

## Engendering the Welfare State: How Fa(i)r are the Scandinavian Welfare States

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**Abstract.** Welfare state or state social provision is perceived as interventions by the state in civil society to alter social forces, including male dominance. A gender-neutral welfare state is not possible on the contrary gendered assumptions constitute the backbone of the welfare state regimes. Feminists have contributed to the literature immensely and categorization of welfare states from a gender-aware perspective has become a rich field that answers “fundamental questions such as: what type of social security system with which assumptions, priorities and with what type of society provision?” The paper discusses the reform agenda of the feminist welfare state utopia, “the real utopia”, in which both men and women can perform as autonomous, free individuals in the public and private spheres. In this regard, the Scandinavian states are far ahead compared to the rest of the world in terms of reforms undertaken, yet the question remains: Is the Scandinavian case a blueprint for “the Real Utopia”? The paper aims to answer this question primarily by presenting feminist economists concerns on welfare state regulations, the suggested reform agenda, secondly by analyzing and evaluating Scandinavian model in a historical and conceptual context.

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**JEL.** B54, H53, H55, I38, J29.

### 1. Introduction

Neoliberalism and its severe inequality consequences in terms of income distribution, economic development and human development call back the discussions on social security systems in academic and political circles. Despite the “eight crises of social protection”<sup>1</sup> that characterizes the neo-liberal period, around the world the unease about the growth of social and economic insecurity is severely felt. Hence, social security reform has to be on the agenda of many governments that has to consider the demographic pressures as well as the fiscal constraints. The vital question in this respect is “what type of social security system with which assumptions, priorities and with what type of society provision?” The Scandinavian welfare states are the closest to the “welfare state utopia” that envisions a gender and class based equality and inclusive citizenship framework. The aim of this paper is to evaluate welfare state models from a gendered lens and to discuss whether the Scandinavian welfare states can be treated as a benchmark model.

Social policy regimes are not neutral but rather considered as “institutionalized patterns in welfare state provision establishing systematic relations between the state and social structures of conflict, domination and accommodation” (Orloff, 1996). Hence, welfare state, or state social provision is perceived as interventions by the state in civil society to alter social forces, including male dominance. A gender-neutral welfare state is not possible and on the contrary “normative

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assumptions about the gender roles and social organization of care lie at the heart of modern welfare states” (Ciccia & Bleijenberg, 2014). For this very reason, categorization of welfare states based on their gendered assumptions and policies is an important contribution of the feminists to the comparative literature.

Organization of work life and social policies are still built upon the outdated assumption of male breadwinner model in which men commit themselves to full-time employment and women provide unpaid domestic work and care giving at home. This leads to a seemingly trade-off between “women’s emancipation and reaching parity with men in employment” and “child well-being and parental time”. However the real practice enforces an even less pleasant trade-off. Economic distress (mostly in less developed world) and economic-social reorganization (more so in developed world) have led to increasing women’s labour force participation. Women join their male counterparts in the public sphere of commercial activity yet the social and political institutions continue to assume the continuation of the traditional division of labour. The organization of the workplace and care giving has not been adapted to this change. Employers use women’s labour more and more in the labor market yet they continue to depend on women’s unpaid domestic labour without providing direct contribution or changing their stance on gendered division of labour. Hence women try to fulfill both work-life and their traditional housewifely-maternal responsibilities. However this comfortable ignorance is not priceless, it results with low productivity in the labour market and a significant decrease on the well being of the children and women. Time poverty imposed on women is not sustainable, nor is the low quality of care available for children. Therefore the real trade off is between enjoying embarking all the weight of reconciliation on women and recognizing the socially as well as politically undesirable consequences of this option besides its unsustainability in the long run.

Scandinavian countries with the exception of Denmark (77%) that succeeded to overcome gender gap by 80% (WEF, 2015) are the focus of the study. This paper questions how fa(i)r are the Scandinavian welfare states to reach the dual earner-dual carer model. The outline is as follows: the first section presents how social policies and welfare state regime in general are built upon gendered assumptions and are strong tools to reinforce or transform existing inequalities. Secondly, various types welfare state regimes are analyzed in historical and categorical form a gender-aware perspective in order to have an evaluative acknowledgement of the Scandinavian model. Finally the paper concludes by questioning whether the utmost developed Scandinavian welfare states have reached the ‘Real Utopia’ or not?

## 2. Gender in the Welfare State

Some analysts perceive emergence of modern welfare state as a transition from private to public patriarchy, in which the gender hierarchy is reinforced by the assumptions of the system. Firtsly, male-breadwinner model is assumed as the norm according to which, men is responsible for fulltime employment to earn the living of the household members and women is responsible for care-giving and domestic labor. Secondly, following the gendered division of labor, the family wage system provides superior wages to men, which either excludes women from the labor force or at least from the favored positions and (re)produces a job hierarchy that contributes to women’s dependency on men. One should note that this model not only assumes but also promotes the “traditional family”. The system depends on women’s unpaid care work, which is always rewarded less than men’s work. This gendered structure is also reflected in politics in terms of gender differentiation, and most of the times gender inequality in claiming benefits from the state, which contributes to women’s exclusion from political power. Men tend to make claims on the welfare states as workers; whereas women make claims as members of families, which are called as second-tier programs in terms of their benefit generosity.

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The design of the policy not only can reproduce male dominance but also can transform it. It determines whether the welfare state help to promote patriarchy or women's empowerment? "One may ask the social reproduction analyst: What will constitute evidence that a given policy works for or against male dominance? One may ask the poverty researchers: Are women's interests only economic" (Orloff, 1998).

To answer those decisive questions we need an explicit framework. Molyneux (1985), distinguishes two types of gender interests; practical gender interests and strategic gender interests. The practical gender interests are to improve women's material situation but would not themselves fundamentally challenge the gender order, on the other hand strategic interests are to undermine some aspects of gender subordination. In this respect the questions should be asked again to develop an understanding of how different characteristics of welfare states both shape and are shaped by women's practical and strategic interests. Those questions can be answered only by looking deeper into the implications of the existing policies and deriving some principles that will improve both women's (society's) strategic and economic interests.

MacDonald (1998) puts forward fundamental principles of gender review of welfare state policies. One of the most important principles is the recognition of intra-household inequality in the process of designing policies. Feminist economics provides a rich literature in terms of criticizing Becker-style altruistic models of household decision-making (see Folbre, 1986; Bergmann, 1995; Agarwal, 1997; Kabeer, 1994). It is well established in the literature that family members neither have equal access to resources nor can benefit equally from expenditures; therefore members of the same household may have different levels of well being. Also it is commonly argued in the literature that having an independent income is very important in terms of bargaining power in the household as well as is the case in any other relationship. However, the implicit assumption of policies is to consider households as unified units and see women as wives and mothers rather than individuals, policies focus on inter-household differences not intra-household differences (Mosesdottir, 1995).

When the income security policies are based on family income, with the assumption that all family members are equally well-off, it not only overlooks the intra-household differences but also ties women's security to their marriage rather than their individual existence. Also earnings-related benefits such as unemployment insurance and pensions are individual entitlements that are expected to support the family. This system builds a structure in which women's earnings may negatively effect family entitlements and this reinforces the traditional roles underlying male bread-winner approach (Mosesdottir, 1995).

In the poverty literature women's vulnerability to poverty is tied to this traditional family model and also institutionalization of this model in the labor market and the welfare system. Hence a gender analysis of the welfare state inescapably brings us to discuss the gender inequality in terms of vulnerability to poverty. The studies on poverty indicate that women constitute the largest portion among the poor due to women's weak position in the labor market and rising rates of solo motherhood (see Fukuda-Parr, 1999; Chant, 2003; Çağatay, 1998) Also in poverty analysis, it should be kept in mind that a focus on poverty rates alone can be misleading since when marriage rates are high the poverty rates tend to seem low as well as the gender poverty gap, however this analysis obscures women's vulnerability to poverty. Women can be relatively worse off compared the rest of the family members, hence social security benefits should be individualized. (Christopher *et al.*, 2002)

Individual entitlement is necessary but not always enough. If spousal income affects benefit levels as is the case for most earnings related programs, like in Britain, New Zealand and Australia then family income-limits again affect unemployment insurance benefit levels and therefore combined with the gender inequality in the labor market, "low-income families risks disqualifying many

vulnerable women and children and reinforcing their economic dependence on male earners” (MacDonald, 1998). Individual versus family as the basis of entitlement is far from being a solved issue. Therefore in the existing social structure feminists such as Nelson (1996) argue for more nuanced solutions compared to an understanding going in between individual and nuclear family as the unit of analysis and offer the term “individuals in relation”.

The second principle addresses the need for recognition of the reproduction process, “Policies must be based on recognition of the economic importance of social reproduction, including care-giving and unpaid household work” (MacDonald, 1998). Feminists arguing for a social provisioning approach claim that strategies to increase productivity cannot be really successful without internalizing the effect of the reproductive sphere. It is well established in the literature that there are economic costs of loading the social security provision on the household. For example, studies on structural adjustment processes show the potential negative macroeconomic outcomes of cutbacks in social spending. (ex. Elson & Çağatay, 2000) These cutbacks are compensated by extension and expansion of women’s unpaid work, which inescapably negatively effects female labor supply, the quality of care, the wellbeing of the women as well as the children and ultimately threatens the long-run sustainability of the strategy. The welfare state should be based on an understanding that examines organization of reproduction in terms of its equity, efficiency and sustainability.

A third principal is the recognition of different labor market experiences of women and men. It is well established in the literature that women all around the world earn lower wages and are more likely to be working in nonstandard, less secure and informal jobs. Social security programs are typically employment-based and women have been traditionally disadvantaged compared to men as a result of their disadvantaged position in the labor market. A welfare system, which considers full-time and continuous employment as the norm, disregards these gender differences. Even if the language of the policy is gender neutral due to the real world experience the target group is mostly male workers:

“However, there is not a “universal worker”-there are men and women workers, with labor market opportunities, constraints, returns and life-cycle work patterns. While this individuation of entitlement may be long-term strategy for equality, in the short term it can worsen the social security position of women” (MacDonald, 1998).

### 3. Welfare State Models from a Feminist Perspective

Women’s participation in the labor market has been on a steady increase due to two primary reasons: (i) the rising commonsense that every individual should be self-supporting (primarily in the developed North), (ii) the decreasing household income and increasing income insecurity which makes sole male-breadwinner model unsustainable (primarily in the Global South). This shift from male breadwinner model to universal breadwinner model in which both adults of the family engage in paid labor also enforced ‘farewell to maternalism’.

Raising maternal employment and quality childcare stand as two competing or complementary targets depending on the welfare state model (Orloff, 2009). Yet in most of the world, the welfare system continues to rely on maternal care and preserves the traditional gender roles in the household. The increasing total (paid and unpaid) work load on women results with the entrenchment of women’s time between their maternal-housewifely responsibilities and labor market responsibilities. The dual pressure on women’s time and energy beclouds their participation in the labor market. Women generally have to pay a ‘mommy tax’ described as; ‘mother’s career breaks, periods of part-time employment, parenting related occupational and job choices, along with employer discrimination on the basis of parental status’ (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). To avoid shortening hours of care employed women tend to do everything else less, including sleeping to compensate time of absence for their children. Yet, time-crunch of mothers and

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twin crises of the care-givers and takers and declining fertility rates are inescapable consequences of a system that neglects the unequal gendered division of labor.

In 1980's both the British and French were concerned with declining birth rates and infant mortality, which caused a population problem, therefore they developed policies to support reproduction. In both countries the balance of power among trade unionists, employers and the state had a significant importance in terms of determining the outcome, and in both countries trade unionists that are mainly constituted by men defended a "family wage" which would keep their wives out of the labor market. In Britain strong male dominated unions succeeded therefore *British* policies were mainly concerned with breadwinner men's wages. Britain chose a "familialist" policy design that is built on gendered division of labor, which undercuts women's capacities to enter the labor force on an equal basis with men. On the other hand *France* developed policies that allowed for mother's paid work, by offering both material support and health related services to working mothers and their children. France's "parental welfare state" provided an important support for two-earner families (Orloff, 1998). Similarly in 1930s the decline in birth rates was a concern for Sweden and Swedish women reformers used the fears about declining population to promote new protections for working women. In Denmark, women's dual roles as mother and worker are supported by social and family policy to facilitate women's integration to the workforce. The feminist literature presents that various responses to the crisis of care in different country contexts, based on different gender ideologies determines women's capabilities and economic empowerment.

Hakim (1995) opposes the feminist argument that women's choices are constrained by the limited opportunities given to them and claims that assuming women would be like men only if they could is to ignore 'gendered moral rationalities'. Based on preference theory, Hakim categorizes women into three: (i) 'work-centered', (ii) 'home-centered' and (iii) 'adaptive' and argues that home-centered and work-centered women pursue their preference no matter which policy context is in place, hence social policies can have some effect on the large majority that have adaptive preferences.

Another categorization on welfare states and gender outside the feminist framework is Esping-Andersen's *Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990). The basis of this categorization criteria is 'social rights and decommodification of labor', which represents the degree to which the individuals typical life situation is freed from the labor market dependence. The three worlds are: liberal, conservative-corporatist and social-democratic.

Liberal regimes consider the market provisioning as much as possible and do very little in terms of offering alternatives to the income generated by the market. US, Canada, Australia are few examples of liberal regimes. The other two types of regimes differ substantially from the liberal regime in terms of having a well-developed welfare state that provides state provision for childcare. Social-democratic regimes are universalistic and egalitarian and promote significant decommodification of the labor. Nordic countries belong to this group. On the other hand conservative-corporatist regimes still preserve status and class hierarchies and the benefits are still tied to labor market participation. Austria, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands are categorized as conservative-corporatist regimes. Gender outcomes of these two differ greatly. The former develops an individual model of entitlement and offers services for care work to facilitate women to enter the paid labor force, however the latter develops policies that strengthens women's dependence on the family.

Esping-Andersen's categorization of welfare states has been very influential in generating a ground for discussion between mainstream analysis and feminist analysis. Historical institutionalism that provides time and place specific analysis rather than general laws not only denaturalizes a certain type of welfare state model but also addresses that there is room for change. Esping-Andersen (1990) discussed the changing labor market regimes and the effect of these processes on women, by



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doing so he entered the feminist literature terrain without acknowledging the existing feminist prior work and has defined emancipatory yet still gender blind social citizenship rights.

Feminists criticize Esping-Andersen and Hakim as well as other mainstream economists as they still resist in assimilating the concept of care, gendered power and dependency as well as interdependency in their welfare state analyses. In this regard, mainstream fails to understand the relational aspects of gender and considers it as only an individual attribute; moreover they fail to question the hierarchies and inequalities which shape men's and women's preferences and agency. Hence it is fundamental to recognize that 'Gendered identities and agency, including orientations to family are not pre-political or natural' (Orloff, 2009). Another important difference is that mainstream researchers address care as the source of women's difference from men and as a barrier to women's employment which needs to be solved whereas gender analysts consider care as a socially necessary action which is not acknowledged as such due to its gendered character. These fundamental approach differences between mainstream and feminists indicate the importance of the accumulating literature on gendering comparative welfare states.

The rest of the section describes models of welfare states based on gendered division of labour and childcare policies to provide a gendered comparative perspective as well as a policy agenda to reach an egalitarian model:

*The male breadwinner (MB) model* assumes the traditional gender division of labor presented above in which women financially depend on the husbands' income and other derived entitlements. However as discussed above, male breadwinner model is no longer sustainable in today's modern and global age. Comparative welfare state analyses on European states show there is a move towards universal breadwinner model yet childcare services remain to be limited, still enforcing traditional gender norms. Ciccia & Bleijenbergh (2014) list Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Poland and Slovakia as some of the many countries going through such a transformation (p.65).

Preservation of traditional gender norms, and provision of limited care support to families result with *one-and-half breadwinner model*, a modern variant of the male breadwinner (Crompton, 1999). In countries where state support is modest and childcare mostly fall on families, even if the states do not promote traditionalism, the gender discrimination in the labor market and scarcity of affordable childcare perpetuates traditional gender roles. Britain, Cyprus, France, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Spain (Ciccia & Bleijenbergh, 2014) remain to be in the one-and-a-half breadwinner model. In this model employment reduces women's dependency but does not eliminate it. Women's employment behavior is determined by their care responsibilities more than men and their efforts to reconcile leads to taking time out of the labor force (part-time employment or shorter hours) and hence life-long lower entitlements and pension entitlements (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). This means continuation of economic dependency and vulnerability to poverty and long-term earning gap, described with terms such as 'motherhood wage penalty' and 'mommy tax' (Orloff, 2009).

*Caregiver parity model (CGP)* also sustains the traditional gender roles, yet differently from the others this model recognizes the importance of the unpaid work and attaches a much greater value to it. By providing generous allowances and long leaves to mothers from different socio-economic backgrounds, the model relies on rhetoric of choice, which gives women the right to choose between paid employment and home-maker role. However the model does not provide paid quality public care together with the allowances for mothers who want to stay home, hence what is at hand is traditionalism rather than a choice between equally viable options. High allowances and long leaves hinder women's employment prospects in desirable jobs, in other words a policy seemingly beneficial for women leads to a welfare paradox by actually hurting them. In addition, Hook (2006) demonstrates that long parental leaves taken mainly by women not only decreases

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women's labor market attachment, but also hinders men's engagement in unpaid domestic work and caring activities. Bulgaria, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia and Luxembourg apply caregiver parity model.

*Universal breadwinner and substitute care-giver model* is also defined as the 'adult worker' model (Lewis & Guillari, 2005). This model aims full integration of women to the labor market. Parental care is unvalued and treated as an obstacle hence this model focuses on reducing women's care responsibilities with a substitute care giver rather than balancing this parental care by increasing men's share in parental care. This substitute caregiver can be state care-giver (e.g. Finland and is used to be socialist countries); or can be marketized care-giver (e.g. US). These two alternatives are based on similar gender assumptions yet have very different class inequality outcomes. If it is not the state that provides high quality, easily accessible childcare for all, then lower income families typically can only have limited access to good quality childcare. A second important negative aspect of marketized carer model is that the caregivers are generally paid low wages and are with low qualifications, which has substantive negative externalities for healthy development of future generations (Ciccia & Bleijenbergh, 2014).

*Universal Caregiver Model* (Fraser, 1994) is the real utopia (dual earner-dual care giver model) (Gornick & Meyers, 2009) of the feminist literature on welfare state models. The aim of the model is to transform the gender roles inside and outside labor market. This fundamentally gender egalitarian framework requires a substantive transformation to achieve symmetrical engagement in paid and unpaid labor of two genders. To challenge reproduced gender inequality in the labor market, work-family reconciliation policies, effective anti-discriminatory laws, prevention of sexual harassment and comparable worth policies to overcome segregation are necessary.

Universal caregiver model recognizes the importance of parental care and high quality childcare for all. With a 'children's rights' approach the model treats children as citizens the state is responsible for and aims shared engagement of families, state, employers and other actors in care. The case for government intervention is made on the public benefits that result from care. Benefits of healthy, well-nurtured children as well as the cost of unequal parenting on next generations are shared by the society hence so should be costs (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). In this system the costs of care are socialized and all social groups and families with different means have equal access to good quality well compensated care. Care is not seen only as an obstacle but as a very valuable experience and a human right. State respects parents right to choose in between supported parental care and non-parental care.

### 4. How Fa(i)r Are the Scandinavian Welfare States

This section aims to look closer into the feminist utopia of welfare states, dual earner-dual carer model to discuss the reforms to reach a truly egalitarian division of labor and to evaluate how close the most developed welfare states, the Scandinavian case are in this regard. Who are defined as active citizens in the welfare system determines who will be primarily benefiting from the system. Therefore, the transformation of states' perspective of women's citizenship constitutes the primary goal. This section primarily discusses the struggle and transformation in politics and women's recognition as active citizens in the Scandinavian case. Secondly, the policy agenda to reach the real feminist utopia and the Scandinavian experience so far is evaluated based on this blueprint.

#### 4.1. Scandinavian States: Women As Active Citizens

The feminist debates on citizenship in Scandinavian Countries are in line with the social democratic model of Esping-Andersen and are closest cases to the Real Utopia, dual earner-dual carer model of feminists. The Scandinavian case is an example of social movement politics to extend social and political rights of women. Widely accepted 'citizenship' concept that recognized women as active

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citizens has a success story of collective action. Since 1970s women's political integration has clearly developed, women's political participation has increased nearly to equal terms in parliamentary as well as the corporate structures of governance (Skjeie & Siim, 2000).

Lewis and Astrom (1992) argue that the developments in terms of women's being considered as active citizens is the results of interaction between women's political mobilization "from below" and political integration "from above" in political parties and institutions. Hernes (1987) name this double tendency as "State feminism". New discourse on participation in Scandinavian countries is such that political forums without women's presence have lost their legitimacy.

Hernes describes social democratic ideal of citizenship as "an activist, participatory and egalitarian ideal" (1987), which is shaped by the social movements. Equality, solidarity and universalism are the core values that shape the principle of inclusionary and equal citizenship. This perspective is widely shared in the society and therefore the policies in this direction have popular support. Equality is not conceived as a status but as equality of conditions, hence distribution of resources is planned with the aim of promoting equality in capabilities.

The experience of each country in terms of the relationship between women's movement and state policies towards a more egalitarian system are different. In Denmark new women's movement is described as having a pragmatic attitude towards the state that cooperates with national and local political structures (Skjeie & Siim, 2000). In Norway a more interventionist feminist movement made more direct contributions. On issues of gender equality and social policies, women in different political parties and women organizations outside political parties have cooperated, the very first aim of those alliances was to run campaigns in order to promote women's political representation in national and local political elections. This alliance called as "The Women's Coup" succeeded with majority of women in three large councils. Regarding citizenship and gender there has occurred a transition from a housewife contract to contracts of equality.

Women has been demanding active citizenship and they have been approaching to this active citizenship in Denmark and Sweden by inclusion of women in the labor market since 1970s which is accompanied by public child care services. In Norway women's movement has been bringing in those, as claims through slogans in demonstrations and those have become propositions in the parliament in late 1980s. Skjeie & Siim (2000) argue that even though the social democratic worker paradigm has remained paramount, a new understanding of gender relations developed within this paradigm. The family is still thought as the smallest harmonious cell of the society now the equality is based on the premise of dual breadwinners. This premise envisions the political reforms such as kindergartens and extension of parental leave as "for the common interest of the community" rather than gendered issues of conflict.

Skjeie & Siim (2000) argue that Scandinavian scholarship has challenged feminist notions of citizenship that are based on public/private divide. They claimed "Women's political integration should not be understood in terms of a general transformation of male domination, or predominantly as an effect of labor market participation... social rights without access to politics is paternalism. Political rights without social rights cannot secure equal citizenship between women and men" (Skjeie & Siim, 2000).

As Skjeie and Siim state and the Scandinavian experiences show it is hard to distinguish strategic interests from economic interests and the cooperation of the political activism "from above" and "from below" are should be complementary to move towards an engendered welfare system.

### *4.2. Reform Agenda and Scandinavian Case*

The dual earner-dual carer society is described as one that provides: 'Equal opportunities for men and women in employment, equal contributions from



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mothers and fathers at home, and high quality care for children provided both by parents and by well qualified and well-compensated caregivers' (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). Gornick & Meyers (2008) set the blueprint of reforms to be undertaken to go through the substantive transformations the real utopia requires. Firstly, the transformations need to take place in the distribution of paid and unpaid labor to achieve gender symmetry. Secondly, the workplaces should be ready to manage their business when father's as well as mothers' reduce their working time especially during the early ages of their children. And state should protect parents' rights to have time for their children without economic sacrifice. In this end three major policy areas are family leave policies, regulation of the working time and care reform.

1. *Regulation of the working time*, especially for men, is necessary to achieve gender symmetry in paid and unpaid work. Long working hours of fathers' is the main obstacle in their engagement to their children's care. A child needs both parents and both of the parents need to spend time and be part of the development of their children. This reciprocal reproductive process is not given the value it requires in the traditional division of labor. On the contrary fathers typically work longer hours compared to their childless counterparts. Absence of fathers in the upbringing of the children is a big loss for both children's and father's wellbeing. Moreover, unless men work fewer hours, women will not have the room to have a career both in terms of time and availability of jobs. High quality reduced hour (35-39) jobs for both genders and strict overtime regulations can provide the means and time for both genders to sustain a decent life that they can fulfill their professional and familial responsibilities.

Scandinavian countries have limited the weekly working time to 35-39 hours with Denmark having the lowest (37 hours) and Finland having the longest hours (39.3) Very recently Sweden is trying to apply 6 hours working day (30 hours per week). Overtime work conditions are clearly defined and very long hours of work is limited with 48 hours.

In addition to lowering the working time reforms on part-time work is also important. Part-time working conditions, right to pay and benefits need to be in parity compared to full time. All Scandinavian countries apply policies to increase the quality of part-time work and adapt 1997 EU Directive on Part-time work: 'to eliminate discrimination against part-time workers and to improve the quality of part-time work' In this regard, they aim to attain pay equity, equality in occupational benefits, social security, training and promotion opportunities as well as equal bargaining rights unless any inequality compared to full time workers is objectively justifiable.

Feminists also argue for giving parents' with young children the right to formally request to change their working time by either asking for reduced hours or for flexible arrangements to meet their caring responsibilities. The employer can reject the request but the request should be formally reviewed. This dialogue is in itself valuable in terms of engrafting a family friendly and employee oriented approach to businesses. Scandinavian states take active role in motivating employers to consider such requests and to provide the opportunity to switch between part-time and full-time due to personal and family reasons. Sweden is an early example (since 1978) that provides parents the right to work for 6 hours a day (at pro-rated pay) until their children turn 8.

2. *Parental leave policy* is the second area of reform. It includes short-term paid maternity and paternity leave rights and benefits; longer term parental leave and temporary periods of leaves for family reasons. Parental leave policies should be designed with the awareness that a newborn needs parental care in its first year. Even though paid maternal leave is provided in most of the countries, it is rather limited in terms of time and are available only to mothers.

In order to have transformatory effect, the short term maternal and paternal leaves should be given to all employed mothers and parents for a duration of six months each; the leave should be entirely non-transferable and need to be with

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100% wage replacement to enable and motivate fathers' in taking up the leaves and sharing the care responsibility (Gornick & Meyers, 2008).

In Scandinavia, the first year of the newborn baby is granted to the parents to personally take care of their children with a generous paid leave. In Sweden the parental leave days in total is 480, 60 days are allocated for each parent as non-transferable days and the remaining 360 days are shared. The wage replacement is 80% for 390 days of the parental leave and a flat rate for the rest.

Norway also combines maternity and paternity leave under parental leave in which parents can choose to use 49 weeks with 100% wage replacement rate or 59 weeks with 80% wage replacement rate. Norway also uses quotas, 14 weeks of the leave can be used by mothers only and another 14 weeks can be used only by fathers, the remaining 21 weeks can be used by either of them. In addition to these daddy quotas, both Sweden and Norway encourage fathers' to use more leave days by offering an additional 4 weeks of shared leave. Similarly, Denmark extends the shareable family leaves by 2 weeks with the condition of fathers' taking a portion of the leave. In Denmark; maternity leave is 18 weeks, paternity leave is two weeks and 100% compensated parental leave which can be taken by either parent is 32 weeks.

Father's usage of leave is of critical importance for increasing the well-being of mothers, fathers and the children. Male use of parental leave has positive effect on gendered division of labor, men not only increase their hours of care but they also contribute more to other reproductive work as well. It gives fathers the opportunity to enjoy being a parent and starts a closer bonding with the child that effects fathers' subsequent involvement in parenting. Scandinavian states interventions to promote active fatherhood 'by gentle force' (Lister, 2009) seem to pay off. As Hobson states, in Sweden today men who do not use leave for care is no longer and exception but a norm and this has enhanced men's capabilities to be active fathers (Bergman & Hobson, 2002) As of 2002, 78% of first time fathers and 90% of first time mothers took paid leave days. In Norway, after the government placed a "use-or -lose" daddy quota, father's that use parental leave has increase from 5% to 70% (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). However this is not say that fathers have been using equal number of days, even though there is a positive trend in this regard it is rather slow. For example, Swedish fathers take less than 1/5<sup>th</sup> of total leave days.

Another important aspect about leave policies is the need for flexibility in use. Parents should be granted to choose to take up their benefits full-time or part-time over several years. Provision of time and flexibility in parental leaves avoid the time crunch they would have which has adverse effects on well being of the children. Parents should be given the opportunity to be present for their kids in times of need. Limiting the breast-feeding period can have poor health and development outcomes; insufficient care for school aged children leads to poor academic performance and for adolescents parents' presence to observe and intervene to their childrens' risky or illegal behavior is critical. Denmark and Sweden provide flexibility on the planning of parental leaves and allow parents to use their paid leaves in increments until the child is 8 years old. Norway and Sweden allow parents to use pro-rated leaves with part-time employment and Norway also gives the option of purchasing private care for the periods parents prefer (Addati, Cassier & Gilchrist, 2014).

3. *Provision of early childhood education and care* is the third area of reform, which not only serves for gender equality but is fundamental from children's right approach as well. Early childhood education should be high quality and publicly subsidized. The quality standards should be sustained by monitoring, staff education and commitment to desirable working conditions to attract high-quality workers (Ciccia & Bleijebnbergh, 2014). The care provision should have the flexibility to adjust to parents' needs and working hours and should be provided in multiple venues to facilitate parents' arrangements.

The Scandinavian countries define themselves as child-centered social investment states (Esping-Andersen, 2002). This approach aims to eliminate the

impact of social inheritance on child's capabilities. The UNICEF statistics on children's well being reflect the success of Scandinavian countries to achieve this objective. EduCare system provides universal entitlement for care to all children from the end of the parental leave to the start of the primary school. Since 1995, Swedish children are entitled to public or publicly subsidized private childcare from age 1 to 12. The entitlement was initially linked to parents' employment yet later similarly with Denmark, right to care is extended to all children regardless of their parents' employment status. Norway is singled out as relatively more traditional as it introduced cash-for-care scheme that supports parental care at home. Denmark is the best example among Scandinavian countries. Care for the children is on the agenda of political parties and it cares the highest portion of 0-2 years old (61.7%, 2004) followed by Norway (58.7%) and finally Sweden (39.5%) (Lister, 2009) In ages 3 to 5, 90%, 82% and 78% of children in Denmark, Sweden and Norway respectively were benefiting from EduCare (in 2000s, Gornick & Meyers, 2008). The care provided in Denmark is promoted by the coalition of social pedagogues and women's movement which is high quality care that not only fulfills care taking but also aims to increase child's well-being and enhance their development (Ciccia & Bleijenbergh, 2014). In accordance with high quality care education requirements for care providers are highest possible and they are well compensated. In Sweden, 98% of the caregivers have specialized certification and in all Scandinavian countries care givers need to have a bachelor degree. Caregivers earn the average female wage with the exception of Denmark where they can earn considerably more (Gornick & Meyers, 2008).

Scandinavian states have been active in planting an egalitarian system and have achieved enviable standards in working time arrangements, parental leave policies, early childcare and education as well as transforming the public and private spheres from an egalitarian perspective. In comparison to other countries Scandinavian countries are far ahead yet looking closer as a benchmark necessitates to also mentioning the shortcomings to determine the further agenda.

There exist gaps between the objectives and outcomes. The primary gap is in political representation, even though women's political participation is relatively high men still dominate the decision-making positions. Thanks to the active feminist movement, women's agency in politics has not been limited to rights given from above but have been earned rights and the struggle to have an established equality by all means is necessary. In order to overcome the disadvantaged position of women as relatively new insiders in the realm, Norway challenges the problem by a quota of 40% for women on non-executive board directorships. As a result of state's active policies, Norway has the highest women proportion in decision-making positions in politics.

The glass ceiling seems to be persistent in the labor market as well, both in public and private sector there exists fewer women in the upper end of the hierarchy. Even Scandinavian countries are far from completing the transformation in traditional gender roles, to some extent they continue to be reproduced in the household and in the labour market. It is primarily women who use most of the days of parental leaves and allowances; women with young children tend to work less hours more often than is the case for men, and women choose less competitive more secure jobs. These persistent traditional gendered patterns lead to persistent segregation in the labour market where women are less likely to be in top positions (Orloff, 2008). This segregation is mirrored in wage gap as well, the gap is wider in higher income levels. In all Scandinavian countries there exists a gender inequality in earnings among parents. Mothers' earnings account for nearly 1/3 of household earnings in Norway and Sweden and 38% in Denmark (Gornick & Meyers, 2008). However one must note that the gender wage gap in Scandinavia is very modest compared to the rest of the world. The compressed wage structure as a result of class equality principle does not allow big discrepancies and life standards to not vary as much as it is the case in the rest of the world (Lister, 2009).

## 5. Conclusion

The dream of an egalitarian society where both women and men can be autonomous individuals and parents is a nearly a dream to come true in the Scandinavian countries with the work-family support system. Thanks to active women's movement, gender equality has become an integral part of the citizenship concept. As a result of this, policies to transform the labor market as well as the everyday family life to advance equality constitute the core of the welfare regime. Political participation of women has increased significantly and explicit policies to increase number and effectiveness of women in decision-making positions are in place to overcome agency gaps. Moreover, Scandinavian countries, namely Norway, Sweden and Denmark can provide high quality childcare for all. There exists a significant increase in father's participation in care responsibilities as well as other unpaid housework. Despite the persistent gaps and segregation that need further intervention, Scandinavian countries have accomplished a long way and has accumulated valuable experience which proves that a dual earner-dual carer society is a real possibility rather than a utopia.

## Note

<sup>i</sup> Guy Standing defines "eight crises of social protection" as: linguistic crises, fiscal crises, legitimization crises, moral crises, social dumping crises, governance crises, work crises, social justice crises. For further discussion see "Globalization-Eight Crises of Social Protection".

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