



## Nationalism, Gender and Welfare

*The politics of gender equality in Scandinavia*

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**Nationalism, Gender and  
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– The politics of gender  
equality in Scandinavia**

**Birte Siim & Pauline Stoltz**

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## Foreword

In April 2013, Birte Siim and I attended the 18<sup>th</sup> annual world convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities (the ASN), which was held at Columbia University in New York, USA. Here, we jointly presented the following paper on “Nationalism, Gender and Welfare

– The politics of gender equality in Scandinavia” as part of a series of panels on gender and nationalism, which was organized by Jill Vickers (Carleton University, Canada) and Margaret Power (Illinois Institute of Technology, USA). Our paper appeared on the panel on “Gender and Nationalism: Theoretical Approaches”.

We would hereby like to thank Jill and Margaret for getting everybody together. The initiative was so successful that we already now are discussing the possibilities of creating a network, for future meetings and for publications.

Aalborg, April 2013

Pauline Stoltz

Editor, FREIA Working Paper Series

# Nationalism, Gender and Welfare

## – The politics of gender equality in Scandinavia

Birte Siim & Pauline Stoltz

### Abstract

Feminist scholars have pointed out that constructions of gender and gender equality are embedded in national narratives and politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2011; Siim & Mokre 2013). This paper aims to explore the gendered approaches to nationalism and to discuss how nationalism in Scandinavia<sup>1</sup> is associated with ‘social democratic’ welfare and gender equality.

Brochmann and Hagelund (2010) have pointed towards a specific form of Scandinavian welfare nationalism which is challenged by globalization and increased migration. We add that gender equality is a key aspect of the Scandinavian politics of belonging and that this has implications for our understanding of the challenges which can be recognised in the contemporary politics of gender and welfare in Scandinavia. This point can be illustrated by means of a focus on the problematic ways in which contemporary nationalist parties in Sweden, Denmark and Norway have formulated welfare and gender equality politics. These observations in turn raise theoretical and analytical questions about understandings and conceptualizations of the intersections of nationalism, welfare and gender.

The first section briefly introduces two approaches to nationalism and gender: those of Nira Yuval Davis (2011; 1997) and Umut Özkirimli (2005; 2010). Second, the paper presents key aspects of the Scandinavian welfare and gender regimes as identified by Scandinavian feminist researchers and discusses potentials and problems of Nordic equality politics using Yuval Davis and Özkirimli. Third, it explores the framings of welfare, gender equality and the family of three nationalist parties: the *Norwegian Progress Party*, the *Sweden Democrats* and the *Danish Peoples’ Party*. The last section reflects on the challenges which we recognise as being the result of current reformulations of the Nordic welfare and gender equality policies and discuss the need for feminist approaches to reframe gender equality/justice from a transnational, global

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper we focus on the three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway and Sweden, because there is still a lack comparative research of the five Nordic countries, which include Finland and Island.

perspective. We propose that one way of doing this would be overcoming the exclusive notions of solidarity tied to the nation state and formulate more inclusive notions of solidarity and justice beyond the nation state.

## **1. Theoretical approaches to the nation, nationalism and gender**

This section argues that the relations between gender, the nation and nationalism are dynamic and contextual. Benedict Anderson (1983) defined the nation as ‘an imagined community’ and also other social constructivist approaches have argued that nations are contingent, heterogeneous and subject to change. Gender analyses of nationalism should according to us evolve further by comparative case studies.

We are inspired by two theoretical approaches to nationalism that both urge the pursuit of a gendered analysis of nationalism: Nira Yuval-Davis (1997; 2011) and Umut ôzkirimli (2005; 2010). Yuval-Davis defines nationalism as a national politics of belonging, which is concerned with the construction of boundaries of belonging, of a delineated collectivity that includes some people and excludes others (Yuval-Davis 2011; 86-94). Ôzkirimly defines nationalism as a metanarrative, or discourse, that is a particular way of seeing and integrating the world, a frame of reference which helps to make sense of and structure the reality surrounding us (Ôzkirimly 2005; 163). The two approaches are both concerned with borders and boundaries. Following these approaches we define nationalism as claims of community cohesion centered on ‘the nation’ as a common frame of reference. It is a form of discourse that structures the reality around us. In this vein, it is nationalism that defines the nations and not the other way round.

### *1.1 Gender and the politics of belonging*

Nira Yuval-Davis’ classical book *Gender and Nation* (1997) was one of the first approaches to address nationalism and gender, and her recent book *The Politics of Belonging - Intersectional contestations* (2011) elaborates further on this analysis. One of the crucial distinctions in this approach is between *belonging*, which refers to emotional attachment about ‘feeling at home’, and *the politics of belonging* which concerns both the construction of boundaries and the in/exclusion of particular people, social categories and groupings within these boundaries.

In this context Yuval Davis has noticed that *women/mothers are often embodiments of the homeland, as well as of home*. Women are associated in the collective imagination with children and therefore with the collective, as well as the familial future, i.e. Mother Russia or Mother India. (In a Swedish context we

can also think of the figure of Mother Svea.) She is interested in the symbols and imaginary of a population and emphasizes that it is not the figures of women/mother alone that symbolizes homelands, but rather the imaginary social relations and networks of belonging in which they are embedded (Yuval Davis 2011, pp. 94-95).

Another aspect of her thinking that is useful for us is her observation that there is *a rise of 'autochthonic' or nativist politics of belonging*, which is important if we want to understand nationalist and extreme right politics in Europe and elsewhere. Claims to territories and states are here made according to logic of 'we were here first'. We here follow Yuval-Davis who contends that an intersectional analytical perspective is crucial for any concrete analysis of belonging/s and political projects of belonging, since 'different political projects of belonging have different effects of different members of collectivities who are differently located and/or have different identifications and normative value systems (Yuval-Davis 2011; 25).

### *1.2 Dimensions of nationalist discourse*

Umut Özkirimly has emphasized that the discourse of nationalism operates in ways that divide the world into 'us' and 'them', produces hierarchies among actors, naturalizes itself and reproduces itself through private and public institutions, especially family, school, workplace, media, church and the police (2005; 32-33). Özkirimly divides the nationalist discourse in different dimensions; a *spacial* dimension, which is associated with the territory – an actual or imagined homeland; a *temporal* dimension – the construction of national history; a *symbolic* dimension – aiming to provide a grammar for the collective consciousness through its metaphors, its heroes, its rituals and its narratives; and an *everyday dimension*, whereby national identity is produced, reproduced and contested in the details of social actions and routines of everyday life that are taken for granted (179-194). Also according to him the nationalist discourse has primarily emphasized women's roles as mothers at the symbolic level.

Following Özkirimli, nationalist claims provide a communication strategy that: (1) divides the world into homogeneous and fixed identity positions; (2) creates a temporal lineage from the past, through the present and by way of extrapolation into the future to demonstrate the diachronic presence of the nation; and finally (3) is based on a preoccupation with the national territory, imagined or real. In addition to this, we also follow Michael Freeden (1998), who argues that nationalist claims rest on a positive valorization assigned to one's own nation, granting it specific claims for social cohesion. In summary, we interpret nationalist claims as a particular communication strategy that seeks

to reify and naturalize the nation as something natural and commonsensical (Hellström, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012; Özkirimli 2010).

### *1.3 Summing up*

According to both Yuval Davis and Özkirimli, many nationalist discourses tend to have a gender bias in which men and women are constructed differently. These approaches emphasize how this has been done, especially by focusing on the reproductive and symbolic role of women as mothers and the idealization of motherhood and ‘the home’. We conclude that the relations between gender and nationalism are dynamic and contextual and one of the ways the gendered analysis of nationalism could evolve further is by comparative case studies from different parts of the world, including from the Nordic countries.

Recent feminist research indicates that there have been important changes in the way gender and gender equality are constructed as part of national narratives and nationalist claims across Europe and that gender equality has today come to play an important role in the constructions of both European values and national identities (Akkerman & Hagelund 2007; Andreassen & Lettinga 2012; Siim & Mokre 2013).

Following the thought of Yuval Davis and Özkirimli (leaving out the everyday dimension of nationalism), we would like to focus on the following research questions.

1. In relation to the temporal, symbolic and spatial dimensions of nationalism and the politics of belonging in Scandinavia, we identify and discuss key aspects of Scandinavian welfare and gender regimes as these over the years have been understood in Nordic welfare and gender research.
2. In relation to the temporal, symbolic and spatial dimensions of nationalism and the politics of belonging in Scandinavia, we identify and discuss the key framings of welfare, gender equality and the family of three nationalist parties in three countries: the *Norwegian Progress Party*, the *Sweden Democrats* and the *Danish Peoples’ Party*.
3. Finally we discuss potential feminist responses to exclusive nationalist formulations of Scandinavian welfare and gender equality policies, including the need for feminist approaches to reframe gender equality/justice from a transnational, global perspective.

## 2. Scandinavian Welfare Nationalism and Gender Equality Politics

In this section we start with the first question. Scholars have started to explore the specific version of nationalism tied to the Nordic (often labeled “social democratic”) welfare state and its politics of gender equality (Hellström, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012; Meret & Siim 2013). As mentioned, nationalism here refers to claims of community cohesion centered exclusively on the nation as a common reference point and as a form of discourse that structures reality around us (Ôzkirmlı 2010). From this perspective nationalism can be interpreted as particular communication strategies that seek to reify and naturalize the nation. These are strategies that can be used by nationalist parties as well as by mainstream parties. Nordic welfare politics can be understood as part of these nationalist claims and struggles over politics of belonging, i.e. of who belongs to the nation.

### 2.1 Nationalism and Nordic welfare and gender regimes

In comparative research the Scandinavian countries are often considered to belong to the same welfare and gender model characterized by a large and generous public sector, a high level of universalism and many tax financed social benefits (Borchorst & Siim 2008; Melby et. al 2008). The three Scandinavian countries have developed flexible labour market models, which share important characteristics: a) well-organized labour markets; b) relatively strong and independent trade union movements; c) a close cooperation between employers union, trade unions and the state.

Comparative gender research often emphasises that the Scandinavian welfare states share basic characteristics which combine a large public sector with a dual breadwinner model. This includes; 1) a family and welfare model where both partners are expected to do wage work; 2) public welfare with extensive childcare services and generous maternity- and parental leave schemes, 3) a relative high number of women in the political elites, 4) gender equality as a strong norm in public discourse and politics as well as a value embedded in the private lives of citizens (see Bergqvist et al., 1999). On this basis feminist scholars have generally agreed that the countries in spite of their differences share basic characteristics that make it meaningful to include them as part of one common gender equality model (Borchorst & Siim 2002; Melby et al. 2008).

If a *temporal* dimension of nationalism concerns the construction of national history and if a *symbolic* dimension aims at providing a grammar for the collective consciousness through its narratives, then we would like to claim that the above often is considered part of the national narratives of the Nordic countries by politicians, other citizens and researchers alike. It is also a picture

which is sometimes idealized by actors from outside of the Nordic countries, including by researchers such as Sylvia Walby (2009).

## *2.2 Spatial dimensions of nationalism and the politics of belonging*

If we look at the spatial dimensions of nationalism and the politics of belonging of the Nordic countries, than arguably immigration represents a blind-spot in the Scandinavian welfare political strategy. That is, there have been migration regulations, but these were for long not the focus of any attention in the public sphere. Increased immigration has now raised concerns about the limits to welfare disclosed by the new forms of inequalities between the native born and third country nationals. This development has let politicians to also question the gender model's ability to accommodate increasing diversities among women.

In spite of certain similarities the Nordic countries have different experiences with multiculturalism and they have adopted different approaches and policies towards migration and integration<sup>2</sup>. Sweden has the longest history of work-related immigration since the early 1960s. Denmark's immigration was also a guest-worker model during the 1960s, and Norway experienced immigration from Third-country nationals from the end of the 1960s.

Comparative Scandinavian research has recently started to explore the different policy responses to migration and integration. A Danish-Swedish comparison of public policies and discourses indicate that although the integration policies and discourses are divergent there may be an actual convergence in the practical effects of integration policies (Hedetoft et. al. 2006; 406). The studies argue that the framing of the issues, i.e. whether diversity is labelled as a threat or an asset, whether ethnic minority groups are perceived as a problem or an asset, is a key factor in shaping public policies (Hedetoft et. al. 2006).

Brochmann and Hagelund (2010) have led a large comparative study of the welfare-political consequences of immigration to the Scandinavian welfare states titled 'limits to welfare'. In the summary they interpret the three Scandinavian countries<sup>3</sup> as one welfare model with three exceptions. The 'multicultural' Swedish model is presented as the 'good' model with a relative accommodating response towards diversity, the restrictive Danish model as 'bad' model; with the pragmatic Norwegian response positioned 'in between' (356-357). This interdisciplinary study focuses on both differences and

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<sup>2</sup> In 2005 Sweden's foreign population ratio was 12.4. Denmark and Norway were in between with a medium-size foreign born population ratio of 6.5 and 7.8 respectively. The largest immigrant groups in Denmark, Norway and Sweden come from Turkey, Pakistan and Ex-Yugoslavia (Brochmann & Hagelund 2005).

<sup>3</sup> The interdisciplinary comparative study has participation of researchers in history, sociology and political science from Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

similarities in the interactions between the welfare state and immigration in the three countries. The emphasis is on the policy shifts towards immigrants since the second WW till 2010 and on intended and unintended effects of the interactions between the policy changes in the three countries. They argue that the founding and evolution of the Nordic welfare states' can be interpreted as an exclusive 'welfare nationalism' based upon integration with three central elements: democracy, citizenship and modernization.

According to Brochmann and Hagelund the three countries face similar problems with discrimination and failed integration of immigrants on the labour market and in society (Brochmann & Hagelund 2010). The studies conclude that in spite of the differences in governments' policies and discourses towards immigration, the three countries face similar problems with discrimination and failed integration of immigrants on the labour market and in society.

Scandinavian research has thus started to discuss key questions about the implications of the political and ideological differences for the in/exclusion of immigrant minorities on the labour market, in politics and society. The study emphasises that traditional welfare state policies have failed to integrate immigrants on the labour market and in developing equality based policies towards new immigrant groups (Brochmann & Hagelund 2010; 367). And that even the more accommodative Swedish policies face similar problems with failed integration of immigrants. The main conclusion is that the three countries have become de facto multi-ethnic countries, which are presently forced to re-define the national welfare projects faced with global mobility and growing demands for labour power.

We agree with Brochmann and Hagelund's identification of the major challenges from migration to Scandinavian welfare policies. We add, however, that gender equality politics are key aspects of Scandinavian understanding of welfare and that this has implications for Scandinavian politics of belonging.

### *2.3 Gender and the politics of belonging*

Women from non-western countries are perceived to present special challenges for Scandinavian welfare states, because of their low labour market participation compared to women in the ethnic majorities, which for several decades have had record high employment rates within the OECD (Emerek & Bak Jørgensen 2009). The high employment rates of the native populations – above the Lisbon target for both men and women – about 80 per cent for men and 70 per cent for women, thus contrasts with the low employment rates for immigrants, for example in Denmark where male migrants have employment rates lower than 55 per cent and female immigrants from non-western countries have employment

rates lower than 40 per cent. This makes the gap in employment rates between the native populations and these immigrants groups among the highest in Europe (Siim & Borchorst 2010).

The marginalization of non-western immigrant groups on the labour market and in society represents real problems. In Denmark and Norway gender equality has come to play a key role in the discourse about integration, where the perceived gender equality in ‘ethnic majority families’ is contrasted with the supposed patriarchal oppression of women in ‘immigrant families’ (Siim & Skjeie 2008). The Danish and Norwegian cases illustrate how Governments and nationalist anti-immigration forces have used/misused gender equality against ethnic minority women who are perceived to be oppressed by their culture (Meret & Siim 2013).

Feminist scholars in turn have started to criticise Scandinavian welfare and ‘women-friendly’ social policies ‘from within’, because they tend to neglect diversities of interests among women (Siim & Skjeie 2008; Mulinari et.al. 2009). Research has recently compared the effects of various Scandinavian migration/integration and gender equality policies from the perspective of immigrant and refugee women (Langvasbråten 2008; Siim & Skjeie 2008; Borchorst & Teigen 2010). One central concern is the perceived conflicts between the official gender equality norms and the cultural norms and practices in immigrant families, which have been politicized by Right wing anti-immigration forces (Bredal, 2006, Meret & Siim 2013). Another concern is the absence of ethnic minority women from decision-making (Skjeie & Siim 2008), which influences the power to define gender equality and feminism (Pristed & Thun 2010), and has made alternative perspectives on gender and family relations invisible and illegitimate (Langvasbråten, 2008). In a recent evaluation of 25 years of Norwegian Gender Equality Politics the committee, chaired by the Norwegian political scientist Hege Skjeie, concludes that gender equality has had a strong bias favouring women from the middle-classes – not working class women or ethnic minority women (NOU, 2012: 15).

We claim that one of the main challenges for the Scandinavian countries today is how to reformulate welfare and gender equality in the face of increasing ethno-cultural and ethno-religious diversity. Research has demonstrated that the countries have during the last 150 years been characterized by a relative cultural, religious and linguistic homogeneity. Up until the 1960s immigrants came primarily from other Nordic or European countries. As the countries became increasingly diverse, inequalities are also opening up between more “culturally distant” migrants from the Middle East, Africa and Asia and the rest of the population. Culturalist explanations to inequalities feature in the public discourses about work, family, sexuality and personal life. Gender equality has become a key marker in these contexts, delineating the boundary between

Nordic and “other” cultures by means of the portrayal of immigrant men as more patriarchal than Nordic men and immigrant women portrayed as being more oppressed than Nordic women. From this perspective the characteristic “passion for equality” seems to be premised on an underlying “antipathy to difference” (Kabeer 2008). Such representations serve to ignore the observation that cultures are negotiated and transformed through interactions with others and shift attention away from wider issues of racism that are likely to permeate these interactions (Kabeer 2008; 266-268; see also de los Reyes 2000).

Arguably this focus on gender inequalities in terms of categorical differences between men and women, as these cut across the class-based categories of capital and labour has led to “epistemological blind spots”, which makes it difficult to incorporate inequalities of race/ethnicity and more particularly the intersections between gender, class and race/ethnicity.

Scandinavian gender research has also for many years tended to take the perspective of Nordic women and has not addressed differences *between* women or *between* men from different social categories. While migration research has mainly focused on immigrant men, and immigrants are often represented as passive, victimized and trapped in their cultures. This situation has gradually changed, and today there is a growing literature where feminist scholars are questioning basic assumptions of Nordic gender equality politics (Kabeer 2008; 268-269; Siim & Skjeie 2008; Borchorst & Siim 2008; Långvasbåten 2008; de los Reyes 2003; de los Reyes, Molina & Mulinari eds, 2002; Stoltz 2000).

#### 2.4 Conclusion

The Scandinavian countries have historically had a strong engagement in equality policies and discourses, and they have until recently been perceived as relatively homogeneous from a comparative perspective. Path-dependent developments in welfare states policies in relation to class and gender still form key elements of Scandinavian politics of belonging. Immigration has increased inequalities among native and foreign born women from non-western countries and has challenged the countries self-understanding as normative models for gender equality and justice. Research has pointed out that new inequalities among groups of women exist on the labour market, in the family and in politics.

This development has challenged famous Norwegian feminist Helga Hernes’ grand vision of a ‘women-friendly’ society ‘where injustice on the basis of gender would be largely eliminated without an increase in other forms of inequality, such as among groups of women’ (1987: 15). Siim and Skjeie (2008) have proposed that the new forms of inequalities among women can be interpreted as a Scandinavian gender equality paradox between the relative

inclusion of the native majority women in society and the relative marginalization of women of diverse ethnic minorities on the labour market, in politics and society.

The evolution towards de facto multi-ethnic countries has changed research, but moreover the political landscape in Scandinavia. This observation can contribute to explain current challenges to reformulate (gender) equality policies, but also the interest in equality issues on the part of populist and nationalist parties in Scandinavia. Welfare nationalism which includes gender equality has in general until now been relatively uncontroversial. It could be perceived of in a banal way or following Özkirimli (2005; 2010) with a focus on its expressions in the everyday dimension of nationalism. The link which is made between nationalism, welfare and gender in the versions of nationalist parties is at the same time much more provoking for mainstream politicians and feminist researchers alike. Let us therefore now turn to these versions.

### **3. Case studies of nationalist claims by nationalist parties in Scandinavia**

This brings us to research question number two. In relation to the temporal, symbolic and spatial dimensions of nationalism and the politics of belonging in the Nordic countries, we would like to describe and discuss the framings of welfare, gender equality and the family of three nationalist parties in three countries: the Norwegian Progress Party [*Fremskridtspartiet*, FrP], Sweden Democrats [*Sverigedemokraterna*, SD] and the Danish Peoples' Party [*Dansk Folkeparti*, DFP].

European gender research has noticed that Rightwing parties have found new and creative ways to use/misuse gender equality as a key value which separates the modern majority from the oppressive, patriarchal immigrant Muslim minorities (Rosenberger & Sauer eds. 2012). Scholars have also noticed that in the Scandinavian context right wing political parties have supported the welfare state and defended liberal values, including gender equality and women's rights (Meret & Siim 2013).

#### *3.1 The changed political landscape*

In the last decades, the Scandinavian countries have witnessed profound changes in the political landscape. The 'Social Democratic' understanding of equality policies that dominated larger parts of the last century, focusing mainly on class and gender, have come under pressure from increased globalization and immigration processes in the Scandinavian countries, and the countries have witnessed a growth of neo-liberalism and new forms of political conservatism.

The last twenty years or so each country has for longer or shorter periods of time had Conservative, Liberal or Center as well as coalition governments.

There are important historical differences between the political landscapes in the three countries. One is the role of Social Democracy, which has historically been weaker in Denmark than in Norway and Sweden. And liberal-Conservative-centre governments have been stronger in Denmark, which has had long periods with liberal conservative-center governments since 1980. The first was headed by the Conservative Poul Schlüter (1982-1993); the latest by the liberal leaders Anders Fogh Rasmussen (2001-2009) and Lars Løkke Rasmussen (2009-2011). The right-wing populist Danish People's Party [Dansk Folkeparti, DFP] was the parliamentary support for this government. When it comes to the Danish party political landscape, research highlights that the party has succeeded in moving from a maverick party to become a legitimate support party for the previous Government (Meret 2010). In the election in 2007 the party gained 25 out of 179 seats in Parliament and in the latest national election in November 2011 it gained 22 seats. The Party gained popularity on two major political issues; the opposition to immigration and to the EU and it has managed to influence the political landscape as a support party for the Conservative-Centre Government (2001-2011).

Social Democracy has been stronger in Norway, but since 1990 the country has had two Conservative-centre governments (1997-2000 and 2001-2005). The Norwegian Progress Party has also been highly successful in electoral politics. In the local election in 1987 Progress Party gained around 12 per cent of the votes nationally and the success was large due to the party's focus on restrictive immigration policies. In 2009 the Progress Party became the second strongest political organization in Norway, second only to the Labour Party, but it has never managed to gain a direct influence on politics, since the other political parties have been unwilling to cooperate on the national level (Sicakkan 2011).

Sweden has had Social Democratic governments from the 1930s until 1976, from 1982 until 1991 and from 1994 until 2006, when the centre-right coalition of Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt took over, which is in power still today. It was only in the general elections of 2010, that the nationalist political party, *Sverigedemokraterna* (Sweden Democrats, SD), had its electoral breakthrough. With 5.7 per cent of the total votes the party crossed the threshold of representation in the national parliament (which has a 4 per cent threshold). Four years earlier, after the 2006 elections, the party had emerged from the shadows of the far right. The SD received 2.93 per cent of the votes – not enough to secure a position in parliament, but enough to gain representation in almost half the country's municipalities. Before the 2006 elections the SD was hardly noticed in the media; afterwards, it became a high-profile party in the public debate (Hellström, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012).

Thus there are profound differences in right-wing populism's history, politics and impact on the political agenda in the three countries. Since the 1990s the Norwegian Progress Party and the Danish People's Party (DPP) have both attracted a large part of the population, but only the DPP has directly influenced legislation as a parliamentary support for the government. The growth and influence of the Sweden Democrats is a more recent phenomenon.

### *3.2 Nationalist parties, welfare and Social Democracy*

One key issue is the relations between populism, welfare politics and the parties' relations to Social Democracy. In the Swedish context Hellström, Nilsson and Stoltz (2012) point out that Sweden has ceased to be an exception within the Nordic and European context and has started to develop similar patterns in relation to the role and challenges of the populist right. Despite its limited political weight, the SD also gained a strategic parliamentary position between the winning centre-right coalition and the Left–Green opposition (with a weak and internally divided Social Democracy). The extremist origins of this party and its past associations with national-socialism constitute one of the major differences with the other Nordic cases (Hellstrom, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012; Löow 2011).

Already during the 2006 general election campaign SD blamed the Social Democrats for refusing to see the connection between migration and the implosion of the universal welfare system. They urged for a return to a more homogeneous Sweden with much less immigration. The party referred to the metaphor of the so called 'People's Home'. In Sweden, the evolution of a strong welfare state was linked to the consolidation of the democratic state. Popular use of the phrase 'people's home' by leading Social Democrats from the late 1920s and onwards demonstrates the relevance of nationalist claims to mobilize support for a class-transgressing welfare regime for all Swedish people. The people's home alluded to a trinity of democracy, the people and the nation that contributed to establish the founding myth of the modern Swedish national community. Marginalization strategies by mainstream politics and media against the SD did not deter skilled and unskilled workers, unemployed and the retired (*cf.* Oscarsson and Holmberg 2008).

Given the rapid changes in the world economy, the SD portrays itself as the defender of the people's home and to Per-Albin Hansson (prime minister of Sweden from 1932 to 1946, who applied the people's home label to the Social Democratic reformist agenda) as a key inspiration for its politics, although it also pledges allegiance to the late nineteenth-century conservative nationalist movement in Sweden. The SD claimed during this election campaign to be the rightful heir of a long Social Democratic tradition of safeguarding the interests

of the common people. The populist appeals to the people presuppose the commitments to ‘the heartland’ – an idealized past society, populated by a culturally homogeneous ‘people’. In the case of the SD, these appeals are centred on a particular symbiosis of the universal welfare state and cultural conformism; hence, the people’s home concept suits the party well (Hellström, Nilsson & Stoltz 2012). Today the party is struggling with an infected struggle between so called ‘nationalist’ and ‘social conservative’ wings amongst its members. In 2011 the party changed its party designation from ‘nationalist’ to ‘social conservative’. Discussions about ideological deviations and party discipline have since then led to the exclusion of members with amongst others Nazi and extreme right wing sentiments. This is still internally controversial (see e.g. *Dagens Nyheter*, 18 March 2013, ‘Hotande utslutning splittrar SD’).

Siim and Meret (forthc.) have analysed multiculturalism, Right wing populism and the crisis of Social Democracy. They notice that the Scandinavian populist right-wing party with an undoubtedly working class profile is the Danish People’s Party (*Dansk Folkeparti*, DF); and show how this profile have affected the party’s position on welfare issues. Remarkably, the party has succeeded in the role of ‘welfare guarantor’ within the Liberal and Conservative project. At the 2011 elections the DF vote slightly declined from 13.9 to 12.5 per cent, but the party remains the third strongest political force in the country. More than half of the DF votes come from skilled and unskilled manual workers, principally men and people with low levels of education (Meret 2010). Working class support has clearly been achieved at the expense of the traditional left-wing, especially Social Democrats, which in the past decade have lost a considerable share of working class support.

The pro-welfare orientation of the party became carefully and gradually part of the DF programme. Today the party leadership promotes the DF as the only genuine carrier of the classic Social Democratic welfare tradition. In 2006, the DF leader Pia Kjaersgaard declared that ‘a real Social Democrat votes for the Danish People’s Party’ (*Dansk Folkeblad* 2006/5), where welfare is considered to belong to the deserving, who –according to the DF – are native Danes, who have paid for it through generations. To strengthen this point the DF 2007 campaign posters significantly captured: ‘Tight immigration policy and real welfare’, formalising the party politics around two central issues: anti-immigration and the welfare state and at the same time maintaining a strong Eurosceptic position.

The Norwegian Progress Party (*Fremskrittspartiet*, FrP) has roots in the neo-liberal and tax protest wave of the 1970s (Goul Andersen & Bjørklund 2000). Compared to its equivalent in Denmark, the FrP survived the new times, re-thinking some of its positions on economic issues, but particularly developing anti-immigration and cultural protectionist standpoints, strongly critical of the

multiculturalist politics pursued by the Norwegian governments. In 2009 the FrP became the second strongest party in Norway with 22.9 per cent of votes, a significant share coming from less-educated, less-skilled workers (*cf.* Bjørklund 2011: 285). Already in 2005 the FrP had gained votes among unskilled manual workers in Norway and was the second party among manual workers, right behind the Labour Party (Bjørklund 2009). These levels of working class support are remarkable, particularly as the FrP continues to support economic liberalism at the core of party ideology (*cf.* Prinsipp- og handlingsprogram 2005-2009; see also Mudde 2007). From the 1990s the party leadership acknowledged its role as ‘new working class party’, introducing *ad hoc* pro-welfare measures that appealed to this electorate. For instance, the party asked to ‘use oil reserves to benefit the common people’ and to employ the revenues to finance public infrastructures and improve social, health and schooling systems.

In the case of all three states we can see how both the temporal and symbolic dimensions of nationalism are used in the argumentation of the parties.

### *3.3 Nationalism, gender equality and the family*

Another key issue is the relations between nationalist parties, nationalism and gender equality. Meret & Siim (2013) has analyzed the framing of gender equality, women’s rights and family values in the party programs and manifestos of the Danish Peoples’ Party and the Norwegian Progress Party. The study illustrates that the two parties exclusionary neo-nationalist positions and nativist discourses, positions are combined with a growing emphasis on the importance of liberal democratic values, including gender equality and women’s rights. One explanation for this would be that gender equality discourses and policies have become an important part of the national narratives and political projects of belongings.

According to both the DF and the FrP, the implications of the modernization of gender roles and the achievements in gender equality reached so far in both Denmark and Norway, are something to be acclaimed, whereas further adjustments can only be reached by the labor market’s self-regulatory mechanisms<sup>4</sup>. Within this frame of ‘world leading [countries] on issues of gender equality’ (FrP Prinsip-og handlingsprogram 2005-2006), women’s current struggles for rights almost become a selfish project, or to put it in the

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<sup>4</sup> The FrP and the DF are presently particularly attentive to gender equality, although there are still inherent tensions in this commitment. The two parties consider that gender equality has already been achieved in Norway and Denmark and are thus negative towards further gender equality policies, like ‘gender mainstreaming’ policies, gender-based quotas, or even ‘positive actions’.

words of the FrP leader Siv Jensen ‘[...] it makes me sick to see that Norwegian feminists demonstrate to get more women into management positions, while immigrant women still lack access to the most basic rights’.

In this sense the populist right wing parties tend to use gender issues mainly in relation to the vulnerable position of immigrant women (eg. Akkerman and Hagelund 2007: xx). However, by referring to concrete and pragmatic issues (genital mutilation; enforced marriages; honor killings; question of the veil/headscarf) these parties have effectively contributed to highlight some of the existing shortcomings of gender equality policies, at the same time diverting the question of gender equality into an issue dealing primarily with ethnic minority issues, i.e. cultural incompatibility, the role of Islam in the West and the condition of Muslim women.

### *3.4 To sum up: The particularities of Scandinavian nationalism*

Our preliminary conclusion is that the ideology of Right wing populism in Scandinavia is strongly influenced by the particular national histories, political institutions and cultures, including the welfare and gender equality regimes/politics (Meret & Siim, 2013; 93). All three parties refer to the history of the working class and perceive themselves as heirs of Social Democracy and that the Norwegian Progress party and The Danish Peoples Party have become de facto working class parties (Meret & Siim, fortc.). Arguably the strong support for the welfare state is a particularity of Nordic nationalism.

Following Özkirimli we could say that the three nationalist parties by means of this reference to history create a lineage from the past, through the present and by way of extrapolation into the future to demonstrate the diachronic presence of the nation. They also divide the world into homogeneous and fixed identity positions, notably as this concerns women from ethnic minorities and especially those from the religious minority of Muslims on the one side and a positive valorisation of the own nation and identity on the other side. Here Yuval Davis’ point about women/mothers being used as embodiments of the homeland is reframed into a struggle between modernity and tradition. Here modernity is symbolized by the positive valorization of native born women who embody the dominant values of gender equality, and tradition is symbolized by a negative valorization of Muslim migrant women who embody the patriarchal values of their culture.

## **4. Conclusion**

The above arguments raise a number of questions concerning the links which *are* made and those which *could be* made between welfare and gender equality

policies and the role of nationalism in the formulation of these links; between theoretical, analytical points and normative points.

From a gender perspective one key issue is the tension which can be recognized between on the one hand what has been identified as an *exclusive* form of welfare and solidarity for native born citizens only, as expressed by the nationalist parties, and on the other hand transnational and global versions of gender equality and justice, as (probably more accurately) being searched for by Scandinavian politicians and feminist researchers with an interest in solidarity which goes beyond the borders of the national territory. A related issue is therefore the need to reframe feminist approaches to welfare, gender equality and justice in the Scandinavian context and beyond from transnational and global perspectives. As also mentioned in the introduction, this could be done by means of a reformulation of the notion of solidarity and justice as less exclusionary as what is perceived of as being the case in the formulations of the welfare and gender politics by both mainstream and nationalist and populist parties in Scandinavia today.

One of the challenges is to reframe the notion of solidarity. As Jodi Dean has pointed out, solidarity requires hard work. It is not a given or can be presumed to exist without a problem. Neither is it something that can be demanded. We can preferably distinguish *demanding* solidarity from making an *appeal* to solidarity, which is something totally different. The notion of an appeal gives the impression that we can be obliged to act out of solidarity. This is not the case, since the demand itself reveals the lack of solidarity. Solidarity is therefore always something that we only can make appeals to. (Dean 1996;21) That is, if the above described nationalist parties are in the business of demanding solidarity of migrants (or throwing them out of the country) and localizing this solidarity exclusively within the boundaries of a state, then these are demands which are questioned by amongst others migrant right activists.

Theoretically, one option could be to turn to the work of Seyla Benhabib. She is interested in the struggle of marginalised people such as migrants. Benhabib wants to “signal forms of popular empowerment and political struggle through which the people themselves would appropriate the universalist promise of cosmopolitan norms in order to bind forms of political and economic power that seek to escape democratic control, accountability and transparency.” To her this means that cosmopolitanism is never fixed in values, time or place. It rather “...anticipate(s) another cosmopolitanism – a cosmopolitanism to come.” (Benhabib 2008; 177).

Another option would be to turn to Nancy Fraser's approach to social justice (1990; 2007). Fraser has recently reframed her normative model arguing that in a globalizing world struggles for economic redistribution and social recognition requires that political issues should be discussed at the global rather than the national level. The argument is that it is at the global level that decisions affecting 'the fate of all', for example regarding global warming, are taken, or not taken. Fraser has also discussed what sort of changes would be required to imagine a genuine critical and democratizing role for transnational public spheres under current conditions. She claims that a paradigmatic shift from 'a theory of social justice' to a view on justice as participatory parity in a post-national world faces a dual challenge: one is to create new, transnational public powers; the other to make them accountable to new transnational public spheres (2005; 8-9; Siim 2013;2-4; Dahl, Stoltz & Willig 2004 and 2005).

From the perspective of democratic politics the question of agency is important in this context, as there is a difference between the ways in which different actors describe problems and solutions with citizen/migration policies, with gender equality policies and with welfare policies, including with the relations between these three. Agency can here be understood in the form of researchers, and of nationalist and other politicians and decision makers, but also of feminist and migrant rights activists.

In Europe presence in politics is crucial to citizenship status and access to political rights, which many (although not all) of those who are targeted by nationalist parties, lack. The constraints on the party political activity of for example ethnic minority women can be said to be related to lack of citizenship and weak legal status. Jyostna Patel investigated on behalf of the European Women's Lobby, which strategies were used to empower Black, ethnic minority and migrant women in a number of organisations in six of the member states of the European Union during the 1990s. The focus on the insecure legal status was a recurring theme, which these organisations strikingly often worked with. (Patel 2000;17-18) Without a citizenship that includes social, civil and political rights, one can maybe become a member of a party, but the possibilities to become an active representative in a political institution will be limited. 'Black' women with full citizenship rights can at the same time face problems of racism. The constraints on the political activities of refugee and migrant women in that sense overlap with those of 'black' women with full citizenship rights.

Today there are more politicians with a migrant background in Scandinavia in comparison to say the 1990s. One of them is Burundi-born Swedish politician Nyamko Sabuni, who served as minister of equality and minister of integration in the different centre-right governments of Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt between 2006 and 2013. Another is the present Pakistani-born Danish Minister of Ecclesial Affairs and Gender Equality, Manu Sareen. Despite this increase

and the presence of at least some highly positioned individuals, the discussion about the lacking agency of migrants in issues related to welfare, gender equality and integration can still be considered to be relevant today. There is an emerging migrant rights movement, especially visible in Sweden (see Nordling 2012). Also feminist movements are much more sensitive to the voices of migrant women today in comparison to earlier periods in time. Despite this, the question ‘what is racism?’ remains sensitive both within these social movements, in party politics and in the public sphere in general. This includes the question how intersections of inequalities according to categories of gender, ethnicity/’race’, religion, sexuality and age are understood *by whom*.

In Swedish and other Nordic languages the homogenizing distinction between “Swedes and migrants”, or “*svenskar och invandrare*”, is still the most common way of addressing perceived ethnic and ‘racial’ differences. There is at the same time a difference between rhetoric, not only used by nationalist parties, in which native born people are contrasted with non-natives and rhetoric which says that there are differences between different types of migrants and their (gendered, classed, national, sexual, health, age) identities. There is also a growing alternative discourse with a positive valorization of ‘New Swedes’ and ‘new Danes’. However, from a perspective of democratic politics it is important to investigate what has been called the Scandinavian gender equality paradox the relative inclusion of native-born women in politics and the relative marginalization of migrant minorities in the political elite (see also Stoltz 2000 and 2004; Siim and Skjeie 2008).

Normatively speaking migrant men and women, wherever they came from, should not only be the *objects* of discussions about Scandinavian gender and welfare policies on citizenship and migration, but also were *subjects* and people with their own ideas about policies that concern themselves. Arguably their possibilities of representing themselves have implications for the reframing who belongs to the nation as well as for defining the content of welfare and gender equality politics. The question ‘who has the power to define the meaning of gender equality?’ is therefore still crucial (see also Stoltz 2000 and 2004). Arguably there is a dual challenge for gender equality and welfare politics to transcend exclusive politics within and beyond the nation state (Siim & Mokre 2013). Nira Yuval Davis’ intersectional approach and the concept of transversal politics could potentially be a useful starting point to transform democratic politics within and beyond the nation state.

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