

Equal Participation and Diversity

Conference Report⁽¹⁾

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The colloquium “Equal Participation and Diversity” was hosted by the Japanese-German Center Berlin (JDZB) on December 1, 2017, in cooperation with the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) and with the support of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES). The event brought together an interdisciplinary and international group of renowned gender scholars. This colloquium was organized in the context of changing economies and growing investigation about gender equality in industrialized societies. Drawing from examples stemming from the Japanese, South Korean and German cases, scholars engaged in discussions concerning the latest development of gender policies and their social and economic influences.

Panel I

The first panel on “Innovative Political Approaches towards Gender Equality and Diversity” covered current approaches and reforms towards gender equality and diversity, tackling the issue of gender mainstreaming, gender budgeting and issues of implementation and assessment. The first presentation on “The Rise and Fall of Gender Mainstreaming in Germany – Lessons to Learn” was based on a paper by Dr. Regina FREY from the Institute for Social Work and Social Education, unfortunately unable to attend the event, and presented by Prof. em. Dr. Ilse LENZ. Focusing on the German case, the paper highlighted gender equality as a basic principle in the German constitution and social law, as well as in the functioning of federal governance. However, it appears that there is a relative absence of initiatives taken in order to promote it. Gender Mainstreaming (GM) has been introduced through a federal cabinet decision as a leading strategy to achieve gender equality, but an overall policy implementation (such as a comprehensive gender budgeting system) lacking at the federal level undermined possible outcomes. Concrete measures are being observed at a sub-federal level, but institutional mechanisms still lack at the national level, making it challenging to tackle persistent gender inequalities. The complex debate around the concept of “gender” within civil society complicates the process of implementing national measures. The presentation ended on several recommendations, putting an emphasis on promoting



Prof. em. Dr. Ilse LENZ & Prof. Dr. MAE Michiko

1. This report portrays the main line of argument of the conference and it summarizes the presentations and discussions according to the understanding of the author. We therefore ask not to quote single remarks as literal remarks of the speakers.

research concerning Gender Impact Assessment (GIA) and improving Gender Budgeting (GB) at a European level, while calling for the creation of institutional mechanisms at the national level, accompanied by an assessment and monitoring system, and a further discussion at the societal level.

The second presentation by Prof. Dr. MIURA Mari⁽²⁾ from Sophia University on “Revisiting Social Investment in Japan” addressed the topic of social investment in contemporary Japan. Pushed by demographic changes, reforms had to be implemented in the last two decades, and since 2009, social expenditures have grown, with for example the multiplication of daycare facilities to support working women. However, MIURA underscores the absence of consideration on human capital formation, and the sustained assumptions over gendered labor division. According to her, the Womanomics launched by the Abe government, rooted in neoliberalism and anti-feminist conservatism, promoted women’s activation but without questioning gender discriminations, the male breadwinning system, and the link between womanhood and motherhood. The shift from a manufacturing nation to a knowledge-based economy does not seem to have been acknowledged by recent governments, leading to the absence of investment in career paths for women. If the Womanomics were aiming at “making women shine”, it appears that reforms have neither led to a better representation of women in the economic sphere nor to an overall debate on gender inequalities.

In the third presentation on “Bringing Back the Policy Potential of Gender Mainstreaming to Challenge Gender Inequality in Korea”, Prof. Dr. KIM Kyoung-Hee from Chung-Ang University covered the issue of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) in the case of South Korea, with perspectives on the newly elected Moon government. GM has been implemented in late 1997. Working with feminist organizations and civil society, the government enacted several laws and acts, creating institutional mechanisms to ensure the promotion of gender equality. However, with the return of a neo-conservative government in 2008, gender impact assessment started being implemented without a clear concern for GM. With time, GM became technocratized, emptying the concept from its political contents and objectives. According to the discussant, the reasons for such a technocratization would be the absence of clear definition for the term “gender”, but also the powerful neoliberal ideas embedded in the economic discourse that tainted the issue of gender with notions of efficiency and effectiveness rather than equality. The presentation ended on the plans announced by the newly elected government to bring GM into the political debate through the establishment of a Presidential Commission on Gender Equality and the strengthening of the Ministry of Women and Family.

Panel II

The second panel on “Participation and New Forms of Securing Work and Family Life” revolved around contemporary challenges surrounding gender equality in politics and in the labor market with regards to the different reforms of the welfare system. The first presentation by Prof. Dr. Hildegard Maria NICKEL from Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin on “More Gender Equality? New Patterns of Conflict in Gender Relations” relied on the ongoing Hans Böckler Foundation (HBS) research project conducted at Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin entitled “Participation and Reproduction: The Employment and Gender Policy Roles Played by High Skilled Workers and High Level Managers at the German Rail Operator Deutsche Bahn AG”. According to the presenter, even if there is a growing integration of women into managerial positions, leading to a reflection on women’s role with regards to production and reproduction, leadership culture in the company still ignores the necessary

2. Conventional Japanese and Korean name order is generally followed: FAMILY NAME – given name

balance between professional and private lives, an issue that is even more exacerbated by the use of communication technologies. The resistance of male workers, despite a rise of awareness among male managers and skilled workers, also impedes the possible changes in the working environment. New boundary struggles between production and reproduction, as well as new gender traps, are obstacles to the integration of women in the labor market, especially when it comes to managerial positions. NICKEL underlines the need to think further about the issue of gender-fair distribution of labor in the workplace and to expand the reflection to embrace lifestyle in a holistic manner.

The second presentation by D. TSUJI Yuki, Associate Professor at Tōkai University, titled “A Challenge to Patriarchal Political Arena, or What? Analysis of KOIKE Yuriko's Uprising in the 2017 National Election” was centered on the rise and fall of KOIKE Yuriko, with her election as Tōkyō's governor in 2016 and her failure to secure a large number of seats during the legislative elections in 2017. As the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP, conservative) did not endorse her for the 2016 gubernatorial elections, Koike decided to create a local party “Tomin First” (Tōkyō Citizens First Party) and challenged the Japanese two-party system revolving around the LDP and the DPJ (The Democratic Party of Japan). With a populist but neoliberal program, highlighting gender imbalance in politics and including women's policies, she was able to collect votes from liberal, but also conservative competing parties, with a higher support coming from female voters. KOIKE also challenged the Japanese familialist welfare regime by offering an approach leaning towards a neoliberal model, promoting a universal breadwinner system and therefore the expansion of female employment. According to the presenter, the victory of KOIKE's party at the 2016 Tōkyō election illustrates the citizens' dismissal of a patriarchal party (the LDP) and the demand for alternative policies to face new social issues. Nevertheless, the new party created for the national election, the Party of Hope, only secured 50 seats in the Lower House, showing the limits of her program. Koike was criticized for enhancing ideological coherence within her party, not devoting herself to her status as Tokyo's governor and implementing a top-down party governance. Increasing the number of female candidates was therefore not enough to secure a victory. KOIKE's parties showed that the party leadership's intervention can bring a change and increase the number of female candidates within the party, but also showed that a more democratic running of the parties themselves was expected for voters to endorse them.

In the third presentation on “Reconciliation of Work and Family without Gender Equality: South Korea's Dilemma”, Prof. Dr. HONG Seung-Ah from the Korean Women's Development Institute discussed the issue of Work Life Balance (WLB) in the context of South Korea. The increase of women on the labor market in the past decades has led two-earner families to become prevalent in Korean society, creating a demand to reconsider the issue of WLB, but more generally social policies. The presenter started by presenting three main policy areas in which reforms were made in order to accommodate the societal changes. First, childcare services were created in 1991 in order to support working parents. But it appears nowadays that 58.4 % of children taken care of in those facilities have non-working mothers, questioning the full impact of the reform. Second, Parental Leave was expanded in 2001 in order to balance work and childrearing, including full paternal leave starting in 2007. However, data still shows a lower rate of men taking a leave, an issue related to organizational issues within companies (disadvantage in promotions and job arrangements) but also economic struggles (parental leave compensations are too low to ensure economic stability). The last measure was improving Work Flexibility in 2010, with the goal of creating new jobs and increase women's economic participation. It could have led to a better balance between family life and work, but it appeared that women often use their extra free time for childcare, children's education and housework, in a much higher proportion than men. Even though South Korea has engaged in a rapid reform of its social policies, many issues still remain. Structural rigidities penalizing fathers who take time off work and maintaining care work mainly onto women's shoulders; there is a need to

encourage and strengthen policy implementation and men's participation, but first of all, there is a need to put gender equality on the agenda once again, in order to question the link between caregiving and womanhood in the Korean context.

In the last presentation of the second panel on "Gender Inequality in a Growing Service Economy? Non-Standard Workers in Germany and Japan", Prof. Dr. TANAKA Yōko from the University of Tsukuba addressed the issues related to non-standard work in Germany and Japan. With the expansion of the service sector, both countries have seen a growing number of non-standard workers. This shift brought three issues possibly leading to the devaluation of work, especially for female workers: a difference in skill formation, a devaluation of gendered vulnerabilities and a persisting male breadwinner system.

Even though it is undoubted that the general employment structure is now shifting towards a female-oriented non-standard work in the service sector in both countries, TANAKA highlights the presence of important differences in the two cases. In general, part-time work in Germany is considered as a variation of full-time employment, giving access to a better wage, benefits and bonuses, and it concerns mainly young workers. In the Japanese case, part-time work is detached from full-time employment, with little prospect for a career, pay raise, no access to benefits and bonuses, and it affects mostly women, bringing in a gendered dimension.

According to the presenter, these differences are rooted in the labor conditions of full-time employment. The conditions being constraining in the Japanese context, with unlimited working hours, possible compulsory periodical relocations and expected devotion towards the company, many people (and especially women) prefer overlooking the disadvantages of non-standard work. In Germany, collective agreements led to a form of social protection of part-time workers and to the possibility to transition from part-time to full-time employment. Even if the service sector is growing in both countries, the two examples show how labor policies can impact non-standard workers differently, with important consequences on female workers' trajectories.

Panel III

The last panel of the symposium on "Paths towards Participatory Societies" was dedicated to recent developments of the concepts of womanhood and manhood, and their implications for participatory societies. The first presentation on "The Men's Need for Gender Equality" offered by Prof. Dr. Stephan HÖYNG from the Catholic University of Applied Sciences Berlin tackled the need for more gender equality from a masculine perspective. If feminist groups have often highlighted the existence of male privileges rooted in patriarchy, the presenter argues that patriarchy also comes with constraints that burden men (lack of self-care, pressure to succeed professionally, limited time for childcare, etc.). Within the labor market, capitalism led to the link between masculinity and certain types of sectors, pulling men away from care work or social work. There is the need to understand that a hegemonic masculinity influences the construction of identities and that it also creates tensions for men. Drawing on data showing men's vulnerabilities related to health and life expectancy, but also the gender based division of labor, HÖYNG stresses the importance of gender equality for both women and men, deploring the lack of public policies aiming at reconfiguring masculinity. Civil



Prof. Dr. Stephan HÖYNG

groups now advocate for a redefinition of this concept, especially towards a caring masculinity. As a conclusion, HÖYNG underscores the dangers of creating new forms of normative masculinity and the need to reconstruct gender relations in a democratic manner.

The second presentation on "'Shining Women' Policy Under the ABE Government: A Japanese Version of Gender-Mainstreaming?", held by Dr. SHIN Ki-Young, Associate Professor at Ochanomizu University, offered an analysis of the "All Women Shining Society Policy" in Japan, asking if this policy could be considered as a new form of Gender-Mainstreaming (GM). In 2013, Prime Minister ABE pledged to promote a "society where women shine" as a part of his economic growth strategy, leading to the Act Concerning Promotion of Women's Career Activities in 2015. Tackling many issues, such as the promotion of women into leadership positions, the return to the labor market after childbirth, men's parental leave, or support for childcare, it aims at mobilizing the dormant power of female workers. Focusing mostly on the business sector, the government has produced numerical targets in order to promote women's participation. But according to the presenter, the achievements are still underwhelming. Even if all national and local governments have produced action plans, as well as 99.9 % of firms with more than 300 employees, the implementation is still lacking, notably because of an absence of enforcement measures. Since 2017, the Women Shining Society policy has expanded in order to incorporate more issues, such as violence against women, health, or single-parent support. If it seems that gender equality would be at the heart of those policies, the discussant underscores the conservative stance of PM ABE against the promotion of gender equality before his arrival in power, concluding that the ultimate goal of his policies is the full-scale mobilization of the working force in order to promote a strong nation-building, not through better gender equality, but through the contribution of women to economic growth.

The last presentation on "Pleated Hair, Hair Rollers and Undyeing Hair: the Challenges of Women's Participation in Public Participation in Korea" was given by Dr. KIM Hyun-Gyung from Freie Universität Berlin. Taking on the examples of three public figures (PARK Gun-Hye, LEE Jung-Mee and KANG Kyung-Hwa) and their hairstyles, the presenter offered an analysis of the presence of women on the South Korean public scene. The modern public and political spheres are still male dominated, explaining why women tend to get more attention, especially about the way they look. In the Asian context, as it was in the European one, women are often associated with the private sphere, leading to their underrepresentation in modern democracies. After being elected as president in 2012, PARK's pleated hair was used to remind the population of the paternalistic social activities and image of her mother, while promoting policies reminding of her father's presidency. However, her tidy hair became the center of criticisms after the Seawol ferry incident in 2014, as it was interpreted as a symbol of unnecessary vanity and corrupt femininity. On the other side, the constitutional court judge LEE, who voted in favor of the impeachment of PARK in 2017, was publicly seen with hair-rolls in her hair, and became a symbol of the difficulties to bring together professional and private lives for women. As a last example, the discussant brought up the example of KANG, currently the first female Foreign Minister in South Korea. Her undyed hair, going against the pressure for female workers to look young and feminine, created the image of an independent, capable professional woman. However, her education abroad and career path created a gap between her and working class women, deepening a gap among women in a post-developmental state. The discussions that arose from those three women's hairstyles show the importance of appearance, especially for female figures, in democracies because of the necessity to represent oneself in the public sphere.



Dr. KIM Hyun-Gyung

Discussion

Before moving onto the general discussion, MAKIYAMA Hiroe, a member of the House of Councilors in Japan, was invited to express her opinion about the event and possible questions. She expressed the need for more female politicians in Japan, in order to tackle the gender imbalance, but also in order to represent female voters better. She asked female researchers to pay attention to the initiatives implemented by female politicians, such as the group Kanajo ("Women of Kanagawa Prefecture") in order to make their actions more visible.

The general discussion revolved around two main topics: the common issues between Germany, Japan and South Korea, and the differences that need to be considered. It appeared that the current entrenchment of the welfare state, under the idea that it is too costly, is shared between the three countries, and that neoliberal policies in general tend to lead to a representation of women as economic actors, without systematically raising awareness about gender equality. But with the major social changes happening, with for example demographic change and structural changes within the family as an institution, it might be important to go beyond the traditional vision of family and address other issues. It also seems that the three countries have seen progress with regards to gender inequality, even though many issues still remain; there is therefore a need to carefully analyze the new issues and put them in a transnational perspective, by comparing the changes and evolutions in different countries. In terms of differences, scholars pointed out the need to carefully define concepts, such as "gender equality", "democracy" or "feminism", as they might convey different meanings. Reminding of the context is extremely important when addressing issues such as "family policies", "masculinity", "femininity", "hegemony", as concepts are constructed within this particular context.

Overall, the colloquium has allowed researchers to bring together different perspectives from three similar, but still quite different countries, and to open a discussion about gender equality and social participation in rapidly changing environments. Different trajectories of change are observed nowadays, with tensions between neoliberal/conservative policies and empowerment, as well as between different kinds of feminism, but there is still an overall need to address and discuss the issues gender equality, democracy and social justice further.

