of the fathers, in my country, are genuine equals. Well, sometimes they are mostly talking and don't take the homework seriously. 1/3 are equals to some extent. But, in my eyes, the quiet opposition is problematic. They want no change at all. But nevertheless the attitude of men has changed significantly - and that of women too. 96% of the people in my country are pro equality. But it's also more of a lip service, I think. We meet old prejudices. But it is very satisfying to watch the progress of many young men. Like the words in "koka makaroner".

We have also an obstruction from women. So we have a lot of prejudices to meet. Swedish research also found one strange phenomenon. Even very equal young couples return to their old traditional gender roles when becoming parents.

And mostly all men view the home like a hotel, it's *her* main job and that's a big problem too. The main problem is that we are afraid of changing our habits and our ways to live. The old rules feel good, we know them and we are comfortable with them and we don't want to change anyone's mind, not even our own. The statistics from Swedish parental insurance confirm these chewy habits. I am coming back to that later.

There are a lot of reasons to be a good dad.

Daddy's are even responsible citizens.

Back home, with children, we have time to think, take long walks and I believe this is even good for many men when they later return to their work. They have also time to slow down, even when they are taking care of their kids.

The child's total love influences more than men understand. Life gets a deeper meaning and men become more mature and humble.

But it takes time, time and time. And Europe needs more children, no doubt about that. We have a crisis.

Many employers realize that men, and caretakers, who have been on paternity leave have learnt a lot about chaos and have become good at handling conflicts. To win over children, you have to collaborate.

We are in the beginnings of a social revolution. The new fathers are more and more active in taking responsibility in child care. And that is something we men have a poor track record. The Norwegian gender researcher Oystein Gullvåg Holter once told about an industrial leader, a business man with a lot of meetings, travels who once came home on a Friday evening and asked his young son which nice new present he wanted. And the son replied "I want to have another father".

Men have to find the real life. What worries me is the fact that children, the suburban children, children to unemployed fathers, are often living together with an absent dad. It's a problem and surely a question of social class as well.

Many women say goodbye to the old male thoughts. That's good! I would wish for fathers to find an alternative to the old male behaviour. The Swedish parental insurance, which was established as early as 1973, is still no success.

In Sweden both fathers and mothers can take parental leave – but not together. The distribution – according to the statistics from Försäkringskassan (Insurance) show that 20% of all parental leave days are taken by men. But many men are not taking any leave at all, so the actual percentage is smaller in reality. The numbers have also levelled off today. What a disaster. Although it is a difficult task we have to change our thoughts and minds if we want to improve our society.

It's a long road, very, very long road.

But Europe needs many, many more children. It's time to act. The politicians, the people in the business, people around in Europe, they must ensure that we choose the right track. We cannot of course have only old people living in Europe. Personally I am only slightly positive about whether we will cope. The development in Sweden is thus far not convincing.

Now to the good news;

Today's young fathers consider themselves to be better fathers than their own father. I believe this! And it's very, very important.

Men want to be good fathers, without doubt.

More men than ever want to have equality, even despite old prejudices.

Modern men are looking for a new balance between family life and work.

But even in Scandinavia, fathers are in a low speed race, not like Kimi Räikkönen, towards becoming better fathers.

But if it goes too slowly we will have to change the laws, just like in Iceland, where parental insurance goes 1/3 to the father, 1/3 to the mum and 1/3 to the family to be used how they want. And it works!

The TCO (Swedish Labour Union) predicts that it will take another 211 years until parental insurance days are equally distributed between mums and dads!

Women's better education will perhaps fix the problem, making her the main income earner in the home. That may not be the way the men have wanted things to develop.

Thanks for your attention!

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