

# FEMINA POLITICA

ZEITSCHRIFT FÜR FEMINISTISCHE POLITIKWISSENSCHAFT  
(FEMINIST JOURNAL OF POLITICAL SCIENCE)

**Call for Papers**

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## **Norms, Normalization and New Ambivalences in the Welfare State (Working Title)**

The industrialized welfare states of the Global North employ rights and entitlements, as well as functionally differentiated organizations of distribution, to institutionalize relationships of power and domination. Often, these lead to inclusion and exclusion along the lines of gender, class, race, disability, sexuality, and nationality. Inscribed in these relationships are welfare state models that represent social ideas about gender and intersectional inequalities. Through their normative power, these welfare state models impact social relations, creating hierarchies and structuring individual life courses.

For example, the welfare states frequently described as “conservative” in comparative welfare state research, such as West Germany or Austria, continue to be shaped predominantly by the norms and normality of the breadwinner model. Today, however, this order is eroding and transformed by contradictory sociopolitical developments. One major force in this has been the emergence of the ideal of a two-earner model in a social investment state, which focuses on general gainful employment for all genders. The orientation toward a society of working citizens not only establishes labor market availability as a key prerequisite for related rights and benefits but also ties social status to the ideal of a self-reliant, independent, and flexible subject.

In Germany, for example, this transformation of the welfare state and society has led to ambivalent developments: On the one hand, women\* and other sexually marginalized groups have seen an increase in labor market participation and hence autonomy. On the other hand, gendered inequalities in the labor market persist, with further axes of inequality coming into play given the various interconnected inequality relations within the group of women\*. Some reforms of family policy, the pension system, or labor market policy herald the departure from the normative model of the breadwinner whereas others exacerbate the welfare state’s pronounced emphasis on gainful employment.

Moreover, there are only a few new socio-political approaches that favor partnership-based and queer patterns of division of work in private households. In addition, hardly any working time or valuation models in the professionalized care system exist which might point to an alternative to a fundamentally crisis-ridden organization of social reproduction. Care work

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attributed to women\* is redistributed to a considerable extent between women\* of different social and national origins through transnational care arrangements. But even professionalized care continues to be characterized by low monetary and social recognition, precarious working conditions, and poor social security.

Finally, the pluralization of living situations has created a greater diversity of gender and living conditions. The erosion of the “normal biography” promotes a growing diversification of beneficiaries. At the same time, the welfare state, through its procedures and preconditions, contributes to the categorization and classification of socially constructed groups and the organization of care in nuclear families. This is accompanied by new normalization practices, in part also by stigmatization processes, which manifest themselves not least in discourses about poverty, (new) inequalities, or gender equity in the political public sphere.

These dynamics are just a few examples that point to the significant challenges the welfare state model is facing and to the shifts in the instruments of labor and social policy since the turn of the millennium, if not earlier. However, there is no new, coherent model to replace the old one. As a result, contradictory social, labor, and gender policy incentives are created, highlighting the incoherence of current policies.

We are seeking abstracts addressing the following questions:

- How do new welfare state models become established and how do (old and new) normalization processes emerge regarding gender and intersectional inequalities? What are the gender-related assumptions of normality that shape debates in the political public sphere on the present and future of the welfare state?
- Which political, structural, and cultural factors explain current welfare state developments, policy changes, or policy persistence? Why is it possible for incoherent family, care, and social policies to persist?
- Which established and recent approaches to welfare state research contribute to explaining current welfare policy dynamics and phenomena? In addition, which approaches from related fields (e.g., on justice, alienation, stigmatization) might be fruitful?
- What is the influence of the welfare state's institutional setup and the design of established social law, including the associated negotiation and decision-making routines, on the emancipatory development of gender policies? What are the limiting or enabling conditions?
- What role does the intersectionality of different inequalities play in the protection against social risks? Is the importance of gender in social policy discourse diminishing in favor of other categories of inequality? What does this differentiation mean for the ability of collective actors to mobilize in the fight against gender inequalities and poverty?
- How and by whom can the needs of so-called “weak interests” be brought into social and labor policy reform and decision-making? What room for political maneuvering do equality-oriented actors organized in associations and civil society have in shaping social policies with an emancipatory effect? Which practices of resistance can be observed to undermine or expand existing assertions and positions in innovative ways?
- How can the developments of the welfare state in Germany be systematized and analyzed in an international comparison from a feminist perspective? What is the role of the European Union or the United Nations in these developments?

We welcome both theoretical and empirical contributions, case studies and country comparisons, as well as quantitative and qualitative methodological studies.

### **Abstracts and Contact**

Agnes Blome and Julia Lepperhoff are the Special Issue editors for this issue. Abstracts of one to two pages should be sent to [a.blome@katho-nrw.de](mailto:a.blome@katho-nrw.de), [julia.lepperhoff@eh-berlin.de](mailto:julia.lepperhoff@eh-berlin.de) or to

redaktion@femina-politica.de by **November 30, 2023**. As a feminist journal promoting women inside and outside academia *Femina Politica* prioritizes qualified abstracts by women.

### **Submission Deadline for Contributions**

The Special Issue editors select contributions based on abstract submissions and invite authors to submit full papers until **December 15, 2023**. The deadline for manuscripts of 35,000 to maximum 40,000 characters (including spaces, footnotes, and bibliography), prepared for anonymous double blind review, is **March 15, 2024**. Information concerning the author(s) should only be provided on the title page. All manuscripts are reviewed by external reviewers (double blind) and by one journal editor. The reviews will be returned by **May 15, 2024**. The final publication decision will be based on the full-length paper. The deadline for the final version is **July 15, 2024**.

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