

EDITORIAL

Rights, Responsibility, and Identities

After World War II employment became a right, at least a male right. Full employment was an official national goal, a right to work was even inscribed in some postwar constitutions. As part of the neoliberal offensive of the 1980s and 90s, a duty to keep oneself “employable” was substituted for a right to employment. Hans Pruijt analyzes the import of “employability” into the Dutch labour market as a discursive game. The obligation to keep oneself employable could be presented as an “empowerment” of employees. Managers and cooperative trade union officials engaged in a language game of translating employability from Thatcherite English into Dutch. The former opted for *inzetbaarheid*, roughly renderable into standard English as deployability, while the unions wanted to name it *meerbaarheid*, meaning capacity to defend oneself. The practical effects of the game, according to Pruijt, seems to have been modest.

Employability in a less ideologically charged sense may be taken as the reason for Colin Williams’ and Sara Nadin’s counter-intuitive finding that most undeclared work in Europe is done by formally employed people. This is particularly pronounced in the Nordic countries. Only in Southern Europe (before the recent crisis) do people outside the official labour force and the unemployed together do more undeclared paid work than the employed, 56–44%, respectively, in terms of hours.

Comparative attitudes to social rights can now be extensively studied, thanks to the rich supply of international surveys, which can be combined with national macro-data and institutional groupings of nations. In this issue Sang-Hoon Ahn and Soo-Wan Kim look at support for public pensions, and Johanna Kallio and Mikko Niemelä search for people blaming the poor for their poverty. Among the memorable findings of Ahn and Kim are, the strong female support for public pensions, making gender effects more influential than class and age, and that the effect of age declines strongly with class ascendancy. The authors also want to point to the negative impact (though weak) of national taxation size, when pension level is controlled for.

Most likely to blame the poor for their poverty are, on a national level, (30–40% of the) people in the neoliberal post-Communist countries, the Baltics, Czecho-Slovakia, and Poland, and least likely the Swedes and the

Dutch. Among individuals, the young, the old (65+), people who never had any economic problems, and manual workers are more likely to see the cause of poverty in the laziness and lacking willpower of the poor than corresponding reference groups.

Two articles study parents and their small or adolescent/young adult children. Pau Baizán, Marta Domínguez-Folgeras and Maria José González find in Spain the general pattern of a crucial mechanism for the reproduction of inequality, i.e., higher class parents devote more time to developmental and “high intensity” care of their children. But they also find that fathers out of work do more “developmental” care than highly educated working fathers, and that housewife dedication to qualifying child care does not follow the class scale.

To what extent the welfare pattern of Mediterranean Europe can be adequately characterized as “familistic” was debated in *ES* 15:4. But that the predominant relations between Mediterranean parents and their adolescent and young adult children are much more familistic than in Central and Northern Europe is non-controversial. Therese Lützelberger reports from a *Eurostudent* database that in the mid-2000s 76% of Italian students aged 21–24 were living with their parents, while 27% of the German and 4% of the Finnish did. Her own study is a qualitative exploration of the identity cultures of independence and interdependence in German and Italian relations of parents and grown-up children.

One of the major features of “Europe-making” in the last 20 years has been East-to-West travel and migration. The German historian and urban anthropologist Karl Schlögel (2013) has devoted his latest collection of essays to it. One of the biggest sources of this movement has been Romania, whose domestic population is declining since the early 1990s. By 2009 ten percent of Romanians, 2.1 million, were residing in the EU15, and in 2012 more than 900,000 were registered in Spain. This is the important background to Silvia Marcu’s delimited qualitative investigation of how Romanian immigrants to Spain interpret and reconstruct their identity.

Göran Therborn
University of Cambridge

Reference

Schlögel, K. (2013) *Grenzland Europa*, München: Carl Hanser.