

Gender in an Age

A. Kościńska na konferencji "Gender in an Age of Global Care Crisis"

Prof. Agnieszka Kościńska uczestniczyła w konferencji Gender in an Age of Global Care Crisis zorganizowanej przez Hub on Global Experiences of Gender in an Age of Care Crises and Transformation na Uniwersytecie Oxfordzkim



Referat:

Agata Ignaciuk, Agnieszka Kościńska, *Is Catholic masculinity the answer?*

In Poland, where according to the 2021 census 71% of population self-identifies as Catholic, conversations about possible solutions to care crisis cannot ignore religion-driven ideas. In a Christian context, care is usually discussed vis-à-vis female “maternal” qualities. During the communist period, care remained partly organized by the State and partly placed within the family and defined as women’s responsibility. Since the end of communism in 1989, Poland, along with other Eastern European countries, has embraced neoliberal approach to care, which has been further privatised. In this paper, we draw on our ongoing historical and anthropological research on gender and religion in Poland to analyse the Catholic concepts of masculinity promoted in popular publications on preparation for childbirth and the so-called natural family planning. We focus on the work of Catholic gynaecologists and author Włodzimierz Fijałkowski, who in the 1980s and 90s was the key figure in developing these concepts in Poland. He argued that men should embrace “female”, care related qualities, and saw this process as a key component in transforming gender relations within the family and men’s involvement in providing care. This new model of masculinity could potentially be the answer to the gendered dimension of care crisis. However, our examination of Fijałkowski’s model of masculinity shows that inclusion of men in the care realm came at a cost: merely by entering traditionally female spaces were men granted authority therein. In his vision, men were supposed to oversee women’s involvement in childcare from the very moment of conception, prevent abortion and make sure that family planning is conducted in accordance with Catholic rules. As a result, this model of masculinity leads not to solving care crisis, but to strengthening anti-abortion and anti-reproductive rights climate in the country.

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[1] <https://gendercarehub.web.ox.ac.uk/gender-age-global-care-crisis-conference-2024>