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Paper Proposal for the ESPAnet 2010 Conference “Social Policy in Global Crisis: Consequences and Responses” in Budapest, Stream 13: Family Policies and the Reconciling of Paid Work and Care

Mom Cares and Dad Pays?

The Institutionalised Role of Mothers and Fathers in Post-Separated Families.

Demographic, social and economic changes have affected family arrangements and practices in various ways. First, rising rates of parental divorce or separation imply an augmenting prevalence of lone and non-resident parenthood. The linkage between parenthood and partnership has loosened, lately. Simultaneously, gender specific role expectations towards mothers and fathers have changed, too. The discussion of “good” motherhood is increasingly or has always been accompanied by aspects of female labour market participation. This holds also true for lone mothers. Within labour market reforms, e.g. in Great Britain, their activation potential has been emphasised. In Germany, mothers have lost their extended right to maintenance after divorce because of their own employability.

For quite a while the perspective on mothers and children after separation has been prevailing in social science. Recently, non-resident fathers gain importance in the discussion. Social developments have caused and at the same time are based on the process of redefining men’s role within families; they are no longer exclusively considered as providers. From a ‘new’ kind of father a child centred attitude and a more intense relationship towards his children is expected as well as wanted. Fulfilling the ‘new’ caring role of fathers while living in a different household is rather difficult. National discussions on fathers’ responsibilities after parental break up vary. Whereas in Great Britain the focus lies on fathers’ financial responsibilities, the Norwegian public is concerned about discrimination of non-resident fathers in terms of care.

So far bringing the strangs together – changing role expectations towards mothers as well as fathers after separation - has been neglected. The paper presented will focus on the institutional settings for these parents:

- How is the role of mothers and fathers after separation institutionally shaped? Are mothers freed from their employment duty in case of lone parenthood? Are fathers awarded caring rights after divorce? Is there a rather equal sharing of cash and care implemented?
- How do these roles compare to mothers and fathers in intact families?

Answering the research questions the analysis will compare institutional settings for separated families – marriages and consensual unions – in Germany, Norway and Great Britain.