

**GENDERING INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS:
UNDERSTANDING PARENTAL LEAVE REFORMS
IN DENMARK AND SWEDEN**

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Paper presented at the 8th ESPAnet annual conference 2010, September 2-4 2010, Budapest, Hungary.

INTRODUCTION

This paper adopts a feminist institutionalist approach to explore and understand the gendered institutionalist dynamics in the development of parental leave reforms in Denmark and Sweden in the 19th and 20th century. In line with recent institutionally-focused research in feminist political science (Haskova & Saxonberg 2010; Kenny 2010; Krook & Mackay 2010; Waylen 2010), we understand the term feminist institutionalism as an approach that combines elements of new institutionalism (NI) – in particular historical institutionalism (HI) – and feminist theory. The potential of historical institutionalism to grasp gendered dynamics is strong due to the fact that it is methodologically pluralist, problem driven and historically focused (Waylen 2009). While HI offers a useful toolkit to feminist theory, a gendered approach can be beneficial to historical institutionalism by recognizing gender as a key dimension of political institutions and by stressing institutional power relations (see Kenny 2007; Kenny & Mackay 2009; Mackay & Meier 2003). A synthesised approach – a feminist historical institutionalism (FHI) – may provide crucial insights into the dynamics of institutional continuity and change, by emphasising the complex processes of institutional innovation and reform. We argue that a significant contribution of a FHI approach is to help us answer some of the big puzzles, in particular how and why does institutional change come about, which in turn can help us to understand how positive gender change can take place.

HI is an obvious choice for a feminist analysis of parental leave reforms. This case represents a long-lived Scandinavian welfare program, which has been characterized by considerable stability during many decades, followed by more turbulent periods, where new objectives have been adopted and new norms and ideas have influenced the policy changes. Furthermore, a comparative approach to two countries that share many similarities may contribute to sharpen the conclusions about the institutional mechanisms that have been at play.

The paper begins with a short expose of HI and feminist approaches to questions of institutional innovation, continuity and change, with a particular focus on recent developments in the field. It then evaluates these theoretical issues in the context of a comparative analysis of the introduction (and implementation) of parental leave reforms in Denmark and Sweden. While both of these countries many times are pointed out as successful cases in the implementation of women friendly policies, findings from the two cases reveal considerable differences between the countries as well as similarities in terms of the organization of care giving. Based on the combined insights of historical institutionalism and

feminist theory, the paper argues that the different trajectories are the result of path dependant developments, and the differences relate to varying political significance of gender equality. The paper concludes with a discussion on the implications of the comparative study for the further development of a feminist historical institutionalist perspective.

FEMINIST HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM

The basic starting point of new institutionalism is that institutions “matter” and that “the organization of political life makes a difference” (March & Olsen 1984: 747). Research on institutions has largely converged around four main approaches: rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, organizational or sociological institutionalism, and, more recently, discursive institutionalism. The common denominator of all these approaches is their equal attention to formal and informal institutions. According to Douglass North, institutions may be seen as “the rules of the game in a society or... the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction (1990:3). Institutions are thus described as “formal constraints – such as the rules that human beings devise – and informal constraints – such as conventions and codes of behaviour” (1990:4).

Despite their common focus on institutions, the four approaches are based on different analytical assumptions and different definitions of institutions. For historical institutionalists, institutions are defined as “the formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy (Hall & Taylor 1996:938). Historical institutionalism focuses primarily on the long-term ramifications of largely contingent events (Pierson & Skocpol 2002). According to this approach, new institutions rarely emerge and when they do, it often happens in relation to crisis or periods of uncertainty.

Historical institutionalism is closely associated with the concept *path dependency*, which is based on the idea that choices made early on in the life of an institution, usually determine or restrict subsequent choices. This implies that timing and sequence may be crucial, and the time factor represents in itself an institutional factor. Through process tracing and comparisons, historical institutionalists, therefore, study the ways in which empirical processes are linked, and what causal mechanisms underlie these processes (Thelen 1999; Thelen 2003; Pierson & Skocpol 2002). Path dependency is, in turn, associated with additional concepts: critical junctures, increasing returns and feed back effects. These concepts have been developed to meet the most widespread criticism of historical institutionalism, which is its focus on continuity and its problems with explaining institutional

change (Hay and Wincott 1998; Hay 2006; Peters 1999; Peters et al. 2005). The idea of *critical junctures*, first, means that longer periods of historical stasis and stability are followed by rapid institutional innovation, to be followed again by longer periods of stasis. Critical junctures may be defined as “a period of significant change, which typically occurs in distinct ways in different countries...and which is hypothesized to produce distinct legacies” (see Collier & Collier 1991). These critical junctures can not be predicted from prior events, and they function as major turning points in which decisions of actors establish certain directions of change (Mahoney 2000). Once a particular path has been chosen, actors adapt their strategies in ways that reflect and reinforce the logic of the institutional system (so-called *feed-back effects* creating *increasing returns*), pushing these institutions further along the path. In doing so, opportunities for other paths or trajectories are blocked.

Recent work in the field has elaborated on a dynamic view on institutional change. Kathleen Thelen (2003, 2004), for instance, focuses on three questions with regard institutional stasis and innovation: what are their origins, why do they persist, and how can their termination be explained? Taking the opposite side to deterministic explanations of institutional change and evolution, Thelen argues that the reasons that institutions endure may be different to those that were responsible for their creation. In her view, unanticipated interactions and conflicts may result in unintentional consequences, and this means that outcomes might differ from what is predicted through strong path dependence. However, institutions are not always reinstated or replaced. Rather, institutions are often remodelled and developed.

Thelen (2003; 2004) introduces two new concepts to the debate: *institutional layering* and *institutional conversion*. According to the first, certain elements of an institution are partially negotiated while leaving other elements in place, while existing institutions are redirected to fulfil new purposes, in the second concept. While these processes still are path-dependent, since opportunities for change and innovation are limited by previous choices, they move forward and beyond the traditional dichotomy of institutional stability and change.

Historical institutionalism has also been criticized for its structuralist emphasis and for downplaying the role of agency (Hay and Wincott 1998; Hay 2006; Peters 1999; Peters et al. 2005)). Recent HI analysis, however, stresses the crucial role of political agency and strategy in the context of institutional structures (Waylen 2010). For instance, a framework to explain patterns of institutional change has been developed by Mahoney and Thelen (2010). In this framework, focus is directed towards the context, different change agents and their strategies,

and the different forms of institutional change that can emerge. Pertaining to context, two key elements are isolated: the strength of veto possibilities for defenders of the status quo and the levels of discretion in the enforcement of the rules. The context affects the strategies of different change agents and the likelihood of success. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) identify three key groups: 1. 'Insurrectionaries' outside of institutions who promote the displacement of old institutions by new ones (where there are strong veto possibilities and low levels of discretion), 2. 'Subversives' within institutions who are often associated with layering, adding new institutions and rules alongside existing ones (in similar contexts of strong veto possibilities and low levels of discretion), and 3. 'Opportunists' and 'symbionts' who will take advantage of high levels of discretion and any opportunities that arise, often resulting in institutional drift or conversion where no new institutions are created but existing ones have a different impact. Thus, an application of Mahoney and Thelen's frameworks targets the capacity of defenders of the gender status quo to veto change and the levels of discretion in the policy implementation. The success of change agents depends on the coalitions that they are able to form (Mahoney Thelen 2010). This idea is based on Thelen's earlier work (2003:213), in which an argument is made for both more structure and agency in HI analyses.

Peters, Pierre & King argue that a critical point connected to the problems with downplaying the role of agents is the inability of HI to conceptualize and account for political conflict (2005). They find that the concept of path dependency tends to mask dissensus over ideas and policies during periods that appear stable, whereby Hi tends may present changes during formative moments as more dramatic than they are. They argue for the awareness of the role of agency and political conflicts in incremental changes.

SIMILAR – BUT DIFFERENT: SCANDINAVIAN COMPARISONS

The historical institutionalist tradition emerged in close connection to comparative politics (Thelen & Steinmo 1992). Comparison across time falls within the core of the research agenda when explaining the trajectory of policy developments. Many scholars within the field have also been inclined to do comparisons across countries, because this type of approach may be useful for gaining better understanding of the institutional determinants for policy making.

Scandinavian (and Nordic) welfare state research and gender research have been characterized by a strong comparative tradition. The similar political culture and welfare state tradition of the three countries has generated a legacy of policy learning. Legal experts, civil society organizations and politicians engaged from the early 1900s in exchanging ideas

concerning policy reforms. This practice was facilitated and later formalized by the Council of Nordic Ministers. The geographical, cultural and political closeness has also nurtured a strong tradition of comparative research.

In the comparative welfare state literature, the Scandinavian welfare states are very often clustered together, and most notably by Gøsta Esping Andersen and the power resource school as a Social Democratic welfare state model characterized by universalist and tax financed rights and a high degree of de-commodification of labour, i.e. independence of market forces through public benefits (1990). This idea has been challenged both in terms of the Social Democratic legacy and the question about how similar the welfare states are. Other studies have concluded that there is one model with five exceptions (Christiansen & Åmark 2006). Many studies still point to the many similarities between especially the three Scandinavian countries, especially with regard to redistribution among the social classes.

Gender equality has been claimed to be a hall mark of the Scandinavian countries, particularly with regard to political presence of women, the influence of women's organizations and women friendly policies, and in relation to this issue, it has also been widespread to talk about a Nordic or Scandinavian model. Feminist scholarship has contributed to more nuanced conclusions. Several books like *Unfinished Democracy* (Haavio-Manila et al. 1985) and *Equal democracies?* (Bergqvist et al. 1999) have questioned, how far the ideals about gender equality stretches and have pointed to several paradoxes in the development. Furthermore, the idea about one gender model is also challenged. *Equal Democracies* concluded that there are five different models that vary in terms of political representation, gender policies, institutionalization of gender equality.

A research project that focused at Scandinavian welfare policies also questioned the idea about one common gender model. (Melby et al. 2008), and an analysis of the policy logics of care policies and the visions of gender equality they are based on (Fraser 1997) in the three countries concluded that Denmark above all has emphasized a universal breadwinner model, which promotes integration of women in paid work. This has materialized as a relatively high level of public child care facilities. Sweden has also promoted a universal breadwinner model, but during the past decades, the country has increasingly promoted a universal care giver vision based on the integration of men in care and the idea of shared parenthood as a means to achieve gender equality (Borchorst 2008).

Much of the comparative literature has been preoccupied with explaining similarities and differences between the countries from many different theoretical approaches, but the new institutionalism has only been applied to a limited degree. The question is

whether institutionalist approaches in general and HI in particular may help explain mechanism behind the different trajectories.

In the following sections, we focus at patterns of continuity and change in parental leave reform in Denmark and Sweden. We identify major changes and formative moments in the decisions on the length of the leave, the entitlements of mothers and fathers and legislative changes in the economic compensation¹. We are interested in explaining continuity and change and the role of political conflict and consensus, which ideas have shaped the political decisions and who have been the dominant actors.

PARENTAL LEAVE REFORMS IN DENMARK (Borchorst, 2003; 2006; 2008)

The first political decision on parental leave in Denmark was made in 1901 with the adoption of four weeks mandatory leave after the birth for female workers. The decision was passed by an all male dominated parliament, since women were not granted suffrage and could not run for office till 1915. The mandatory maternity leave was part of the second Danish labour protection law, and the dominant actors within Parliament were some male politicians that were convinced that labour protection legislation was needed to mitigate the worst consequences of the industrialization process for the working class. Outside Parliament, female unionist and women's organizations tried to convince the politicians to introduce a mandatory maternity leave, but they were opposed to a ban on women's night work, which many other countries adopted. They feared that women would be protected out of the labour market, and they drew on an argument of sameness between the genders, arguing that what was not good for women was not good for men either. A female alliance across the classes was a rare phenomenon at the time, and it was successful in convincing the politicians to remove the ban on women's night work from the proposal and to include a mandatory maternity leave. The employers within Parliament supported the proposal.

Relatively few women were covered by the bill, since it only included workers within industry and craft with 5 workers and more. The mothers who were covered by legislation got access to economic benefits under the poor law, but without losing their political rights. During the following decades, it became clear that the mothers found the benefits rather stigmatizing. For this reason, female unionists and the women's organizations advocated for expanding the right to leave and for improving access to benefits during the leave. During the 1930s, which were characterized by an intensive debate on how to prevent

¹ We focus on political decisions, and we do not analyse decisions about economic compensation in collective agreements.

birth rates from declining, the access to benefits was improved. At the same time, there was an intensive debate on banning married women's right to work. There were a few examples of married women, who were dismissed – mainly within the municipal administrations and among teachers – but a national ban was never passed. Female Social Democratic politicians convinced the Social Democratic prime minister, Thorvald Stauning that it would violate a gender equality. Despite the heated debates on how to improve the situation of families with small children, only modest reforms were adopted.

The after war period constituted the golden era of the male breadwinner family in Denmark, since 2/3 of all married women were registered as housewives in the late 1950s, and the period only saw small changes in the parental leave. This era of the male bread winner model only lasted 10-15 years, since it started to crumble in the early 1960s, when a large scale entry of women into the labour force set off. During the 1960s, mothers were granted 14 weeks of absence with sickness benefits (same level as unemployment benefits), and the right to absence became tied to rights to benefits. The group of women who were entitled to leave was also extended. During the 1970s, when more than half of all married women were actively engaged in paid work, more than 20 proposals to expand the leave and improve the economic compensations forwarded mainly by left wing parties, were turned down. The proposals were supported by the women's organization and the new feminist movement, which acted as a relatively strong extra parliamentary actor shaping ideas about women's position. Economic opportunity structures were, however, drastically altered during the same period. Denmark was hit hard by the first oil crisis, and unemployment increased considerably from 1973 onwards. Women were not sent back as house wives in the family, since they had access to unemployment benefits (including part time workers, who part of the unemployment insurance system), but the attempts to reduce public expenditures implied that few reforms were passed at the time. Furthermore, the so called landslide election in 1973, transformed Danish politics. It eroded the stable party system that has been predominant during the past 75 years. It was based on the four old political parties, the Social Democrats, the Social Liberals, the Conservatives and the Agrarian Liberals. The political consensus on which the welfare state had been founded and extended during the previous decades was undermined. Two newly formed political parties also challenged gender equality as a hegemonic political norm. The Progress Party, a tax denial party on the extreme right, obtained considerable representation, and it articulated open resistance and ridiculed almost all political decisions on gender equality. The much smaller Christian Democratic Party's pro-family rhetoric emphasized childcare within the family. The two parties did not gain major support on the

actual policy making, but their presence prompted a shift in the discursive opportunity structure.

Some of the proposals that had been turned down in the 1970s were passed in the 1980s. In 1980 employees on leave were protected against dismissal, and in 1983, the leave was prolonged to 24 weeks. Fathers became entitled to 2 weeks after the birth and to share the last 10 weeks of the leave. The rights of the fathers were tied to the working situation of mothers until 1991, when they obtained rights to leave independently of the mother. In 1997, the leave was prolonged from 24 to 26 weeks and the last two weeks were earmarked for the father (i.e. It could not be taken up by the mother). In 2002, the leave was prolonged to 52 weeks, and the earmarking of leave for the father was abandoned. Two weeks after the birth are mandatory for the mother and the following 12 weeks are reserved for the mother. The rest may be divided by the father and the mother. Hence unlike, Sweden (and Norway and Iceland), Denmark does not grant fathers a right to leave that may not be taken up by the mother.

Overall, it may be concluded that the process has been characterized by a path dependent process similar to what characterizes other welfare benefits. A pattern of stability and gradual improvements has been predominant. Danish maternity and parental leave has been subject to increasing regulation from 1901-2010, but the first 50 years were characterized by modest changes in the right to leave of mothers, the groups that were covered were extended and the access to benefits during the leave was improved. In 1960, a restricted number of working mothers were covered; economic compensation was very modest and based on a residual principles. The 1960s represents a critical juncture, where objectives were radically changed. This happened at the same time as women began to enter the labour force on a large scale. The entitlements of mothers were strengthened considerably, and most mothers were covered, the length of the leave was increased, and the level of economic compensation was radically improved. Different ideas influenced the reforms in the different phases. During the first 60 years, residual principles guided the reforms, granting working class women the right to leave with poor help based on an evaluation of need. The 1960 reforms were closely linked to the ideas about a universalist welfare state, and in addition to that, ideas about generation gender equality by integrating women into the labour force was promoted by many different actors.

The issue of entitlement of fathers to leave that cannot be transferred to the mother diverged from this pattern and the introduction and the removal of the daddy quota

represent path breaking developments in opposite directions. The question is what has created this diverging pattern.

1997-2002 decisions: extension of leave and zigzag course on the daddy quota

The decisions to introduce and to abandon the two weeks daddy quota both split the parliament into right and left, whereby the consensus that had characterized most of the decisions on parental leave since 2001 was undermined. Both decisions were path breaking in the way that it fundamentally altered the principles of leave, particularly with regard to entitlements of the genders.

A distinct difference between the two decisions was, that the first, which was proposed by a Social Democratic-Social Liberal Government supported by the center and left parties was not politicized. The decision process lasted only 16 days, which is the shortest process of all the decisions since 1901. Furthermore, the decision went largely unnoticed in the public debate.

The decision in 2002 to abandon the daddy quota (and extend the leave to 52 weeks) was made by the right wing government, which had just taken office. These changes had been announced by Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who became Prime Minister in November 2002 after the election. The debate on the parent leave was part of the pre election campaign in 2002. The issue was highly politicised. Rasmussen used the proposal to break with his previous welfare minimalist image and to profile himself and his party as welfare friendly by proposing an expansion of the parental leave. At the same time, he distanced themselves from the Social Democrats by framing the daddy leave as tutelary and old fashioned. The arguments against the daddy leave were also framed as interference with the privacy of the family, and it was argued that the fathers would not take up the leave, which would then be lost.² In this way, a private-public split, which had not occupied a central position in the Danish political debates for several decades, was rearticulated (Borchorst, 2006). The center-left parties were not able to challenge this framing, among other things, because the Social Democrats and to some extent also the Socialist People's party was internally divided on the issue. Some politicians in these parties also framed the proposal as coercion and strongly opposed it.

The parental leave was since 1989 regulated as part of the Equal Treatment Act (as an implementation of an EU directive), but gender equality only played a modest role

² Statistics on the take up rates of the leave told a different story. From 1998-2002 the percentage of fathers taking up the leave in week 25 and 26 increased from 7-24 pct.

during the debates. This may be seen in relation to the fact that the Danish equality machinery was established in 1975, when the economic, political and discursive opportunity structures had altered drastically. Hence the relatively weak political significance of gender equality may be explained by path dependant processes as well. It is also clear that the Danish gender equality project, only to a limited degree has included the role of men as fathers, and shared responsibility for care of children has not been a central issue during the debates. During the late 1980s and the 1990s, the Danish Equal Status Council was influential in pushing for a debate on the role of fathers and they launched campaigns for increasing the leave of fathers, but the Council ran into a turbulent period in the mid 1990s, when the chair was involved in a scandal that ultimately forced the government to resign. The Council did not play any significant role in relation to the 1997 decision.

The question remains, how these developments may be explained. At the actor side, the political parties, organizations and movements advocating most strongly for gender equality has been weakened in different ways. The strong extra parliamentary new feminist movement was dissolved in the late 1980s, the Equal Status Council was weakened and the political parties in Denmark did not profile themselves on gender equality to the same extent as in the 1970s and 1980s. This may also be explained by the fact that the parties dissolved the women's sections and committees in the late 1960s, and gender conflicts remained largely invisible in the political parties. Furthermore, more right wing parties became openly opposed to political measures promoting gender equality during the 1990s. This also implies that the institutionalization of gender equality in the political system and the political parties has been relatively weak.

PARENTAL LEAVE REFORMS IN SWEDEN

The first Swedish law regarding parental leave was instituted in 1900. This law only affected women who worked as wage-earning factory workers and just required that employers not allow women to work in the first four weeks after giving birth. During the interwar period, laws were enacted to include other professions with female workers, and the length of the period of leave was extended. In the subsequent years additional reforms were introduced such as the 1955 law providing working mothers a three months (12 weeks) paid maternity leave on birth of child.

In 1974, a parental leave reform was introduced, which entitled parents to share parental allowance upon childbirth. The benefits comprised 90 percent of wage for 180 days (24 weeks), which must be used up before the child is eight years old. Parental allowance,

thus, replaced the previous maternity leave reform, and men were given the right to parental allowance for care of children on the same terms as women. A sickness benefit for care of sick children was also introduced. During the next few years, the 1974 reform was extended several times. For instance, in 1976, the parental allowance was increased to 210 days (28 weeks), and in 1978 it was increased to 270 days (36 weeks), of which 30 at the minimum rate only. In 1980, moreover, the father was entitled to parental allowance for ten days in connection with the birth of the child. In 1986, the parental allowance was increased again, this time to 360 days (48 weeks), of which 30 days (4 weeks) at the minimum rate only, and in 1989, allowance was given for 450 days (60 weeks), of which 90 days (12 weeks) with only the minimum rate (See Appendix 1).

The next major reform took place in 1995, when the “daddy month” was introduced; stipulating that at least 30 days of parental leave must be used by mother and 30 days by father of the 450 available days. In 2002, the reform was extended, reserving 60 days for each parent, days that can not be transferred to the partner.

We argue that the introduction of the 1974 parental leave reform in Sweden represent a critical juncture, representing a shift between two logics in the organization of care giving. We also argue that the 1995 daddy quota reform can be seen as an institutional layering, being based on the 1974 parental leave reform while at the same time partially negotiated to force men to use their rights in order to achieve a more gender equal society. In the following, the process leading up to these reforms, their main actors and contents, as well as subsequent path dependent developments will be outlined.

The introduction of maternity leave reforms

The first Swedish law regarding parental leave was instituted in 1900 (Olsen 2000). This law was intended to meet the needs of women who had entered the labour market, and it only affected women who worked as wage-earning factory workers. The law merely required that employers not allow women to work in the first four weeks after giving birth, and no financial compensation was given. The law was passed above all to tackle infant mortality and to protect the health of the mother and child (Olsen 2000). In 1913 women were granted economic compensation, on the condition that they had made payments into a health insurance fund. During the interwar period, laws were enacted to include other professions with female workers, and the length of the period of leave was extended. For instance, in 1932, women who were not part of health insurance programs were eligible for up to 30 days leave. In 1938 universal maternity allowance was established as well as financial assistance to

mothers and child support assistance, and in 1939, law a was introduced that prohibited employers to dismiss gainfully employed women due to pregnancy, child birth or marriage.

In the subsequent years additional reforms were introduced such as the 1955 law providing working mothers a three months (12 weeks) paid maternity leave on birth of child. This reform was not only directed towards the health of the mother and child, and the problems revolving around declining birth rates, but it also contributed towards improvements in women's independence.

In general, the male breadwinner model characterized the gendered division of labour in Sweden in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Women were generally seen as a wives and mothers, and women that did undertake paid work, usually single mothers, poor women or women married to men unable to work, were seen as temporary workers (Karlsson 1996). Within the Social Democratic party it was argued that also a blue collar worker family should be able to live on one salary (Karlsson 1996:226 ff). Calls for the advancement of working mothers' situation were nevertheless made. In Alva Myrdal's and Viola Klein's publication *Kvinnans dubbla roller* [Women's double role] (1957), motherhood and professional work were pointed out as women's two roles. While these two roles were as important, they were separate. A woman could be a mother and professional, but not at the same time, it was argued, and approximately 10-20 years of a woman's life should be dedicated to motherhood. To a large extent this view was also maintained by the women's wings of the political parties. However, while being part of this discourse, they argued that women, and also women with small children, should be able to choose professional work, and they should also have the right not to become a homemaker. Free choice gradually became their key word regarding the organization of caregiving.

Processes leading up the 1974 parental leave reform

During the 1960s Swedish women entered the labour market *en masse*. Labour shortage in combination with an economic boom had created a great demand for women in the work force, and during the period 1960 to 1975 the share of working mothers (with children aged 7 or less) increased from 32 to 60 percent (Bergqvist et al 1999: 132). A discussion amongst the political parties and their women's sections then surfaced concerning men's responsibility for the home and children. At the outset this discussion concerned the provision of public child care to facilitate women's access to the labour market and to reconcile working life with caring responsibilities. The main dividing line between the political parties, at least during the first years of discussions, concerned whether homecarer allowances should be promoted in

line with the proposals made by the Conservative Party and the Centre Party or public child care be extended as claimed by the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party. The debate, thus, revolved around two poles in the organization of care work: the male bread winner model (or care giver model), which keeps care work in the family and is based on one earner and one carer, and the dual breadwinner model (or dual earner model or universal breadwinner model), which aims at universalizing the breadwinner role and is based on moving care work from the family to the market and the state.

Another related public discussion concerned the role of women and men in society. In the 1960s and 1970s gender equality became a key political objective, in the wake of the extensive political mobilization of women and women's entry into political decision-making bodies. Increasingly it was argued that every adult should be able to support herself, and that economic independence was the key to freedom and independence. The traditional sex roles with a male provider and a female care taker were gradually being questioned, and the "Sex Role debate", being spurred by publications such as the liberal Eva Moberg's *Kvinnans villkorliga frigivning* (1961) and the sociologist Edmund Dahlström's anthology *Kvinnors liv och arbete* (1962), stressed the importance of socialization into female and male sex roles, and called for a change. With men assuming greater responsibility for child care and domestic work and women engaging in paid work and in politics, greater equality between women and men in all spaces of life – a double emancipation – should be fostered. On the ideational level, thus, changes in attitudes and norms between the sexes were required concerning the distribution of paid and unpaid work, including caregiving, and on the political level, radical reforms were required facilitating women and men's equal access to the labour market and a life free from gender stereotyped expectations (Bergqvist et al 1999). Issues concerning parental leave reforms were, thus, related to both to labour shortage and gender equality.

The 1974 Parental leave reform

In the 1970s, discussions on the organization of care work focused also on the care of the small children. Among the political parties, the Liberal Party was the first political party to officially support the idea of a gender neutral reform, and, thus, fathers' rights to parental leave. At the Party congress in 1971, representatives from the Liberal Youth Section presented a motion on the introduction of parental leave reform, which was based on its family program from 1967 arguing that the individual and family, not the state, should decide on the organization of care giving (Klinth 2002). By arguing for the family's right to decide,

advocates could criticize legal acts that fixated an institutionalised gender order – a hegemonic masculinity – in which men were seen as providers and women as carers (Klinth 2002; 142). Demands for a reform were also heard within the Social Democratic Party, but it was internally split. The Minister for Family Politics, Camilla Odhnoff, supported fathers' right to parental leave and the right of families to free choice, while the Minister for Social Affairs, Sven Aspling, was in favour of maternity leave benefits.

In parallel to these activities within the parties, a Commission on Family Politics (Familjepolitiska kommittén) was set up by the Social Democratic government to investigate the issue. In its report *Familjestöd* (SOU 1972:34 *Familjestöd*), the importance of facilitating women's entry to the labour market was stressed, and it was argued that a shared responsibility for the care of small children was very positive. The child would be able to bond with both parents, and the father would "early on learn to get used to care giving, which in the long run would contribute to a more balanced distribution of work between the parents during the child's upbringing" (SOU 1972:32, 224). It was, thus, anticipated that the reform would lead to a more equal distribution of care work and domestic chores between the sexes, and therefore enhancing both women's position in the workforce and men's position at home. While it was also anticipated that women would continue taking the main responsibility for the care of the small children, the report, thus, raised some hopes for men's improvement in this area. No demands for a regulated division of parental leave allowance were made, based on the argument that this was a prerogative of the parents. The trade unions and other organizations that responded to the report were in favour of the conclusions, and in the subsequent parliamentary debate, it was argued that reconciling working life with family responsibility above all was a problem from women, and integrating men in care responsibilities was critical for achieving gender equality.

In 1974, a parental leave reform was introduced, which entitled parents to share parental allowance upon childbirth. The benefits comprised 90 percent of wage for 180 days, which must be used up before the child is eight years old. The parents themselves were to decide on the proper distribution of days between themselves. Parental allowance, thus, replaced the previous maternity leave reform, and men were given the right to parental allowance for care of children on the same terms as women.

This reform was made possible by its very construction. Being based on equal rights – parents' equal rights to parental leave days and equal rights to decide on the proper distribution themselves – political consensus could be established. The double emancipation was codified as a new norm, and formal rights were established, but there were no

requirements. Proponents of a continued male bread-winner model, equal parenthood, and gender equality in the labour market could all find resonance in the reform. However, the reform also represented a gendered discursive shift, allowing not only women but also men to give care to small children. Men became fathers. It also represented a shift from the male breadwinner model to the dual earner model and, thus, a shift from the gender division of labour typified by the male breadwinner model, where men are family providers and women are homemakers and caregivers, to the dual earner model, in which these responsibilities are shared between the parents. Moreover, the reform was to some extent part of a larger discursive shift from free choice to gender equality pertaining to the organization of care giving. To what extent this reform was to lead to an equal distribution of responsibility for the care of small children, however, was an open question.

Processes leading up to 1995 daddy month reform

During the 1970s, proposals for earmarking part of the leave for fathers were promoted by several actors. The proposals were motivated by the fact that women continued to take the main responsibility for the care of the small children, and that the reform had only affected gendered practices very modestly. However, in 1973, and prior to the introduction of the reform, two female parliamentarians from the Center Party, Karin Andersson and Elvy Olsson, presented a motion, demanding that parents should share the parental leave allowance and that no parent alone should be able to make use of the benefits (Motion 1973:1686). Considering the gender wage gap and the difficulties for women in advancing at work and having a professional career, mothers rather than fathers would make use of the benefits, they maintained, and, as a consequence, the rationale behind the reform would be lost.

The issue on a regulated division of parental leave was also raised by the National Federation of Social Democratic Women. When a new public investigation was commissioned by the Social Democratic government in 1975, Familjestödsutredningen, the National Federation of Social Democratic Women managed to have this committee to study whether an extension of the parental allowance benefits could be combined with a demand that a certain share of the “allowance days” must be taken by the father. In the Committee report, *Förkortad arbetstid för småbarnsföräldrar* (SOU 1975:62) it was suggested, in line with the demand by the Social Democratic Women, that the parental allowance is to be increased from seven months (210 days) to eight months (240 days) provided that no parent make use of more than seven months, thus, leaving one month for the other parent. Although it was argued that men’s share of using this right would increase, in particular by information

campaigns on parental leave reforms, this provision would encourage fathers to take a greater responsibility for the care of small children.³

When the Social Democratic government prepared a revision of the parental leave reform in 1976, however, the allowance was extended from six to seven months, but the proposal that one month was to be reserved to the father was not included. Social Democratic women perceived this omission as a “betrayal against equality”, and prepared a counter reaction (Karlsson 1996). Completely at odds with the prevailing standards in the Social Democratic government and parliamentary group, 18 out of 36 female Social Democratic parliamentarians presented a joint motion in the Swedish Parliament, calling for a “daddy month”, reserving one month of the allowance days to the father. This action has been labelled “the women’s coup” (Karlsson 1996), since the female MPs decided to present this motion in parliament without having informed the party leadership about it and fully aware of the fact that the party leadership was opposed to the demand. The party leader and prime minister Olof Palme considered the coup as a “stab in the back” (Karlsson 1996:293).

Daddy month reform 1995 and 2002

In the beginning of the 1990s, the issue of homecarer allowance surfaced again on the political agenda. After decades of consensus concerning a strong extension of public child care, parental leave reform revisions, and the institutionalisation of the dual earner model, proposals for homecarer allowance were presented by the new right wing government, backed up primarily by the Christian Democratic Party. The reform which was enacted in 1994 stipulated that a cash allowance benefit would be distributed to parents who stayed at home to care for small children. It was based on the argument that parents would be given a free choice in relation to care. While the women’s wings in the 1960s had argued that working mothers should have a free choice to choose professional work, this reform was motivated by the argument that women should have the right to choose homemaking.

Parallel to the discussions about homecarer allowances, a discussion about the low share of fathers making use of the parental allowance reappeared on the political agenda. Despite the fact that lots of campaigns had been introduced to make more fathers make use of their rights, women continued to take the prime responsibility for the care of the small children, and father’s share of the allowance days was marginal. This time, the issue was primarily advanced by men. At the Unit for Gender Equality in the Government Offices, a

³ During the second half of 1974, and six months after the introduction of the parental leave reform, only 2 % of the eligible fathers made use of their right (SOU 1975:62, 102).

“daddy group” had been established. In its report, *Pappagruppens slutrapport*, a “vision of the present father” was called for, implying that children should have the opportunity to experience manliness as comprised of “warmth, caring and responsibility” (Ds 1995:2, 109f). Both parents ought to share the “responsibility and joy” of caring for the small children, and it should be seen as a merit in the labour market to have made use of the parental leave rights. Ingrained attitudes in the society as well as employers’ resistance towards men’s parental leave were identified as the main reasons for men’s low share of the care of the small children. The corporate sector was pointed out as a remnant of the medieval vassal system, in which the values of the leader shape the corporate norms. In a critique of this system, the daddy group suggested a ‘daddy guarantee’, in which three months of parental leave should be mandatory for the fathers (Ds 1995:2, 109f).

Being influenced by the proposals made, the right-wing government, and the same government that proposed the homecare allowance, proposed the “daddy month”, stipulating that at least 30 days of parental leave must be used by mother and 30 days by father of the 450 available days. In the government bill, men’s need of support vis-à-vis their employers was emphasized, as well as children’s need and right to their fathers (Prop 1993/94:147). The bill, furthermore, noted that despite formal rights and opportunities, men had not used their right. Gender equality work must, therefore, “focus on changing the informal structures in society which reproduce the unequal distribution of power between the sexes” (Prop 1993/94:147, 20). Thus, the reform was also related to power: “It has also become more and more clear that gender equality to a large extent is about the distribution of power and influence in society between women and men” (Prop 1993/94:147, 15).

The party leader of the Liberal party, and the Minister of Social Affairs and Gender Equality Bengt Westerberg, was the driving force behind the reform. This minister was also one of several well-known public men that took advantage of this reform himself, showing that private life sometimes must be prioritised, also by men. The reform can be seen as a trade-off between several political demands. Westerberg, for instance, managed to secure support for the reform among the parties in the government coalition, in return for his support of the homecarer allowance. While the homecarer allowance was repealed by the Social Democratic government, when it returned to power, the daddy month was in fact extended. In 2002, the reform was extended from one to two months, reserving 60 days for each parent, days that can not be transferred to the partner.

CONCLUSIONS

By using tools from the HI toolkit, this paper has attempted to disentangle how and why the organization of parental leave and its gendered outcomes have taken different routes in Denmark and Sweden. The paper supports the claim that the institutional arena and the roles of key actors within that arena must be in focus of any FHI analysis in order to understand the complex mechanisms that contribute to institutional change and positive gender outcomes. To study pressure from inside (women's federation and others) on their own, or from feminist networks outside the parties, are insufficient. Rather, other institutional actors such as key insider and outsider actors and their possible alliances must be at the centre of analysis as well. At the same time, there is a need for a broad take on institutional arenas, including, for instance, the party arena, the bureaucratic arena and civil society. Moreover, we argue that an FHI approach, including concepts such as critical juncture, path dependency and gender, may improve our understanding of institutions and institutional change and how they are gendered.

Findings from these two cases have revealed differences as well as similarities between the countries in terms of the organization of parental leave and its gendered outcomes. In both countries, the relatively early reforms of parental leave were aimed at solving the problems of working class mothers. In the 1960s, both countries took major steps toward universalism, entitlements were extended to all mothers, and the two countries both offered relatively generous economic compensation. The countries have however, taken different routes in relation to the rights of fathers, and this is the most notable difference between the two countries. Swedish fathers became entitled to leave a decade earlier in Sweden than in Denmark, and Sweden earmarked part of the leave for the father five years before it happened in Denmark. Finally, the Danish leave has no daddy quota in 2010, whereas the Swedish has been extended, and it reserves the same period for mothers and fathers. After a major conflict in the Social Democratic party in the mid 1970s the Swedish daddy quota is today a consensus project among the political parties. In Denmark, the issue divides the political parties to the right and left.

The similarities between parental leave reforms in the two countries may be explained mainly by the dominance of the same ideas and discursive framings. The first political decisions on maternity leave was influenced by ideas about a residual welfare state, the reforms the 1960s and 1970s were part and parcel of the establishment of a universalist welfare state. From 1960 onwards, the idea about achieving gender equality by integrating women into the labour force influenced political parties from right to left in both countries.

The Swedish debate has been much more influenced by the idea of integrating fathers in care as part of the gender equality project, whereas the role of fathers has not played a significant role for the Danish gender equality project. Furthermore, the relationship between the genders has to a greater extent been expressed in terms of power in Sweden, thus facilitating regulations such as quotas. However, while quotas de facto have been introduced in Sweden, they have always been framed as “daddy months”. The Danish daddy leave was not named, and the opponents used the term quota in order to frame it negatively, because quotas presumably are the most controversial gender equality instrument.

We will argue that the processes in both countries have been characterized by path dependency, and that the first period was marked by modest changes, followed by a period of critical junctures. In relation to Mahoney and Thelen’s (2010) identification of three key groups contributing to institutional change, the Swedish case seems to have involved diverse groups, including both political parties, women’s wings, youth organisations, trade unions, governmental commissions and individual members of parliament and ministers. In the Danish case, some of the groups that were actively engaged in promoting reforms of the parental leave in the 1970s and 1980s, like the feminist movement and the gender equality machinery, disappeared or was weakened during the 1990s. Many alliances have also been established in the Swedish case, working across both party lines and the right-left dichotomy, whereas the Danish debate has been since the late 1990s has been divided between right and left, particularly on the issue of the rights of fathers in relation to gender equality.

In Sweden, insurrectionaries outside of formal institutions, as well as subversives within institutions have been active in the promotion of institutional change, and this has also been the case in Denmark in relation to some elements of the leave, like the length of the leave and the economic compensation. The zigzag course of the Danish decisions indicates that on this issue, the Danish case more than the Swedish has been characterized by path breaking developments, and future developments are highly dependent on the balance between the political blocks.

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