

Danish Home Economics Associations in Early 20th Century Denmark - Ideas of Enlightenment and Womens Roles in Times of War and Crisis

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When teacher in home economics Rebekka la Cour, a Danish pioneer in the education of women in the field of home economics, with strong ties to the Danish Folk High School, founded the first Danish home economics association in 1908, it was based on ideas of enlightenment, education of women, and strengthening womens position in society. The home economics associations aimed at women in the rural areas and were meant to form a framework for educational activities in home economics matters as well as other current subjects of interest or importance to women especially in these areas. For women in the countryside at that time, home economics was the occupation in which a dominant part were employed and earned a living from. The idea of home economics associations soon spread in Denmark, where they organized a wide range of educational activities aimed at women. The first decades of 1900 where these developments took place were in Denmark characterized by wars and economic crises. Based on historical documentation like memoirs, yearbooks, and periodicals (archival materials) and drawing on theory of intersectionality, we explore the role and initiatives of the home economics associations in times influenced by war and crisis. This is with a specific focus on gender and social class. Our findings illustrate how the associations contributed to the education of women but on the other hand also to the positioning of them in certain ways, e.g. in the form of attributing to them a certain role in home and society.

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