

Dagmar Kutsar & Marjo Kuronen (eds.), *Local Welfare Policy Making in European Cities* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015)

Local Welfare Policy Making in European Cities is an anthology covering 11 different cities in the European Union, through case studies of local welfare policies. The book disseminates the findings of the research program *Impact of Local Welfare Systems on Female Labour Force Participation and Social Cohesion (FLOWS)*, and it is funded by the European Union's framework program. Therefore, the book has a very strong theme of female labour force participation that is evident throughout the book. In connection with this theme, the book examines the policies of child- and elder care policies in the 11 cities.

The book tries to draw a connection between the European Union's goals of gender equality and female labour market participation, with the impact of local welfare policies in the studied European cities. It is both a main point of the book as well as the premise of its relevance, that local welfare policy processes can support the European Union's goal of increased women's labour force participation and, also, that local policy and polity are the main structural barrier thereof.

The studied cities is selected to represent the following European regions: the Nordic countries, North-west Europe, Continental Europe, Mediterranean Europe and post-socialist Central-east Europe.

The first section of the book is focused on statistical comparisons of the studied cities and comments on the development of female labour market integration across them. The later sections examine local policy processes, childcare and elder care respectively.

Although one might expect a comparative study of regional welfare policies, the book is narrowly concerned with female labour market participation in relation to the welfare services of child- and elder care. The gendered focus is also the reason that care-related welfare services are chosen as the welfare policies for comparison. Female labour market participation is a strong theme in all the chapters. There is nothing wrong with this focus, but I would expect the title of the book to reflect it. One could almost claim that the title is misleading. But as the saying go: "don't judge a book by its cover". To do justice to the content of the book, it can be assessed as a book about female labour market participation with a focus on local welfare policies.

Across the 11 cities, the book analyses the labour force participation and job opportunities for women in relation to factors such as, local gender culture, welfare regimes (on a liberal to social democratic continuum) and local economic situations. The policies and the local context in the cities are analysed in great detail. With an international group of contributors, the book utilises the authors' local expert knowledge well and it gives a thorough presentation of the local circumstances forming labour force policies and gender

equality processes.

The book tries to move between two widely different scales. I can only appreciate the attempt to get knowledge by analysing scales as wide as international statistical comparisons, to local city polity and local welfare service provisions. Though the relation between the two scales of analysis could be emphasised more strongly, the book shows that the interplay of local policy landscapes and global economic developments is of significant influence for gender equality in the local labour forces.

The international and interdisciplinary nature of the book that gives it the aforementioned merits also brings about one of the greatest quarrels that I have with the book. As stated, the book reports the findings of the FLOWS research project. It seems too apparent though, that the book tries to collect and re-sample various parts from the project. Though all the chapters are centred around female labour force participation and comparisons of the 11 cities, they seem only loosely connected. Albeit an anthology is fragmented by definition, I strongly miss credible conclusions and comments drawing the different chapters together into a coherent story or at least relating them to each other.

Because of its strong theme of female labour force integration, the book will be of particular interest to scholars in the field of gender studies. Scholars with an interest in labour market policy or with a focus on local welfare policy will also benefit from reading this book.

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