

LABOUR MARKET POLICIES IN LIGHT OF FEMALE EMPLOYMENT AND POLITICAL MOBILIZATION: A NEW FRAMEWORK

Gender is said to be an important predictor of policy preferences. Women should favour “investment policies” over “consumption policies” due to their more fragmented professional careers (Beramendi et al. 2016). Concerning labour market policies, women prefer active labour market policies (ALMPs) over passive labour market policies. With rising levels of female employment this could lead to higher spending for ALMPs due to a different structure of policy demand. However, among advanced capitalist economies there are no signs of convergence in terms of spending levels for ALMPs and important differences are still visible. These differences reproduce those between models of capitalism (Esping-Andersen 1990; Burroni 2016).

While recent work focused on changes in the overall female employment rate across countries, little attention has been paid to the distribution of female participation among different professional groups. Beramendi et al. (2016) analyse how professional groups’ preferences for investment, consumption and weak or strong state intervention contribute to the creation of hegemonic coalitions that shape policy demand. However, no quantitative studies have been made to test their theoretical framework.

This paper tries to explain why these differences still exist by providing a new theoretical framework, that considers two main variables: labour market stratification and female political mobilization. On one hand it analyses how female employment has spread over professional groups. The paper will present evidence from EU-LFS micro-data on Italy and Sweden and it will show how women are more integrated inside the hegemonic coalition in Sweden than in Italy. However, in order to complete the framework it will be necessary to consider female political mobilization in order to understand if women actually endorsed higher ALMPs spending levels. In order to do include female political mobilization inside the framework, the paper will draw from the literature on state and party feminism (Lovenduski, 2005) and from Julia O’ Connor’s (1993) concept of “political opportunity structure”.