

EDITORIAL

The veil or headscarf has become an issue in Europe, as a religious symbol anathema to militantly secularized polities like the French, as well as a target of Islamophobic anti-immigration politicians. Kemalist Turkey developed as a top-down secularized state, similar to the French state and to the anti-clericalism of the Iberian peninsula in the first third of the twentieth century. In an article that is bound to be controversial, Ayse Guveli of the University of Essex presents a critical look at the impact on those at the receiving end of the headscarf ban in Turkey. She argues, on the basis of empirical evidence, that it has meant not only humiliation of the women affected, but that it has also decreased women's chances of education and employment; indeed, that it functions as an elite preservation of educational and labour market privilege.

In the previous issue of *European Societies* we had an article about the sociology of new forms of political participation. This is continued here by Luke Yates of the University of Manchester, studying who takes part in ethically or politically critical consumption, either by boycotting or by 'buycotting', i.e. buying things for moral/political reasons. The practice is spread very unevenly across Europe: frequent in Northern and West-Central Europe, rare in Southern and East-Central Europe. In the former group of countries, women were more critical consumers than men.

Family relations constitute our second theme this time, analyzed from very different angles, reflecting the rich diversity of sociology. Three make their own use of the large European Social Surveys, which have become a central resource of European sociological research. But Arne Mastekaasa and Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund of the University of Oslo utilize the annual Norwegian labour force surveys to assess the impact of the massive entry of women into the labour market on the income distribution of households. While husbands' earnings have become more unequal in Norway since about 1980, like in most countries, wives' earnings have in fact become less unequal. Like in most North Atlantic countries, the increasing labour force participation of married women has significantly mitigated the recent turn to more inequality among males.

Public policies and institutions of maternal leave and of childcare differ widely in Europe. Anders Ejrnaes, of Roskilde University, focuses on how women experience and evaluate the different packages on offer with

respect to their labour market prospects after maternity. Austrian women come out as the most critical, and Danish the least.

Divorce or separation have become quite normal outcomes of a European coupling in the twenty-first century. Generally, these break-ups tend to have negative effects on children and their life chances, at school and in the labour market, but so too may dysfunctional marriages and partnerships. Marco Albertini, of the University of Bologna, and Anna Garriga of the Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona look at the effects of parent–child contacts after divorce. In the ongoing debate about declining effects of time and of context, the contribution of Albertini and Garriga finds no evidence – taken from the Survey of Health, Age, and Retirement in Europe – of decreasing negative effects.

It is well known that divorcees and widow(er)s are less happy and consider themselves in poorer health than married people. But are there contextual effects, deriving from the rates of married and, for various reasons, non-married people around? That is the question which Tim Huijts and Gerbert Kraaykamp, of the University of Nijmegen, try to answer, trawling the European Social Surveys of 2002–2006. The authors do find a range of interesting contextual variations, e.g. a high percentage of married people negatively affecting the subjective health of widowed people, or a high percentage of cohabitants being negatively associated with the subjective health of the unmarried. The paths of causality largely remain puzzling, though.

Non-married cohabitation has become a major feature of European sexual and family relations. But it remains very differentiated, both between the North and the South, and also between the West and the East. Kairi Kasearu and Dagmar Kutsar, of the University of Tartu, present an update from the latest European Social Surveys, and insert their findings in the still inconclusive debate of European family convergence.

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