



Mission statement

Economiefeministe – Platform for feminist economics

Economiefeministe, the platform for feminist economics, is a place where knowledge of economics is collected, systematised, generated, conveyed and discussed – from a feminist perspective.

Economiefeministe consolidates knowledge of feminist economics (as generated and negotiated in feminist and women's movements, in scientific argumentation, politico-economic controversies and discussions about the future) and takes it further. Economiefeministe exposes the large gaps that exist in current economic policy and in its theoretical and ideological foundations. The starting point for our work is the care and provisioning industry¹, and its importance for the economy as a whole.

Those who raise questions about economic contexts from a feminist perspective, be they academics, activists, participants in civil society initiatives or institutional project staff, are invited to get involved.

Platform for feminist economics

- We incorporate current and historical economic questions raised by feminist and women's movements, as well as the work of experts on feminist economics and economic policy.
- We develop projects to address current issues pertaining to feminist economics.
- We work together with academics and activists who raise questions about macroeconomic contexts from a feminist perspective.
- We interconnect interested parties, experts, activists and theorists.
- We support projects and initiatives with know-how when needed.
- We focus on macroeconomic contexts, including the role of the state and the financial system, thus raising questions about power, money and control over women.

1 This economic sector includes all paid and unpaid personal and household-related activities and services.

Relevant to everyone

Women spend more than 80 percent of their working time in the care and provisioning industry. This encompasses all personal and household-related services, meaning all paid and unpaid activities involved in directly caring for and looking after people. Such work is a central prerequisite for the quality of our living conditions and for our standard of living, so it is relevant to all of society and to economic policy.

The work performed in the care and provisioning industry comprises almost 70 percent of the total volume of paid and unpaid work in our society. Yet despite its economic and societal importance, and enormous volume, the care and provisioning industry is not included in prevalent economic theories or policies as a distinct analytical category. This is because up until now, the basis for thinking and action in the field of economic theory has predominantly been the analysis of industrial capitalism and the large service sectors associated with it. In such calculations, services that are financed and organised by the state usually only appear as costs. This means nothing other than that the importance of this work, disproportionately performed by women, is ignored in public and academic debate on economic policy – for instance in defining what counts as value-adding and economically productive within the gross domestic product (GDP).

Key questions in feminist economics

Care and provisioning work raises economic questions that are different to those raised, for example, by industrial production or financial services. For instance, fewer caregivers cannot keep caring for more sick people without both the care services and the working conditions suffering.

Since the women's movements of the 1970s at the latest, feminist economists have been researching the characteristics of this work and its status in our economy, under the terms 'economics of care', 'reproduction', 'social provisioning', 'economy of care or reproduction', 'caring industries', 'economics of care' and 'care and provisioning industry'. The key questions they ask are: Who counts? Which groups of people are represented in statistics and considered in economic theory? How is this work organised? Who provides it and under what conditions? How is it (not) remunerated, and what effects does this have on the paid and unpaid workers in this sector? How important is it for the economy as a whole? And what questions arise in relation to gender justice, ecological sustainability and a good life? With these questions, feminist economists, on one hand, identify the economic foundations of systematic discrimination against women and disregard for the work they do. And on the other hand, they strive to close the serious gaps in prevalent economic theories and practices.

As such gaps in economic thinking affect women disproportionately, they are central factors in feminist economics. This is because women perform a disproportionately large volume of (poorly) paid and unpaid work in the care and provisioning industry. Moreover, a large majority bear children, and take on a large share of the care and support work in their families. The approaches to the care and provisioning industry that have emerged in economic theory to date, as well as the questions these raise about work processes, working conditions and exchange relationships, come mainly from the pens and minds of women's

and feminist movements. Economiefeministe incorporates current and historical economic questions from these movements, along with the work of experts on feminist economics and economic policy.

Who counts?

We focus on perspectives that take macroeconomic contexts into account. In this regard, the role of the state and of the financial system must also be included in the discussion, as well as questions about the interplay of power, money and control over women.

In addition, if we wish to understand the economic dynamics of the economy as a whole, our work on this sector absolutely has to begin on the basis of the interconnectedness and dynamics between the various economic sectors, as well as economic relations with foreign countries.

A majority of those who work in this sector, especially women, bear a whole range of serious consequences: large income gaps (the one between men and women amounts to around 100 billion Swiss francs annually), being disadvantaged (by the way public finances are organised, by the financing systems for old-age, unemployment and health insurance, by taxation, and by the distribution of capital and wealth), and the financially detrimental effects of current models for financing childcare outside the family – to name just a few aspects.

We do not want any more politico-economic debates, studies or legislative proposals without substantial consideration from the perspective of feminist economics. This is because socio-political decisions that are made without adequately taking into account the structural economic disadvantaging of women, along with their experiences and skills, will only meet the needs of a minority within society. We must therefore urgently ask: How can work in the care and provisioning sector be financed and socially organised in future, so that it benefits the entire population, and is no longer based on financial and temporal exploitation of women, or generally an underpaid, unpaid and flexibilised labour force? What do we need to know about economic contexts, so that the prerequisites for democratic decision-making on economic policy are met? What if women and their work actually count?

Challenges

When we talk about an economic sector that encompasses directly caring for and looking after people, we are talking about all the people who are cared for and all those who work in this sector. People from different social backgrounds, in different family and income situations, with and without a migration background, of different ages, and with different skin colours, sexual orientations and gender identities, have different degrees of access to services and different working conditions in this sector. A lot of data is still missing, so phenomena can only be described to a limited extent, given the numerous aforementioned inequality mechanisms.

The theorists and activists tackling these challenges are diverse, both in terms of their disciplines and their approaches. It is no different in economics: There is no such thing as 'the' feminist economics – neither in past nor present questions, theories or debates. There is only pluralist feminist economics. But regardless of their different approaches and theo-

retical constructs, they at least have common starting points: unpaid work, aspects of the care and provisioning industry, or its importance for the economy as a whole.

Organisational form and (un)paid work

Economiefeministe's organisational form, as an association, confronts us with fundamental issues that are at the core of our subject matter and of our association's aim: The coexistence of paid and unpaid work, and the related fairness issues are not only central to feminist economics, but also to our organisational structure, as well as to cooperation with researchers, activists, groups and organisations. On appointing an executive board and combining paid assignments with volunteer work, we need to determine which work should be paid work and how much should be paid for it. We keep a log of our discussions and conclusions, and intend to discuss this subject publicly as well, because we assume that other civil society projects are confronted with similar challenges.