DEMFAM THURSDAY TALKS

Rethinking Parenthood in Central and Eastern Europe: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

Thursday, 4–5 PM (CET) online

Fanni Svégel

The Political Instrumentalization of "Family Values" in Post-Socialist Hungary

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This talk examines the evolving role of fatherhood and family policy in Hungary from the late socialist period to the present, highlighting how ideas of parenthood have been shaped through broader political transformations.

It focuses on the politicization of "family values,' both historically and in contemporary authoritarian governance. Beginning in the late 1970s, a discourse emerged around the ideal socialist family, promoting gender equality in caregiving. Experts and media addressed the domestic role of fathers, while Ágnes Geréb started to allow fathers in the delivery room. Although these developments signaled a shift toward gender egalitarianism, such ideals never fully mainstreamed.

After the collapse of socialism, new fathers' rights groups appeared, many aligning with right-wing parties and anti-abortion movements. Today's authoritarian governments employ "demographic populism,' instrumentalizing family policies to consolidate power and enforce traditional gender roles.

Speakers' bio

Fanni Svégel is an ethnographer, PhD candidate at Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Humanities, writing on the history of childbirth and abortion, women experts and violence against women. Her dissertation project The Changing Landscape of Reproduction examines the intersection of medical, political, and cultural influences on reproduction, emphasizing the complex dynamics of state intervention, professionalization, and gender in mid-century Hungary.