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Who is at issue - what is at stake?

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**Who is at issue - what is at stake?
Intersectionality in Danish and Norwegian gender equality policies**

by

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Introduction

The Scandinavian welfare states have often been labelled woman-friendly, but during later years, a recurrent issue has been, whether Scandinavian policies of gender equality have been designed for white middle class women, and whether diversity between women has been ignored (Mulinari, 2008; Borchorst & Siim, 2008). We address this issue by applying an intersectionality approach to the study of policies of gender equality in Denmark and Norway. We focus on which groups are in focus of these policies, and to which extent the policies are based on a gender only approach; how inequalities are addressed and which means and instruments are proposed by governments. Our focus is accordingly political intersectionality at a macro level.

The paper presents the very first and preliminary results from our common research project on political intersectionality in Denmark and Norway. We are interested in how policy objectives and policy logics relate to different dimensions of differentiation such as gender, class, ethnicity, generation and sexual orientation, and we analyse welfare policies, family policies, and policies of integration and of gender equality. The choice of gender equality policies as our starting point is motivated by the fact that both of us have worked with this area for many years. A less pragmatic reason is that gender equality has turned out to be a thorny issue that mirrors tensions in the political debate about gender equality and ethnic minorities. It is noteworthy that the political parties that have been most reluctant to support decisions on gender equality, are now framing gender equality as a very important issue. During the same process, gender equality has become a dominant issue. This represents a shift in the political debate especially in the Danish case, where gender for many years has occupied a relatively insignificant role.

The focus on political intersectionality in Scandinavia is interesting, since the populations have been and are still characterized by a certain state optimism, in terms of the ability to secure the well being of the citizens, and these countries have a legacy for emphasizing equality as a central political goal. They have been claimed to have a 'passion for equality' (Graubard, 1986). It is true, that the three countries have been relatively successful in reducing class inequality, and this is reflected in their relatively low gini coefficients that measures income differences (OECD, 2006). They have also been regarded as forerunners in terms of gender equality. They did relatively early adopt legal reform securing women social and political citizenship (Bergqvist, 1999, 297), and they abandoned the male bread winner model in the 1970'ies (Denmark and Sweden) and 1980'ies (Norway). This is reflected in high employment rates and level of education of women (World Economic Forum, 2008). Furthermore, they have been in the World top in terms of political representation of women (IPU, various years). This development has been facilitated by policies of economic redistribution, which have occupied a central role during the periods of Social Democratic headed governments. Ethnicity has not been an important issue in the debates until recently, among other things because the countries have been relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity. With the emerging multiculturalism, ethnic differences have become politized, and during later years it has become a salient issue. The countries are not as successful in reducing inequalities between majority and minority populations, and the distance between employment of women (and men) in the majority and the minority populations is considerable.

Our project departs from the questions of, how policies intersect in terms of combating exclusion and marginalization of different groups, whether and to which extent policies tend to be geared to tackle one dimension of inequality at a time, and how inequality and marginalization is addressed? To put it in another way: do family and welfare policies deal with minority issues, and do policies of integration relate to class and gender equality, and finally the topic of this paper: Do policies of gender inequality address inequality related to class and ethnicity? We find that the systematic focus on intersections between different dimensions of inequality may add new perspectives to the welfare state literature about regimes and models. In the

first part of the paper, we outline our theoretical approach. The second part contains our preliminary results on gender equality plans with an emphasis on the most recent plans.

Macro level dynamics of political intersectionality: Old wine on new bottles?

When American black feminists set off the intersectional turn in feminist theory, the main focus was expressions of identity formation and personal experiences related to judicial and political responses (and non responses) to processes of marginalization and oppression. Kimberly Crenshaw, who supposedly coined the term, was in her first article from 1991 preoccupied with antidiscrimination law, and how American courts frame and interpret stories of black women plaintiffs (1991). She found that black women were caught between on the one hand the single issue approach of antidiscrimination law and the related practice of the courts and on the other hand, race and gender hierarchies. In an article from 1993, she made a distinction between structural, political and representational intersectionality (1993). She defined structural intersectionality as the differentiating experiences of black and white women and related political intersectionality to feminist and antiracist political strategies. She identified the first at a societal or macro level and the second at meso and micro levels of doing politics. Representational intersectionality was defined as processes of cultural construction and the framing of specific cases.

The distinction between structural and political intersectionality is applied in many contexts, and it has stimulated reflections on the interactions between various processes of intersectionality. We do, however, find Crenshaw's definitions of structural and political intersectionality unclear and relatively narrow, which may have to do with the fact that it is generated from an American context. It was possibly also motivated empirically. We suggest that both structural and political intersectionality operate on a macro, a meso as well as on a micro level.

Several scholars have observed that the scientific approach to intersectionality altered, when the concept travelled from the US to Europe, and this has also had an impact on which aspects and levels of operation of the content that are brought to the fore. Baukje Prins notes for instance that the British debate was more influenced by social constructivism than the American debate, which was based on a systemic approach (2006). Similarly, Ann-Dorte Christensen and Birte Siim observe that the concept and the underlying position on power changed, when it was introduced in the Danish/Nordic context, as it was first adopted by post colonial and post structural feminist scholars (2006). During the past few years, a new trend may be identified. The hastily growing body of literature on institutional intersectionality reflects an increasing concern with macro level processes of political intersectionality. This development has been spurred by the adoption of article 13 in EU's Treaty of Amsterdam, which prohibits discrimination according to six strands: sex, racial and ethnic origin, disability, age, religion and sexual orientation and the recommendation to set up. This development has also involved an increasing interest in how transnational and national processes of intersectionality interact, and which political actors have been influential in shaping this process (Woodward, 2005; Verloo, 2006; Squires, 2009; Lombardo & Verloo, 2009). This research interest which so far has concentrated on the macro level also deals with political intersectionality but with an emphasis on formal institutional structures. It concentrates on judicial processes, and it deals with how different grounds of discrimination are tackled by political institutions in the implementation of antidiscrimination legislation. The question remains, whether this also implies less scholarly interest in, how class inequality interacts with other dimensions of inequality. If this is the case, one reason is that class is not included in article 13.

Our project addresses aspects of institutionalization, too, but we are less preoccupied with formal institutions and more with policy logics and objectives. We are interested in the political processes shaping policies with the objectives to reduce inequality at a national level. The empirical approach is open to identifying the intersections between all types of inequality, but we

are particularly interested in the intersections between gender, class and ethnicity, and we study policies that have focused on these dimensions.

The interest in the capacity of welfare states to reduce inequality is not new. In the comparative welfare state research, it has been debated since the early 1980's, whether and how policies reduce inequality between the classes and the genders and how they are influenced by political strength of different class organizations (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Attempts to cluster welfare states in regimes and models according to the impact on combating exclusion and marginalization of the working class and of women are abundant. A large body of feminist scholarship has been preoccupied with the existence of specific gender models, and numerous researchers have focused on the lacking gender perspective and failure to grasp the role of the family and its interaction with the state and the market in the influential power resource tradition. In the early 2000's, some of the central scholars of the power resource school yielded to the feminist critique, and they started to include a gender perspective, the role of paid and unpaid care and benefits and social services such as parental leave and child care facilities were included in the analysis (Korpi, 2000; Esping-Andersen et al., 2002). Ethnicity has, however, been strikingly absent in the welfare state literature. This is true for mainstream as well as for feminist scholarship.

The focus here is on policies that are aimed at reducing inequalities related to class, gender and ethnicity. It is not our normative position that dealing with several dimensions and the interaction between them is always the most positive policy approach or that additive policy measures that aims at tackling problems of inequality at one dimension at a time is necessarily bad or negative for reducing inequalities. The issue at stake is, whether some policy measures downplays or ignores differences between women or between men that are essential for the problem in focus, and whether the experiences, privileges or problems of one group are generalized to the situation of other groups. We apply Hancock's distinction between unitary, multiple or intersectional measures (2007a) to characterize the different policies. A unitary approach implies that one single category is regarded as the only or the most relevant strategy, and it also implies that this category is perceived as the primary. This strategy is often labelled as identity politics. A multiple approach recognizes several categories, but they are treated as conceptually independent, whereas an intersectional approach deals with several categories and it is not a priori premised on the idea that one dimension is the most important. Hancock's disciplinary focus is political science and policy analysis, but her distinction has a conceptual purpose. She does however apply it to the study of policy outcomes (2007b), and we find that it is fruitful when applied to a distinction between policy logics and outputs as well.

A central issue is, whether the focus on particular groups like black underclass women is sufficient to grasp the complexity of intersection patterns of exclusion and marginalization. The point is, however that the answer involves considerations on which levels, one wants to focus on, and this does in turn also have implications for the most optimal methods. The focus on subjectivity and identity formation may be studied in for instance in narratives and processes related to specific groups, whereas meso and macro level focus on political and institutional intersectionality necessarily also involves an interest in problematizations, policy making, political actors and institutions. The interest in specific groups is of course also relevant at this level, and a central question is whether the constructions of problems of certain groups are based on essentializing premises of the character of their problems. We are interested in which definitions of inequality that are embedded in the solutions to the problems of specific groups. The question is, whether lack of gender equality is related to individual, structural or cultural reasons, and whether gender inequality in different groups is explained differently.

Problematization and framing are significant for the instruments that are chosen. Policies may, however also be symbolic, in the way that their objectives and the proposed measures

and instruments are not in correspondence in terms of the types of solutions or the forms of policy measures. We distinguish between policies of economic redistribution and policies of cultural recognition (Fraser, 1997), but we find it important to be cautious with identifying the first solely with reducing class inequality and latter with ethnic differences, since all types of inequality may be affected by both types of policies. We are also preoccupied with whether governments recommend the endorsement of new legislation, the passing of actions plans, launching campaigns aimed at changing the attitudes of specific groups or suggest that citizens should be informed about their rights. Our research questions are the following

General questions:

- Is the underlying policy logic unitary, multiple or intersectional?
- Which criteria are in focus, gender, class, ethnicity, generation, sexual orientation etc.?
- Which definition of inequality is embedded in the plans: equality of opportunity, equality of results
- How are causes of inequality framed, as structural, cultural or individual?
- Which vision of gender equality, universal breadwinner, caregiver-party model or universal caregiver?
- Which kinds of initiatives are suggested, economic redistribution or cultural recognition?
- Which types of political solutions are proposed, legislation, economic incentives, pamphlets, campaigns?

The empirical analysis starts with an examination of the main trends of Danish and Norwegian gender equality policies, embarking from the general gender equality policy-documents of the Norwegian and the Danish governments. The development of the official gender equality policies in Denmark and Norway has not been running in parallel, however. Second, we will undertake a detailed examination of the two recent gender equality policy documents presented respectively by the Danish and the Norwegian government.¹

The Danish Perspective- and Action Plan on gender equality

The Perspective and Action Plan for 2009 is the most recent in a row of yearly published reports by the government. The first report of this kind was published in 2002. Gender is the dominant perspective of the report and has a clear emphasis on the women's perspective, even though the front page photo of the 2009 report is of an older man. Other dimensions of differentiation, such as class, age, sexual orientation, geography etc. is by and large absent. Ethnic background is to some extent present as part of how gender equality is problematized. Yet, this is not included as a general dimension, but as a main focus in relation to certain issues such as segregation and drop-out rates in the educational system, the labour market participation of immigrant women and their participation in civil society organizations. The plan draws a sharp line between issues where gender, and mainly women, are the main focus and issues where gender equality, is related to the situation of ethnic minority groups (or immigrant groups as formulated in the report). The report is organized according to fifteen objectives of the government. Four of the fifteen objectives focus primarily on

¹ The material we use for the following discussion of differences between Danish and Norwegian gender equality policy is the two most recent documents. It should be noted, however, that the comparison is based on two documents that differ in regard to extent and focus. The reason why we have chosen two compare these two documents concerns the similarities. The Danish government's account on gender equality and the Norwegian government report on men, male roles and gender equality are the latest and the most comprehensive expressions of the official gender equality policies, and they are both to be debated in the national parliaments. There are also clear similarities between the two documents in regard to what are the main issues for policy-making.

gender equality in relation to the ethnic minority/immigrant population in Denmark: Objective 4: The gender segregated choice of education and the labour market should be broken down; Objective 7: More boys with immigrant background should complete junior high-school; Objective, 8: More women with immigrant background should work; Objective 9: More women with immigrant background should be active in associations and organizations. In the remaining 11 objectives differences between ethnic groups are not mentioned at all.

Hence, in relation to most of the objectives and issues, gender differences are the sole dimension in focus. Other differentiation criteria such as class and age and ethnic background are not in focus. Nevertheless, the causes of gender differences are occasionally connected to other factors, such as the significance of differences between professions to explain the gender pay gap, differences in work cultures to explain fathers' use of parental leave, etc:

Men earn in average more than women. The raw differences in income are among other things expressions of differences in the jobs, the branches there is worked in, and differences in personal characteristics such as level of education and professional experience. (Objective 1). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 6)

A Danish study has shown that the work organization culture is decisive for whether men take parental leave. For some men it may be necessary to be pioneers and take the first step to change old habits and traditions. The government wishes to support work organizations that promotes a culture that allows men to take the parental leave they have acquired. (Objective 2). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009:10)

In relation to gender segregation in education and in the labour market (objective 4), the gender perspective intersects with differentiations along ethnic lines:

Young women and men continually make very gender stereotypical choice of education, this apply both to Danes with a Danish background and to Danes with an immigrant background. (Objective 4). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009:16)

It is only this issue that refers to the majority and the minority in a similar way. In the other three objectives where the ethnic minority/immigrant perspective is included, the problematizations revolve mainly around the situation of the ethnic minorities, which are represented and targeted as a special group. In relation to completion of education it is especially the situation of the ethnic minority/immigrant boys that is the focus:

The government's vision in relation to education is that Denmark shall have the best basic education, where all children become knowledgeable and capable, are well and become capable to make a life in Denmark and in the world. Education is a corner stone in the Danish society and hence all young and in particular boys both with Danish and immigrant background, complete junior high school, after primary education. Boys with immigrant background have a significant lower completion rates compared to the girls. (Objective 4). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 16)

In relation to employment and participation in civil society organizations, the main emphasis is on women from ethnic minority groups:

The employment rates of women and men with immigrant background are significantly lower than for Danes – this concerns in particular women from non-western countries. Increased employment among women with immigrant background will imply a higher degree of economic equality for women and provide the children with good role models. (Objective 8). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009:30)

Equality between the genders and the integration of both women and men in the educational system, in the labour market and in society at large is central to the Danish economy for social cohesion in the Danish society and for free and equal opportunities of the individual. Hence, it is the policy of the government that

more women with immigrant background participate in associations and organizations. (Objective 9). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 32)

These examples illustrate the ways in which the issue of gender equality is interconnected to the image of the Danish nation. The references to the Danish nation primarily appear in relation to issues, where ethnic minorities are in focus.²

The gender equality report proposes a wide range of initiatives to promote gender equality within different areas. An extensive list of different kind of initiatives is mentioned under each of the fifteen objectives in the government report. The emphasis is on measures such as information material and different kinds of campaigns to inform and change preferences. And a belief in the effect of the initiatives is expressed:

The gender equality minister presented in March 2008 a Charter for more women in management. This is expected to lead to more women in management, which in consequence will lead to more women with relevant experienced in board positions. (Objective 6). (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 25)

In addition, it is suggested to further initiatives on the recruitment of the underrepresented gender, and in particular of ethnic minority backgrounds, as i.e. through mentoring, role models, etc. Generally, positive action and quota procedures are not mentioned as initiatives to further gender equality. However, in one case it is emphasized in particular that positive action and quotas are not a kind of measure that the Danish government wants to introduce:

It is decisive that this is not obtained through positive action in form of i.e. quotas. There should never be any doubt that positions and resources should be passed to the most competent researchers. (Objective 15) (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 44).

Daddy quotas are not mentioned³. It is, however, emphasized that this is a matter of the autonomy of the families and not a matter of government interference (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 11).

Perspective

The major perspective in the document is on men and women in relation to different issues of gender equality. The instances where issues of gender equality are connected to ethnic background, the main focus is on the situation of ethnic minorities. Hence, a relatively sharp line is drawn between the issues where gender equality is delimited to a question of the undifferentiated categories of men and women, and when gender equality is interconnected with ethnic background. The question is, whether the issues that are addresses from a unitary gender perspective, implicitly refer to white middle classes. An undifferentiated gender perspective is most often reserved to typical middle class issues, such as women in management, women in corporate boards, women in political decision-making and women in science – as well as in relation to fathers' use of the parental leave. While the interconnection of gender equality and the situation of ethnic minorities emerge in relation to issues such as participation in the labour market, drop-out rates in the educational system etc, issues which also interconnects with class. Gender equality in relation to sexual orientation is not mentioned in the report.

Equality of opportunity is the main focus of the government report. Although there are also onsets to conceptualizations of equality of result, at least in the sense that skewed income distributions are regarded as indications of lacking gender equality. The preference for gender

² A possible exception is the aim to encourage women to a scientific career, where it is mentioned that it is decisive for Denmark that women research talents should be preserved (Minister for ligestilling, 2009: 44).

³ Denmark is the only Nordic countries that does not have a daddy quota. Two weeks daddy qutoa (in week 25 and 26 of the parental leave) was abandoned in 2002, after a new right wing government had been appointed.

equality in terms of equality of opportunity is expressed particularly clearly in the introduction to the government report:

The government will create equal opportunities for women and men. The purpose is that women and men should be considered equals and has equal opportunities to choose the life they wish. The government wants respect of differences and of personal choices of the individual (Introduction). (Minister for likestilling, 2009: 4)

Hence, the base line for the government is a principle of equality of opportunity, yet it often seems to drift between this conception and a concept of equality more closely connected to equality of result, for instance in relation to fathers use of the parental leave it is emphasized that this is not an issue of compelling arrangements, but of the free choice of fathers and their families. While in relation to gender segregation, gender skewed ratios are used as an indication of gender equality deficiencies. The same is the case for women in management, but then gender balance is directly connected to the profitability argument. A main argument is that it is best for society and firms that the human resources of both men and women are equally utilized (Minister for likestilling, 2009: 20). Structural dimensions of gender inequality are almost absent in the government report, which implicitly underlines individual and cultural explanations for patterns of marginalization.

The parliamentary debate on the report, which took place on March 24th 2009, reflected that gender equality policies have become subject to conflicts and very different interpretations between the two political blocks (Folketingstidende, 24. marts 2009). The Center-left parties were critical of the report and the priorities of the government, and they claimed that the minister is the worst minister ever of gender equality. These parties highlight structural explanations of gender inequality. They also maintained that there was discrepancy between policy objectives and policy initiatives that are not too far reaching, since they are mainly related to providing information and launching campaigns.

The all dominating vision of gender equality is the universal breadwinner model, which has been emphasized as the main route to removing gender differences in Denmark for the past four decades. It is also clear that the same vision is forwarded as the main solution to the problems of ethnic minorities, women as well as men. A vision of a universal caregiver model is not a political priority of the government, which frames the division between mothers and fathers as a matter that the government should not interfere with.

Norway

The Norwegian government has presented four major white papers on the lines and directions of Norwegian gender equality policies: 1) Action plan for gender equality, with an emphasis on the promotion of the situation of women in education and employment (Stortingsproposisjon nr. 122, 1980-81, 2) On measures and means in gender equality policies (Stortingsmelding nr. 69, 1984-85, 3) Gender equality policies for the 1990'ies (Stortingsmelding nr. 70, 1991-92) and 4) Report to the parliament on men, male roles and gender equality (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009).⁴

⁴ Furthermore, the government gave an account of gender equality to the parliament in 1999 (Barne- og familieminister, 1999). In 2008 the government published a gender equality report on the goals, strategies and measures to secure gender equality between men and women (Likestilling 2009). This latest report has a different official status and is not to be debated in parliament. In addition, the government proposition to the parliament concerning the establishing and revision of the gender equality act (Odelstingsproposisjon nr. 33, 1974-75, Odelstingsproposisjon nr. 1, 1977-78) and further revisions (see http://www.samfunnsforskning.no/files/P_2008_3.pdf, p. 34-35).

Main trends of Norwegian Gender Equality Policies 1980 onwards

The major perspective is gender differences, with particular emphasis on the situation of women. Although, the situation of men has come more to the fore during this period, particularly with focus on men's participation in housework and in caring of their own children, which is argued to be an important precondition of gender equality. The government report from the early 1990'ies (Stortingsmelding nr. 70, 1991-92) constitutes a turning point, with an increased focus on men and their role as fathers. Nevertheless, also here the main perspective is on men's responsibility to participate in the household, not necessarily as autonomous caregivers, but as facilitators of women's participation in employment and education.

Differentiations between women are not central, but touched upon in ways that connotes to class. In the government reports from the 1980'ies there is a rather strong focus on the marginal position of women in relation to education and employment, as a problem of economic independence. This emerges as an issue not equally relevant to all women, but as matters that particularly concern women with limited education and weakly connected to the labour market. This could be interpreted as a policy sensitive to class differentiations. The importance of women's economic independence emerges as a – if not *the* – central objective of gender equality policies in this period.

The objective to advance the economic independence of women is closely connected to a *regional perspective*, where the particular problems of women in sparsely populated areas are underpinned. Measures to promote the situation of women in the districts and enhance their possibilities to participate on the labour market are proposed. The accessibility of part-time work is promoted as a measure. Reduced working hours is presented as a pragmatic solution to make employment a possibility for non-employed women. The varied situation of women in relation to employment is further developed in relation to *age*. Especially in the first two government reports there is a strong focus on the situation of adult women, in relation to access to wage-work and possibilities to take higher education.

Ethnic background is not a matter of centrality. In the first report from the early 1980'ies ethnic background is not mentioned at all. In the two following reports the situation of immigrant women is mentioned, in the report from the early 1990'ies treated under a separate sub-heading. The focus is on the participation of immigrant women in education and employment. This is connected to the introduction of initiatives to facilitate adult training. The parallel situation of immigrant women to that of "Norwegian" women in an early face of gender equality evolvement is stressed in particular. The situation of indigenous people (the Sami population) is not mentioned. The same goes for equality policies directed at people with different sexual orientations.

There is an extensive field of initiatives that are proposed in the government reports. This is in particular the case of the first two reports from the 1980'ies. The policy solutions outlined witnesses a strong belief in systematic thinking and the inclusion of a wide range of measures that in sum is supposed to create gender equality. A main feature is the strong emphasis on positive action and quota measures. In the two government reports from the 1980'ies there is also an emphasis on economic incentives, which seems to have fallen out of the later gender equality policies.

Perspectives

The main perspective in gender equality policies outlined in the three government reports is unitary. The prime concern is with the situation of women. The situation of men are little present in the reports, and when it is, men even more than women emerge as an undifferentiated category. The women perspective is occasionally approached more differentiated. This concerns the ways matters of economic independence, age and ethnicity enters into problematizations of gender equality.

Attention to the different situation of women is the most present in the two first government reports. Although in the government report from the early 1990'ies, the importance of being aware of differences between women is proclaimed to be of great importance.⁵ Still, differences between women and men are largely absent. Moreover, the women in management issue emerge as a new theme in the report, however not connected to the proclaimed new awareness of increasing differences between women. The women in management issue express an expansion of the gender equality agenda, and a possible political turn towards a particular awareness of the situation of the middle-classes. The inclusion of the situation of immigrant women is another new perspective in the government report from the early 1990'ies (Stortingsmelding nr. 70, 1991-92: 19).

Equality constitutes a main justification for gender equality policies in the government reports. The conceptualizations of equality drift between approaches of equality of opportunity and equality of result. The main perspective appears to be that gender skewed distributions are indications of lack of gender equality, which implies that equality of result is the governing principle of Norwegian gender equality policies. On the other hand, especially in the report from the early 1990'ies there seem to be a tendency towards equality of opportunity that is intertwined with an increased attention on a more explicit emphasis on the recognition of difference, in particular framed as a need to revalue women-dominated educations and professions (Stortingsmelding nr. 70, 1991-92: 3).

The main vision in Norwegian gender equality policies in the period discussed here is clearly the universal breadwinner model. The main aim is to promote the economic independence of women through participation in education and employment. Throughout this period the emphasis on a universal caregiver model increases, however. The perspective is then on the integration of men in the caring of their own children. The universal breadwinner and the universal caregiver model are furthered as reciprocally dependent on each other.

Report to the parliament on men, male roles and equality

In December 2008 the Norwegian government presented a report to the parliament on men, male roles and equality. The predominant perspective is on men, yet the report is as well a report on gender equality. The emphasis is on how gender equality relates to the situation of men and what the main initiatives to make gender equality advancements for men should be.

The following analysis concentrates on three main chapters in the report on the gender segregation (ch. 3), on reconciliation of work and family life (ch. 4) and on the situation of men in the family, as partner and parent (ch. 5) as well as the more general reading of the complete report.

The three main themes are approached as central challenges for achieving gender equality in the report. Gender segregation is framed as a master issue interconnected with other major gender equality problems, as i.e. the gender pay gap, gender stereotypes, freedom of choice etc. The role of fathers in relation to reconciliation of work and family is partly approached as an issue of facilitating for the full participation of women in education and employment, as well as the importance of fathers' participation and engagement in the caring of their own children. The relations of men and family life emphasize the responsibilities of caring and sharing of children and domestic work in the family, and not the least in regard to custody policies.

Although the report explicitly concerns the situation of men, it is not an exclusive male perspective that is furthered in the report, the general perspective is gender. This is particularly the case in the chapters explicitly analysed here. There are important differences to what extent other

⁵ Because some problems have been solved, some new problems have come in focus. The development has made differences between women visible, according to economic living conditions and general opportunities. Some have ceased the new opportunities. For others the societal changes has rather highlighted existing problems. (Stortingsmelding nr. 70, 1991-92: 5).

dimensions than gender is approached in the chapters in the report. In relation to gender segregation and men and family life the gender dimension is the prominent perspective. In the chapter on reconciliation of family and work the situation of ethnic minorities is more actively included, although to a limited degree. Differentiation according to ethnicity appears however most of all to result from the occasional knowledge of existing studies, more than as the result of a systematic approach to a diversified gender perspective. The main approach to the situation of ethnic minorities concerns how to deal with the fact that immigrants as a group are more strongly featured by traditional values in relation to the sharing of work within the family.

Research (on ethnic minority background (our note) indicates a wide variety of attitudes. Simultaneously, as many immigrant men express gender traditional attitudes to women's participation in the labour market as well as to the distribution of housework in the home (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 55).

This understanding of the situation is connected to a problematization of the ethnic minority father's access to parental leave. An implication of the current parental leave arrangement is that when the mother has been non-employed during pregnancy, and remains non-employed after the child is born, the father is not entitled to parental leave and the daddy quota.

..... fathers from immigrant groups where the mother are little employed have a high risk of falling outside the birth allowance scheme than fathers in the majority population where the employment rates of mothers are higher. Simultaneously, these are families that to a larger degree should be a target group for more gender equal families. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 59).

The restriction in the parental leave system that implies that the mother has to have an individual connection to the labour market (either before or after the birth), even though the father has an autonomous acquired right to parental leave, is discussed as a particular problem for ethnic minority families. The birth allowance scheme gives a bad gender equality signal it is proclaimed, because it is better adjusted to the situation of some groups than others and in particular the least to the situation of immigrants:

The current rules send an unfortunate gender equality policy signal based on the aim to strengthen the caring roles of fathers and it creates unfortunate differences in the treatment of fathers with acquired rights. This is regularly furthered by the users, as unreasonable. Immigrant father from nations where the employment of women is particularly low is hit in particular. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 62).

Class differentiations are not explicitly approached in the report. Nevertheless, problems related to class emerge in relation to how fathers' access and use of parental leave is problematized. First, by the way attention is called to the problem that some women prioritize home and children above work and hence restricts the fathers' opportunity to take a longer period of parental leave. This is described as being in particular a problem attached to women in low pay jobs, with little flexibility, often located in health care. Second and simultaneously it is stressed how it is a particular problem for men in high income jobs to take parental leave, because the state only compensates the pay within a certain limit. It is mentioned several times that couples who share the family work equally and who has the same status in employment as regard income, position and working hours also are the most likely to share the parental leave:

Father are more likely to take parental leave when the parents choose parental allowance with 100 per cent wage compensation; the mother tend to have higher education; the pay of the mother increases; it is gender equality in the pay of the mother and the father; and the father and the mother work full-time – and she does so not work within health or social services. Among the couples who share the parental leave, the mother has to a higher degree than other couples a high professional position, higher education and is well paid in a full-time job. The

father as well has a relatively high position in the labour market, high education and average pay. When the mother has a job that is important for her, simultaneously as the father wants to be together with the child, the parental leave is more often shared. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 57-58).

In this way, a middle-class standard is idealized as a model for others to adapt to. A main obstacle for implementation of the political goal is discussed as being a problem of mothers in low status jobs who do not want to share the leave period with the father. Another obstacle is connected to the working life itself and the employers, where obstacles are set on men who work in “greedy” organizations demanding high degree of work dedication and long hours. An extension of the daddy quota is recommended as a measure that will increase the legitimacy of men working in greedy institutions to take a longer period at home with their children. No solutions are presented however to make women in low status jobs wanting to share the parental leave with the father.

Age differentiations are rarely problematized in the report. The only instance where sexual orientation is mentioned is in relation to men and family life, where some reflections are offered about homosexual men’s wish for children and their capability to bring up children.

Initiatives to deal with the gender equality problems outlined in the report vary extensively. In relation to gender segregation the main initiative proposed is to enlarge the opportunity to adopt positive action to promote the recruitment of men within women-dominated educations and professions.

The government will examine a proposition to expand the legal authority of article 3a in the gender equality act, including regulations, to other sectors and education where men are underrepresented. Article 3a in the gender equality act, including regulations, apply to positions with the responsibility for caring and education of children, and opens for positive action of men, this imply to hire men as long as they are equally or about equally qualified as the best qualified women applicant (moderate quotas. The precondition is that men are underrepresented in this type of positions within the work organization. It is important that this opportunity to positive action is used actively and is anchored by the social partners. A revision of the gender equality act, including regulations, should be followed by a change in the practice of the employers to use this measure to a larger extent. Simultaneously, moderate quotas should be combined with information campaigns and other strategic means to increase the recruitment. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 48-49)

It is emphasized that positive action must be combined with other forms of measures of recruitment, as well as measures that keep men who already have made untraditional choices (women dominated types of educations and professions). The main initiatives proposed to reconcile work and family relates to fathers’ rights and ability to take parental leave. This concerns the before discussed question of securing that all men with acquired rights, actually have the right to parental leave, irrespective of whether the mother is employed or not. As well as to an expansion of the daddy quota of the parental leave and to the strengthening of information and awareness of father rights to parental leave. In addition, the role of the employers and the importance to adopt a male perspective on the proactive obligations according to § 1 in the gender equality act is stressed. This concerns in particular the necessity to make employers aware of a male perspective on gender equality matters, especially in relation to male dominated organizations. This also implies the necessity to promote dialogue between the social partners, and directly with employers, to adjust the situation in the working life to the caring responsibility of fathers. In relation to men and family life the main focus regards how to organize child custody and the shared parenthood after a divorce, there are also some initiatives proposed concerning how to deal with and reduce conflicts within the family.

Perspectives

A unitary gender perspective predominates in the report. This is the most evident in relation to gender segregated labour market and men and family life. In the one instance where

ethnicity/minority is included in relation to gender segregation (ch. 3) it is not related to gender, but emerge as another separate dimension.⁶ In relation to men and family life, variations in family forms along ethnic lines are emphasized. The main point stressed by the government in the report in regard to men, family life (ch. 5) and ethnic differentiations, concerns the lack of knowledge about the situation of ethnic minorities.⁷

In regard to policies to promote reconciliation of work and family life (ch. 4) the approach is ambiguous. On the one hand, men and fathers are conceptualized in a unitary manner, for instance by making references to what typically characterises the situation of men etc., based i.e. on average numbers in the statistics etc. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8 (2008-2009): 54). Simultaneously, there are attempts of more intersectional approaches, as illustrated above, where connections are made between different dimensions of differentiation.

Although the unitary perspective dominates, the current government report emphasis on men, expresses in itself an expansion and a possible switch in perspective, as to how gender equality policies have been mainly preoccupied with the situation of women. Simultaneously, the men's perspective furthered in the report has not contributed in any considerable way to a more complex and multidimensional approach to issues of equality.

The equality ambition in the report connects the most strongly to equality of result. On the one hand, there is an expressed goal of the policies to promote equality of result.

It is important for the government to call attention to gender segregation as an important societal challenge. Gender segregation in the labour market is a problem for men and women equally. Segregation is an important structural obstacle for women and men to attain equal economic rights and actual freedom of choice in relation to participation in the labour market. This government aims for a gender balanced working life. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 34)

In the report, the promotion of vertical and horizontal gender balance in the educational system and in the labour market, as well as in regard to the sharing of caring and domestic work are set up as important aims of gender equality policies. Simultaneously, it is emphasized that an important aim is that individuals should have equal opportunity to choose education and occupation on the basis of their interests and wishes, and not because of their gender.

The gender equality goal is first achieved when young people have equal opportunities to choose careers independent of gender. A major challenge relates to the fact that educational choice is done at an age when knowledge about the labour market is scarce. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 44)

A possible interpretation is that equality of result is considered also to be a means to achieve full equality of opportunity. The preconditions for achieving equality of opportunity are not explicated in the report, however. In regard to the situation in the families, the freedom of choice is less the issue of problematization. Rather equal sharing of caring responsibilities and domestic work within the family, as well as equality in parenthood for parents not living together, come for more as an unquestioned prerequisite for the gender equality policy.

Comparison of the policies of Danish and Norwegian gender equality policies

There are important differences between the Danish and the Norwegian government reports in the ways gender, as well as other dimensions are included in gender equality policies. In the Danish

⁶ There are also differences between the minority linguistic population and the majority population in the choices of types of higher education. The minority linguistic choose to a higher degree science and technological educations, and the humanities, and to a lesser degree the pedagogical directed educations. (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009: 44).

⁷ Little systematized research on male roles and gender equality practices in different ethnic groups exist, and it is necessary to have more research on this (Stortingsmelding nr. 8, 2008-2009:44).

account on gender equality the line is drawn relatively clearly between the issues that are treated in a unitary gender perspective and the issues that include differentiations according to ethnic background. In the latter cases, the perspective is primarily on the ethnic relations, i.e. focusing on the problems that particularly apply to men in ethnic minority groups (completion of higher education) and women in the same groups (participation in employment and the civil society). Thus, it may seem as though the ethnic minority/immigrant perspective in a sense is perceived as a class issue, however not articulated as such.

The Norwegian report appears as more ambivalent in regard to whether and how it connects to other dimensions of differentiation than gender. The main perspective is gender, with an emphasis on a male perspective. To the extent that other dimensions are included this applies to variation according to ethnic background. Ethnic background is however not systematically approached in the report. It appears more to be the result of occasional knowledge to relevant studies that interconnects gender relation to the situation of ethnic minority groups. The class perspective is generally absent, at least as an intentional perspective. Nevertheless, there is a tendency to connect gender equality advancements to life situations that typically characterizes segments of the middle classes, yet without discussing this in a class perspective.

Differences in initiatives

There are important differences in the proposition of initiatives and measures for promoting gender equality in the two countries. The national differences in preference of initiatives reflect path dependant variations in gender equality policy traditions in the two countries. Norwegian policies suffer from inconsistencies and the debate is characterized by ideas about a gradual development towards gender equality (Skjeie & Teigen, 2003; 2005). Danish policies of gender equality are, however, much more narrow and the institutions are weaker than the Norwegian, among other things, because the establishment of the Danish machinery suffered from a weak start, due to unfavourable economic, political and discursive opportunity (Borchorst, 2004). Furthermore, our results correspond with Langvasbråttén's analysis, which shows that conflicts between minority cultural traditions and the equality norms are much more outspoken in Denmark than in Norway (and Sweden)(2008). It should be noted that the even though some of the difference between the two governments have persisted during periods of governments of similar political colours, but the Danish government is based on two right wing parties, supported by the extreme right, whereas the Norwegian government is formed on a broad Center-Left coalition.

The Danish and the Norwegian reports on gender equality policies apply gender differences, i.e. the skewed distribution on different types of education and occupations, differences in working hours, skewed distribution of house-work, and male dominance in positions of power and influence, as indicators of gender equality deficiencies. This implies that gender equality policies rely on a conception of gender equality that to a certain degree is based on equality of result/gender balance. Simultaneously, references are made to perceptions of gender equality as a matter of achieving equality of opportunity in the Danish as well as in the Norwegian government reports. Consequently, the policies in both countries slide between these two main conceptualizations of equality, equality of opportunity and equality of result. A formal conception of equality as simply a question of formal rights is not central in any of the documents analyzed here. In justifications and development of the actual policies there are, however, some variations with regard to conceptualizations of equality according to policy areas, as well as between the two countries. The main tendency is that the Norwegian gender equality policy is more in favour of gender balance/equality of result as the main political objective, while the Danish policies more strongly refer to conceptualizations of gender equality as a matter of providing equality of opportunity.

The Danish government proposes primarily initiatives that provides information and seeks to influence the attitudes of people in brochures, guides, campaigns etc. No initiatives imply legislative reforms or other types of regulations, as for instance measures of positive discrimination or policies of economic redistribution or recognition. The Norwegian government proposes more regulative measures, positive action in employment and education, expansion of the daddy quota of the parental leave system, changes in the arrangement to include fathers in particular of ethnic minority background. In addition, they promote initiatives such as information material, guides, campaigns etc.

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