

**Report: Caring Democracy: Can Markets be Caring?**

July 15th, 2015 ׀ 18:00 – 20:30 h

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung׀ House 1 | Hiroshimastr. 17, 10785 Berlin

**“Caring Democracy- Can markets be caring?” Panel & Keynote speech at IAFFE Oepning “The political economy of drudgery”**

July 15th & 16th 2015

Summary:

“*Democratic politics should center upon assigning responsibilities for care, and for ensuring that democratic citizens are as capable as possible of participating in the assignment of responsibilities*.” In the Roundtable Discussion on “Caring Democracy”, **Joan Tronto,** a leading feminist political theorist at the University of Minnesota, ultimately emphasized the importance of transforming democracy in order for caring democratic politics to lie at its fundamental core. The Roundtable Discussion was held within the framework of the International Association for Feminist Economics (IAFFE) Conference, which took place in Berlin this year. These annual conferences are essentially designed to provide an open forum for the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of research relevant to feminist inquiry of economic issues.

Currently, it is evident that all nations are experiencing a “care deficit” which has taken diverse forms in different parts of the globe. The caring deficit and the democratic deficit are principally two sides of the same coin. In order to thus expand democracy, more inclusion is required, in addition to the fostering of concerns regarding gender and class, as well as the concerns for caring – consequently inserting a value for caring into democratic politics. One of the limiting variables of a caring democracy is the prevalence of “passes” for the allocation of responsibilities, that can be seen in the form of production passes, bootstrap passes, and charity passes. The effect of these passes is that they allow men and middle class citizens to abstain from taking care responsibilities, thereby allowing them to buttress the personal responsibility narrative that justifies the current practice of care in a “market foremost” economy. In order to make caring democracy a reality in everyday politics, it is essential to scrutinize the practices in society and democratize these respective institutions in order to raise issues of care to the level of local, national, and international political agendas.

Ultimately, a caring democracy stresses equality through ending privileged irresponsibility, thus creating grounds for equal citizens. Additionally, it provides an alternative to market- foremost neoliberal ideologies as the market misunderstands time as present. As time to work is perceived as dominant, the time to care is thereby completely neglected, although it is a more central humane value. In essence, a caring practice leads to more democratic care which enhances both care and democracy. It is therefore imperative to think backwards, remembering that what gives life meaning is living in relationships of care.

**Soledad Slavador,** an associate member and researcher of the Interdisciplinary Center for Development Studies, Uruguay (CIEDUR) in the Gender and Development Area, introduced insights into the extent to which Uruguay was moving in the direction of a Caring Democracy. The significance of a Caring Democracy is recognized in Uruguay as being linked with social protection, social and gender equity, as well as the enhancement of capabilities and the promotion of development. However, there is a lack of awareness about care policies and the notion that this implies a revolutionary change in the society as part of a transformative political agenda. Unfortunately, neoliberal policies have left their traces on social levels that are still suffering today. The state itself, as a service provider, lost credibility and therefore has troubles adapting to the logic of the families. Thus, the establishment of the Network for National Integrated System of Care is crucial to the creation of a Caring Democracy in Uruguay, as it serves as a platform for exchange, for those proclaiming this issue from workplaces, civil societies, different civil society, and organizations.

**Yumiko Yamamoto,** the specialist for Gender and economy, inclusive growth, trade and human development in the United Nations Development Program in Asia- Pacific, added further comments on whether markets can be caring in Asia, ranging from wealthier nations such as Singapore with an income per capita around $58,000 to the less economically developed countries whose income per capita is as low as $600. The growing disparity and inequality is one fundamental concern in this region. Therefore, Yamamoto proposes to invest in the care sector as an industrial policy by arguing that if unpaid care work were counted within the nation’s GDP, it would rise by 25% - 32% in China, and nearly 50% in Australia, as well as allow for the establishment of millions of jobs, if unpaid work were substituted by the public/private sectors.

The proposal of investing in the care sector as an industrial policy would have to be in conjunction with strategic partnerships with diverse social enterprises such as the Narayana Health Hospital in India or Cyberdyne Inc. in Japan.

Once the expert comments were delivered, an open discussion began amongst all participants, discussing the diverse avenues for change in order to trigger a transformative path to a Caring Democracy. **Valeria Esquivel**, theResearch Coordinator on Gender and Development at the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Geneva, acted as a moderator for the open discussion. Although the end goal of a caring democracy is clear, the different means to reach this goal were discussed and analyzed in which the partnership between trade unions, the state, and the citizens were highlighted.

On the 16th of July, the IAFFE Keynote Speech was held in the Berlin School of Economics and Law, organized by IAFFE and the Friedrich-Ebert- Stiftung. In “Global Care Workers and Global Justice: The Political Economy of Drudgery” Joan Tronto once again acted as a Keynote Speaker. **Bina Argawal,** professor of development economics and environment at the University of Manchester, introduced Joan Tronto by describing Tronto’s books, in particular “Caring Democracy” as a paradigm shifting book, which in conjunction with the “Ethics of Care” argues against the idea that morality is gendered and furthermore emphasizes the need for a liberal, democratic, and pluralistic society that rethinks care as a central activity of human life.

Joan Tronto began by locating global justice in the framework of colonialism and that there has been an emergence of new thinking involving “de- colonial thinking, as post- colonial thinking nevertheless implies the asymmetrical power relations between the colonizer and the colonized. This distinction was employed as a starting point for the introduction of Tronto’s new project which deals with analyzing global justice from the perspective of global care workers, in which national borders are crossed in order to take on care work in other countries. In this setting, drudgery can be seen in relation to dispossession, exploitation, and extraction, in which the question arises, “Who should do the dirty work?”

There are several push and pull factors, that drive migrants away of their country of origin such as the higher wages that await in the country of destination, the official policies of work abroad, and the significance of remittances. When analyzing the movement of migrants it is imperative to take the global economy into account and deal with the question of whether people are making the decision “freely-out of choice rather than out of necessity” as people often have to migrate due to poverty, conflict, human rights violations, poor governance, or lack of employment.

Within the open discussion, questions were brought up concerning the nexus of illegal migration and human trafficking as well as the further implications of migration on the country of origin and destination. For the country of origin, it must be noted that those who migrate are often the most adventurous and the most ambitious which has a significant impact on the home country. On the other hand side, in the receiving nations the problem of “partial citizenship” emerges which is harmful for citizens who come to see “others as inferior” which causes a lack of social cohesion.

In her concluding remarks, Joan Tronto ultimately emphasized that it should be universally understood that, *“We are not only all care givers, but more importantly- we are all care receivers.”*

Written by: Lara Laila Gärber