

New Economy and Work, Family and States: A Comparative Gender Analysis of Japan, the US, UK and Germany

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【 Outline of survey 】

Globalisation, the new economy and gender are each key issues in contemporary social thought, and the nature of their intersection is at the cutting-edge of debate. In this project we challenge and revise key claims in four well-established areas including: ' industrial relations and varieties of capitalism ', where we provide a critique from a gender viewpoint; 'gender studies ', where we develop the comparative debates that are taking off in this field; ' new economy ', where we challenge the gender-blind conceptualisation and provide analysis of the implications of including gender; and ' globalisation ', where we challenge the simple deregulation thesis. Globalisation is often assumed to be associated with de-regulation of the workplace and deterioration in the quality of working-life. When gender is brought into focus, we find increased regulation on some dimensions of the workplace as well as de-regulation of others. We investigate the extent to which global processes lead toward convergence among industrialised economies and the extent to which path dependency defines trajectories of particular countries. We investigate whether global processes contribute to the development of three distinct models (American, European and Asian).

【 Expected results 】

This project uniquely combines theoretical discussion and comparative empirical material from four countries: the US, Japan, the UK and Germany. These countries are selected because of their importance in the world economy today, and because they embody important contrasts, namely liberal capitalism with market-led public gender regime (the US and UK) versus state-led coordinated capitalism with halfway public gender regime (Germany and Japan). By focusing on the EU as a key aspect of the analysis of the UK and Germany, which is simultaneously de-regulating economic arenas in the drive for entrepreneurialism and re-regulating in the drive for equal opportunities and the reconciliation of working and family life, we could clarify relative positions of the US and Japan. In this project, gender researchers of work organizations and social policies who represent the four countries have already organized themselves into a team of unusual degree of coherence. Our comparative study centered around Japan could achieve theoretically as well as empirically high originality.

【 References by the principal researcher 】

Mari Osawa, 2002, Danjo-kyodo-sankaku-shakai wo Tsukuru (Building a Gender-equal Society), Tokyo: NHK books, pp. 1-252

Mari Osawa ed., 2004, Fukushikokka to Jenda (Welfare States and Gender), Tokyo: Akashi-shoten, pp.1-256.

【 Term of project 】 F Y 2004 - 2006

【 Budget allocation 】 61,700,000 yen

【 Homepage address 】

<http://web.iss.u-tokyo.ac.jp/osawa/>