

Introduction.

Ambivalences of the Rising Welfare Service State – Hopes and Hazard of Modern Welfare Architectures.

Jean-Michel Bonvin, University of Geneva

Hans-Uwe Otto, Bielefeld University

Arne Wohlfarth, Bielefeld University

Holger Ziegler, Bielefeld University

1 The Welfare Service State on the Rise

Welfare arrangements are subject to constant change. Currently, welfare states in Europe and around the world are implementing new modes of welfare production, with significant consequences for the lives of those who need to rely on public help and support. The scopes and scales of these reforms, as well as their societal implications, do vary in accordance with institutional pathways and general political and economic constellations. Yet for all national arrangements, a central challenge is to ensure the circumstances of social integration for stability and cohesion as well as enabling and enhancing individual capacities of their citizenry. Originally set up in industrial societies, current welfare states are facing upheavals on different fronts. Externally they need to cope with the competitive challenges of a globalized economy while internally facing the demands of social modernization against the background of cultural diversity and social heterogeneity.

Against this background, traditional welfare programs – income-replacing compensation for market failures, existential threats and standard biographical problems – are considered to be no more appropriate in addressing the unequal diffusion of the new social risks (van Aerscht 2011). Not only but especially the European Union promotes new forms of welfare production with drawing attention to *human development* – emphasising equal opportunities, social protection and inclusion, high level of education and health (European Parliament et al. 2017). While growing inequalities within a number of states but also the international inequalities between rich and poor states are acknowledged to be major policy issues, social conflicts and personal hardships have been redefined along more individualized terms. Accordingly, welfare approaches attempt to strengthen the citizens' capacities to handle social opportunities but also to overcome hardships on their own responsibility. In particular, service-based approaches to welfare form the core of comprehensive and far-reaching reforms. These seem to amount into a distinctively new phase of the welfare architecture: The emergence of *Welfare Service States*.

Empirically social services spending tends to grow as a relative structural share of welfare expenditure – as opposed to cash transfers, which still remain an integral part of welfare production. This has also been reflected in significant EU policies like the *Lisbon Strategy*, *Europe 2020* or the *Social Investment Package* all of which highlighting service based modes of welfare provision and emphasizing policy fields that – like education, training, employment support and active labour market policies (but also care, counselling, health and

rehabilitation and numerous family policies) – are essentially provided through services which provide (ecological or infrastructural) opportunities in terms of care and support supplies as well and foremost are means for ‘people changing’ welfare interventions aiming at enhancing, sustaining or restoring competencies, capacities, behaviours, attitudes and other dispositions of the citizenry. Conceptually such incipient Welfare Service States focus on preventive policies, personalized interventions and social investments in the human capital of their beneficiaries (Bonvin/Rosenstein 2015). This focus implies a significant recalibration of the cognitive and normative orientations about what welfare policy should achieve: The new ‘currency of justice’ in welfare production is claimed to be the empowerment of individuals to achieve active social participation as well as self-reliance and flourishing personal life conducts. This shift represents “a reorientation in social citizenship, away from *freedom from want* towards *freedom to act*” (Hemerijck 2017, p. 12). It is assumed that such approaches tackle social problems more effectively - a claim not supported by evidence yet (Cantillon 2011). However, these developments away from the redistribution of goods and resources have fundamentally changed prevailing paradigms and inner logics of the conditions of producing welfare (Bonvin/Dahmen 2017).

2 New Logics...

Within traditional transfer frameworks, benefits could be granted automatically by laws and handled administratively in such a way as to guarantee homogenous benefits for all. In contrast, the eligibility criteria of service-based welfare provisions tend to be rather fuzzy, tailored and future-focused (Otto 2015; van Berkel et al. 2017). According to the premise *prepare rather than repair*, welfare relies more and more on services adapted to specific personal situations rather than standardized transfers. Particularly personalized, ‘people changing’ services are playing a crucial role here (Valkenburg/van Berkel 2007): Not alimentionation but (extorted) activation for (market) participation has become the modus operandi of welfare production. While such strategies promise to be more flexible in order to provide tailor-made individualized solutions, they tend to oust more structure-orientated approaches (Gupta et al. 2016).

The rise of the Welfare Service State seems to be related to what has been presented as a sophisticated answer to (neoliberal) critics of traditional welfare settlements: The *social investment turn* (Morel et al. 2012). In this perspective, welfare spending is regarded as an investment in education and the human capital promising a pay-off for the competitiveness and quality of society as well as for the individual well-being (Jenson 2017).

These (activation) policies, particularly in the sector of personal welfare services have typically been accompanied by managerial reforms – stressing the compelling necessity of controlling, accountability and performance measurement (Ziegler 2019). It has to be taken into account, that not only the importance but services themselves have been changed. This change is often framed by appeals to market principles and tendencies towards privatization of welfare delivery (Reisch 2013; Abramovitz/Zelnick 2015) – treating social services as equivalent to other economic goods. Even if these controversial and ongoing processes differ in shape and content within different welfare states, they re-contextualize the general framework of welfare and imply a shift of control away from public responsibilities towards a profit-oriented welfare economy, as private investors are increasingly taking part in the decision-making process about welfare measures – for instance in terms of *Social Investment Bonds* (Burmester et al. 2017).

As a result, profoundly altered standards and quality criteria regarding the appropriateness of services and their delivery may be set in opposition to professional knowledge (Gingrich 2011).

3 ...and Shortcomings of the New Welfare Architecture

These reforms in the philosophy and operative conduct of welfare (service) production do not only affect immediate beneficiaries and employees within the welfare sector but also the very democratic make-up of welfare societies as they eventually amount into substantial renegotiations over the rights and duties of citizens vis-à-vis the state (Taylor-Gooby 2010; Betzelt/Bothfeld 2011; Betzelt 2013; Clarke et al. 2014). At the same time, they have implications for the issue of distributive justice, as they coincide with an amplified focus on utilitarian metrics of inequality and welfare provision. Additionally, there is plenty of evidence that some (socially vulnerable) groups are less likely to (voluntarily) participate and thus benefit from welfare service production as compared to monetary transfers (Cantillon/van Lancker 2013; Otto 2015). This concern is underpinned by emergent evidence that ‘new’ service-based provisions are less effective than traditional benefits in mitigating poverty and inequality (Cantillon/Vandenbroucke 2014).

Further, in particular, the socially and culturally selective uptake of services poses a problem for the very architecture of the new Welfare Service State (Otto/Ziegler 2019 [In press]) insofar as the selectivity access to services is tantamount to non-access to social rights. This means that certain social risks will not be processed and that certain demands or needs cannot be satisfied – a circumstance that worsens with the hands-on nature of the service approaches, up to the danger of an erosion of the universal dimensions of social protection systems (Warin 2006).

However, the non-take-up problem might not be resolved by paternalistically forcing people into given service supplies – also Carrots and Sticks have become a widely established counterstrategy to force people to activation. Rather it points to the question whether and in how far people are entitled to assessable supplies which they have reason to value.

It is, therefore, necessary to explore ways how service-based social investment strategies might be organized and implemented if social inequalities are to be taken into account and new forms of social exclusion and paternalism are to be avoided.

This publication addresses these challenges by tackling questions about the political deliberation and the theoretical analysis and justification, combining such disciplinary perspectives as social services, social policy, social philosophy, and economics. It aims to scrutinize whether and under what circumstances the hopes of those who are seeing welfare-arrangements based on (new) social services as an opportunity for a “giving citizens empowering voice and choice, to serve their demands“(Tonkens et al. 2013, S. 161) as well as a new chance for individualized and more tailor-made responses to social problems and individual needs are justified. Or whether and to what extent the worries of those, who are afraid of decreased solidarity and an overwhelming focus on market solutions resulting into a conformity-enforcing system, are to be taken seriously.

In the chapter *Conceptual Issues of the Welfare State*, the authors of the six different contributions discuss the changed governance conditions and the actual performance of social services in the context of the new welfare systems. They investigate the continuing infiltration

of market logics into the welfare and service sector, changed control logics and behavioural imperatives as well as the shifting relationship between state and its citizenry in the context of a service-based welfare architecture.

In 13 articles, the chapter *Putting Welfare Reform into Practise - International Experiences* illustrates the broad range of international change processes towards a service-based welfare architecture in Asia, Africa, the Europe Union and the United States and links them to the experiences of welfare users. Light will be shed on social policy reforms in different countries and how they frame the conditions of welfare production. Special attention has been drawn to the changing circumstances for child and youth welfare and the situations of women.

The concluding chapter *Reconceptualisation of Welfare Research* outlines new perspectives and methods of and for welfare state analysis. The four articles investigate new ideas of welfare legitimation and evaluation frames by exploring *culture, work* and the opportunities of the Capability Approach.

This publication was produced in the following of the conference *Ambivalences of the Rising Welfare Service State – Hopes and Hazards of fundamentally realigning the Architecture of Welfare Modernity* sponsored by the VW Foundation in late spring 2018.

References

- Abramovitz, M., & Zelnick, J.** (2015). Privatization in the Human Services. Implications for Direct Practice. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 43(3), 283–293.
- Betzelt, S.** (2013). Activation, social citizenship and autonomy in Europe. In G. Ramia, K. Farnsworth & Z. Irving (Eds.), *Social Policy Review 25* (pp. 249-270). Bristol: Policy Press.
- Betzelt, S., & Bothfeld, S.** (2011). *Activation and labour market reforms in Europe. Challenges to social citizenship*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Bonvin, J.-M., & Dahmen, S.** (2017). *Reformieren durch Investieren? Chancen und Grenzen des Sozialinvestitionsstaats in der Schweiz*. Zürich: Seismo.
- Bonvin, J.-M., & Rosenstein, E.** (2015). Contractualising social policies: A way towards more active social citizenship and enhanced capabilities. In R. Ervik, N. Kildal & E. Nilssen (Eds.), *New contractualism in European welfare state policies* (pp. 47-72). Burlington: Ashgate.
- Burmester, M., Dowling, E., & Wohlfarth, N.** (2017). *Privates Kapital für soziale Dienste? Wirkungsorientiertes Investment und seine Folgen für die Soziale Arbeit*. Baltmannsweiler: Schneider Verlag.
- Cantillon, B.** (2011). The paradox of the social investment state. Growth, employment and poverty in the Lisbon era. *Journal of European Social Policy*, 21(5), 432–449.
- Cantillon, B., & van Lancker, W.** (2013). Three Shortcomings of the Social Investment Perspective. *Social Policy and Society*, 12(4), 553–564.
- Cantillon, B., & Vandenbroucke, F.** (2014). *Reconciling work and poverty reduction. How successful are European welfare states?* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Clarke, J., Coll, K., & Dagnino, E.** (2014). *Disputing citizenship*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- European Parliament/European Council/European Commission** (2017). *European Pillar of Social Rights*.

Gingrich, J. R. (2011). *Making markets in the welfare state. The politics of varying market reforms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gupta, A., Featherstone, B., & White, S. (2016). Reclaiming Humanity. From Capacities to Capabilities in Understanding Parenting in Adversity. *British Journal of Social Work*, 46(2), 339–354.

Hemerjick, A. (2017). *The Use of Social Investment*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jenson, J. (2017). Developing and spreading a social investment perspective. The World Bank and OECD compared. In A. Hemerjick (Ed.), *The uses of social investment* (pp. 207–215). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Morel, N., Palier, B., & Palme, J. (2012). *Towards a social investment welfare state? Ideas, policies and challenges*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Otto, H.-U. (2015). *Facing trajectories from school to work. Towards a capability-friendly youth policy in Europe*. Cham: Springer.

Otto, H.-U., & Ziegler, H. (2019 [forthcoming]). Capability-Friendliness and the Non-Take-Up of Welfare Services. *Social Work and Society*.

Reisch, M. (2013). What is the future of social work? *Critical and Radical Social Work*, 1(1), 67-85.

Taylor-Gooby, P. (2010). *Reframing Social Citizenship*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tonkens, E., Hoijtink, M., & Gulikers, H. (2013). Democratizing Social Work. From New Public Management to Democratic Professionalism. In B. Steijn & M. Noordegraaf (Eds.), *Professionals under pressure* (pp. 161–179). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Valkenburg, B., & van Berkel, R. (2007). *Making it personal. Individualising activation services in the EU*. Bristol, UK: Policy.

van Aerschoot, P. (2011). *Activation policies and the protection of individual rights. A critical assessment of the situation in Denmark, Finland and Sweden*. Farnham: Ashgate.

van Berkel, R., Caswell, D., Kupka, P., & Larsen, F. (2017). *Frontline Delivery of Welfare-to-Work Policies in Europe. Activating the Unemployed*. London: Taylor and Francis.

Warin, P. (2006). *Exit from and non take up of public services. A comparative analysis. France, Greece, Spain, Germany, Netherlands, Hungary*.

Ziegler, H. (2019 [forthcoming]). Evidence based social work. In H.-U. Otto, F. Kessl & W. Lorenz (Eds.), *European Social Work – A Compendium*. Leverkusen: Budrich.

Author's Addresses:

Jean-Michel Bonvin, Prof. Dr.
University of Geneva, Switzerland
Faculté des Sciences de la Société, Institut de Démographie et Socioéconomie
Jean-Michel.Bonvin@unige.ch

Hans-Uwe Otto, Prof. Dr.Dr. h.c. mult.
Bielefeld University, Germany
Faculty of Educational Science; Bielefeld Center for Education and Capability Research
huotto@uni-bielefeld.de

Arne Wohlfarth, M.Ed, MA
Bielefeld University, Germany

Holger Ziegler, Prof. Dr.
Bielefeld University, Germany
Faculty for Educational Science; Working Group 8 – Social Work
hziegler@uni-bielefeld.de