

National Politics and Global Ideas? Welfare, Work and Legitimacy in Norway and the United States

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Content

Sammendrag.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Forord	v
Introduction.....	7
Some basic illuminations.....	8
The reforms and the debates	11
The Norwegian cash-for-care reform	11
The Norwegian transitional allowance.....	12
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)	12
The United States.....	14
Norway.....	15
Perceptions, arrangements and globalisation	16
Concluding remarks: Independency as the principal norm?.....	17
References	19

Sammendrag

Formålet med notatet er å diskutere sammenhenger mellom nasjonale velferdsdebatter og teorier om globalisering. I utgangspunktet kan vi anta at vi ved å se på hvordan ulike velferdsordninger diskuteres i forskjellige politiske kontekster kan avdekke en del underliggende nasjonalpolitiske verdier. Hva da når velferdspolitiske ideer og argumenter i økende grad ser ut til å være på reise mellom forskjellige velferdsstater og velferdsstatsregimer? Viktige spørsmål vil være hvordan dette kan forklares, hvordan det påvirker de velferdsstatenes politikk og autonomi, og hvilke implikasjoner det gir i forhold til tradisjonelle velferdstypologier.

Hovedargumentet er at kritisk bruk av globaliserings- og internasjonaliserings-teorier, og en kritisk tilnærming til disse begrepene generelt, kan være en nyttig innfallsvinkel for å forstå slike reisende ideer. Samtidig er det viktig å understreke at selv om ideer er felles, kan de komme til uttrykk i høyst forskjellige velferdsordninger. Denne variasjonen vil i stor grad kunne forklares ut fra forskjellige nasjonale politiske kulturer og strukturer. I videre analyser er det viktig å ta høyde for nettopp denne doble prosessen mellom det tverrnasjonale på den ene siden og det nasjonale på den andre.

Abstract

This paper is a discussion of the link between national welfare debates at the one hand and theories of globalisation at the other. Briefly, one can assume that by analysing how different arrangements are being discussed in different political contexts one is also able to «unveil» deep-rooted values in these contexts. What then when, apparently, ideas and arguments over social policy increasingly are travelling among welfare states, despite their belongings to different «regimes»? How is this travelling to be explained, does it influence nation states' policy and autonomy and does it affect traditional typologies.

My argument goes that a critical approach to theories of globalisation and internationalisation as well as the concepts in general, can offer ways to understand and interpret such travelling. Still it is important to note that despite being common; ideas can be transformed into quite different arrangements. This variation is to a great extent to be explained by (national) differences in political cultures and structures, and this dual process of the cross-national at the one hand and the national at the other, requires special consideration in further analyses.

Foreword

This publication comes out of the *Strategic Program for Research on Globalization and Internationalization: welfare, work, legitimacy and globalization*, at the Stein Rokkan Centre for Social Studies at Bergen University Research Foundation. This program is designed as a University of Bergen research network, and its primary area of activity is the study of changes in *welfare and labor market institutions* as they are played out in the debate on globalization and internationalization

(see <http://129.177.180.14/globalisering/programnotat.pdf>).

Issues of distribution, regulation and fairness are central to the program, which incorporates research in sociology, political science, economics, history and philosophy. One basic premise for program research is that focusing on welfare and labor market institutions can provide important insights into other areas of society and that it can also shed light on other globalization issues, such as the status of the nation state and conditions for democratic governance.

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Introduction

This paper is based on my PhD project, broadly aimed at identifying and analysing the impact of globalisation upon the Norwegian and the U.S. welfare states. More specific the project focuses on policy and media debates over three controversial political reforms within these two different welfare state regimes: The Norwegian reforms cash-for-care (*kontantstøtten*) and the transitional allowance (*overgangsstønad til enslige forsørgere*), and the U.S. reform Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). My main argument is that even though these reforms apparently fit traditional welfare state regimes and typologies (Titmuss 1974, Esping-Andersen 1990, Baldwin 1990), debates over them crosscut these typologies.

Briefly, one can assume that by analysing how different arrangements are being debated in different national contexts one is also able to «unveil» deep-rooted values in these contexts. If so, by focusing on cash-based welfare reforms directed at families with children (and in two of the three cases only to single parent families with low or limited income) debates surrounding these reforms can be viewed as *expressions* of political and cultural norms within the national context of the reform (e. g private versus public responsibilities, notions of what constitute proper ways of family life and thereby proper gendered behavior etc.). What then when, apparently, ideas and arguments over social policy increasingly are travelling among these welfare states, despite their belongings to different «regimes»? How is this travelling to be explained, does it influence nation states' policy and autonomy and does it affect traditional typologies?

To relate this travelling to theories of *globalisation* can turn out to be a useful analytical starting point, because broadly speaking globalisation can be understood as ideas from different areas circulating between and within national and political contexts. Due to historical processes of global or international interactions, however, it seems reasonable to argue that globalisation – despite being among «the hottest topic» in contemporary political science (Østerud 1999, Lecher and Boli 2000, Held et.al 1999, Held and McGrew 2000) – is not merely a modern phenomenon. States have long traditions in looking to each other when defining and solving societal and collective problems, which in turn can indicate that there is really nothing qualitative new going on. Still research literature as well as public debates continuously stress the uniqueness of contemporary globalisation. E.g. Held et al. (1999:16) suggest a definition catching both quantitative and qualitative aspects of present day globalisation:

A process (or sets of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions – assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction, and the exercise of power.

This definition also helps distinguishing globalisation processes from more restricted processes of internationalisation, which simply has to do with patterns of interactions and interconnectedness between two or more nation states, regardless of geographical location (Held et. al.1999: 16). What makes the current processes of globalisation so special, it is argued, is not merely its increasing *extensity, intensity, velocity* and *impacts*, but also the very way in which these processes are organized and institutionalised in nearly all domains of society (political, military, economical, cultural, ecological and so on). (Held et. al. 1999:414–452, see also Lechner and Boli 2000). Related to the question of travelling ideas this interpretation implies that if not entirely «modern», contemporary processes of globalisation are characterized by *an increasing amount of ideas* from *an increasing number of areas* circulating between and within national and political contexts. In that way theories of globalisation seem to go beyond theories of diffusion focusing on how innovations spread from members of a social system to members of another, implying societies rather bringing in solutions from outside than solving problems «their own ways» (Karvonen 1981).

This project however is aimed at analysing how processes of globalisation are linked to the welfare debates and the 3 welfare arrangements chosen in Norway and the United States. As a consequence focus is not merely on whether some ideas so to speak are travelling «better» than others, but rather to what extent is it *the same ideas* we are dealing with, and if so how are they institutionalised and expressed. The challenge then is to open for globalisation – along with diffusion and internationalisation – as theoretical tools and actual forces when analysing travelling or cross national ideas – although *without* loosing sight of national differences and specific political actors. The intention of this paper is solely to sketch out some potential ideas and relate them to the frame of the general project, which in turn suggests further clarifications of basic assumptions and intentions.

Some basic illuminations

The very foundation for the project lays in 3 welfare reforms seemingly standing up as exceptions in the political contexts they are parts of. At first glance both cash-for-care, transitional allowance and TANF fit and confirm traditional models or regimes of welfare states. Here Norway and the United States are «prototypes» of the generous, right-based social-democratic – and the limited, need-based liberal welfare regimes respectively (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999, Titmuss 1974). The debates and controversies surrounding these reforms, however, seem to crosscut the traditional typologies. Central to this paper are questions of how notions of welfare have changed over the last decades and possible interpretations of this, while essential to the entire project is a more extensive linking of this «crosscutting» with broader processes like globalisation and its implications in terms of *policy, typology* and *autonomy*. This threefold distinction also contributes in transforming general and broadly defined processes of globalisation into narrower and more tangible questions of research.

Implications in terms of policy have to do with how arrangements are being debated and thereby notions of legitimacy as well as illegitimacy, while *the autonomy dimension* refers to relations between national policy, actors and debates at the one hand and global processes and «forces» at the other. This again is likely to influence future political orientations and actions. *Implications for typology* then refer to if and how eventual crosscutting ideas influence and maybe even erode the distinctive welfare types, e.g. «liberal», «social-democratic» and «corporate» regimes (Esping-Andersen 1990).

So how are we to know *if* – and eventually *how* – processes of globalisation are linked to national welfare states and the legitimacy of concrete political reforms? To answer this, the project will focus on national public debates over cash-for-care, transitional allowance and TANF – from 1996 (when the arrangements definitely were set on the public agenda) and in selected periods onward. These debates are to be analysed, interpreted and discussed within a broader theoretical framework, constituted not only by general globalisation processes, but also specific international and national actors like OECD, UN, national governments and mass medias as well as distinctive user groups.

When explaining variations in support for the welfare states as well as specific welfare arrangements, *middle class interests* are a widespread factor. Briefly, the argument is that the more middle class views and priorities are reflected through political arrangements and these arrangements are institutionalised as universal rights, the stronger their support and legitimacy (Baldwin 1990, Cook and Barrett 1992, Esping-Andersen 1996, Skocpol 1995). Baldwin (1990) for example, stresses the importance of the solidarity between the labour and middle classes being institutionalised as *rights*, when explaining the scope and support for the Scandinavian welfare states. Correspondingly, selective welfare arrangements dominating within the liberal model are claimed to prevent this form of solidarity and institutionalism. Yet, neither typologies nor theories of middle class interests seem sufficient in explaining why cutbacks in transfers to lone parents appear to be less controversial in Norway than in the U.S. – as to be demonstrated in the next part of the paper. Based on notions of «the liberal and individualistic» U.S. and the «women-friendly Scandinavia», actually the opposite could be more likely. Nor can typologies and theories explain why in the Norwegian context it seems more controversial to offer cash-for-care to a (potential) broad group of recipients than to limit the transitional allowance to groups small already in the first place.

Do «travelling ideas» constitute a useful approach to paradoxes like these? Are some ideas so to speak superior in representing ideals or standards for the politics and the ideologies of the national welfare states? *Wage work* for example, also among women and welfare recipients, appears to be an increasingly powerful ideal across states and welfare models (Knudsen and Wærness 1999, UNECE 2000). Linked to globalisation, the welfare state and gender relations (both as ideals and practices) this opens for various questions pointing towards the project's relevance and potential. For

example, feminism most likely can be interpreted and understood in terms of globalisation or as «a global trend» – taking extensity, intensity as well as velocity and impacts into considerations (Held et. al. 1999). Still we can expect the concrete outcomes of this global trend to diverge between different states, and among different social groups within the same national context. Then it becomes highly important to elaborate the relevance of cleavages or contextual factors like centre-periphery, class and race in these matters. At a rather specific level this has to do with *who look to whom for what*, or *who are the carriers of the «proper» ideas – and how and why is that*. We can also expect different groups having – and meeting– different standards for what is proper and not, etc. On a more general basis, it seems reasonable to expect states as well as groups within the singular states to be affected by processes of globalisation and internationalisation in different ways and having different preconditions (i.e. in forms of political institutions and citizens` rights/duties towards state policy) for this.

Even though no public debates have been analysed to any great extent in this phase of the project¹, further specifications of the «debates» referred to are required. Here a principal distinction is made between *academic debates* at the one hand and *policy* and *media debates* at the other. This does not merely serve to catch paradoxes and controversies within and among the different welfare states, it also opens for the possibility of controversies over concrete political arrangements in one area of debate, without this necessarily being the case in another.² In accordance with the theme of the project, focus is on policy and media debates. Though in order to grasp and fully understand *the forms* as well as *the contents* of such debates, *academic debates* constitute an important theoretical background. First and foremost they highlight the contexts in which policy and media debates take place, and thereby work as tools in analysing the empirical material: policy and media debates over TANF, cash-for-care and transitional allowance.

While *academic debates* refer to theories over welfare states, globalisation and gender, *policy debates* refer to formal speeches in the U.S. Congress and the Norwegian Storting. Besides the fact that these forums open up for speeches without interruptions, the politicians` primary aim is to explain or persuade each other. As a consequence political debates also are ideologically oriented and a central source for the project. Moreover such policy debates are available at Internet, at least in the time span for the project.

Media debates have to do with how cash-for-care, transitional allowance and TANF have been «presented» in selected newspapers in distinct periods from 1996 and

¹ This of course affects the structure and design of this paper with its orientation towards initially and general – but basic – questions and assumptions, rather than specific «findings».

² An example: The U.S debates over TANF is partly due to groups of intellectuals as well as certain interest groups criticizing the 1996 welfare reforms trying to influence politicians and the Congress (make a policy debate). Simultaneously these actors partly have succeeded in transforming the academic debate into a media debate (see among others Feminist Economics, vol. 1, no.2 1995, Piven 1999,2001, The Women`s Committee of 100`s project 2002 and Blueprint Magazine, January 2002).

onward. There is a twofold advantage related to the use of newspapers as sources. In addition to being among the population's most important sources of information (or at least among the most regular ones), they are crucial in mediating the general opinions over these arrangements. The Norwegian medias chosen are Aftenposten, VG and Dagbladet, while the U.S. ones are The New York Times, Washington Times and USA Today. All are major national newspapers with extensive websites, but also differing in profiles and reader groups.

The reforms and the debates

Among the basic assumptions discussed is the assumption of political reforms as expressions of certain norms and ideas, an important point to the further discussion. In an international, historical context both Norway and the United States can be viewed as «exceptions», due to their traditions for supporting women in their roles as *mothers*, either prior to or in addition to their roles as housewives or workers (Skocpol 1992, Gordon 1994, Syltevik 1996, 1999). In one way or the other this is also a common trait for the three reforms to be presented here, although belonging to different welfare state models or regimes (Titmuss 1974, Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999, Baldwin 1990). Moreover, each of these reforms is based on cash transfers rather than services – a crucial point to be discussed more closely later in this paper. Another important point to keep in mind is that both cash-for-care, transitional allowance and TANF are regarded as *successful reforms*, despite of their different goals, profiles and user groups.

The Norwegian cash-for-care reform

With the cash-for-care reform introduced in 1998, parents of children age 1-3 can choose to receive 3000 NOK per month (ca 300 US dollar). The only criterion is not to make use of state sponsored childcare programs (which in practice means most of the Norwegian kindergartens). The aim of the reform is threefold (St.prp. 53, 1997-98):

- Better possibilities for families to take care of their own children.
- Real freedom of choice regarding the use of different forms of childcare programs.
- Increased equality in public transfers from the state to the families, regardless of how childcare is organized.

In 1999 approximately 76% of families with children age 1-3 where paid cash-for-care. 96% of the recipients were women (Reppen and Rønning 1999) and this turns out to be a stable picture (Baklien, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2001). Despite widespread use the reform is often regarded among the most controversial issues on the Norwegian political agenda in the 1990s – not only in the general public but also among the actual

receivers.³ By seeking to make home based childcare more attractive to children it can be considered a break with a family policy which, since the 1970s, had aimed at strengthening women's employment, largely through the promotion of state sponsored childcare and parental leave schemes (Håland 2001, Berven, Magnussen and Wærness 2001). Still, wage work does not prevent these families to make use of the reform. It is the parents who decide whether they will spend the money on private childcare or spend more time at home themselves.

The Norwegian transitional allowance

This reform makes single parent families eligible to a basic minimum income due to their special care obligations. From the implementation in 1964 and until 1998 being lone parents with limited income and youngest child under the age of 10, was the only criterion for receiving transitional allowance. Employment status was not considered to be of special importance in these matters (Øyen 1966, Syltevik 1999). More generous transfers, though for a shorter period of time, characterised the 1998 changes. All lone parents with limited income and the youngest child under three years old are still eligible to transitional allowance. From then, however, wage work or education is an absolute condition for further transfers. Public authorities are also increasingly stressing the temporary and instrumental aspects of the reform. E.g. the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs states that transitional allowance is to be regarded a temporary help for self-maintenance, so that single parents fully or partly are capable of providing for themselves and their children through wage work (Ministry of Children and Family Affairs 2000). Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics of Norway (SSB) show that the number of receivers in 2001 is only half of what it was in 1998, when the changes occurred. Among the receivers, 4 out of 5 now are under education or work part-time (SSB 2001, The national Insurance 2001). Compared to cash-for-care and TANF, however, the debates over transitional allowance have been both few and modest.⁴

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

TANF is rooted in the Social Security Act (1935), often regarded as the basis of the US welfare system. The reform is a renewed version of Aid to Families with Dependent

³ For example, completely need-based coverage of kindergartens has been a pronounced political goal the last two decades, suggesting a coverage rate at approximately 70% (Hellevik 2000). Though the coverage rate for all children age 1–5 though was 52% in 2000 and even lower among the youngest children (Statistic Norway 2002), indicating that many parents receive cash-for-care as a compensator for lacking kindergartens rather than by «choice» (Bungum, Brandth and Kvande 2001).

⁴ An illustrating example: Searching Aftenposten website and the category «all news» (1997 and onwards) resulted in 30 findings on transitional allowance (overgangsstønad) compared to 631 findings on cash for care (kontantstøtte) in the same category.

Children (AFDC), a mean-tested program originally oriented towards widows with responsibilities for young children. Among the main intentions was preventing the needs for these widows to be employed, and thereby to break with contemporary ideals of motherhood. (Skocpol 1995).

However, changes within family, society, and the labour market (e.g. more employed women, increasing number of divorces and more out of wedlock births) resulted in reconsiderations over which group should be eligible to the transfers. From 1967 also single mothers could receive AFDC, and the number of single parent families more than tripled from 1960 to 1990. The number of AFDC receivers also increased steadily until 1994, but from then to 1999 the number was halved (Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1999). This sudden decrease is to a great extent related to the massive critics towards the reforms, and claims for restrictions and reductions both in the Congress and the general public. Still the direct explanation of the declining number of receivers is the amendment *The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA)*, where AFDC was transformed to TANF. Here the values of «work for your welfare» (workfare) and of wage work itself are being stressed much stronger than in the forgoing law (Piven 1999). Like AFDC the administrative responsibilities are divided between federal and state authorities, but TANF gives more room for state judgments within the general juridical framework. The eligibility to welfare is also being restricted to five years within the lifespan, and the states are able to reject TANF for unmarried mothers under the age of 18 and to refuse increased support if giving birth when already on welfare (Piven 1999).

The welfare state and national contexts (and general typologies...) When moving from a brief description of the reforms themselves to the debates and contexts surrounding them, the main argument is that cash-for-care as well as transitional allowance and TANF offer «ideological clarity» and highlight the relations between cross-national ideas and national political adjustments. Focusing on the *debates over* the reforms and not merely the reforms themselves allows stressing ideological aspects, and the temperature, scope as well as the various arguments at use all point towards underlying cleavages being «activated» (Berven, Magnussen and Wærness 2001).⁵ Considering the uniqueness of these debates, compared to the Norwegian and U.S. political agendas in general, characteristics are likely to be explained by characteristics of receivers as well as characteristics of the reforms themselves. To put it more broadly: unveiling what is regarded proper and not in different respects also contribute to exposing collective notions over gender, moral (relating to work as well as sexuality), individual versus societal responsibilities and boundaries between public and private.

An important question then, when altering focus from national reforms to cross-national debates and contexts, is to what extent interpretations of arrangements like cash-for-care, transitional allowance and TANF have changed over time. Certainly the

⁵ In this respect the point that use of these arrangements often coincides with use of others arrangements as well is of minor importance. A family receiving TANF for example, is most likely receiving food stamps and Medicaid too, while a family receiving cash-for-care also is paid child allowance (*barnetrygd*).

focus here is from 1996 and onward. Yet, as demonstrated, ideas behind political changes implemented at that time grew out of previous processes. This clearly shows the relevance of elaborating norms central in an U.S. and Norwegian welfare context, also due to the welfare concept traditionally having qualitative different contents in the two countries. Still «globalisation» can turn out to be a useful analytical tool due to the underlying assumptions of travelling ideas – though working through specific contexts and specific political actors.

The United States

«When America works, America prospers; so my economic security plan can be summed up in one word: jobs. ... we must always remember the goal [of welfare reform] is to reduce dependency on government and offer every American the dignity of a job». (President Bush, State of the Union Address, January 30. 2002).

Debates over U.S. welfare policy are characterized by «...a strong belief in individualism, coupled with equally strong beliefs in economic freedom and free market capitalistic economy» (Chelf 1992:5). The very system is based upon the Social Security Act (1935) and has two main components: *social insurance* and *social assistance*, where only the last is associated with «welfare» as a highly controversial issue.⁶ Underlying social assistance is a principle of transfers and services detached from (eventually) previous contributions. Together with Food Stamps and Medicaid, TANF is the most central welfare arrangement, and the very prototype of what characterized the U.S.-variant of welfare: minimum services and transfers to the poorest and the most needy ones. As most of the receivers are poor single mothers in charge of dependent children, we can expect the collective standards to become particularly highlighted through arrangements like these (O'Connor, Orloff and Shaver 2000, Piven 1999, 2001).

There are two major positions in the debates over social assistance. *The conservative argumentation* stresses how welfare arrangements themselves undermine the morals of work, family and sexuality (see for example Murray 1994, Segalman and Marsland 1989). Receiving beneficent money which one has not earned the rights to – i.e. through wage work – is not merely viewed unjust and conflicting with values such as freedom of individuals and bettering one's situation through own achievements. It also, according to this line of argumentation, weakens the receivers' motivations to provide for themselves and their families, creates dependency, in addition to the risk of considerable dispersion. Consequently, eventual public support should be sustained at a minimum level and thereby encourage wage work. Not merely is this expected to

⁶ This paper focuses on the controversial social assistance – part, while there is a relatively high level of support for *Social Insurance* in the U.S. opinion. Underlying social insurance is a principle of previous contributions as the basis for public transfers and services i.e. retirement pensions and medical services (Medicare). These are services understood as deserved rights, mainly on the basis of work participation (Cook and Barrett 1992).

have disciplinary effects upon the receivers, but also regulatory functions towards potential clients now in (low-) paid work.

That being «on welfare» is a fate worse and entails a status lower than having hard and unrewarding work has been characterized as «*Poor Relief and the Dramaturgy of Work*» (Piven and Cloward 1993:343,396, also see Piven 1999). In contrast, the liberal argumentation stresses how focus on wage work alone actually contributes to maintaining the receivers' social and economical problems. According to this argumentation the main reason for these problems to occur is that the recipients have problems already *in the first place* (i.e. problems with getting or keeping work because of lacking education, work experience or childcare facilities etc). Then *extensions*, not reductions, in services and transfers appear as the necessary means to better the situation and prepare for wage work (Chisman and Pifer 1987, Piven and Cloward 1993, Hartmann and Bergmann 1995).

Summing up: conservatives and liberals have quite different views over optimal *instruments* for transforming receivers to workers. The *goal* seems common however: to encourage employment and thereby promote social integration, personal autonomy and increased self-esteem (Fraser and Gordon 1994, Piven 1999).

Norway

«A welfare society securing everyone decent conditions of life is a precondition in creating freedom and equal opportunities for all. Equal opportunities are first and foremost created by just distribution and an expansive welfare system including everyone. The individual needs income, education and access to important services making individual realization and real choices possible» (St.meld. nr. 30, 2000–2001).⁷

In order to understand the massive scope and support for the Norwegian welfare state it is important to stress ideas about welfare as a *right* earned by *citizenship* and over the state both as *guarantor* and *producer* of this welfare (Kuhnle 2000). Certainly, one can argue that there has been a stronger orientation towards market-based alternatives, and the potential role of civil society in performing the necessarily welfare services are also increasingly stressed during the last two/three decades. Nevertheless, the state is still controlling and mostly also financing the welfare – production carried out by actors in market and civil society (Selle 2000, Berven and Selle 2001). Other important principles are universal and standardized services along with wage work regarded as a

⁷ Norwegian: Et velferdssamfunn som sikrer gode levekår for alle, er en forutsetning for å skape frihet og like muligheter for alle. Like muligheter skapes først og fremst gjennom en rettferdig fordeling av levekår, og av godt utbygde velferdstilbud som omfatter alle. Den enkelte må ha inntekt, utdanning og tilgang til viktige tjenester som gir mulighet for individuell utfoldelse og reelle valg.

right in order to be self-supporting.⁸ The value of (women) being able to combine wage and family work is another aspect continuously stressed in policy and media debates, as well as in the general public (Hernes 1987, Kildal 1998, 2000). Norwegian women are characterized as «superwomen» (Dagbladet, May 2001) in this matter: they are ranking at the top of international statistics over fertility as well as employment (SSB 2001).⁹ That most of them are part time workers, still performing the largest bulk of unpaid house- and care work as well, clearly highlights the ambivalence in this matter – and one can ask whether Norwegian equality of gender is more of a myth than a fact (Berven, Magnussen and Wærness 2000, Berven and Wærness 2001).

Perceptions, arrangements and globalisation

Despite eventual «travelling ideas», notions of welfare seem to be qualitatively different in the two countries – a point also central to traditional models and typologies of the welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1996, 1999, Baldwin 1990). These are not static pictures though. Rather, policies as well as attitudes towards these policies change over time and this dynamic cannot be grasped by typologies alone but are to be interpreted within a theoretical frame. This leads back to our previous expectation about ideals of wage work continually extending to new social groups (and thereby indirectly to how notions over reforms not linked to wage work have altered): From being interpreted as legitimate reforms securing lone home-working mother a basic income, to – during the 1990s in particular – being regarded as sources of passivity, isolation and lack of self-esteem (Gordon 1994, Fraser and Gordon 1994, Piven 1999, 2001, Syltevik 1996, 1999). In that way these reforms also reflect two more general processes. First, how dominant perceptions of single parents have changed from persons with special obligations and responsibilities to potential workers. And as a consequence, both TANF and the transitional allowance, especially since reformed in 1998, are aimed at encouraging wage work or the necessary education for self-support.¹⁰ Second, these reforms clearly highlight how dominant views over this form

⁸ For example the Norwegian governments long term program (*Langtidsprogrammet 2002–2005*) state: «The right to work is far more than the right to income. Work is also important as basis for personal development, in creating social networks and for societal participation in general» (*Norwegian: Retten til et arbeid er noe langt mer enn retten til å heve lønn. I arbeidslivet legges mye av grunnlaget for personlig utvikling, etablering av sosiale nettverk og deltakelse i samfunnslivet generelt*). St.meld. nr. 30, 2000–2001.

⁹ The last few days new data from Statistic Norway shows that the fertility rate among Norwegian women have decreased markedly the last year (from an average of 1, 85 children in 2000 to 1, 78 children in 2001). Researchers and medias are discussing whether this is indicating a trend along with alternative incentives to reverse it. Among the solutions is a so called rapid – premium, rewarding mothers giving birth to second child within 30 months after the first one by not making wage work (between the first and second birth) an absolute claim for paid parental leave. Distinctive economic incentives for an eventual third child are also suggested an alternative. (See Lappgård 2001, VG 12.2.2002, among others).

¹⁰ This of course is also related to actual changes within the single parent – category. An example: the concept of «single parent» has changed from associations with widows

of public providing have altered: from a *compensator* of marriage and a way of maintaining a decent standard of living, to a *producer of new forms of problems* related to passivity and dependency (Fraser and Gordon 1994, Syltevik 1999).

Likewise, one of the major objections to cash-for-care is its potential weakening of women's connections to the labour market by creating increased options for retreating or reducing wage work for a limited period of time (Magnussen 1999, Baklien, Ellingsæter and Gulbrandsen 2001). This in turn suggests that it may be fruitful to analyse the heated debates as *responses* to breaking the dominant norms of wage work as a *duty* rather than a right, and wage work as the major source of independency, realisation and citizenship (Håland 2001, Berven, Magnussen and Wærness 2001). Another point to keep in mind when focusing on normative aspects is the distinction between public transfers in forms of *services* and public transfers in forms of *cash*. We can assume considerations over effectiveness and trust in the receivers to be of special importance in cash based reforms, due to the fact that the senders (the welfare state or political authorities on behalf of the nation's tax payers) have few if any direct means of controlling whether or not the receivers spend the money as intended (Magnussen 1999:78–81). Also, these reforms are almost exclusively paid to women – and on the basis of their roles as mothers, not as workers. In addition neither cash-for-care, nor transitional allowance or TANF is determined by any (necessarily) past action, in contrast to for example unemployment benefits. There seems, however, to be a stronger tendency to stress expectations over future actions, i.e. future wage work, both as an instrument in «paying back one's duties» and concerning transitional allowance and TANF as the way of fulfilling these expectations. *All this suggest moral aspects to be particularly apparent in debates surrounding these arrangements* which again points toward this project's theoretical and empirical prospects.

Concluding remarks: Independency as the principal norm?

Crosscutting arrangements, debates and welfare models, *independency* seems to stand out as the shared norm and a major key in analysing to what extent and why different welfare arrangements are regarded as legitimate (or illegitimate). Thus, one can argue, the more the independency of the beneficiary is stressed, the more legitimate the reform (and contrary) (Piven 1999, O` Connor, Orloff and Shaver 2000, Kildal 1998, 2000). What counts as independency and dependency is, however, neither obvious nor static. Rather it varies along with the historical, cultural and political contexts (Fraser and Gordon 1994). An example: in the article «*A Genealogy of Dependency: Tracing a Keyword of the U.S. Welfare State*» by Fraser and Gordon (1994) it is argued that the concept of «dependency» has altered from a natural part of all social relations in the

(«undeserved needy») to being associated with women with children but without partner (Syltevik 1996, 1999, Gordon 1994).

pre-industrial and industrial U.S. society to a negative hallmark characterizing individuals not satisfying the dominant ideal of work:

With all legal and political dependency now illegitimate, and with wives' economic dependency now contested, there is no longer any self-evidently good adult dependency in postindustrial society. Rather, all dependency is suspect, and independence is enjoined upon everyone. Independence, however, remains identified with wage labor. That identification seems to increase in a context where there is no longer any «good» adult personification of dependency who can be counter posed to «the worker». In this context, the worker tends to become the universal social subject: everyone is expected to «work» and be «self-supporting» (Fraser and Gordon 1994:324).

This quotation serves to illustrate how an analysis of the debates over TANF, cash-for-care and transitional allowance also makes up an analysis of relations between normative ideas, principles of the welfare state and the legitimacy of specific political arrangements. By identifying factors creating debates across states and welfare models, one is also able to analyse collective ideas and relations between the global and the national.

As demonstrated through this paper, concepts of travelling thoughts and ideas seem to make sense in pointing towards a set of common changes across different national and political contexts relating to attitudes towards wage work, proper ways of family life and how to balance work and family. A critical approach to theories of globalisation and internationalisation as well as the concepts in general, can offer ways to understand and interpret such travelling. Still it is important to stress that despite being common; ideas can be transformed into quite different arrangements. This variation is to a great extent to be explained by (national) differences in political cultures and structures, and this dual process of the cross-national at the one hand and the national at the other, requires special consideration in the project.

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