

COST CA 11819 “Who Cares in Europe?”

Plenary meeting in Florence, 14-16 December 2020

Workshop: Gender in the “mixed economy of welfare”

(Efi Avdela, Dimitra Lampropoulou, Sonja Matter)

General remarks

In the field of the history of the welfare state, the concept of a mixed welfare economy proves fruitful in analysing and interpreting the production of social security by different actors. As Geoffrey Finlayson has argued: “There was always what is now often called a ‘mixed economy of welfare’ and within that mixed economy, the state was only one element – and arguably, for much of the nineteenth and even the twentieth century – it was not the most important.”¹

Recognising the complex and hierarchical set of arrangements between the various components (state, market, voluntary, informal) of the “mixed economy of welfare” and its different dimensions (provision, finance, regulation, choice, decision) has proven a fruitful research perspective. In addition to the state development of social security systems and other forms of social provision, it allows to examine the contributions made by families for their dependents as well as by mutual aid associations, trade unions, voluntary associations dedicated to caring for others, and to ask about the commitment of church institutions, as well as to analyse their interrelationships, cooperation or conflicts. This research perspective acknowledges that the mix in the “mixed economy” has varied in time and space but also in the different areas of welfare provision (health care, income maintenance, education, personal care, housing). Seeking to gain new insights into the history of collective agents – providers of care we focus primary on the division of gender. However, we are also interested in an intersectional perspective that would investigate how divisions of gender, class and race seep through institutions, communities, collectivities and families. Last but not least, a look at the various groups of actors opens up the possibility of understanding the “economy of makeshifts” (Olwen Hufton) in its diversity.²

¹ Geoffrey Finlayson cited in: Bernard Harris/Paul Bridgen, “Introduction. The ‘Mixed Economy of Welfare’ and the Historiography of Welfare Provision”, in: Bernard Harris/Paul Bridgen, eds., *Charity and Mutual Aid in Europe and North America since 1800*, New York/London 2007, 1-18, 2.

² Olwen H. Hufton, *The Poor of the eighteenth century France*, Oxford 1974.

The importance of the category “gender”

The different ways in which the various actors within this mixed welfare economy were deeply structured by the category of gender has been understudied after the first studies of the 1990s³. However, feminist critics have pointed early on that the mixed economy of welfare rely heavily on the labour of women, whether paid in diverse caring occupations, or more commonly, unpaid in the home.⁴ They moreover emphasized that rigorous application of market principles in social services reinforced the existing hierarchical sexual and racial division of labour; for instance, in the UK it was evident during the 1990s that an expanding feminisation at the lower levels of the social services hierarchy was coupled with further masculinisation at the higher levels, clearly reinforced by the white-male managerialism of the 1980s.⁵

Gendered assumptions have structured all aspects of social provision. Gender has been important in the division of care provision in the family. For example, there is no doubt that families provided (and still provide) a large part of social security. However, it is important to recognize that women perform a much larger share of “care work” than men and that this work is often unpaid. Gender has been important also in the care work performed outside the family, in the policies adopted by state institutions, in the gender structuring of voluntary associations. Even if one examines forms of redistribution, such as the social security systems, it is clear that men and women did not benefit equally from these benefits, nor participated equally in their planning and implementation. Gender differentiation in the production of social security and coverage of social risks also occurs within other social security systems, such as payments from philanthropic organizations or mutual aid funds. The category gender is equally important in respect to management of the private sector: membership, leadership, volunteering or paid work. The main aim of the workshop is to historicize the implicit assumption on which the "welfare state" and "care" are based, to understand the sexual division of welfare and the gendering of welfare policies, and to show how they have been produced, shifted, challenged or rejected by social practices and interactions. We are particularly interest in investigating these issues in parts of Europe that until today have not been included in the mental maps of the gendered dimension of the “mixed welfare economies”.

³ Gisela Bock & Pat Thane (eds), *Maternity & Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States 1880s – 1950s*, London & New York 1991; Susan Pedersen, *Family, Dependency, and the Origins of the Welfare State. Britain and France 1914-1945*, Cambridge 1993.

⁴ Hilary Land, “Who Cares for the Family?”, *Journal of Social Policy*, 7/3 (1978), 257-284; Gillian Pascal, *Social Policy: A New Feminist Analysis*, London 1997; Clare Ungerson and Mary Kember (eds), *Women and Social Policy. A reader*, London, ²1997.

⁵ Mary Langan, “Who Cares? Women in the Mixed Economy of Care”, in C. Ungerson and M. Kember (eds), *Women and Social Policy*, 323-328.

Research questions of the workshop

In this workshop we want to examine the gender-specific structure of “mixed welfare economies” in different European countries in the 20th century. The following questions are at the centre of the discussion:

- How were women and men represented in the “mixed economy of welfare”? Who provided social security and by what means? Who was in a position of power and where? In the family? In the voluntary sector? In the state services? How did these factors change over time?
- To what extent have women and men benefited from social security programs? What needs were met by social security programs in a “mixed economy of welfare”? What needs were not met by social redistribution programs?
- Are there certain moments of historical change in the organization of a gendered “mixed economy of welfare”?
- How have events such as wars, economic crises, or the change of political regimes affected the gendered organization of a “mixed economy of welfare”?
- What was the relation between the specific configuration that the “mixed economy of welfare” took during different periods of the twentieth century and its gender organisation?
- In what ways did gender intersect with other categories such as race and class in structuring a "mixed welfare economy"?

The aim of the workshop is to collect different European case studies and to open up the possibility of comparison. This could be an interesting starting point to develop a special edition of a journal.

COST members who are interested in participating in the workshop should send an email until December 7, 2020 to Efi Avdela (avdela@uoc.gr), Dimitra Lampropoulou (dlamprop@arch.uoa.gr), or Sonja Matter (sonja.matter@hist.unibe.ch).

Participants will be limited to 25 members. You will be notified by December 10.