

Gendering the mixed economies of welfare: ruptures and trajectories in post-war Europe

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The concept of the ‘mixed economy of welfare’ has had an enduring impact on the history of the welfare state. It has spawned numerous studies exploring how and why countries, regions and municipalities have balanced different forms and levels of welfare, i.e. state, charitable or private, official or informal. This research has highlighted the complex, and often ideological and politicised nature of these mixed economies of welfare over time and place. The scholarship has moved from a tendency to consider state and charitable provision and the balance between the two, to a focus on the interactions between the various actors implicated in the economies of welfare, and the practices, negotiations and relationships which underpin the provision and receipt of welfare.

Gendered assumptions have structured all aspects of the mixed economies of welfare and of social provision both inside and outside the family. Concepts of gender underlay the ideological framing of state and voluntary provision, the structure and hierarchies of the relationships between various providers, and the negotiations and performances integral to the receipt of welfare and/or care. It is clear, for example, that men and women neither benefitted nor participated equally in the various forms of redistribution from social security systems to philanthropic organisations. The category gender is equally important in respect to the management of the public and private sector, for example, in terms of membership, leadership, paid work or volunteering.

The main aim of the workshop is to historicize the implicit assumptions on which the ‘welfare state’ and ‘care’ are based, to understand the sexual division of welfare and the gendering of welfare policies and actions, and to explore how they have been produced, embedded, challenged, furthered or rejected, by social practices and interactions. In order to do this, we wish to focus on moments of ‘rupture’ in post-war Europe, when the mode of care or welfare provision appeared to be fundamentally questioned, shifted or changed, for instance the 1950s, the 1970s and the post-1989. At the same time, we are interested in tracing features of gendering the mixed economies of welfare that appear stable and continuous. While our focus will be on the postwar period,

we are also interested in comparisons with the prewar years. We are particularly interested in investigating these issues in parts of Europe that have not thus far been included in the mental maps of the gendered dimension of the mixed welfare economies. Broadening the scope of comparison and shedding light not only on large but also on small scale initiatives, may reveal different chronologies of change in various parts of Europe. The hope is that through different European case-studies, we can gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between ruptures and continuities and the importance of gender in framing these processes. Furthermore, we believe this approach may also elucidate the ways ruptures and trajectories are dialectically interwoven in specific historical and cultural contexts.

Within this framework, we are interested in an intersectional approach that investigates how divisions of gender, class and race seep through institutions, communities, collectivities and families. We welcome approaches to the gendered aspects of care / welfare conceived as both literal and metaphorical / symbolical. Case studies could focus on both sides of the welfare divide, i.e. both providers and recipients and the relationship between the two. Further proposed areas of research are: gendered stereotypes, professionalization, family forms and intra family relations, gender hierarchy in public and private provider entities.

Research questions of the workshop

- What constitutes rupture in the history of the mixed economy of welfare? What is the relationship between ruptures and continuities in the realities of these economies? What can the trajectories of the post-war histories of European ‘mixed economies of welfare’ tell us about notions of gender, family and 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 relationship 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?
- How were women and men represented in the mixed economy of welfare? Who was in a position of power, why and where?

- To what extent have women and men benefited from social welfare programs, either formal or informal? What needs were met and what were not by such programs in a mixed economy of welfare?

The aim of the workshop is to produce different European case studies which 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 to Efi Avdela (avdela@uoc.gr), Dimitra Lampropoulou (dlamprop@arch.uoa.gr), or Lindsey Earner-Byrne (lindsey.earner@ucc.ie) by April, 30th. You will be notified by May, 15th.