Comparing path dependence and path departure in family policy development – the example of Germany and Finland

Birgit Pfau-Effinger

Paper for presentation at Stream 18
ESPAnet annual conference 2011 in Valencia
‘Family Policy in Transition’
Timo Fleckenstein & Martin Seelaib-Kaiser

Prof. Dr. Birgit Pfau-Effinger
Chair in Social Structure Analyses
Institute for Sociology
Research Director, Centre for Globalisation and Governance
University of Hamburg
Allende-Platz 1, 20146 Hamburg, Germany
e-mail pfau-effinger@wiso.uni-hamburg.de
Abstract

How is it possible to explain why family policies in Finland developed path dependent over several decades, while Germany diverged from its path? Studies applying the path dependence approach have rarely made comparisons between continued path dependence and path departure, so this study aims to increase our knowledge in this area. The paper discusses the limits of the path dependence concept of historical institutionalism for comparative analyses of the development of welfare state institutions. It introduces a concept for comparative analyses of development paths of family policies which includes cultural, institutional and socio-economic factors into the explanation, and the ways in which they interact, as well as the role of powerful actors. It also argues that the explanation of path departure should differentiate between two different time dimensions.

The findings show that a path dependent development of family policies in Finland was possible because the institutional setting during several decades was largely matching with the cultural, institutional and social context in the Finnish society, and more recently also with main aims of EU policies. The path departure of family policies in Germany, which were based on the more conservative gender culture in West Germany, was possible, since the development path had in the long-run eroded to some degree. A main reason is that after unification, an alternative, more modern family policy and gender culture existed in the Eastern part of Germany compared with the West. Also, EU policies likewise supported a more gender egalitarian type of family policies.

It is moreover argued that a main reason why the policy shift took place in the concrete situation of the middle of the 2000s is, that powerful actors among the policy elites who were willing to introduce a paradigm change disconnected the discourse about the necessity for a policy change from the gender equality discourse and thus got the support of the conservative parties for the policy shift.

Introduction

Although Germany has traditionally been considered the ideal-typical conservative welfare state with a male-breadwinner oriented family policy, the country radically diverged from this path recently (Henninger et al., 2008; Ostner, 2006). Finland in contrast has a since the 1960s a ‘social democratic’ welfare state and a family policy which is directed to supporting gender equality, together with some conservative elements. Finland continues to pursue the same types of family policies. This article aims to explain the fact that Finland stayed on course, while Germany diverged from its path. Studies applying path dependency have rarely made comparisons between continued path dependence and path departure, so this study aims to increase our knowledge in this area.

In the first section, I discuss the concept of path dependence and path departure and suggest to elaborate it for comparative purposes. In the second section I discuss how it is possible to analyze path dependence and path departure in family policies in a cross-national perspective. I introduce a typology of family policies which can be used for this
purpose. This part is followed by the comparative analyses of the development paths of family policies in Germany and Finland, which shows that the development was characterized by path dependence in Finland and path departure in Germany. The following section discusses the explanation of these differences. The article finishes with a conclusion.

The option to use the path-dependence concept for comparative purposes

In how far does history shape human choice? Concepts of path-dependence stress the constraining role of the past for present development, in contrast to concepts in which change is mainly seen as the outcome of purposive action. The concept of path-dependence was originally developed in the economic sciences where David (1985) introduced it in order to describe the fate of technological innovations. It contradicts the assumption, made by neo-classical economists, of optimal choice, according to which technological innovation is introduced if a new technology is more efficient than the old one. David argued instead, that it is possible that relevant actors prefer a traditional technology to a more efficient solution because it has a comparative advantage which is caused by the fact that it already exists for a longer time. A deviation from the traditional solution may also cause substantial transfer costs. From this perspective, it may be more ‘rational’ to keep the old version.

Douglas North (1990) has suggested using this concept for the analysis of social institutions. Because of high costs, it may be particularly difficult to implement a new institution in the same way as a new technology (North 1990: 99-105). Instead, change often follows a certain development path along which main features of an institution keep relatively stable. Paul Pierson (2000) has adopted the concept of North and introduced an elaborated version of it for the political sciences. In his approach the mechanism of ‘increasing returns’ is the main cause of path-dependent development. This means that ‘the costs of switching from one alternative to another will in certain social contexts increase markedly over time’ (p. 251) which can cause a ‘lock-in’ situation of the institution. When it comes to a ‘critical juncture’, the chance increases that path departure takes place or a new path is established (David, 1985; Pierson, 2000).

The concept of path-dependence deserves the merit to have brought history back into the analysis of welfare-state restructuring. The insight that the restructuring of political institutions is substantially influenced by their past provides us with a view of political actors being temporally located and socially embedded. This is important in explaining the lasting differences between welfare states, even if they seem to be influenced by similar processes like globalisation and EU-integration. Path-dependence has been usefully employed in social-policy analysis, mainly also in analyses of the restructuring of retirement pension systems (Pierson, 2001). Such studies are excellent accounts of the high relative stability of the institutional orders of welfare states.

However, there is a shortcoming in the ways in which the proponents of this approach conceptualise the societal context of institutional development paths. According to Paul Pierson (2001), institutions mainly develop path dependent because of the mechanism of ‘increasing returns’, and thus mainly by endogenous factors. These interact insofar with the surrounding of the institution, as the constellation of other institutions around this
institution may contribute to its stability. He does not systematically conceptualise change in the overall context societal context of institutional, cultural and socio-economic factors in his explanatory framework. Some authors have suggested to include the influence of social, political, economic and cultural factors more systematically, particularly in the case of path departure (Ebbinghaus 2004, Mahoney 2005, Beyer 2005). However, a more elaborated concept about the ways in which institutions interact with the societal context in which they are embedded during path dependent development and path departure, and how it is possible to include the cultural dimension into the theoretical framework, is missing so far.

I suggest to conceptualise the societal context in which the institution is embedded, and the contribution of the different types of factors in the societal context that can have an impact on institutional development more precisely. This relates to the surrounding constellation not only of political institutions, but also of economic and social institutions, cultural values and models and socio-economic structures, and actors constellations. These factors and the ways in which they interact may have an impact on institutional change, and on whether it is path-dependent or not.¹

I assume that the chance for path dependent development is particularly high if the institutional system, the cultural system, and the relationship between both levels, are relatively coherent, and if the degree of tensions between social actors in relation to this institution is relatively low.

The chances for path departure increase if tensions develop in the institutional system or within the cultural system, or between both levels. Nevertheless, it can prevail as long as the degree of tensions between social actors in relation to this institution is relatively low. A path break will only take place if the tensions between social actors increase, and if there is a group of social actors who are able to mobilise power in favour of a new paradigm.

It is therefore important to distinguish two different time frameworks in the explanation of path departure. These include

- **The long-term development of the path:** How far did the path develop in a contradictory way in the long run, and what was the reason? Which was the role of powerful actors?
- **Path departure in a specific situation:** Which specific factors contribute to explaining path departure in this situation? Which was the role of powerful actors?

**Conceptualising path dependence and path departure in family policies**

How did family policies in Western Europe develop, and how is it possible to conceptualise and compare different development paths? Jane Lewis (2004) has argued that contemporary welfare states are increasingly supporting an adult earner model instead

---

¹ I define culture as a 'system of collective constructions of meaning by which human beings define reality' (Neidhard et al., 1986: 11). Such a system includes values and ideals, in sum: ideas, and it can be relatively stable over longer periods of time. At the same time, it is realized that collective constructions of meaning are produced and reproduced by the social practices of social actors, and they can be the subject of conflicts, negotiations and compromises between social actors, with cultural change as a result.
of the housewife model of the male breadwinner marriage. As she and other authors have found, these welfare states differ considerably with regard to the degree to which they support this new model.

The theoretical concept of familialization/de-familialization is currently particularly popular for classification of different types of family policies along the assumed development path from the support of the housewife model of the family towards the adult worker model. This concept refers to the outsourcing of care work out of the family, which is a prerequisite for the integration of women into gainful employment unburdened by familial responsibilities. ‘De-familialization’ is seen as an important prerequisite for the capacity of women to integrate into the labour force and thus to ‘commodify’ themselves, and for gender equality (Lister, 1994; McLaughlin and Glendinning, 1994). ‘Hence, de-familialization would indicate the degree to which social policy (or perhaps markets) render women autonomous to become “commodified”, or to set up independent households, in the first place’ (Lister 1994). In the case of outsourcing, organisations transfer care work to organisations outside the private household. The term ‘familialization’ refers to the opposite: its retention in the family, or policies that support this.

The problem of this concept is that it classifies family policies on the basis of a single dimension, whether it supports women’s informal care in the family or public care outside the family. In this regard, differentiations of the concept undertaken by Leitner (2003) were helpful. She distinguished policies which burdened families with responsibilities that should have been duties of the welfare state and policies that supported families in their duties. But even if we use this elaborated approach, we will have difficulties to adequately conceptualise the ways in which different developments interact and overlap, based on a general trend towards an extension of public childcare and the support of family leave schemes at the same time. Also, it is not possible to classify generous parental leave schemes in general as a conservative and ‘familializing’, as some authors do (Leira 2002). Instead, its effects on childcare and women’s employment depend on the societal context in which it is embedded (Kamerman and Gabel 2010; Pfau-Effinger 2005; Sipilä 2010).

Because of these reasons, I suggest to apply a more complex approach that combines three different dimensions. These include:

- the option to receive public or publicly financed childcare and connected social rights (see also Knijn und Kremer 1997);
- the option to temporarily provide care for one’s own child on the basis of family leave-schemes (like maternity leave, parental leave, paternity leave, child allowance), as well as the option for parents to act as financially autonomous carers during periods of family leave;
- the degree of support for equal sharing of employment and family care between women and men.

The main features of the whole setting can be described on the basis of these dimensions. It is then possible to distinguish different types of family policies in Western Europe (see also table 1) which support distinctly different types of the family.
(1) **Support of women’s employment in a male breadwinner context:** This type is based on comprehensive public childcare for children of age 3-6, but relatively little public care for children below 3 years; a low generosity of family leave schemes, and does not support particular leave by the child’s father.

(2) **Support of gender equality on the basis of comprehensive public childcare:** This type is based on comprehensive public childcare for children of all age groups below school age, a low generosity of family leave schemes, and does not support particular leave by the child’s father.

a) **Multi-option gender equality approach:** This type is based on comprehensive public childcare for children of all age groups below school age, a high generosity of family leave schemes with the option to temporarily act as financially autonomous caregiver. The countries included differ in relation to the degree in which they support particular leave by the child’s father.

In order to distinguish path dependence and path departure, I use the approach that Peter Hall has introduced for the classification of policy changes. Hall (1993) conceptualises the magnitude of policy change in the following way: (1) A first-order change is change in quantity, like in the size of a benefit; (2) a second-order change is characterised as change of instrument; and (3) a third-order change is based on a shift of goals. I suggest using this concept to distinguish between path-dependent and path-breaking changes in welfare-state policies. As long as change is restricted to the change of levels and instruments, it can take place within the framework of the present type of welfare state and its developmental path. I therefore classify first- and second-order changes as path dependence. I argue that we can talk about path-departure mainly only in terms of the third-order change: when a paradigm change takes place, that is that the welfare state change the goals of their policies. In the concrete case of family policies, I talk about path departure if welfare state policies change from one type to the other type of family policies among the three types mentioned above.

**Development paths of family policies in Germany and Finland**

**Path dependence of family policies in the Finnish welfare state**

The development path of family policies that has persisted until today was established in the period between the 1960s and the 1980s. It is in line with a more general path of a multi-option type of family policies of the Nordic countries, which strongly supports gender equality, the labor market integration of women and public early childhood education (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2010).

The Finnish welfare state has strongly supported formal employment of mothers and collectivised childcare since the 1960s. Public childcare has been greatly expanded at the local government level. The Finnish government also introduced a social right for children from 3 to 6 to public childcare was introduced in the 1960s and extended it 1990 to children below 3 years of age. Moreover, free childcare services were introduced for private households in times when the public childcare organisations are closed (Jokkonen et al., 2009).
Besides, also the idea that parents should have the option to choose between public childcare and parental childcare for their small children was early introduced into family policies. The full paid maternity leave that existed since 1964 was considerably extended in length 1970 up to about 44 weeks, and it was transformed into parental leave in 1982, when the option for fathers to share the leave was established. In 2003, also a father quota in parental leave was introduced. The father gets two bonus weeks of extra paternity leave only if he takes the two last weeks of parental leave (Lammi-Tuskula 2010).

The different forms of family leave (maternity, paternity and parental leave) are based on generous income-related benefits pay that has oscillated somewhat since the 1960s. Originally, they were 80 per cent of the previous income. In the deep labour market and fiscal crisis in the early 1990s, they were cut down to 66 per cent of the previous income. Later they increased again up to currently 70 per cent, and for the first five weeks even to 75 per cent of the previous income (since 2007, Lammi-Tuskula, 2010).

Altogether, it would be misleading to classify family policies in Finland, as Esping-Andersen (1999) did, in the 1990s one-sidedly as ‘de-familializing’. Instead, what is typical for the main features of family policies in Finland is that they offer, together with the promotion of gender equality, different options for childcare. These include, besides generous public day care, the option for parents to act as caring parent until the child is about 10 months, on the basis of generously paid parental leave, together with the possibility to act as financially autonomous caregiver (Jolkonen et al., 2009). It is therefore possible to characterise the Finnish family policy as gender equality policy on the basis of a multi-option model. Also, there are specific incentives for the child’s father to participate in family childcare.

However, there is an additional element in these family policies, that somewhat deviates from this general picture. As an alternative to municipal day care for children older than 10 months, a cash-for-care system on the basis of a flat-rate child home care allowance was introduced 1984, paid to parents who did not want to give their 1-2 old children into public day care. It enabled parents to purchase childcare services from the market, or care for their children themselves in their home (Repo, 2010), while their workplace is protected. It includes a basic allowance of 314 Euros per month (2009), which is paid separately for each eligible child, and a means-tested supplement (at maximum 168 Euros per month in 2009). Each sixth municipality also offers municipal pay supplements between 70 and 250 Euros per month (Repo, 2010). This cash-for-care system usually does not provide caring parents with means for financial autonomy. Also, its use is strongly gendered. In 2008, more than half of the Finnish children under the age of three, 56.9 per cent, were in care supported by home care allowances. In most cases, the benefit has been used by mothers (Salmi, 2006). Furthermore, this scheme also seems to create a new divide between social classes, since it is mainly used by low income families in Finland (Kröger et al., 2003).

Social policy researchers often classify long periods of parental leave, and parental leave with relatively low pay, as a conservative element which may increase gender inequality (Morgan & Zippel, 2006). The childcare allowance matches largely with this description.

Path departure of family policies of the German welfare state
Family policies in West Germany since the late 1970s have increasingly supported women’s employment in a male breadwinner context. Public day care for children 3-6 years of age was widely expanded step by step, mainly on a part-time basis.

Moreover, the government of the former West German state introduced a parental leave scheme for parents of children below three years 1984 (‘Erziehungsurlaub’). It was based on the right to parental leave until the child was three years old, after a period of 14 weeks of full paid maternity leave. During this time, the employment relationship of the caring parent was protected. Parental leave benefits were paid for two years with 300 German Mark (150 Euro) per month that was means-tested on the basis of the family income. The third year was unpaid.

These family policies supported a pattern of behavior of mothers that was based on three years of parental leave. Specific policy efforts to include the child’s father into family childcare were absent so far. These policies relied strongly on the concept of the male as breadwinner. It was expected that the husband of the child’s mother would finance a large part of the subsistence of the family as long as his wife was on parental leave or was working only part-time.

The former East German state, in contrast, supported gender equality, at least in relation to the employment system, on the basis of comprehensive public childcare. It provided full-time day care for children from 1-6 years since the 1950s. Also, a maternal leave scheme existed based on one year’s maternal leave during which a full income substitute was paid (Rosenfeld et al. 2004).

After unification in 1990, family policies of the welfare state of the united Germany were based on the western German tradition of the support of women’s employment in a male breadwinner context. The existing social rights were step by step extended. The parental leave benefit has increased in size from about 150 to 300 euros per month until the middle of the 2000s. Also, the social rights related to public day care were extended. In 1996, the government established an individual right for each child from 3-6 years to participate in public day care. Nearly all children of these age groups participated in public day care, mostly on a part-time basis in West Germany, and on a full-time basis in the East. A rather low proportion of children below 3 years of age participated in public day care in West Germany (4–5 per cent) until the early 2000s. This was different in East Germany. Most children of this age group (58 per cent) availed public day care in 1991. The rate decreased to 35 per cent in 2002 but was still much higher than in western Germany (Kreyenfeld and Geisler 2006: 339). Since 2005 some Federal Republics in East Germany have also introduced an individual right for children from two years of age to publicly-funded childcare, independent from the ‘color’ of the governing parties.

In 1998, for the first time since the early 1980s, a left wing government took up office, based on a coalition of the Social Democratic Party (SPD) with the Green Party – the so-called red-green coalition, with a social democratic, female Minister for Family Affairs (Renate Schmidt). Many feminists saw this as a chance for a turn of family policies towards strengthening the aim of gender equality in family policies. However, the Chancellor Schröder, and his Vice Chancellor Fischer placed family policy and the aim of

---

2 An alternative option, much less used, was to receive a higher benefit of 450 euros per month for one year.
gender equality rather low on their list of priorities. Accordingly, this government only introduced some new policy instruments, with a contradictory effect with regard to gender equality, but it did not change policy objectives (Daly and Scheiwe, 2010; Leitner et al., 2004). This was also possible because the feminist parts of these parties were relatively weak. This also relates to the Green party, where feminists did not agree on a common approach to family policies.

Family policy change started when the grand coalition of the conservative parties, the Christina Democratic Union (CDU), and the Christian Social Union (CSU), with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) was enacted in 2005. The Christ Democratic Minister for Family Affairs, Ursula von der Leyen, was strongly supported by the Chancellor, Ursula Merkel, when she introduced a paradigm shift in the German family policy (Henninger et al., 2008). She planned to grant children below three years of age a legal entitlement to public day care. This turned out to be very difficult, since it involved complicated bargaining with the Länder and municipalities (ibid.). She achieved a compromise in 2007, when it was agreed that public day care for children below 3 years will be extended and that by 2013, each third child has a place, with a general option for full-time care. Also, in 2012, the individual right for a place in public day care for children below 3 years of age will be introduced. The data of the Representative German Survey ‘Junge Familie’ (‘Young Family’) that the RWI conducted in 2007 for the German Government show that public provision of day care for children from 0–3 years of age was already 40 per cent in 2007 (RWI 2008).

Also in the field of social rights to give care, the Family Minister, Ursula von der Leyen initiated substantial change in that she introduced a new programme for parental leave (‘Elternzeit’). Parental leave is still possible for a period of three years. What has changed is the method and period of pay. In this regard, policies now support the financial autonomy of caring parents, at least for parents who were employed previous to child birth. Those mothers or fathers who receive an income substitute of 67 per cent of their previous income during parental leave (14 months for single parents), with an upper limit of 1,700 euros. The period in which it is paid was reduced from two years to one year. Parents who were employed with a low income level receive 100 per cent of their previous income. Also, three years of child-rearing are counted towards independent pension entitlements (Frericks, 2010). This means that for one year, many parents are able to act as autonomous caregivers when they are providing family care on a full-time basis.

This was a departure from the male-breadwinner principle in parental leave-schemes, and as such was an important step towards state support of gender equality on the basis of a multi-option model of family policies. In the previous concept, the caring parent, usually the child’s mother, was constructed as member of a male breadwinner marriage, and the idea was that she was financed through the income of the male breadwinner. The new paradigm is based on an individualised concept, on the assumption that a parent during the leave period should be autonomous and able to live on her/his own during this time. As a result of this paradigm shift in family policies, the welfare state now supports an employment pattern of women with young children that more resembles the pattern that had been dominant in East Germany. After one year of parental leave, parents have the

---

3 If parents choose parental leave of two years, they get half of the monthly pay.
option to take up full-time employment on the basis of full-time day care of their children. During parental leave, each parent who was previously employed is independent from the breadwinner’s role of a spouse. However, because of the cuts in parental leave benefits from two to one year, the situation of low income earners is more detrimental than before policy change (Henning et al., 2009). With the new law, the German welfare state has also introduced paternity leave to promote a more equal sharing of family care. Parental leave is 14 months if the father contributes at least two months. If only one parent takes time off, the leave is capped at 12 months (BMFSFJ, 2008). This is an important step towards the support of a more equal sharing of family responsibility and employment.

To conclude, the development of family policies was path dependent from the early 1990s until 2006 when family policies supported women’s employment in a male breadwinner context. A paradigm shift took place, when 2007 family policies started to support a multi-option model of gender equality.

Explaining path dependence in Finland and path departure in Germany

Explaining path dependence in the societal context of Finland

With regard to its main features, the development of Finnish family policies corresponded largely with the dominant cultural orientation of the Finnish society towards a dual breadwinner/state care provider family. In the Finnish society, the housewife model of the male breadwinner family was never dominant at the cultural level, and it was not introduced to any substantial degree into practice of the family. Instead, great parts of the population mainly were part of the social class of free farmers with small farms, until the 1960s oriented towards a ‘family economy’ model, according to Pfau-Effinger’s typology of cultural family models (Pfau-Effinger 2004a). This model, which formed the main cultural basis of the arrangement of work and family until about the 1960s, was based on the idea that all adults, and children if possible, in a family contribute full-time to the agrarian production as do children (Alestalo and Kuhnle, 1991; Haavio-Mannila 1972). During the rapid transformation of the Finnish society from an agrarian society to a service society in the following decades, this model was substituted by a relatively egalitarian model of the “dual breadwinner/state carer” family on the basis of lifelong full-time participation of men and women in waged work. Accordingly, there is a long historical continuity of full-time employment of women, including mothers of young children, in Finland, as historical research has shown (Julkonen et al., 2009).

Based on large powerful women’s associations and a high degree of female organization in political parties and state institutions, women have traditionally participated intensively in politics in Finland. The transition towards the new cultural family model and the according pattern of behaviour in relation to the modern labour market was supported by a general

---

4 Those parents who were not active in the labour force before the child was born still get 300 euros per month on the basis of a means-test in relation to their household income. Those who are unemployed can get social assistance in addition to the benefits and are, therefore, able to act as autonomous caregivers too, even if this is at a very low income basis. Parental leave benefits for long-term unemployed parents were cut after the financial crisis 2010.
movement of young female and male academics (‘Association 9’), who raised feminist policy demands as part of a general movement for democratization. This was to be achieved by an expansion of public childcare, the extension of parental leave, and the return of social democracy to government (Tyska 1993).

Like in other Nordic countries, the egalitarian family model in Finland included the idea that parents should have the option to chose parental leave for children who are younger than one year, in order to develop close boundaries and for mothers to breastfeed their children as long as they want (Lammi-Tuskula, 2010; Repo, 2010). It seems that this idea was even stronger supported in the Finnish context compared with Sweden and Norway: The Finnish women’s movement did not actively oppose the introduction of the childcare allowance, whereas the feminist movement in Sweden and Norway has fiercely opposed the introduction of (a similar) home-care scheme (Bergmann 1999).

However, it would be somewhat misleading to conclude, that the introduction of the child home care allowance, which resembles elements of conservative childcare policies, was directed to the introduction of women’s housewife role. This cultural model never in the Finnish history had been really important. Instead, the childcare allowance can be seen a reaction to the ‘care crisis’ in the middle of the 1980s, which was caused by a lack of qualified personnel for a further expansion of the public day care system, and by the fact that the state therefore could no longer guarantee the public supply of places in public childcare (Joronen 1994). There is also another explanation by (1999), who argues that the childcare allowance matches with particular needs of families in the rural areas, which were very sparsely populated and where it was difficult for parents to bring their children to public day care.5

The option to choose childcare allowance does not seem to be very attractive, since pay is only at the subsistence level, and the caring parent loses income and potentially also career chances. One would therefore expect that the actual patterns of employment and childcare in Finland resemble those in other Nordic countries, this is that the share of women with children below three years of age who are employed is about as high as in Denmark and Sweden, as public provision of day care in both countries is comprehensive for all age groups of children, and generous family leave exist for about the same number of months.

Nevertheless, mothers of young children are using the parental leave scheme and the child allowance that they can chose after the end of parental leave quite a lot. Less women with children below three years of age in Finland than in other Nordic countries are employed as long as their children are younger than three (34,3 per cent, compared with 45,1 per cent in Sweden and 51,4 percent in Denmark, OECD Family Data base after Eydal and Rostgaard, 2010). Also, the great majority of women with children below three years of age care for their children themselves (70 per cent), which is even a higher share than in Germany (62 per cent), whereas this is only 26% in Denmark (EU-SILC 2006, reprinted in EGGE 2009: 75). It seems that many of these women can make use of the option to take up childcare allowance, even if this form a financial point of view is not a very attractive alternative to full-time employment, and even if each child has an individual right to (full-

5 However, mothers of small children in rural areas usually did not act as housewife-and-mother. It was characteristic for the Finnish farm economy of those times that children were just only supervised and received far less attention as, for example, in the German housewife family (Haavio-Manila 1972).
time) day care. This is somewhat surprising. Since the participation of fathers of young children in the Home Care Allowance Scheme is particularly low, its existence also contributes to maintaining some elements of gender inequality in the Finnish society (Julkonen et al. 2009).

The question arises why this cash-for-care system, which has already existed for two decades and seemingly does not fit well with the gender equality concept of the Finnish welfare state, has survived until today and is still popular (see also Kilpeläinen, 2009, p. 87). It should also be considered that the situation since the ‘care crisis’ in the 1980s has changed considerably. The teachers in early childhood education usually have an academic degree, and pay and working conditions have clearly improved so that it is less difficult to recruit staff for public day care organisations than it was in the 1980s (Julkonen et al. 2009).

Repo (2010) talks about a ‘new maternity’ in this context. According to Repo, this concept is not based on the construction of the housewife role of mothers, but instead on the cultural belief that maternity care for children until they are two years is in the best interest of the child. Survey data of the Eurobarometer 2009 show that only about one third of the population (32 per cent) think that children below three years of age should get care in public (or private) day care centres or pre-schools. This is relatively similar to West Germany, where the share is 34 per cent of the population. The majority of people in Finland think that these children should mainly receive care by its mother (37 per cent) or by both their parents (55 per cent). In this regard, the value orientation of the Finnish population resembles a lot the one in Germany: 38 per cent of people in Germany prefer care predominantly by the child’s mother, and 49 per cent prefer childcare by both parents (Special Eurobarometer 2009, after European Commission 2010). It also seems that the Child Home Care Allowance Scheme so far was not broadly contested in the Finnish society (Eydal and Rostgaard, 2011). Hiilamo and Kangas (2009) have analysed political discourses on child home care in Finland. Their findings policymakers in Finland embedded their policies towards childcare in policy discourses which have stressed the ‘freedom to choose’. Care at home with all its positive characteristics was contrasted with bureaucratic institutional care. The authors show how the use of such discourses by politicians has contributed to path dependence in the family policy institutions in Finland.

It seems therefore, that the family policy of the Finnish welfare state, together with its ‘conservative’ Child Home Allowance Scheme, to a considerable part matches with the dominant cultural value orientation of the Finnish population, besides the missing support of childcare by fathers.

One could also ask why a further development of family policies towards a stronger state support of the contribution of fathers in family childcare did not take place, since the data from the Eurobarometer show, that more than half of the population prefer childcare by both parents of a child to childcare by its mother. As Lammi-Taskula and Takala (2006) point out, ideas about fathers’ increased entitlements to paid parental leave have been
discussed for years, but there have been few actual changes. Proposals to extend paternity leave have been more supported by left-wing and liberal parties, whereas the (Agrarian) Centre Party and the more conservative right-wing parties have stressed the argument of the ‘freedom of choice’ (2009, p. 99). Change was also difficult to achieve, as these authors point out, for the leave policies have been part of the social packages in a tripartite agreement between the government, central employers and employees’ organizations. Therefore, the role of the Parliament was more passive.

Explaining path departure in the societal context of Germany

In this section I analyse how it is possible to explain path-departure in the development of family policies in Germany.

Some authors have argued that party policies play a main role to explain why paradigm change can take place in family policies of national welfare states and why it happened particularly in the specific situation in Germany (Bothfeld 2005; Korthouwer 2010; Leitner 2010; Morgan and Zippel 2003; Soss and Schram 2007). Leitner (2010) has conducted an elaborated analyses for the development of family policies in Germany. She found that the gender and family models promoted by the governing parties shaped policy development. In these parties, they were often contested and changed with more general social change. I argue that it would also be useful to analyse how the cultural orientations have changed more generally in the societal context in which the development of family policies is embedded (see also Maetzke and Ostner 2010). Other authors explain such change with the implementation of the directives of the European Union (Haas 2003). Such factors clearly can contribute to explaining such change. However, parties and actors who have supported the aim of gender equality have since a longer time existed in the political landscape in Germany. But for a long time, they only had little options to influence family policies. And, even if the adaptation to EU standards played a role for change in family policies in several European welfare states, it was not an important issue in the debate about the new family policy in the middle of the 2000s (Henninger et al. 2009).

I suggest to analyze the interaction of different dimensions of change in the societal context of family policy development, and to distinguish different time dimensions of the development path.

a) Explanation by the long-term erosion of the German path in societal context

First, I will analyse how far tensions that have developed in the long run between the conservative family policies and the societal context in Germany have led to an erosion of the previous development path of family policies.

In West Germany the housewife marriage was the main cultural basis of the family in the 1950s and 1960s. This model is based on the premise of a fundamental separation of the ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres, and a corollary location for both genders: the husband's proper work is in the ‘public’ sphere, while the housewife is responsible for the private household and childcare; her financial security exists on the basis of his income. This model is linked with the cultural construction of ‘childhood’, according to which children
need special care and comprehensive individual tutelage of the mother in the private household. In the further course of the postwar period the West German society became increasingly more democratic and liberal. The great extension of places at Universities at the beginning of the 1970s contributed to the acceleration of change as a result of which individual freedom within society, also for women, increased significantly. These processes caused an intensification of the contradiction between the general notion of equality of the citizen on the one hand, and the construction of actual inequality in the ideal of the male breadwinner/female care family on the other. On this ground, social actors like the new founded feminist movements initiated a new public discourse about gender inequality and justice. As a consequence, women increasingly began to question the housewife arrangement at the level of everyday life. In their life plans gainful employment increasingly received an independent status besides the family (Pfau-Effinger, 2004). Since then, a fundamental cultural transformation has taken place which exhibited a relatively high dynamic. The old housewife model of the male breadwinner family was increasingly replaced by the ‘male-breadwinner/female part-time care model’. This type rests essentially on the vision of full integration of women and men into paid economic activity. At the same time however, it presupposes that women as mothers may interrupt their economic activity for a few years, after which they combine employment and responsibility for childcare through part-time work, until their children are no longer considered requiring particular care. The idea is that the mother should be employed, but also that ‘private’ childhood should still play an important role in family life (Pfau-Effinger, 2005a). As a consequence, a development started in which women increasingly participated in the labor market.

The cultural development in West Germany has so far not fundamentally questioned the conservative family policy of the German government. However, one should consider that after unification, welfare state policies at the Federal and the local level in East Germany have continuously supported women’s employment on the basis of a gender equality model, which date back to the cultural and institutional traditions that developed in the former GDR (Rosenberg, 2004). This persistence of a different path in family policy in East Germany was mainly also a reaction to the continuity in the dominance of a cultural tradition in the East German population that is based on a dual breadwinner/state care family model (Hummelsheim and Hirschle, 2008; Pfau-Effinger, 2011). It is plausible to assume that the fact that the Neue Länder had already acted as forerunner with regard to a new type of family policy, and the dominant cultural orientation of the people in East Germany towards a dual breadwinner/public care model have inspired policymakers in the Government to introduce these new policies.

It could also be assumed that EU policies towards family and employment and the cultural values that they have transported contribute to the explanation of path departure. Since the late 1990s, the EU has introduced a new international discourse on the ‘Social Investment

---

7 Norris and Inglehard (2004) argued that the switch from an industrial to a knowledge society made work more attractive for women and was a main reason why women increasingly participated in employment. However, in Germany, women started to extend their orientation towards employment in the early 1970s, during the first labor market crisis after the Federal Republic of Germany was founded. Pfau-Effinger (2004) has shown that the cultural shift towards new ideas about gender equality among women in Germany historically took place earlier than change in the educational and economic system towards an extension of more attractive jobs for skilled professionals.
State’, in which ideas about family policies were linked with the economic performance of European societies (Jenson and Saint-Martin, 2006). According to the main argument, the investment in public education of pre-school children of all age groups is rational, since it is an investment in human capital of children which contributes to the position of a society in the international economic competition. Also, it is argued that this measure contributes to the extension of women’s labour force participation and also in this regard improves the relative position of a country in the international economic competition. However, this discourse already emerged in the 1990s at EU level.

b) Explanation of path departure in the specific historical situation of the middle of the 2000s

The factors mentioned above can provide an explanation why the development path of family policies in Germany was de-stabilized in the long run. They do not explain why path departure took place at the specific point of time in the middle of the 2000s, when a grand coalition was in office. Many people had expected that the time in which the red-green Government was in office, around the turn of the Century, was as a ‘critical juncture’ for a fundamental change in family policies. However, this government did not break with the conservative family policy. A main reason why is that the feminist parts of the left wing parties were relatively weak and fragmented. Concepts about family policies were contested among feminists, particularly also in relation to the role of parental leave for gender equality. As a consequence, it was possible for the elites of both parties to largely ignore this issue during the time of the red-green government.

A main factor which explains why the conservative policymakers von der Leyen as Minister of Family Affairs and Chancellor Merkel later successfully initiated a path break in family policies was that they re-framed the discourse about family policies. They embedded the legitimation of the new legislation into the discourse about the social investment state and a demographic discourse (Henninger et al., 2008). Since both discourses disconnected government support of family policies to a substantial part from the discourse about gender equality, it was possible that change in family policies towards the promotion of women’s employment and public childcare was also to a large extent supported by the conservative parties. Even if the EU policies did not directly contribute to the policy shift, they thus had an indirect impact through the ideas that were transmitted in the discourse about the ‘social investment state’.

The interplay between these different factors seems to be part of the mechanism through with the path departure in united Germany happened. It should be mentioned that internal opposition by conservative Christian democratic politicians with traditional family orientations has remained. However, it was not strong enough to question the new path in family policies of the German Government (Korthouver, 2010).

**Conclusion**

In this paper I have compared path dependence of family policies in Finland and path departure of family policies in Germany. I have argued that the concept of path dependence of historical institutionalism needs a more elaborated concept about the societal context in which path dependent development of institutions and path departure is
embedded. I suggested to use a theoretical approach according to which the probability of path departure increases in a situation in which the path has been eroded by tensions at in the institutional, cultural and social surrounding, and in which particular groups of social actors are able to mobilize power for change of the dominant paradigm. This also means that two different time dimensions are important to explain path departure: its development in the long-run and its development in the direct situation when it left the old path.

I have introduced a theoretical framework for comparative analyses of development paths in family policies. My argument was that the explanatory power of the concept of ‘familiization/de-familiization’ is limited, since it does not consider the different dimensions of family policies, and its use can lead to a misinterpretation of specific features of family policies. Instead, I have suggested an approach which distinguishes three different types of family policies on the basis of four different dimensions for comparative analyses. If a paradigm shift takes place in family policies from one of these family models to a different one, I define this as path departure.

As a result of the comparative analysis of the development paths of family policies in Germany and Finland, it turns out that in Finland, family policy since the period between the 1960s and 1980s was directed towards a multi-option model of a gender equalising policy, which was strengthened in its gender equality perspective during this development. At the same time also a ‘conservative’ element was introduced in the 1980s and has survived until today, which is based on a cash-for-care system and does not support gender equality. These policies were in a relatively coherent way embedded into the cultural, institutional and socio structural context of Finnish society, and they were supported by powerful actors. Thus, the development path of family policies remained path dependent even during 1990s and after 2000.

In Germany, the development was since the 1980s dominated by a family policy that was characterised by the support of women’s employment in a male breadwinner context. In the middle of the 2000s, the government left this path towards a multi-option model of a gender equalising policy.

For an explanation why path departure was possible in Germany, I showed that tensions have existed since a longer time in the German context, since the dominant cultural family model that was the main basis for the conservative family policy of the German state, was challenged by a different cultural family model in East Germany, which was more based on the idea of gender equality and in this regard also more ‘modern’ and which was supported by the family policies of the ‘Neue Laender’. Also, EU policies likewise supported a more gender egalitarian type of family policies.

Nevertheless, these factors do not explain why path departure took place in the specific situation in the middle of the 2000s. The main situation which had the features of a ‘critical juncture’ already had existed around the turn of the Century, when a red-green government took up office. During that period, family policies did not change. A main reason is that those actors who were willing to introduce a path break in family policies were too weak to introduce a paradigm shift.

The shift in the main paradigm on which family policies were based took place in the concrete situation of the middle of the 2000s mainly, instead. Two main factors contribute to the explanation why the paradigm change in family policies was introduced in this
specific situation. First, two conservative female policymakers with an action orientation to the cultural value of gender equality were in power, the Chancellor and the Minister for Family Affairs. They acted in a grand coalition of the Social Democratic and the Conservative Parties. And secondly, these actors successfully disconnected the discourse about the necessity for a policy change from the gender equality discourse and therefore got the support of their conservative parties for the policy shift.

I would like to thank Hana Haskova and Steven Saxonberg for their very helpful and inspiring comments on an earlier version of this article.

References


Table 1: The typology of family policies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1) Support of women’s employment in a male breadwinner context</th>
<th>(2) Support of gender equality on the basis of comprehensive public day care</th>
<th>(3) Multi-option type of gender equalising family policies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public childcare provision and social rights to get care</td>
<td>High*</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children 3-6</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children below 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The option to act as financially autonomous family carer during family leave</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particular promotion of generously paid family leave for men</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Steven Saxonberg (2011) has analyzed the historical reason why many European welfare states make a distinction between childcare for children over three years and under three years, using a theoretical approach on the basis of historical institutionalism.