

Long Abstract – Monographic Section

Rethinking Welfare to prevent and combat gender-based violence: challenges and opportunities for an integrated system

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From Combating Violence Through Empowerment to a Vision for a Renewed Welfare State.

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This article investigates the integration of policies against gender-based violence into welfare systems as a potential lever for re-legitimising the welfare state after decades of neoliberal erosion, while simultaneously challenging the patriarchal foundations of social citizenship.

Moving beyond individualising and victimising approaches, it conceptualises gender-based violence as a form of structural injustice rooted in persistent socio-economic gender inequalities, historically embedded in the gendered construction of citizenship and welfare institutions.

Drawing on feminist political theory and social justice scholarship, the article reconstructs the exclusion and conditional inclusion of women within classical welfare regimes, showing how social protection was originally shaped around the male breadwinner model and how violence against women remained largely invisible as a social policy issue.

The more recent incorporation of socio-economic empowerment measures for women survivors of violence – such as income support, labour-market inclusion and housing policies – is thus analysed as a significant, yet ambivalent, discontinuity with this legacy.

While access to such measures acknowledges the link between freedom from violence and women's autonomy, it also entails the risk of victimising, controlling or paternalistic approaches. Implicit forms of conditionality, institutional discrimination and stereotypes concerning the "appropriate victim" as a "vulnerable subject" may exclude certain groups of women or undermine their agency, thereby reinforcing rather than counteracting gendered subordination.

In this way, the very category of vulnerability risks being deployed in selective and stigmatising terms, instead of grounding collective infrastructures designed to sustain autonomy.

The article concludes that only a universalistic and integrated welfare model – capable of addressing both protection from violence and socio-economic insecurity – can effectively support survivors' autonomy, promote substantive gender justice, and contribute to the re-legitimation of public intervention in a post-neoliberal context. Integrating gender-based violence into welfare policy thus emerges as a key terrain for redefining social citizenship and democratic responsibility.

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