Fabian Kessl / Holger Schoneville

The New Charity Economy – Emotions in the Transformation of Welfare State Arrangements

The emergence and establishment of food banks, soup kitchens, meal projects and social supermarkets since 1980s/1990s are indications of a new system of poverty alleviation. Its development has been parallel to and in conjunction with the welfare state's fight against poverty. However, the new system shows significant differences to the rights-based approach of welfare state institutions. The support takes place in form of the distribution of various surplus elementary goods to people in "need", it is realised through a secondary commodity cycle and it is based on the help of voluntary work and donations. We will argue that this system was developed in the "shadow of the welfare state" and can be characterised as a "New Charity Economy". It is symbol of a structural transformation of welfare state arrangements as a whole. Part of the transformation is a significant change regarding the role of emotional as part of the support. While the modern, rights-based welfare state purposefully replaces emotional involvement with social rights, the "New Charity Economy" is very much founded on a special emotional relationship between those providing support and those receiving it.

Fabian Kessl is professor for social pedagogy & social policy at the University of Wuppertal (Germany). His research interests are in the transformation of the welfare state, especially due to the institutional change of social services and the dimensions of scale (spatial aspects). He is Managing Director of the International Online-Journal Social Work & Society (ww-w.socwork.net) and the German Journal for Social Work SOZIALE PASSAGEN; also he is a member of different boards (Neue Praxis, Widersprüche, Critical Social Policy, Zeitschrift für Diskursforschung). The European Social Work – Compendium was edited by him in 2019 (together with Walter Lorenz, Hans-Uwe Otto & Sue White). Contact: fabian.kessl@uni-wuppertal.de

Holger Schoneville is professor for social pedagogy (W1-Juniorprofessur) at the University of Hamburg (Germany). His expertise includes research on poverty and social exclusion, subjectivity and vulnerability in relation to social work theory and the transformation of welfare (state) arrangements. The design of his research is mostly rooted within a qualitative-reconstructive methodology. He is a qualified social worker and worked in research and teaching at various universities and research institutes in Germany, Europe, Brazil and the USA. Contact: holger.schoneville@uni-hamburg.de