

Historical-sociological research GERMANY

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Developments until 1945: institutionalization of the social insurance system

In international comparative research the Federal Republic of Germany has been seen as an example of the „conservative welfare regime“ (Esping-Andersen). Social security as a form of *social insurance* began to be institutionalized during the 1880s. Several characteristics introduced then were maintained into the mid-twentieth century: the principle of mandatory insurance, employment as the basis for insurance, equal contributions by employer and employee, and graduated contributions based on income or risk. Support provided through social insurance and poor relief remained far too meagre, however, particularly for the elderly. As before, they remained dependent on their relatives for support. Historical research proves that shouldering such obligations was problematic: especially in economic crises, and when the relatives were forced by state and municipal authorities to support needy kin, there developed severe internal family conflicts. The Weimar Republic and the Nazi state perpetuated and differentiated the social insurance system (in the Nazi era in a racist way).

Developments since 1945

After 1945, the relation of family/kin and social security took a different path in the GDR (East Germany) and in the FRG (West Germany). In **East Germany**, social security was anchored in the country's 1949 constitution and seen as an obligation for the state and not as a responsibility of the individual. An extensive system of all-day care for children of every age was established to mobilize as many women as possible into the labour force. Pro-natalist policies provided specific payments to families (birth grants, child benefits). In contrast, it was typical for retirees to continue employment while drawing the poor state pensions. **West Germany** emphasized individual self-reliance and responsibility (subsidiary principle). However, the pension reform of 1957, in particular, created a system by which a sufficient income could be received in old age, since pension levels became wage-index-related. The FRG wanted to distance itself from the deep incursions of the Nazi state into the private sphere of family and education; and the same dynamics was relevant vis-à-vis the GDR with its extensive childcare and pronatalist policy. The state support of families in the FRG began late. „Family“ was defined as one in which the husband was the sole breadwinner and the wife did the housework and raised the children. This dynamics is still relevant and remarkable as a specific German mother-ideology, that prefers the children to be cared for by their mother.

Region	Places in daycare per 100 children (age < 3)	Places in kindergarten per 100 children (age 3-6)	Places in day nurseries after half-day school per 100 children (age 6-10)
FRG as a whole	9	90	9
West Germany	3	88 (mainly half-day places)	5
Eastern Germany	37	105	41

Table: Public Child care in the FRG and in selected Federal States, 2002 (Source: Statistisches Bundesamt (ed.) 2004. Kindertagesbetreuung in Deutschland. Einrichtung, Plätze, Personal und Kosten 1990 bis 2002)

Developments and practices since the 1990s

After the German Unification, the West German policies, institutions, practices and also its cultural orientations became implemented and hegemonic for the whole country. Above all this meant the reduction of the public child care offerings in the East, and the now very good support of the retirees there according to the German pension system. A low fertility rate is typical for Germany. With a total fertility rate of 1,34 (2003) is Germany among the European countries with the lowest birth rates. Women's and mother's employment is still more frequent in East Germany despite the bad situation on the labour market. Generally, women's and especially mother's employment is mostly part-time employment. This has been a tradition in the West since the 1960s and was politically favoured in the FRG since the 1980s.

The educational policy (half-day kindergartens and schools), settlements for Parental leave and Child rearing benefits as well as the taxation (income-splitting-system) support and enforce the male breadwinner marriage. Intergenerational networks are strong (also between households). The dwelling in nuclear families and a close dwelling of the oldest generation in separate households (in the same quarter, the same municipality) is typical. Financial transfers from the very aged to the younger members of the families are more frequent (but not higher) in the East, because of the bad situation on the labour market and because of the fact that the female retirees in the East have good pensions as the result of their life-long working biography. Inheritance as a transfer between the generations is more relevant in the West. Inheritances proved to continue and deepen the inequalities between the social milieus as well as the inequalities between the East and the West in regard to income and wealth. Moreover, the intra-generational redistribution of income and wealth by the state (by taxation, by different subsidies) is much higher than the redistribution of income and wealth between the generations and thus a central factor for social inequality.

Kinship-(relation)	Rate (%)
Wife or female cohabitee	20
Husband or male cohabitee	12
Mother	11
Father	2
Daughter	23
Son	5
Daughter-in-law	10
Son-in-law	0
Other relatives	10
Neighbour/friend	7

Table: (Kinship-)relation of the private main care persons to the people in need of care in private households, 1998 (Source: Engstler, H., Menning, S. 2003. Die Familie im Spiegel der amtlichen Statistik)

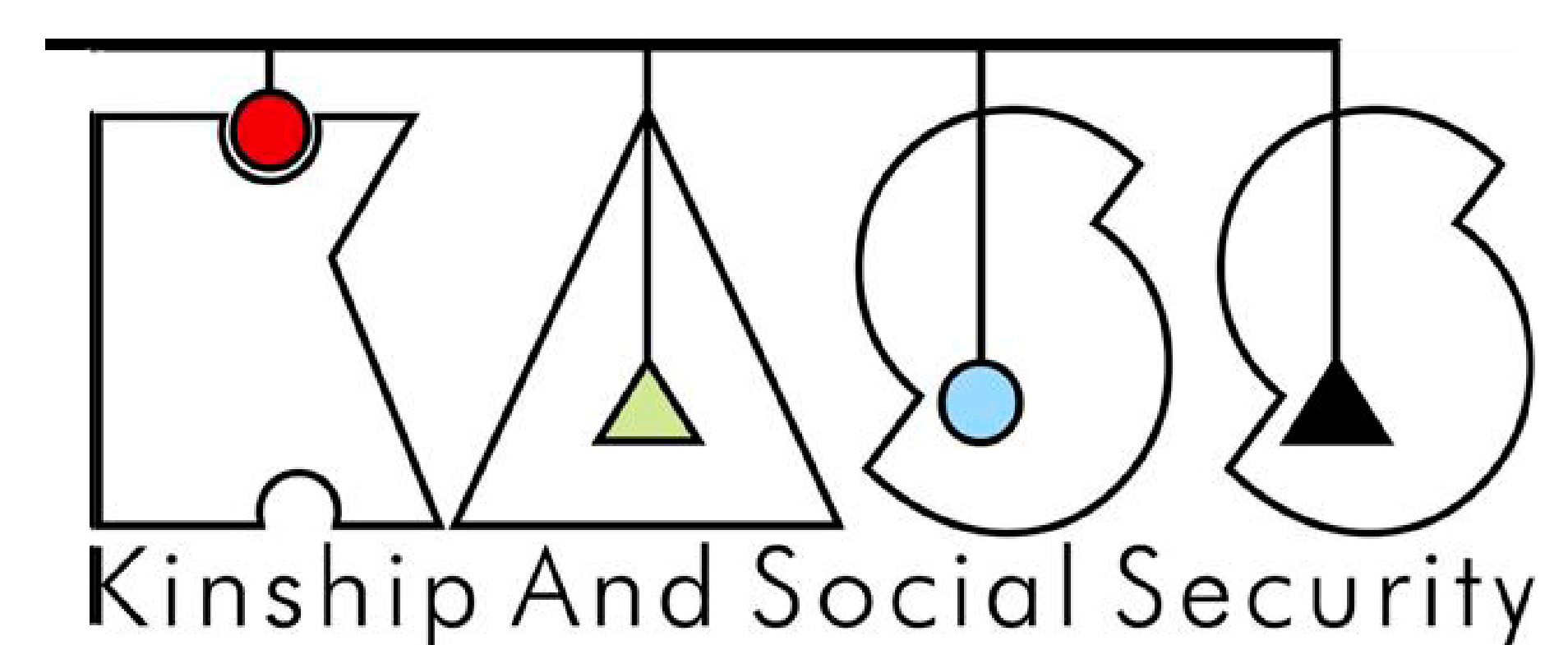
Central current dynamic: “crowding in” – the welfare state enforces private transfers and solidarity

Strong networks of family and kin in Germany can be identified structurally, are enforced institutionally, are favoured politically and are preferred and practised culturally. Public subsidies did not and do not replace private networks, they are a precondition of private networks, are redistributed and multiplied in family and kin and have a catalyst function for assistance and transfers in family and kin. They serve as a model for solidarity in society in general. The current relationship of family/kin and social security is determined by a stable cultural orientation and by a common self-understood daily practice to the benefit of aid and transfers between family members. Of decisive importance, quantitatively and qualitatively, as well as with regard to the combining of public, commodified and private goods, is the work done by women. The economic security provided through the social insurance system forms the precondition for more extensive aid, support, and security provided by the retirees in family and kin. This in turn creates the preconditions necessary for the later nursing of the very aged by members of younger generations.

Future dynamics and open questions: possible weakening or isolation of private networks

There are indications that private networks are expanding to include *friends and neighbours*. Research has pointed to *factors that endanger the networks of family/kin*:

- the demographic change (increasing childlessness and decreasing marriage rates)
- the destandardization of the life course
- the destandardization of employment
- the ideal of societal solidarity because of the dismantling of the welfare state.



Kinship And Social Security

An interdisciplinary project with an anthropological agenda funded by the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme.

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Layout: Kristin Magnucki, Oliver Wehmann
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