

FLAWS

IMPACT OF LOCAL WELFARE SYSTEMS ON FEMALE LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND SOCIAL COHESION



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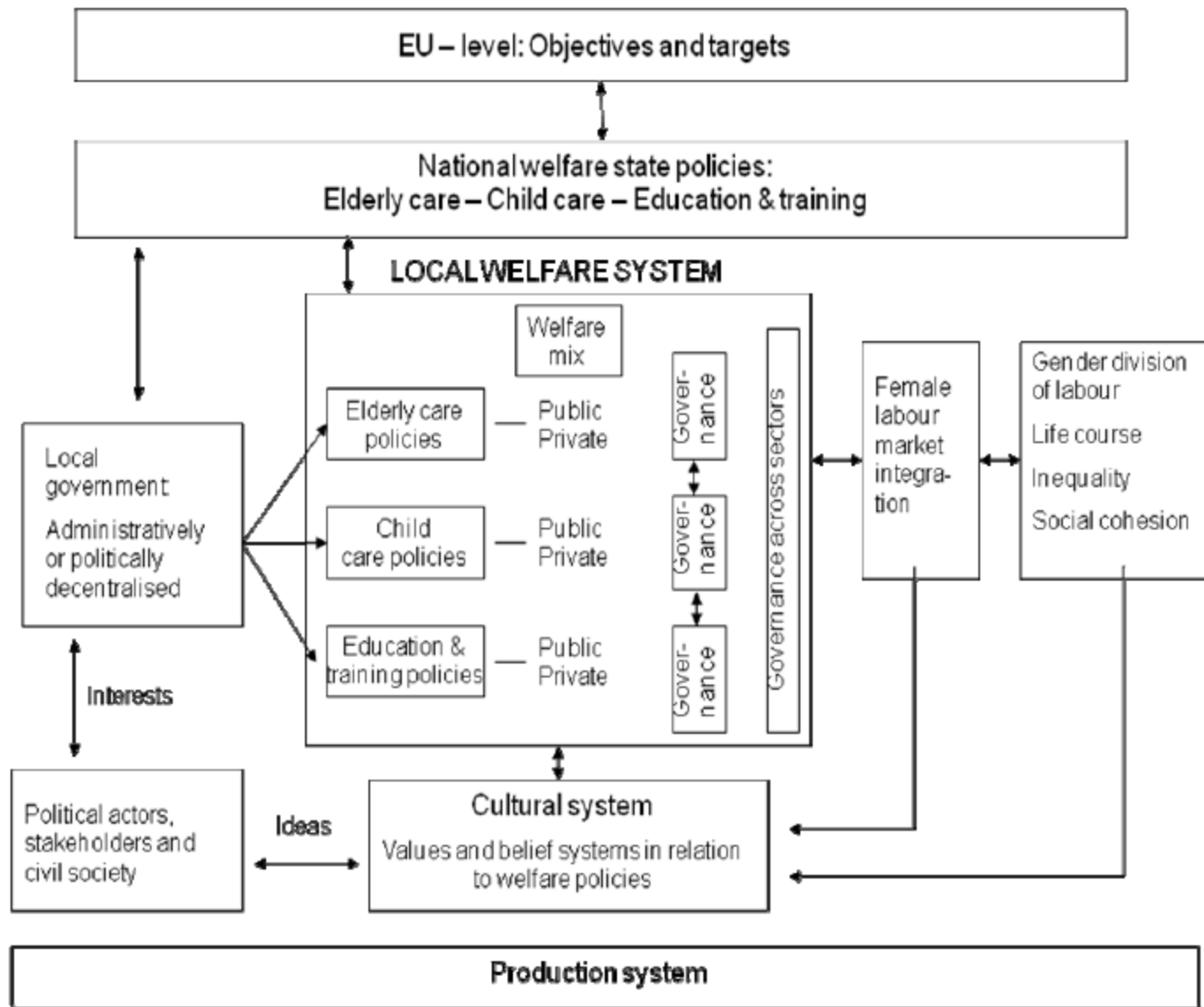
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- What is the problem/challenge?
- Female employment rates are too low in Europe
 - Lisbon agenda (2000)
 - EU 2020 employment strategy
- More women in employment will contribute to economic growth, social equality, social cohesion and the sustainability of the European Social Model

- What can be done?
- Lisbon/Barcelona (2002): social investment strategy, includes child care target
 - 90% coverage for children above 3 years of age
 - 33% coverage for children under three
- 2020 Strategy: social investment and life-cycle approach to work
 - Includes: child/eldercare, life-long-learning, i.e. programs which are supportive to female employment (FLOWS)
- Just move ahead!

- What about implementation?
- In general, EU strategies, policies and their implementation are based on a partnership between the Commission and the Member States.
- Problem: National member states do not have fully authority in areas such as care and life-long-learning
- Policies are in many countries formulated, financed and implemented locally – at the regional or city level.
- Calls for the local as a unit of analysis.



- FLOWS: 11 cities
- Social Democratic cities: Aalborg (Denmark) and Jyväskylä (Finland)
- Liberal regime cities: Leeds (England) and Dublin (Ireland)
- Conservative regime cities: Hamburg (Germany) and Nantes (France)
- Mediterranean cities: Bologna (Italy) and Terrassa (Spain)
- Post-communist regime cities: Tartu (Estonia), Brno (Czech Republic) and Székesfehérvár (Hungary)

- Different degrees of autonomy at the city level => different room for maneuvering at the local level:
- **Centralized** (England, Ireland)
- **Multi-level** (Italy, Spain, France, Germany)
- **Decentralized** (Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Hungary, Czech Republic)
- Differences between municipalities in a given country can be as large as cross-country differences.
- E.g. Denmark (2013): highest spending municipality (Copenhagen) spends DKK 83,476 per elder per year; lowest spending DKK 29,820 (municipality of Egedal)

1st Flashlight

- Do EU's employment targets and strategies inform and affect local policy makers, local goals, local political decision making, and implementation?
- How do preferences, interests, world views and cultural orientations of local political actors look like?
- Do local policies correspond to EU policies?

- Traces of EU employment strategies can be found nationally.
 - In some main governmental document (e.g. coalition agreement, government program)
 - More often in National Action Plan for Social Inclusion or the Operational Program of Human Resource Development; these documents are often requested by the EU.
- Supposed to frame local activities

Local studies

- Local policy documents of the cities
- Interviews with 120 local policy makers (snowball method) responsible for policy formation and implementation in relation to care and life-long-learning.

Results

- Only in three local policy documents (for the cities of Terrassa, Spain, Szekesfehervar, Hungary, and Brno, Czech Republic) the influence of EU in local policy-making could be found.
- Hardly any of policy makers interviewed at the local level was aware of EU strategies
- EU policies and guidelines are **very** weakly translated and transferred into local policies.

What matters locally?

- Least politicized fields in local politics
- Civil servants (not politicians) do to a large degree in most cities shape the action
- Political actors are responsive to local social practices, desires and needs
 - Women's labor market participation is seen as separate issue from the development of welfare services
- Action is dependent on economic, political and cultural factors
 - Some localities are marked by entrenched gender stereotypes
 - In others, equal opportunities have become a social norm
- All cities marked by economic recession; has increased pressure on women to provide informal care

Conclusion

- For EU policies to become effective, new types of vertical governance and dialogues between different policy levels must be established.
- Not only necessary for reasons of efficiency, but also for reasons of legitimacy
- A EU discourse about Europe's employment strategies takes place somewhere between Brussels and the capitals of Europe, totally disconnected from local political authorities responsible for policy making – and even more distant from ordinary people**.

2nd Flashlight

- Do social investment strategies (care and life-long learning) help women to enter, re-enter or remain in the labor market throughout their life course?
- Do women's employment lead to social cohesion?

- Interviews (8,800 survey interviews, and 44 focus group interviews including 440 women) show that work in general is central to women's economic independence, intellectual satisfaction, self-esteem, social integration and social cohesion
- However, some snakes in work-paradise:
 - Far more women than men are working in precarious-like jobs
 - Runs counter to full citizenship and cohesion

Major findings:

- The role of the local welfare state for women's employment decision is much less important than normally anticipated.

Child care institutions

- Employment rate of women with pre-school children is relatively high; i.e. above the average employment rate.
- It is independent of childcare coverage; i.e. child care institutions do not trigger women's employment
- Childcare provisions are not totally irrelevant for women's life conditions:
 - Lack of child care provisions leads women to work part-time associated with low income (not cohesive)
 - Daycare institutions reconcile the challenges of work and family life (support social cohesion)

Age

- Employment rate of women 55-64 is very low (often overlooked)
 - Differences in employment rates (in FLOWS cities) can to a large extent be ascribed to differences in the employment rate of older women
- May be a cohort effect.
- But needs to receive more attention if the aim is to increase the employment rate of women

Education

- High initial education is important for women's employment
- LLL plays a minor role
 - No correlation can be found between employment rates and number of women enrolled in LLL
- LLL display the Matthews effect: most LLL is delivered to women who are already in employment and have a vocational or academic education
- Marginalized groups of women are not included in the target group.

Design and coordination

- Care and LLL policies are not designed from the perspective of women's labor market integration; ideas about the promotion of female employment has informed the mindset of policy makers or structured the design of institutions
- Policies are not horizontally coordinated. The reason for lack of coordination is that systems are complex
 - Educational plans are primarily formulated at the national or regional level
 - Care policies are formulated at the local level

- In sum no empirical evidence seem to indicate that supply side oriented social investment strategies and policies foster growth in women's employment
- Leaves us with two questions:
 - Is social investment really creating employment?
 - Does social investment create new insider/outsider relations (cf. The Matthews effect)

What about demand side measures?

- Overall, demand side factors are extremely important for women's employment
- Local economy frames women's employment opportunities
- Of special importance: growth in the service sector – and especially the public service sector providing decent jobs and work conditions

Prospects on the demand side do not look to bright

- Financial crisis constrain women's employment in local communities
- Dismantling the welfare state to meet the financial crisis only makes things worse (for women)
 - Work opportunity decreases
 - Pressure on women to provide care themselves
 - Increasing work-life imbalances

Conclusion

- No easy solutions if the aim is to raise women's employment rate
- No single causal factor (e.g. day care) can be manipulated to do the trick
- Supply side oriented social investment strategies do not trigger employment opportunities or new practices
- Women's employment is to a large extent demand side driven
 - Clear correlation between women's employment and the size of the public sector
 - But welfare states are dismantled: developments move in the wrong direction

- Keep in mind:
- Women's decision making is complex. Decisions are made in a broader framework of complex – and often contradictory – cultural, institutional, political and economic contexts.
- Strong predictors for women's employment are their cultural orientation, self-image, economic and social life conditions.
- Vertical and horizontal discourses perhaps matter the most

Thank you!