

### **Whose Welfare? Fresh Perspectives on the Post-war Welfare State and its Global Entanglements**

**Veranstalter:** Monika Baár / Paul van Trigt, Research Group „Rethinking Disability: the Global Impact of the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) in Historical Perspective“, Leiden University

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**Bericht von:** Berend Mul, Research Group „Rethinking Disability: the Global Impact of the International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) in Historical Perspective“; Daniël Korving, History Department, Research Group „Diversifying the Collections: Inclusive Citizenship and Public Histories of Exclusion“, Leiden University

The stated aim of the workshop was to facilitate new ways of thinking about the welfare state, by questioning how its history has been shaped by interactions on the transnational level and by the influence of historically marginalised groups, such as disabled persons and migrants. The twelve presented papers of the workshop were divided into five sessions, in addition to the key-note lecture by Sandrine Kott and a public debate session with the Dutch Council for Health and Society.

The first paper was presented by KARIM FERTIKH (Strasbourg). Fertikh applied an actor and process-centred methodology to look at the transnational dimension of the construction of the post-war welfare state (1945-1970) in Europe. Fertikh described a ‘milieu’ of internationally minded reformers in governments, academia, trade unions, and international organisations such as the International Labour Office (ILO) who attempted to interconnect national social insurance systems. While most multilateral agreements were concluded between Western countries Fertikh showed that they also extended beyond the Iron Curtain. Continuing in the same time period, the next paper by GILDAS BRÉGAIN (Paris) investigated the creation and adoption of the Vocational Rehabilitation Recommendation (no. 99) by the 38th International Labour Conference in 1955. Comparing the content of Recommendation no. 99

with the ILO’s vocational rehabilitation policy for war veterans in the 1920s, Brégain argued that the thinking of the ILO in the post-WWII period was marked by a liberal economic shift. The Recommendation favoured ‘selective placement’ of disabled persons with competitive productivity in private and public enterprise over a whole restructuring of the social organisation of labour for full employment for all disabled persons. The later had been originally proposed by the socialist member countries, but was blocked by the capitalist majority in the ILO.

ANAÏS VAN ERTVELDE (Leiden) presented a paper from her ongoing PhD research on the impact of the UN International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) (IYDP) on Belgium’s shifting welfare state policies for disabled citizens. On the basis of archival research she showed how Belgian politics about policies and provisions for disability in the 1970s and 1980s were driven by an inherent tension between citizens with disabilities and the governmental agencies responsible for organizing welfare provisions. These tensions did not only play out on the national but also on the international level. For example, Van Ertvelde described how a Belgian collective of disability organisations, the „Action Commune Nationale des Handicapés – Nationale Gemeenschappelijke Aktie voor Minder-Validen“, was able to draft a text in 1974 which the next year would become the U.N. proclamation of a Declaration of Rights for Disabled Persons. At the same time, people with disabilities have also contested the welfare state, questioning its perceived stigmatisation, categorisation and pathologisation of disability through its interventions and eligibility criteria.

The discussion moved to a legal studies’ perspective with a paper by VERONIKA FLEGAR (Groningen) on vulnerability as a possible alternative foundation for the provision of social rights for non-citizens in contemporary liberal welfare states. From a human rights perspective, Flegar argued, liberal welfare states continue to exist in a state of crisis by proclaiming to uphold equality and human rights while excluding non-citizens (asylum seekers, migrants) from the full range of social rights. To solve this crisis, Flegar ad-

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vanced the philosophical and normative argument to replace citizenship with vulnerability as the key eligibility criteria for access to social rights. She thereby argued that, while vulnerability is universally shared, individual vulnerability depends on varying embodied, situational, and systemic factors. EVAN EASTON-CALABRIA (Oxford) drew on Marxist thought to approach refugees and refugee assistance as workers and an international welfare system respectively. Easton-Calabria showed that refugees have historically been treated by international organisations such as the ILO as workers in need of employment, rather than as helpless victims. By tracing the establishment of Western welfare systems and the international refugee regime she showed how both systems display historical parallels as well as actual entanglements. Challenging predominant images of refugees as beneficiaries and victims, she concluded that considering refugee assistance as a form of welfare enables a clearer examination of refugees' actual position as labourers with the modern capitalist system.

SANDRINE KOTT (Geneva) provided the public key-note lecture of the workshop. Titled 'The Welfare State: National, Transnational, International,' Kott's central argument, that the national, international, and transnational levels of welfare state formation were and are closely entangled, captured much of the discussions throughout the workshop. First, Kott argued for the incorporation of a bottom-up perspective to see how the creation of social rights actually impacted on people. Looking at local employer-employee relations in Alsace-Lorraine in the nineteenth century, she showed that workers were fully aware of their social rights and the fact that these were protected by the state. This introduced a first measure of democracy into an otherwise undemocratic society. In addition to this bottom-up perspective, Kott argued for an actor and event-centred methodology to study internationalisation of welfare. Noting that scholars are often prone to treat internationalisation of welfare systems as a 'good' development, Kott warned that internationalism has also had a dark side, for example in the form of Nazi-internationalism. She urged scholars to approach internationalisation as a continu-

ous process that is driven by concrete individuals and groups that can be studied empirically, without the need for essentialising discourse in scholarship.

The first day of the workshop concluded with a public debate with the Dutch Council for Health and Society (RVS) about social services provision for refugees and the decentralisation of the welfare state. During its presentation, the RVS identified the legal entanglement between territorial access and access to social rights since the 1980s as the key-underlying issue in the national political debate on welfare provisions for refugees in Netherlands. Another core issue for governmental agencies was the question of the role of citizens in dealing with refugees, ranging from the setup of buddy-programs to the role of medical doctors in deciding who has access to medical treatment. Although the RVS focussed on the national level, the presentation and ensuing discussion provided the historical work discussed during the workshop with a direct connection to contemporary, practical issues.

ROSE ERNST (Seattle) opened the second day of the workshop with her critical analysis of the development of the U.S. welfare state. Based on a case study of Washington State archives, Ernst argued that administrative practices were central to ongoing processes of (re)creating white supremacy and settler colonialism through the expanding welfare state. She introduced the concept of colonial moods to capture the process of how the continuous internal description and discussion of social problems through memos, reports, and maps allowed civil servants to dehumanise themselves and their victims. This dehumanisation process enabled the infliction of administrative violence, which Ernst described as the categorization of deserving and undeserving people, and processes of exclusion which supported white supremacy and settler colonialism. A critical outlook was also upheld by CHRISTINE BYLUND (Stockholm) with her paper on the question how ableist ideas about family formation, labour, and independence have shaped the Swedish welfare state. Ableism was defined as the societal structures that determine what it means to be able-bodied, rendering certain bodies and ways of

living deviant. While the Swedish welfare state is usually considered an exemplary success domestically and internationally, Bylund showed that the use of welfare state support has to varying degrees oriented people with disabilities away from family formation, relationships, and denied them the role of productive labourer.

In contrast to the critical approach by the two preceding speakers, GIACOMO CANEPA presented a more appreciative paper of welfare state development between World War II and the 1970s. Focussing on the French and Italian cases from a transnational perspective, Canepa described how the application of public assistance systems by governments shifted from a groups-based tool for ensuring public order to a system of individual rights that were aimed at prevention, personal development, participation to democratic life, and the reduction of inequalities. The concept of 'rehabilitation' played an important role in this development, as it was understood in the United States that Europe could only recover if individuals' material as well as civic and mental well-being was restored. Canepa argued that the concept of rehabilitation which was originally closely tied to the reintegration of refugees throughout Europe was from the 1960s onwards applied to other social groups such as disabled persons.

Moving the discussion outside Europe and North America, PAUL VAN TRIGT (Leiden) investigated why the perspective of socio-economic inequality and social citizenship was largely ignored in U.N. policies in the non-Western world in the 1980s. Van Trigt's case study on the impact of the U.N. International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) in the Dutch Caribbean revealed that the state was largely absent from disability policy in this region. This meant that (social) citizenship was understood differently from the European context. The absence of the state was compensated for by care organisations, which however operated in a developmental aid-framework rather than in a citizenship discourse. At the global level of the U.N., Van Trigt argued that the concept of socio-economic inequality had little potential to unite the capitalist and socialist blocks.

MICHAEL KOZAKOWSKI (Colorado) in

his paper on the development of the French welfare state between World War I and 1974 demonstrated how imperial social categories, decolonisation, and integration of social security and welfare regimes on the European level intersected to determine who was included within European citizenship and who was not. In the case of Algerian migrants, inclusion and exclusion came to depend on older imperial definitions of 'Europeans' and 'Muslims.' Within the emerging structures of the EEC, access to the welfare state itself became a marker of new European identity and citizenship. MONIKA BAÁR (Leiden) elaborated on the role of the EEC in the final paper of the workshop. In the paper she argued for the important role of citizens, and especially migrants and their representatives, in shaping the freedom of mobility within the EEC and its successor, the European Union. This was possible because the wording of the initial treaties and subsequent legislation that founded the EEC left room for legal interpretation in the rulings by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. Through two illustrative legal cases in the 1970s by the widows of Italian migrant labourers in Belgium and France, Baár showed how the initial freedom of movement for (productive) workers between EEC countries was expanded to a much broader understood freedom of mobility for persons that currently serves to underpin the EU.

The attendees of the workshop certainly succeeded in approaching the history of the welfare state in diverse and innovative ways. Various speakers approached the welfare state critically, pointing to the ways in which welfare provisions have been used to categorise and include or exclude certain groups of people on the national, European, and global levels. On the other hand, Sandrine Kott pointed out that looking at the role of marginalised groups and people without the ability or position to work revealed the importance of human rights for the historiography of the welfare state. Others were able to reveal the role of concrete individuals, groups, organisations, concepts, and singular events that drove the transnational development of the welfare state in Post-war Europe and beyond. Many of the papers that were presented

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and discussed during the workshop were based on ongoing research. Finally, one topic that was unfortunately only briefly touched upon during the workshop but which could serve to put its discussions and findings in perspective could be the development of the welfare state and its global entanglements in non-Western countries.

### **Conference Overview:**

*Introductory remarks*  
Monika Baár

*Session 1 International institutions & welfare state*

Chair: Monika Baár

Discussant: Peter van Dam

Karim Fertikh: The Internationalization of Social Security in Europe (1945-1970s) A Socio-historical Perspective on the Entrepreneurs of an International Social Law

Gildas Brégain: The Liberal Economic Turn of International Disability Policy after the Second World War

Anaïs Van Ertvelde: „A true revolution of the minds concerning the handicapped person, his social situation and the implementation of care“? The Impact of the UN International Year of Disabled Persons (1981) on Belgium’s shifting Welfare State Policies for Disabled Citizens

*Session 2 International law & welfare state*

Chair: Paul van Trigt

Discussant: Lieneke Slingenberg

Veronika Flegar: Welfare and Exclusion: Vulnerability as Alternative Foundation for the Provision of Social Rights to Non-Citizens

Evan Easton-Calabria: Bordering (on) a Welfare State: A Historical Perspective on Refugee Assistance as ‘International Welfare’

*Public Programme*

Sandrine Kott: Key-note: The Welfare State: National, Transnational, International

Debate with Council for Health and Society: How to Guarantee Social-Economic Human Rights in a Decentralized Welfare State?

*Session 3 (Post)colonial welfare state 1*

Chair: Anaïs Van Ertvelde

Discussant: Bram Mellink

Rose Ernst: Colonial Moods: Administrative Violence and Welfare State Development

Christine Bylund: Ableist life paths: Intersections of Gender, Dis/ability and Family Formation in the Past, Present and Future Swedish Welfare State

*Session 4 (Post)colonial welfare state 2*

Chair: Gildas Brégain

Discussant: Gert Oostindie

Giacomo Canepa: The transformations of social assistance systems in Italy and France

Paul van Trigt: Social Citizenship during the Decolonisation of the Dutch Caribbean

*Session 5 Migration & welfare state*

Chair: Anna Derksen

Discussant: Marlou Schrover

Frank Caestecker: The Belgian Welfare State and the Labor Migration, 1930/45- 1960

Michael A. Kozakowski: Migration, European Integration, and the Logics of French Welfare

Monika Baár: Historical Approaches on the Evolution of the Rights of Non-Working Family Members of Migrant Workers in the European Community

*Final discussion*

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