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WIDE Switzerland Conference
Friday, 31st October 2014 in Bern

Economic Literacy: Standard of Living from the Household Perspective

Workshop focusing on an Economic Literacy approach and an analysis using the model of 5 Sectors of the economy, organised by the Joan Robinson Association, WIDE Austria, and the Economic Literacy Group, WIDE Switzerland.

When we talk about living standard we often have money and goods in mind. The notion of 'quality of life' is more qualitative and subjective. We want to explore it from different angles, mainly households (our own experiences and what we know from others) and the state as a provider of a framework of services. The notion of 'quality of life' is often mentioned in the context of health issues. We have chosen the example of the Swiss state position on health 'Gesundheit 2020' which proposes strategic actions for the health sector.

The process by which we wanted to do this with the participants was the approach of '*Economic Literacy*'. It can be described as an approach and a methodology of common generation of economic knowledge. In their economic literacy tool the Irish feminist organisation Banúlacht explains the importance of economic literacy as follows:

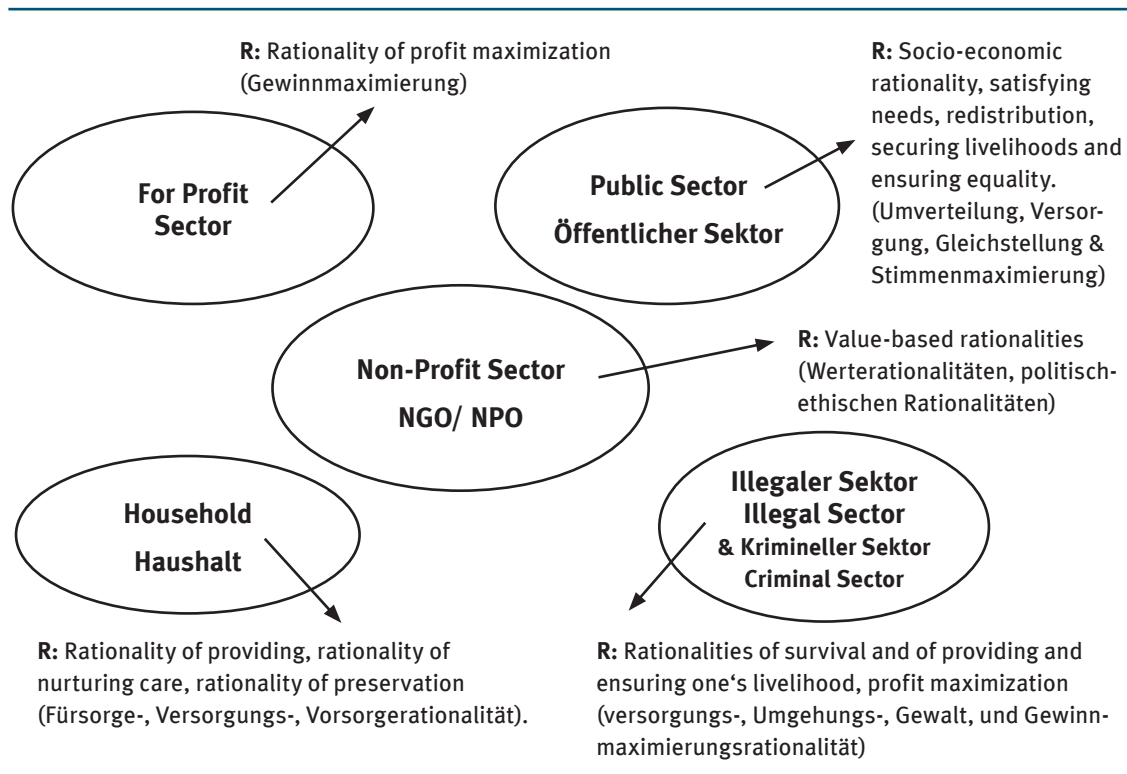
"The international women's movement approach, informed by a **human rights approach**, is creating stronger networks to consolidate and strengthen **alternatives to neo-liberalism** built on such principles as inclusivity, participation and economic justice. However, it is crucial that women have the tools, skills and confidence to engage with policy makers in order to effect change at local, national or global levels." (Banúlacht 2004).

The 5-Sector Model of Economy is an instrument to analyse socio-economic realities from a feminist perspective. Economic rationalities, conception of wo-man, player, interest and power relations are tackled with this model.

Further information: www.wide-netzwerk.at/index.php/publikationen/173-the-5-sectpr-model-of-the-economy

Swiss state position on health analysed by the 5-Sector Model of Economy

5-Sector Model of the Economy (Luise Gubitzer). This broad concept of Economy includes the economic activities of all sectors.



Private sector: Private providers (doctors, hospitals etc) and multiple private health insurances (all have to provide the same benefits according to regulations)

Non-Profit organisations: may receive some state finances and other private donations (Church, NGOs)

Household: Carers in households who provide care work and who are given the responsibility to ensure a healthy life for its members. Own contributions have to be made according to the financial situation.

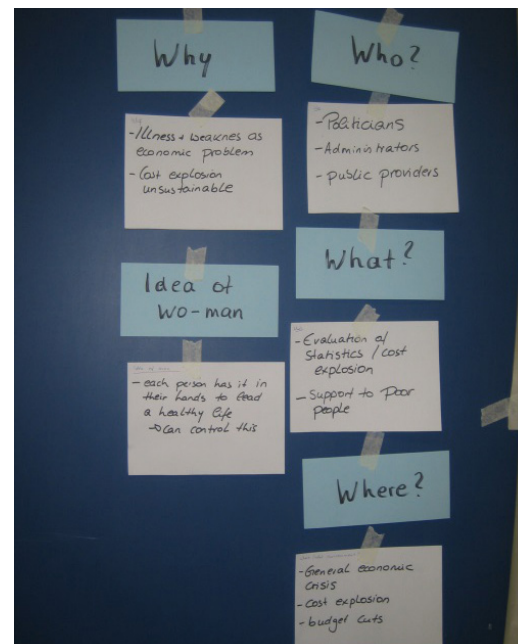
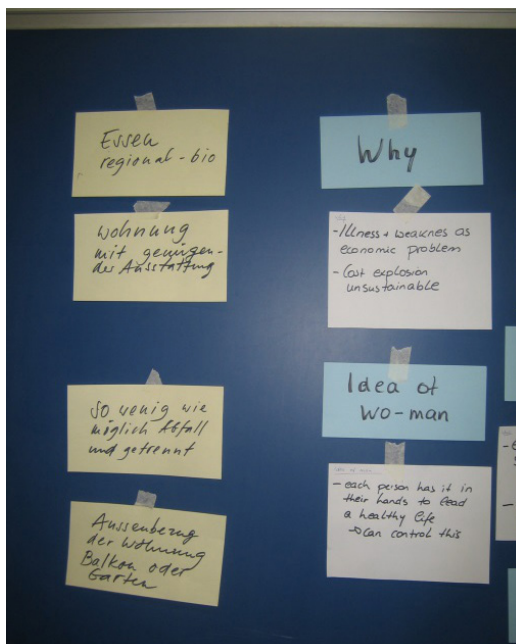
Informal/criminal/illegal sector: many forms of care work happen "in the grey": by migrant workers, "sans-papiers" and others who have an immediate benefit with no/little long term perspective.

Public Sector responsibility: Setting the framework for the provision of adequate healthcare for all citizens (rich and poor ones): Regulations and direct service provision

The Public sector is aware of other sectors that contribute to health provision and care.

Process

- Welcome, introduction and short round and presentation of each person.
- Brief introduction to the health system of Switzerland – **Swiss state position on health** “Gesundheit 2020” – further information: <http://www.bag.admin.ch/gesundheits2020/index.html?lang=de>
- Brief introduction to the Economic Literacy Approach.
- Introduction to the 5-Sector-Model of Economy together with a short critical analysis of the Swiss state position on health.
- Sociometric exercise. The 5 sectors – symbolized by hoops – where displayed in the room. The group visited in this way all sectors. The question each person reflected was: If you are putting yourself in the specific sector (recognizing experiences, people, infrastructure, ...) what does quality of life mean to you?
- Working groups:
 - Discussing the findings about quality of life
 - Collecting issues and demands that the public sector has to care for.



Report: Heike Wach and Eva Klawatsch-Treitl