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Paper proposal

Anne EYDOUX

Researcher in Economics, Centre for Employment Studies

Senior lecturer in Economics, University of Rennes 2

Address: CEE, 29 promenade Michel Simon – 93 166 Noisy-le-Grand cedex

Tél. : + 33 (0)6 98 24 81 04

Email: anne.eydoux@cee-recherche.fr

Title: “Crises and gendered trends in work, unemployment and social policies”

Crises have contrasted effects on women and men’s employment and unemployment rates and may lead to temporary or long-lasting reversals of gendered unemployment gaps – men being more exposed to unemployment than women. The phenomenon is well documented in the US since the seminal work of Ruth Milkman (1976) on what can be learnt from the Great Depression about women’s work. It is not the case in most European countries where men’s unemployment rate is generally below women’s unemployment rate, except in the UK where it is “permanently” above women’s unemployment rate since the 1980’s – and where the phenomenon is documented too (Jill Rubery, ed., 1989). At the European level, the reversal of the gendered unemployment gap first occurred in 2009-2010: men’s unemployment rate grew above women’s rate in the EU 27 (9.7% versus 9.6%) while it was currently below by 2 points during the 2000’s. This reversal however covers a great diversity in gendered employment and unemployment trends all over Europe. Short-term unemployment reversals occurred only recently in France and Germany, while it is more common in Sweden or in Eastern countries (such as Hungary or Romania for instance). In southern countries such as Spain or Greece, women remain overexposed to unemployment.

The paper will analyse and discuss gendered trends in work, unemployment and social policies in European crisis contexts, relying mainly on Eurostat data (in particular EU-LFS, EU-Silc and EU-LMP) and on national data regarding social, family and employment policies in France and Germany.

Section 1 will explore the literature on the links between economic crisis and women's work and unemployment and provide for hypothesis that may explain the gendered impacts of the crisis, namely the role of labour market gender segregation and the influence of family organisation and public policies. Section 2 will describe, using and discussing EU-LFS data, the contrasted situations observed in European labour markets regarding women's work and unemployment. Section 3 will provide for an in-depth analysis focusing on two (Bismarckian) countries in the Euro zone, France and Germany, which exhibit contrasted evolutions after the crisis of 2001-2002 and 2007-2008. The role of the gendered (sector) segregation and the evolutions of the quality of work in both countries will be explored through EU-LFS data, while the role of family organisation and public policies will be analysed on the basis of EU-Silc and EU-LMP data, together with additional data from national sources. Section 4 will question the role of public employment and social policies in both countries, showing that past and present reforms and policies did not favour gender equality in the labour market (Letablier, Eydoux, Betzelt 2011) and mainly benefited to men during the crisis (Eydoux 2011; Annesley, Scheele 2011): as men working in the industrial sector have been identified as the first victims of the crisis, they were also the first beneficiaries of employment and social measures dedicated to vulnerable workers.

References

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