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Research on political actions and claims by women’s movements and other NGOs in childcare and parental leave issues in Norway and Finland since the 1960s

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1. Introduction

This report is a review of research on political actions and claims by women’s movements and other gender-related organisations in respect of childcare and parental leave issues in Finland and Norway since the 1960s. In the term “women’s movements” we include feminist and traditional independent women’s movements, as well as women organising within political parties. By “gender-related” organisations we refer to, for example, male organising in gender equality issues, particularly in issues around men’s caring rights, as well as gay/lesbian organising in family and childcare issues. In addition to the women’s movement, several other actors have mobilised for better childcare (both in the Nordic countries and elsewhere), including parents’ groups, professionals (e.g., pedagogues) and a broad range of voluntary associations. The motives for these actors have varied, encompassing arguments influenced by population and employment policies, pedagogy, social equality and equal opportunities of women and men (Lister et al. 2007: 110). Although gender equality is our main concern, we will relate also to the other motives when it is appropriate.

In this introduction we briefly outline the historical background and similarities and differences between Finland and Norway with respect to the welfare state development and the political landscape shaping women’s organisations and movements. The main part of the report (Chapters 2-6) is structured around the most significant features of each of the decades from the 1960s to the 2000s concerning women’s movements’ demands and actions in childcare and parental leave issues.

In the twentieth century women’s movements played a significant role in the nation-building project in the two countries. After being a part of Sweden from the thirteenth century until 1808 and thereafter an autonomous territory under the Russian Czar, Finland declared independence in 1917. Norway was in a union with Denmark from 1450 to 1814, and then with Sweden until 1905. Women were active participators in struggles for national independence as well as in developing democracy, and the countries were among the first in the world to implement women’s suffrage; Finland in 1906 and Norway in 1913. However, it took a long time before women entered governmental positions, and typically social policy, including childcare, was the main arena of their activity.
In the post-WW2 period, the Nordic societies started to develop a societal model based on universal welfare provision and a social legislation founded on principles of solidarity and equality. Finland and Norway are often seen as belonging to the same Nordic welfare regime where “gender equality” has been a governing idea during the last couple of decades. Women’s participation is high in both the labour market and in the political sphere, as well as in higher education. The political system has supported women’s representation in politics, and welfare arrangements for women (parents) with children are well developed.

Yet, the notion of a common Nordic welfare state “model” or “regime” needs qualification when reproduction and family policies are at issue, especially when a historical approach is used. Feminist welfare state research has shown interesting differences within “Norden” with respect to the strength of the male breadwinner norm. For example, a single-earner model centred on a male primary breadwinner with the wife as a homemaker or a part-time employee, has been much more common in Norway than in Finland. Until recently, the provision of publicly funded daycare, particularly for the youngest children, was notably lower in Norway than elsewhere in the Nordic region (e.g., Leira 2002). The Nordic welfare state is a very recent historical product in Finland. The country was also a late starter as far as industrial development is concerned. It was not until the 1960s that Finland experienced a radical modernisation leap, along with economic prosperity. It was only then that universal welfare provision finally superseded poor relief. Both the poor agrarian Finland and the more affluent industrial Finland have needed the labour force of women. In terms of women’s participation in the labour market (and particularly as full-time employees), Finnish women were ahead of women in the other Nordic countries until quite recently (e.g., Haavio-Mannila 1968; Rantalaiho, L. 1994).

Since the 1960s and the 1970s, several welfare reforms within the field of family policy were carried out approximately simultaneously in Finland and Norway. However, this report will show that despite the similarities, there have been significant differences between the countries’ welfare and childcare policies. These differences are related to heterogeneous historical, political, and economical conditions in the two countries. Briefly, the Finnish past can be summarised as more dramatic than the Norwegian, with more wars and greater poverty. During WW2 many men died in battle against the Soviet Union and in the after war period Finland’s war indemnity to its mammoth neighbour necessitated the participation of
women in the workforce, which resulted in a higher share of women in the labour force than in any other Western country. In the same period the Norwegian economy was rapidly growing and, despite the lack of labour force, a large majority of married women remained outside waged work. In addition to the almost total lack of childcare facilities, the particularly strong housewife ideal in Norway is pointed to as an explanation for this. Although Finland remained a predominantly rural society well into the 1970s, the pace of modernisation was rapid. It coincided with the 1973 oil crisis and the migration of hundreds of thousands of Finns to Sweden in search of work. The Norwegian economy increased, not least after oil reserves were found in the North Sea around 1970. The growing industrialisation of Norway stimulated the import of workers from developing countries; Pakistan, Turkey and Morocco in particular.

The economic crisis of the early 1990s hit Finland far more severely than in Norway. In Finland the difficult economic situation led to cuts in welfare policy provisions, and the level of family policy benefits decreased. An additional difference that most likely has influenced childcare policy concerns the differences in the roles of, and the division of work between the state and the municipalities. In Finland the state has more directly required and even forced the municipalities to take responsibility for daycare services. In Norway the state has practiced a decentralised daycare policy model that gives municipalities a more autonomous role in deciding over care services. The development of the daycare sector has been slower in Norway than in Finland. It has also been more common for daycare services to be run by private entrepreneurs in Norway than in Finland and the prices charged for services have been higher in Norway, too.

Initially, maternity leaves developed slowly in both countries. Parental leave schemes in each country developed considerably during the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1993, Norway established a father’s quota, a leave of four weeks reserved for fathers (as of 1.7.2009, the quota is ten weeks). In Finland a corresponding parental leave reform was introduced ten years later and the take-up of the leave by fathers is considerably lower than in Norway.

In the Nordic countries, women were mobilised into both the new social movements and the traditional women’s organisations in the 1960s and the 1970s. The spectre of a broad mobilisation of women is thus extended in the form of a continuum, ranging from autonomous actions groups to formal and quasi-state
organisations. Internationally speaking, the Nordic countries are characterised by a relatively weak “new” women’s movement. Yet, variations within the Nordic region are large. In its autonomous and radical form, the movement was most widely spread in Denmark and weakest in Finland, with the movement in Norway and Sweden occupying a middle position. These differences have been explained, for example, by reference to the role of the New Left and the importance of the party-political women’s organisations in acting as channels for women’s claims and demands. In Finland, the new feminist movement was established much later than elsewhere in the Nordic region and the role of radical feminism was especially modest. The party-political women’s federations have been stronger and more independent in Finland than corresponding organisations in Norway. Finnish women’s mobilisation has been directed primarily into the established political organisations rather than into social movements (Bergman 1999).

The different character of the women’s movements in Finland and Norway has shaped their political actions and demands in respect of issues concerning childcare. Generally speaking the Finnish women’s movement has been more integrated within the state and has worked for reforms from within institutions, whereas a larger part of the Norwegian women’s movement has been autonomous, often with a critical attitude towards the state, which has also comprised direct actions in matters regarding childcare policy. The debates on the child homecare allowance, a cash benefit that families with small children receive if they do not make use of public daycare services, illustrates the different political cultures in the two countries. While support for the homecare of children was introduced as part of a political compromise in Finland during the 1980s, in Norway a corresponding reform in 1998 broke a long period of consensus in childcare policy and sparked disputes that still continue.

The research literature reviewed
Research that exclusively examines political actions and claims by women’s movements and other gender-conscious organisations in respect of childcare and parental leave issues is modest in both Finland and Norway. In the relatively extensive research literature dealing with social politics, grass roots movements’ actions hold a minor place. The literature basically has a top-down perspective, and focuses mostly on the effects of welfare arrangements and how different welfare regimes differ from one another. In fact, welfare state research has been criticised for
ignoring the historical background to, and causes of, the different developmental patterns of welfare state regimes and for underestimating the significance of the role of grass roots movements in the making of welfare policies (Berven & Selle 2001: 24). Even feminist welfare state researchers have underplayed the impact of women’s movements’ actions and organising (cf. Bergman 2004: 218; Tyyskä 1995).

The literature reviewed in this report either directly examines women’s movements’ activism in respect of issues such as childcare policy, or indirectly pays attention to this activism when studying childcare policy. We have aimed to keep strictly to the research literature, but in order to account for ongoing debates it has been necessary for us in places to refer to newspapers and other publications.

Some relevant research on women’s movements is available, but research on men’s movements’ or ethnic minority organisations’ agency in this matter is scarce. A plausible reason for this could be that these groups have not engaged in these issues to a very high extent in Norway and Finland. Ethnic minorities have been more active e.g. in questions concerning language education in schools and in daycare institutions. However, these matters are beyond the research questions of WP2, as is fathers’ mobilising for their parenthood rights after divorce. In the fieldwork of Workpackage 2 in FEMCIT, we will look closer into the issue of claims and actions by men’s groups and ethnic minorities in childcare and parental leave policies.

Women’s movements in Finland and Norway
The women’s movement cannot be conceptualised solely as the sum of its organisations (Bergman 2002: 30), but also includes people who identify with the movement’s discourse and interpretation of the world. Yet, this report will for pragmatic reasons focus on organisations and identify the differences between them on issues concerning childcare and parental leave.

Within earlier Nordic feminist research women’s organisations have been classified as either oriented towards the struggle for the equal value of men and women, while accepting the complementary role of women as carers and men as breadwinners; as working for equal rights between women and men in employment and political life; or as fighting for women’s liberation where women are seen as oppressed and thus need to liberate themselves by challenging the established gender

1 In this concept we include both “old” minorities, such as the Sami and the Roma, and “new” minorities, i.e. migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.
order (Dahlerup & Gulli 1985: 11; Tyyskä 1995; Wærness 1995: 224-225). Other ways of categorising feminisms have also been used, e.g. radical, socialist or liberal feminism; equality or difference feminism, etc. However, we consider the notions “equal value”, “equal rights” and “women’s liberation” as useful analytical tools, particularly when studying distinctive views of childcare amongst different parts of the broad women’s movement in a historical perspective.

In our study, the Norwegian Women’s Health Association (Norske Kvinner Sanitetsforening, NKS), the Norwegian Housewives’ Association (Norges Husmorforbund), and the two Finnish organisations for rural women (the Finnish language Marttaliitto; the Swedish language Marthaförbundet) are examples of organisations that can be placed in the equal value category. The equal rights organisations typically emerged during the struggles for women’s suffrage around 1900, and many of them still exist today: the Norwegian Women’s Rights Association (Norsk Kvinnesaksforening, NKF) and the Finnish Women’s Union (Naisasialiitto Unioni – Kvinnosaksförbundet Unionen) are typical examples. A Finnish speciality is the “sex-role movement” Association 9 (Yhdistys 9 – Förening 9), which in the 1960s organised highly educated women and also some men in pursuit of gender equality and public childcare.2 Among the women’s liberation groups emerging in Norway from the 1970s onwards one can mention the New Feminists (Nyfeministene, 1970), the Women’s Front (Kvinnefronten, 1972), Bread and Roses (Brød og Roser, 1976), and later the Feminist group Ottar (Kvinnegruppen Ottar, 1991). Of these only the Women’s Front and Ottar still exist. In Finland The Marxist-Feminists (Marxist-Feministerna) and The Old Red Women (Rödkäringarna) started in 1973 (independently, without knowing about each other) and together with two other groups formed the network The Feminists (Feministit – Feministerna) in 1976 (Bergman 2002: 146).

Of course, not all women’s organisations fit this model exactly, and they can also change over time in ideological and political respects. Both in Finland and in Norway equal status oriented organisations such as the Women’s Union in Finland and the Norwegian Women’s Rights Association were radicalised during the 1970s and adopted more feminist and liberation oriented views on society and its gender

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2 Both the Finnish and the Swedish names for the organisations are given here. Although Finnish is the majority language in Finland, and only 6 per cent as of today speak Swedish as their mother tongue, several organisations are officially bilingual.
order. In Finland the distinctions between the equality/liberation block of the left-wing and liberal party-political women’s organisations and the equal value block of agrarian and right-wing women’s organisations were obvious in the 1960s and 1970s, but have become blurred and less intense since the 1980s (Tyyskä 1995). Women organising within the Norwegian Labour Party traditionally combined an equal value gender ideology with a socialist view. However, since the mid-1960s they have increasingly shifted over to principles of equal status, and even of women’s liberation (Seip 1990: 144-145; Lønnå 2000: 117-119).

Eduards, Halsaa and Skjeie (1985: 157) have added a harmony-conflict dimension to their analysis of women’s organisations in the Nordic countries. This perspective is concerned with the view of the women’s cause as either a human cause, or as conflicts of interests between men and women. The equal value oriented traditional women’s organisations typically have a harmonious view of gender relationships, whereas the women’s liberation groups often see these relations as conflictual.

In a historical perspective, the large majority of women’s organisations in Norway and Finland have been equal value oriented, and have had the traditional female sphere as a base for their work. At the beginning of the 1980s, for instance, there were 45 women’s organisations in Norway, with a total of about 550,000 members. Only seven of these organisations dealt with purely “political” matters (Hernes 1982: 48). Equal rights and women’s liberation organisations have always constituted a minority of the broad movement, and in the “top year” of 1974, it was estimated that the number of members in the “new women’s movement” in Norway was only 5,000 (Haukaa 1982: 93). In Finland, the number of member organisations of the equal value oriented National Council of Women’s Organisations (Naisjärjestöjen keskusliitto-Kvinnoorganisationernas Centralförbund, NKL) grew from 31 to 51, and the membership of these organisations grew from 200,000 to 450,000 during the years following WWII (Tyyskä 1995: 195; cf. Dahlerup & Gulli 1985: 14). The women’s liberation movement also remained marginal in Finland. In

3 According to Haukaa (1982: 93) these 5,000 were active members. As a social movement the women's liberation movement of the 1970s was not restricted to the members of its organisations. Runa Haukaa (ibid) explains the decline of the number of members of the women’s liberation organisations after 1974 by the conflicts in the wake of the Marxist-Leninists’ increasing influence over the Women’s Front, and the growing lesbian dominance within the New Feminists. Many women resigned from the organisations, but found their way into other institutions where they carried out other forms of activism.
1976 the Feminists, an “umbrella” for feminist groups, had 19 member groups, with less than 170 members in total (Jallinoja 1983: 200). The emerging new feminist movement in Finland was also visible in the old Women’s Union that in the mid-1970s went through a generation shift and a radicalisation. The membership of the Union grew rapidly, from 216 in 1974 to 1357 in 1981 (ibid).

Norwegian researchers have claimed that viewing equal value oriented organisations as apolitical and traditionalist undermines the social and political impact of these organisations, especially when it comes to issues that have not been on male politicians’ list of priorities and which concern women’s lives (Wollebæk & Selle 2001: 219; Hernes 1982: 74). Hence, when it comes to practical politics, rather than concentrating on the conflicting ideologies between women’s organisations, it is better to view the different ways of working as indicative of a division of labour. The alliances between the establishment and autonomous women’s movements are typical for the Nordic model of democracy, and characteristic for countries where women’s participation in politics has been at a relatively high level, Bergman (2004) has suggested. Equal status and women’s liberation oriented organisations have influenced the political agenda through direct action, lobbying and defining issues, while “establishment” women have brought the issues into the institutions (Hernes 1987). Holli (2002; 2006) argues that both outside pressure and agenda setting, as well as activities from within political and formal structures are needed to impact the course of public policy. In both countries women in trade unions and political parties have played a key role in bringing childcare and other gender-related issues onto the political agenda. However, the party-political women’s organisations have been stronger and have played a more independent role in Finland than in Norway, and they have to a larger extent collaborated across party lines (Dahlerup & Gulli 1985: 32; Tyyskä 1995). Kuusipalo (1990; see also Jallinoja 1983; Tyyskä 1995) argues that because there was no strong grass roots feminist movement in Finland in the 1970s, feminist ideas had to some degree to fertilise the political culture from within. Yet, initiatives have also come “from outside” the political apparatus (Holli 2002).

In Norway the Labour women were traditionally highly sceptical of cooperation with “bourgeois” women’s organisations outside the labour movement, but during the 1970s and 1980s cooperation between women across party lines

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4 While there is some research in Finland on trade union women’s activities in childcare policies (Tyyskä 1995), research in Norway on this issue is more modest.
became more common. Women cooperated against pornography and for the implementation of equal pay between women and men. They also participated in actions to increase women’s political representation, to have more daycare institutions, and in support of safe playgrounds and longer parental leave schemes (Halvorsen 1994; Langengen 2001). In Finland a new trend to establish and institutionalise women’s cooperative activities across party and organisational line started in the late 1980s, and was first apparent in the establishment of a co-operation forum for women’s associations NYTKIS (Coalition of Finnish Women’s Associations) in 1988 (Holli 2006: 138, see also Bergman 1999).

State responsibility for childcare – the impact of women’s movements

Researchers have pointed out how the Norwegian welfare state developed at the same pace as the sector of voluntary organisations; particularly those humanitarian organisations dominated by women (Seip 1994; Rieber-Mohn 1994; Bjarnar 1995; Berven & Selle 2001; Gulbrandsen 2007). Unlike Finland, where the state has been more active in encouraging the municipalities to establish daycare institutions, the Norwegian state has “left” much of the responsibility for childcare to private actors and voluntary organisations. An example of this kind of organisation is the Norwegian Women’s Public Health Association (NKS), which through the twentieth century ran a large part of the care institutions in Norway. Originally established to educate women in the provision of medical services in the eventuality that Sweden were to attack Norway once it declared independence, the association organised thousands of women in volunteer care work for the sick, the convalescents, the elderly and children (Berven & Selle 2001; Bjarnar 1995). By 1962 NKS organised one fifth of Norwegian women (260,000) between 15 and 70 years of age. In close cooperation with the state, NKS carried out (and still does) care work in the intersection between the public (paid) and the private (unpaid) sphere, and has worked “behind the scenes” to resolve social problems, even political demands have been formulated when necessary (Bjarnar 1995: 156).

The fact that the Norwegian state has relied on women’s voluntary (unpaid) work in the development of care institutions in the welfare state project, not only

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5 Anneli Anttonen and Jorma Sipilä (1996) distinguish between Finland and Norway in their comparative analysis of care services in welfare states, and base their view on the extension of public services within childcare and care of the elderly, which they claim were on a higher level in Finland than in Norway.
makes NKS a unique association internationally (Berven & Selle 2001: 35), it also supports the claim that Norway differs from the other Nordic welfare regimes in which the state traditionally has played a more active role in the development of care institutions. Until recently, daycare institutions have not, unlike other sectors, been integrated into the public management of the universal welfare state in Norway (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 54). Several researchers have claimed that the development of full-time daycare institutions since 1970 took place as a result of pressure from women’s movements (Rieber-Mohn 1994; Bergman 2004; Gulbrandsen 2007). This pressure has come from two directions; from the equal value oriented organisations like NKS and the Housewives’ Association that built and ran the majority of the kindergartens in Norway up until the 1980s, and from the women’s liberation movement and the equal status oriented women’s organisations that demanded and fought for more, better and cheaper kindergartens (Bjarnar 1995). Also in Finland voluntary organisations and individual actors organised childcare activities in the late nineteenth century and during the first decades of the twentieth century. These activities were mainly undertaken for philanthropic reasons, and later on many of the early institutions developed as children’s homes (Eskola 1973; Jallinoja 1976; Rauhala 1996). Gradually the municipalities became more active in the childcare question, under the pressure of the state. In Finland women’s organisations were never engaged in running childcare institutions in a similar way to that found in Norway, and the role of the private daycare service producers has also remained marginal.

Several explanations have been suggested to account for the Norwegian state’s lack of responsibility for the building of daycare institutions. Leira (1994: 55) suggests that the state’s engagement in the upbringing of children is in conflict with the accustomed division of labour between the state and the family, and that there has been a widespread resistance to state intervention in matters that are seen as belonging to the private (that is mothers’) sphere. The high marriage rate in Norway in the post-war period and the – in a Nordic perspective – exceptionally low employment rate for

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6 State subsidies started in 1917, and the child welfare act was reformed in 1936 to define the role of the municipalities and to develop some standards for services in order to control the quality of care (e.g. Jallinoja 1976; Rauhala 1996).

7 Over 90 per cent of all daycare services are “purchased” through municipalities (Stakes 2006).

8 According to Leira (1994: 55) there have in general been more conflicts about women-related reforms than other welfare reforms in Norway. Examples include the abortion act, the daycare act and the equal status act.
married women, are other explanations for the state’s low commitment to childcare. Ideological and cultural dimensions need to be added to this picture; as several researchers have pointed out the housewife ideal was particularly strong in Norway in the inter- and post-war periods (Lønnå 1996: 159). Although the ideal that a good mother should be a housewife was also widespread in Finland, many women with small children were obliged to work for economic reasons (cf. Auvinen 1968).

By leaving responsibility for childcare to private actors the state has also been seen as promoting the traditionally strong position of the voluntary organisations in Norwegian society. The extensive cooperation between the voluntary sector and the state in the nation building process after independence from Sweden in 1905 has been explained by the historical lack of strong local elites (such as the nobility) that could have hindered local initiatives (Berven & Selle 2001: 13). Whereas in many other countries organisational life is often split up into two; one at the local level and the other at national level, Norwegian grassroots organisations have traditionally been based on democratic membership of local organisations, which are tied together hierarchically at the national level. This democratic structure, which is also valid for Finland, has offered political opportunities for women’s organisations, even when they have criticised the state, it has been argued (Berven & Selle 2001: 30).

Hernes (1982: 50) on the other hand, has pointed out women’s movements’ lack of impact on public politics, and exclusion from arenas where economic and political decisions are taken. She identifies five forms of power which could be relevant for both Norwegian and Finnish organisations: that the organisations 1) influence public priorities; 2) put issues that formerly were not seen as “political” on the political agenda; 3) influence public opinion; 4) define themselves as watchdogs in respect of the public sector; or 5) get representative status in public committees and as members of courts of hearings (høringsinstans) (Hernes 1982: 61). All these forms of power depend on resources and legitimacy, which again in turn influences the impact the organisations have (cf. Holli 2006). In Norway, the most frequent form of contact between the organisations and the state has been through the court of hearings (and not through representation). Hernes (1982: 51) argues that the traditional women’s organisations’ lack of power is due to them being too decent, fearing to politicise aspects of women’s private lives; and that class antagonisms have not been taken into account in relevant political organs. Other feminist scholars claim that traditional women’s organisations’ avoidance of conflicts in favour of adaptation and
their “wish for respectability in a hostile, male-dominated society”, are consequences of the ideological opposition they have encountered (Dahlerup & Gulli 1985: 13). According to Hernes (1982: 51) women’s organisations have contributed to, supported, and supplemented the welfare state without threatening and competing with it. However, the question as to whether they have been recognised for their efforts to establish welfare policy, or not, is a subject for discussion (e.g. Hernes 1987; Bjarnar 1995). In a Finnish context, Liisa Rantalaiho (1994, see also Anttonen 1997) argues (from a perspective that recognises women as actors with power) that women chose a difference-based strategy that focused on issues close to women (care, health, education) and separated them from men. In this way they succeeded in creating a their “own space” within civil society and the state, and gained some power in respect of welfare policy.

Outline of the report
Childcare and parental leave policies have gone through profound changes since the 1960s in both Finland and Norway. So have the women’s movements, their alliances, demands, and strategies. In the following we will examine the characteristic traits of each of the decades with respect to claims and demands regarding childcare and parental leave issues expressed by women’s movements and other gender-based organisations. In the research literature that our report is based upon, daycare politics seems to be much more in focus than parental leave policies. Claims-making for better parental leave schemes is not examined from a “movement perspective” to the same extent as daycare is. A plausible explanation for this state of affairs is that the gradual development of parental leave has never been an object of conflict to the same extent as public daycare has been.

In Chapter Two we will see how neither daycare nor parental leave schemes were central on the political agenda in Norway in the 1960s, and that the most eager advocate for nurseries was the Housewives’ Association. The sex-role debate contributed to the changes that the strong housewife ideal underwent and had a profound impact on the ideological development of the Labour women’s movement. In Finland this debate resulted in the establishment of an influential sex-role movement, Association 9, in 1966. The association challenged both women and men’s role in society and considered childcare to be one of the most central issues for changing the sex roles.
In Chapter Three the focus is on the emerging “new” autonomous women’s liberation movement of the 1970s in Norway and its demands and actions in respect of daycare institutions, extended parental leave schemes, and questions concerning fathers’ role in the family. This kind of radical grass roots organising was considerably weaker in Finland. Instead similar discussions were carried out within the institutions. The earlier debates resulted in the implementation of daycare acts in 1973 in Finland and in 1975 in Norway, and to modest extensions of parental leave schemes.

Chapter Four deals with the relative political consensus over increasing the parental leave scheme in Norway during the 1980s. We will examine how the Labour “women’s government”, consisting of 40 per cent women, including prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, established the Section on Men’s Role in 1987, which in 1991 suggested a “fathers’ quota” to be introduced into the parental leave scheme in order to improve the relationship between men and their children, a proposal which was implemented in 1993. In both countries parental leave schemes were extended gradually. In the mid-1980s the Finnish welfare state’s dual model of childcare policy was established as a compromise: Families with children under three years of age were entitled to either public daycare services or homecare allowances, depending on their own preferences. Unlike in Norway, the Finnish municipalities were obliged to arrange daycare services.

Chapter Five shows how the relative consensus on the childcare policy in Norway in the 1990s was interrupted by the establishment of a cash benefit scheme similar to that in Finland. In Finland the deep economic recession of the early 1990s placed many families with children in a difficult situation as unemployment rates were rising sharply at the same time as cuts were being made in family policy benefits and allowances. In the Finnish parliament women MPs established an informal parliamentary network in 1991 that played an important role in the decision to extend the daycare policy in the middle of the economic recession. In both countries reforms were made in order to increase fathers’ parental leave rights.

Chapter Six briefly examines the core issues of the first decade of the 2000s. In both countries this period can be characterised as a decade of fatherhood related childcare policy. Also the rights of lesbian and homosexual parents have become a matter of public welfare policy. A new challenge concerns the changes that follow increased immigration. The emphasis on the well-being and citizenship rights of
children has become stronger in the context of childcare policy in both countries (e.g., the increasing focus on the time squeeze and the need for more “family time”). Today the role of gender-based activism in childcare policies is rather unclear – some of the leading feminist researchers in the field are, however, critical of the current policy development, and have suggested alternative policy models.
2. The 1960s

Norway: Housewives, kindergartens and sex roles

In 1960, 55 per cent of all women in Norway older than 15 years of age worked at home, and only 9.5 per cent of married women were employed (Lønnå 1996: 159). In 1960, 55 per cent of all women in Norway older than 15 years of age worked at home, and only 9.5 per cent of married women were employed (Lønnå 1996: 159). Women’s marriage rate was extremely high, with 80 per cent of women between 25 and 29 years of age being married in 1960. Although the employment rate among married women increased to 23 per cent by 1970 (partly due to the fact that farmers’ wives were not counted as employees before this year), the ideological and moral stress on the ideal of decent women as a housewife, busy creating a happy family, continued throughout the 1960s. Daycare institutions and part-time kindergartens were seen as something meant for the deprived or the privileged respectively. The view that a husband should be able to earn enough so that he could allow his wife stay at home was still dominant in the Labour Party, and women’s increasing participation in the labour market was seen as a socio-political problem. There was a widespread opinion that sending children to daycare institutions was a sign of some kind of maltreatment (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 70).

In the 1960s, daycare institutions, both part-time and full-time, were part of the Child Protection Office (Barnevernet), and hence under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs. Daycare was seen as one of three types of child protection institutions, along with orphanages and children’s holiday camps. In 1963, only 259 daycare institutions existed in Norway (most of them private part-time kindergartens), 20 fewer than there were orphanages. Less than 2 per cent of pre-school children had a place in any kind of daycare institution (Gulbrandsen 2007: 51-52).

Curiously, one of the most eager advocates of daycare in the 1960s was the Housewives’ Association. Notably not as full-time institutions to facilitate mothers’ waged work, but as philanthropic Fröbel inspired pedagogical part-time kindergartens. In 1946, the Committee for the Housewives’ Kindergartens (Komiteen

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9 By comparison 25.9 per cent of the married women in Finland were employed in 1960, whereas 53 per cent were employed in 1970 (Arnhild Skrede: “Gifte kvinner i arbeidslivet”, Lars Alldén, Natalie R. Ramsoy and Mariken Vaa: Det norske samfunn (1986), p. 145).


11 Of the 259 daycare institutions in 1963, 16 per cent were run by the local municipalities, 16 per cent by religious organisations, 11 per cent by humanitarian organisations (such as the Red Cross and the NKS), and the rest by Housewives’ associations (Knutsen 1991: 181).
for husmødrenes barnehager) initiated the Kindergarten Circle (Barnehagekretsen). In addition to the Housewives’ Association, this circle consisted of the Norwegian Women’s Health Association, the Red Cross Children’s help, the kindergarten teachers’ and the district nurses’ trade unions and, according to Knutsen (1991: 179) also the Labour women’s committee. Some of the members of the Kindergarten Circle ran kindergartens, at the same time the network functioned as a union for the teachers in the kindergartens, in addition to work as a pressure group to persuade the authorities to build kindergartens. Once a year between 1946 and 1971 the Committee for the Housewives’ Kindergartens arranged a “Children’s week” in Oslo, where the purpose was to collect money to start new kindergartens. Lotteries, markets, games for children, carnival processions of dressed up children from the kindergartens through the city, an information service, and lectures about the advantages of kindergartens, were arranged to make publicity for the idea of kindergartens and to encourage the building of new ones (Lea 1982: 20).

In 1963, the fiftieth anniversary of women gaining the right to vote was celebrated, and broad discussions about women’s role in society followed. One of the earliest voices against the housewife ideology came from the Women’s Rights Association (Norsk Kvinnesaksforening, NKF). Gender equality and the plight and right of married women to work, had been the governing ideas throughout the history of the association, an idea that historically was often expressed through scepticism about measures for the special protection of women, such as mothers’ leave arrangements, maternity benefits, and even widow’s benefits – views which caused confrontations with the Labour women. Such arrangements would encourage women to be lazy and could decrease their competitiveness on the labour market, the vice president of NKF argued in 1964 (Lønnå 1996: 215-217). Not all the members of NKF agreed with the view that maternity benefits would encourage passiveness. The association’s legendary activist, Margrethe Bonnevie, continuously demanded actions to facilitate women’s participation in paid work, such as the right to six months of maternity leave, child benefits, the building of high quality daycare institutions run by professional educators, the rationalisation and professionalisation of housework, and access to birth control, including the legalising of abortion. Although a reformist politician of the Liberal Party, Bonnevie was inspired by socialists like Alexandra Kollontai and Katti Anker Møller. Apparently it was Bonnevie who indirectly initiated the sex-role debate, when in the early 1950s she requested the sociologists
Erik Grønseth and Harriet Holter to undertake research on women and gender (Lønnå 1996: 194).

The sex-role research claimed that socialisation, and not nature, was determining gender inequality. As the sex roles were interpreted as being socially constructed, they could also be changed politically. Men and women should be seen as individuals rather than gendered beings, and a more equal division of labour should be embedded within the family as well as within the wider society (Bergman 2004: 222). In contrast to Finland, no sex-role organisation was established in Norway, although the debate had a great impact on the established women’s organisations. As a matter of fact, questions concerning the father’s responsibility for childcare had been raised by NKF already in 1953, when the psychologist Åse Gruda Skard held a speech where she proposed a total reorganisation of the family. It was better for the children to have a mother who realised her potential than to have a self-sacrificing mother, she argued (Lønnå 1996: 185-188). Part-time work and kindergartens were not enough – the fathers should take part in housework and childrearing. Gruda Skard was concerned about the power of socialisation and claimed that the education of children should be equal and adapted to the child’s skills, not to its sex. The speech was distributed and used in NKF study circles over the country.

The sex-role debate and other new cultural currents at the beginning of the 1960s, such as the New Left’s critique of traditional authorities, combined with the increasing lack of labour force, had an impact on the “naturalness” of the housewife ideology. Gradually an ideological shift occurred, as trade unions, employers’ organisations, and even the Housewives’ Association wanted to improve the conditions for women’s participation in paid work (Lønnå 1996: 203-204).

The shift in ideology is obvious in the development of the Labour women’s movement, the so-called Women’s Secretariat. Until the mid-1960s the Labour

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12 The Labour women’s movement started as the independent Women’s Association of the Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiets Kvindeforbund) in 1901. When the Labour Party became a member of the COMINTERN (the 3rd International) after the Russian Revolution, one of the directives banned separate women’s organising within the party. This directive was apparently one of the few that was obeyed. In 1923 the Women’s Association of the Labour Party was dissolved, and the Women’s Secretariat was established as one of the party’s agitation bodies. The same year the Labour Party withdrew from COMINTERN, but the Labour Women’s Secretariat failed to regain its former autonomy from the party. Throughout the history of the Labour women’s movement (which includes both the members of the Secretariat and all women members of the party), a controversial question has been whether women’s self-organising has strengthened their position within the party or led to their isolation (Halvorsen 1994: 92-93). In 1992 the Women’s Secretariat was transformed into a “network”, and the regional party bodies and the national annual meeting appointed its steering committee. Many
women’s movement functioned as a sort of housewives’ association, in which there was broad agreement that its particular responsibility were care related social issues. Discussions even took place with a view to participating in voluntary work in order to recruit members among young housewives. As the radical wing despised “bourgeois” charity work and wanted to focus strictly on politics, as care was seen as a public responsibility, this was not approved (Halvorsen 1994: 81-83). The scepticism about cooperating with “bourgeois” organisations applied also to the liberal Women’s Rights Association. The Labour women were eager to emphasise that they were not a “women’s rights” organisation, as they did not work for women’s particular interests, but for the Party. There were few conflicts between women and men in the central board of the party, even though many women were not satisfied with the proportion of women’s representation in the country’s largest party (Halvorsen 1994: 86).

Langengen (2001: 226) has analysed how Labour Woman (Arbeiderkvinnen), the publication of the Labour women’s movement changed during the 1960s from being a traditional housewives’ magazine with cooking recipes etc., into a political mouthpiece where sex roles, justice, democracy, and equal status between men and woman were discussed.

In 1964, the central board of the Labour Party appointed a committee to investigate the position of women in society and to propose measures for future policy making. The committee included, among others, progressive sex-role researchers such as the earlier mentioned Harriet Holter and Åse Gruda Skard, and representatives of the Labour women’s movement. The Prime Minister (and leader of the Labour Party) Einar Gerhardsen led the committee (Langengen 2001: 226). In relation to the committee’s work, Gerhardsen (regarded by many as the Father of the Nation) mentioned “women” in a public speech, supposedly for the first time. He thanked the women for changing Labour from an elitist revolutionary party in the 1920s, to a mass peoples’ party (Seip 1990: 145).

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were disturbed by the fact that the committee was to be elected by delegates (including men) other than the ones it was representing, and saw this as a backlash (Arbeiderhistorie 2001: 2006). Today, the executive committee of the Labour Party appoints the board of the Women’s Network (www.dna.no/dna.no/Om-Arbeiderpartiet/Kvinnenettverket). Since 1992 it has become almost a norm that the leader of the Women’s Network is the same person who is the minister of gender equality and family affairs when the Labour Party is in government.
In 1965, the committee delivered the report “Woman’s place is – where?”, where the lack of proportionality between women’s participation in elections and their actual representation in political bodies was analysed. The report was perhaps not very ambitious, but the goal of “gender equality” was put into Labour’s party programme. Still, the results did not impress the women activists of the party. After the election in 1969, the Labour Party continued the tradition of having one symbolic woman in government (usually dealing with family affairs) (Langengen 2001: 226). Despite the shortage of labour force, little was done to facilitate women’s employment. Part-time jobs had not yet become common; practically no full-time daycare institutions existed, and the parental leave scheme was only 12 weeks in length (Eeg-Henriksen 2005: 73).

Finland: The sex-role movement articulates the idea of mothers as wage-workers

In Finland, institutional children’s daycare had been approached as a divided arrangement since the late 1940s. “Kindergarten” activities, understood as a pedagogical service with an educational function, were meant to be directed to children over three years of age and on a part-time basis. Full-time daycare places again were seen as a service for families in which the mother needed to work for economic reasons. The way of constructing an understanding of the childcare question was also contradictory in other ways. The plans to extend services were framed by a discourse that presented full-time care as something that was not in the best interest of the child, and during the 1950s – the time of the so called “home-cult” – the number of daycare places actually decreased in Finland (Rauhala 1996: 112-114).

The contradictions in developing daycare in Finland in the 1950s included the elements of a crisis that emerged later on in the 1960s, when women’s increased labour market activity and the post-war baby boom created a big demand for childcare facilities. In the 1960s the labour force participation rate of mothers with children under 16 years of age had already increased to 67 per cent, but only 9 per cent of all

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13 The name of the report was a play on words inspired by a popular comic movie at the time, “Woman’s Place”, which dealt with a married couple in which the father chose to stay at home to take care of the household and the children. Even though the wife was the one with the more successful career and the husband managed his role as “househusband” very well, she could not bear the feeling that she was not being a good housewife. As a result, she quit her job and everything returned to “normal”.

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pre-school children from dual-earner families could obtain a place in a crèche or a daycare centre, and approximately another 9 per cent of such children were able to find places in different part-time programmes (Tyyskä 1995: 31). The gap between the availability of formal daycare arrangements and mothers’ labour market activity indicated a high use of private childminders. Daycare services were offered mostly on a part-time basis, and children in full-time care were almost exclusively children from lone parent families or who experienced poor living conditions (Räsänen & Majuri 1968: 81; see also Rauhala 1996; Välimäki 1999). On the other hand, as a consequence of women’s increased wage work, the number of maids had decreased, and the childcare issue also became a problem for more affluent families (Jallinoja 1983). A common perception was that several thousands children were on their own, without proper care (Räsänen & Majuri 1968).

In Finland, women have traditionally had a strong economic role in family households. The European male breadwinner model, which ascribes the role of housewife to the woman, has never prevailed in Finland to the same extent that it has in other Nordic countries. However, it was still the ideological norm even in Finland, particularly in the 1950s, and in the prospect of a strong economic growth in the 1960s, it was considered to be an ideal that had some plausibility in it (Bergqvist et al. 1999). As Riitta Auvinen’s (1968) study shows, both women and men questioned the paid work of women, and especially of mothers of small children (cf. Haavio-Mannila 1968: 184-185). Yet, despite the norm of a male-breadwinner society, mothers’ employment was rising rapidly in Finland throughout the 1960s.

In this context Association 9 was established. Inspired by the sex-role debate in Sweden, it introduced a “new woman”, the mother in paid work, and started to argue for state-organised public daycare as the (only) way to realise women’s labour market participation (Kantola 2006: 49; Jallinoja 1983). Association 9 established a working group in daycare issues, later renamed to an “action group”. Association 9 delivered a report on childcare policy to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in 1968. It used also untraditional methods in order to catch attention. On Mothers’ Day in May 1968 Association 9 arranged a demonstration outside the parliament building demanding more daycare institutions and expressing a strong “no” to mother’s wages (Tyyskä 1995: 93; Rotkirch 1968).

Association 9 broke the relatively quiet period in Finnish feminism that had followed the realisation of women’s suffrage in 1906 (Jallinoja 1983; Holli 1990). It
was not the only women’s movement in the 1960s, but it was the movement that had a resonance in large parts of society and managed to recruit new members (Jallinoja 1983). Association 9 existed from 1966 to 1970 when its members decided to enter established institutions and political parties and work for gender equality from within the state apparatus instead.

*From women’s politics to gender equality politics: the Finnish sex-role movement sets the agenda in the childcare question*

Association 9 originally started as a “women’s bragging club” in the autumn of 1965 (Jallinoja 1983), but turned quickly into a legally registered association. The decision-making body consisted of nine members who were elected annually in the members’ assembly. The number of members in the founding year was 250, growing to about 800 by 1970. The activists came mainly from Helsinki, and primarily from intellectual circles. Membership was open to men, and close to one third of the members were men (Holli 1990: 75).

Association 9 was a movement that according to Riitta Jallinoja (1983) emerged from women’s own experiences: a major part of the women that initiated and were active in the movement were married, had children and a professional career, thus experiencing the concrete hardship of being an employed mother in late 1960s Finnish urban society.

Association 9 received a lot of media visibility and started a debate on sex roles in the mass media. That many of the Association 9 activists were journalists was certainly helpful (Holli 1990: 75-76). The effective use of the media to influence public opinion in issues in respect of the family and marriage and to oppose more conservative perceptions, did not take place without ridicule, as was the case with the radical suggestion by Association 9 of a new parental leave that could be shared between the parents. Association 9 suggested that the nine week long maternity leave should be lengthened to six months and quoted equally (3+3) between the parents. Probably Association 9 was a pioneer in the Nordic countries to propose parental leave and a father’s quota (Eskola 1968; Rotkirch 1968; Tyyskä 1995: 186; cf. Dahlerup & Gulli 1985; 30).

By emphasising the similarity of women and men in both the public and the private spheres, Association 9 constructed a new frame for approaching childcare and for understanding its function in society. Thereby Association 9 pivotally influenced
the policy process. As Johanna Kantola (2006) argues, in the rhetoric of Association 9, and later on also in the argumentation of many liberal and left-wing female politicians, women’s employment was constructed as a solution to social problems. This was a radically different view to that which had dominated in the maternalist women’s movement up to that point. Thus, women’s labour market participation was redefined in a positive way and in this context, the approach to daycare provision for children also changed.

Without doubt, Association 9 had a central role in the Finnish childcare debate. It initiated a new way of conceptualising motherhood and gender relations in society by introducing mothers’ paid work as a new societal norm, and thereby took a radical step away from the existing discourse that was based on a maternalist understanding of women’s lives (Anttonen 1997). Association 9 was recognised as an “official authority” on questions relating to the status of the sexes and gender equality (Holli 1990: 76).

**Committees dealing with women’s position and daycare**

In 1966, after active debates in the Finnish media, the coalition government led by the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Party appointed a Committee on the Status of Women (KM 1970) to investigate the position of women in Finnish society. This committee was the first official state institution in Finland to promote gender equality (Kantola 2006). The link between the sex-role movement and the committee was obvious. Association 9 had several representatives on the committee, and they were at the same time actively engaged with issues that were not part of the formal agenda of the committee. Two out of eleven committee members were men. According to Holli (2002) there was a “strategic alliance” between the movement and the formal institutions, which was needed in order to effect change.

Towards the end of the 1960s, many women in the Socialist, Social Democratic and liberal parties adopted the ideas of Association 9 (Tyyskä 1996; Bergqvist et al. 1999; Kantola 2006). The Finnish Women’s Democratic League (*Suomen naisten demokraattinen liitto*, SNDL), i.e. the women’s organisation of the Finnish People’s Democratic League (*Suomen kansan demokraattinen liitto*, SKDL)\(^\text{14}\)

\(^{14}\) SKDL was an umbrella organisation for left socialist and communist organisations, including the Finnish Communist Party. SKDL participated in several left-centre governments in post-WWII Finland. It dissolved itself in 1990.
argued for a public childcare policy in line with Association 9 (Kantola 2006: 52; Bergqvist et al. 1999). SNDL also proposed a childcare allowance for parents of all children, whether employed or not, and in 1971 it took up the universal right to daycare – i.e. that mothers who were at home would also have a right to take their children to public daycare on a part time basis (Tyyskä 1995). Also the Social Democratic Women’s Federation (Sosialidemokraattiset naiset) was influenced by Association 9, but to a less extent than the women in SNDL. The only non-socialist party that was influenced by Association 9 and acted in favour of organised daycare for children, was the Swedish People’s Party (Svenska folkpartiet), a small liberal-right party for the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, which often participated in government coalitions (Eskola 1968; Bergman 2002).

Although Association 9 had a great influence on the debates on childcare, not all agreed with their views. The “mother’s wage” – a financial assistance to stay-at-home mothers – became a central issue in the Finnish childcare debate in the 1960s. Actors aligned to the political centre and right argued strongly for traditional family values, and for the woman’s role as a mother and a housewife rather than as an employee (Eskola 1968). The Centre Party’s women’s organisation, the Centre Women (Keskustan naiset), was the main advocate for the “mother’s wage”, receiving support from the conservative right-wing party’s women’s federation, the Coalition Women’s League (Kokoomuksen naiset, KNL) (Tyyskä 1995; Anttonen 1997). The conservative/agrarian side presented three main arguments in favour of the mother’s wage. Firstly, it would protect the emotional bond between mother and child; secondly, it would value women’s domestic work; and thirdly, it would be a cheaper

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15 In 1966, the town of Espoo near Helsinki started to pay an experimental means-tested “mother’s wage”. In 1967, this was offered for 16 families with many children living in poor conditions. Initially, arguments for the allowance were economic – it was seen to be cheaper for the municipality to pay for a mother to stay at home with the children than to offer the family daycare services. This economic reasoning was supported by arguments related to the “best interest of the child” in which the home-based care was considered the most child-friendly alternative (Räsänen & Majuri 1968).

16 The first parliamentary bill for mother’s wage was tabled in 1947 by the social democratic MP Martta Salmela-Järvinen. She suggested that the mother’s wage could be added to the family allowance to enable women to leave paid work and devote themselves to the home (Anttonen 1999: 30-31).

17 The Coalition Women’s League (KNL), the conservative party side of the Finnish women’s movement, argued for “politics of equal value”. In the 1960s (and the 1970s) KNL aimed to attract the support of “ordinary” women, which was done through a focus on “the family” (Tyyskä 1995). In the 1970s the political right started to see institutional daycare more positively. This interest in daycare was, however, framed by the discourse of parental choice and the argument that the state should leave the decision to the family. From the late 1970s onwards KNL began arguing for an increase of the value of housework. It also argued in support of making child and other care expenses tax-deductible (ibid: 193).
way to arrange childcare in society (see Kantola 2006: 52). The idea of “mother’s wages” was strongly supported also by influential independent women’s organisations, such as the Martha Association that represented rural women and were strong advocates of women’s role as mothers and homemakers.

Association 9 was critical of the mother’s wage arrangement on several grounds. A mother’s wage was seen to restrict women’s role to the household and children and it would only benefit male-breadwinner families with a high income. The allowance was not considered to be large enough to raise the status of mother’s work, and it would not improve women’s position on the labour market. It would also paint a false picture of the relationship between mothers and children, a relationship that should not be defined in terms of a pseudo-employment relationship. In line with its equal rights/liberation ideology, Association 9 demanded the development of public childcare services (Tyyskä 1995: 185-186).

The late 1960s represents a formative period for new ideas in the area of childcare policy. The debates on daycare emerged at a time when an ethos favourable to social reforms and societal critique was dominant and Finland was in the process of modernisation. General societal equality was emphasised in the debates that emerged and the political demands that flowed from them. Bergman (2002: 139) points out that “in addition to the specific external opportunity structures that were required (e.g. a favourable political climate), the issues had to be placed under the broad umbrella concept of “equality”. This strategy was also used by the sex-role movement.

The debates initiated by Association 9 contributed to change the attitudes towards public daycare in Finland. The ideological and discursive change is evident in committee reports at the time. For example, in 1967 a committee on institutional daycare (KM 1967) still stressed that public childcare was primarily meant for children whose mothers have to work outside the home for economic reasons; three years later, in 1970, it was pointed out by the committee on the position of women that “mother’s wages” were in conflict with the principles of gender equality. In the new view on gender roles both women and men were seen as employees and parents, and the focus was on the economic independence of each individual (Bergman 2002: 221).

According to Rauhala (1996: 165) the political disagreements on childcare of the late 1960s culminated in the daycare question, and a long process of planning work preceded its completion in the early 1970s. The emphasis in the formal planning
of the daycare reform was on child welfare and the existing services were perceived as “maltreating” the children. From the public policy documents it is possible to explore the radical change of the time. “Characteristic of the planning documents of that time is an attempt to adjust to the change that had been taking place, a consequence of which had been women entering the labour market” (Rauhala 1996: 168, translated by MR). That the state should have a main role in regulating the change was considered essential. The goal of regionally equal services was seen to be guaranteed by giving the state responsibility for financing and controlling services. The state’s central role in the daycare reform was not questioned in civic debates – it was also one of Association 9’s demands – or in the formal planning work. The state’s right to oblige the municipalities to produce daycare services was accepted without challenge (ibid). The first reforms were carried out under the Child Welfare Act of 1968. The aim was mainly to regulate private family-care providers. According to Rauhala (1996), the need for services for children was so great that something had to be done, and in the difficult political situation prevailing the best way to respond quickly was to adopt and enforce the Child Welfare Act.

Summary
Despite structural variations between Norway and Finland, such as the relatively large difference in mothers’ wage work participation, the sex-role debates’ questioning of the naturalness of mothers’ role as housewives gradually led to an ideological shift in both countries during the 1960s. Referring to sex roles instead of women’s rights underlined the importance of approaching and changing both women’s and men’s lives. The sex-role movement perceived women and men primarily as individuals, not as gendered beings. Women’s social citizenship was, however, the core in the sex-role debate. The initiatives launched by Association 9 called for state responsibility in the field of childcare, and started a discussion that resulted in a widespread understanding of childcare as a general political issue. Association 9 sought to effect structural change in society, demanding that both men and women would have equal access to self-fulfilment, according to their personal capabilities – including the reconciliation of family and paid work. Although the sex-role debate did not result in a dedicated organisation in Norway, the impact of the change in discourse is clear in the shift of the Labour women’s movement’s attitude towards the male dominated party.
leadership from politeness to a more demanding stance. Yet, these critical claims were only a foretaste of what was going to happen in the next decade.

3. The 1970s

Norway: The new women’s liberation movement puts childcare on the political agenda

The tradition of relative political consensus in Norway described in the introduction was interrupted during the 1970s. The decade was characterised by conflicts, not only between the establishment and the New Left, the traditional women’s organisations and the new women’s liberation movement, but also within the rising women’s liberation movement itself. As the organisation of private life became a political issue, childcare became crucial for the women’s liberation movement. The activists were baby boomers of fertile age, students or women on their way into the labour market, and many of them regarded the lack of daycare institutions as a practical and personal problem in their daily life.

The radicalisation of Labour women

The sex-role debate and the ideological shift of the 1960s culminated in open conflict in the 1970s. In the Labour Party the question of daycare provoked disputes between men and women (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 57). In its 1970 working programme the party focused on two main topics: “equality and extended democracy”. In the debate prior to approving the working programme, Labour women borrowed arguments from the sex-role inspired sociologist Erik Grønseth. His survey showed that 68 per cent of married women outside the labour market wanted paid work if they had the opportunity to do so (Lønnå 1996: 194). The Labour women argued that women’s right to paid work, and therefore childcare to render it possible were important elements of “equality and extended democracy” (Arbeiderhistorie 2001: 194). The men in the party seemingly did not agree with this interpretation of equality and democracy, but after hard negotiations the Labour women managed to convince the majority to approve a statement in the party’s work programme to the effect that the number of places in daycare institutions should be doubled within a few years. It was the first time women aggressively refused to “make coffee for socialism”, according

to Labour women activist Elsa Raastad Bråten (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 57). The revolt continued in 1971 when younger party members, inspired by the new feminists, openly criticised the men in the party. They were angry that, once again, only one woman was appointed to the post of cabinet minister in the government (Langengen 2001: 227). This was the “end of women’s endless loyalty” (Halvorsen 1994: 98), and the Labour women decided, for the first time, to adopt an action programme of their own, separate from the party. In the programme “Equal status and responsibility”, approved in 1973, equality between men and women, both in society and within the Labour Party, was stated as the main goal. The programme called for gender discrimination to be prohibited by law, and women’s quotas in the party were proposed (Langengen 2001: 228). In the 1975 Labour women’s action programme, “Children’s place in today’s society”, daycare institutions, where the children should be brought up to solidarity, was described as a means to change Norway into a socialist society (Arbeiderhistorie 2001: 196).

As shown above, the Labour women’s movement began working more independently and explicitly for women’s interests during the 1970s. Though radicalised in a feminist direction, the Labour women were first and foremost active in demanding the institutionalisation of gender equality policies (Eduards et al. 1985: 135-137). Examples of such activities include their work to implement the Equal Status Act (1978); the Children’s ombud (1981); and a women’s quota of at least 40 per cent in the Labour Party bodies. Nevertheless, the Labour women failed to convince the party to approve their proposal for a resolution that obliged local municipalities to the building of daycare institutions in 1979 (Arbeiderhistorie 2001: 198). According to Halvorsen (1994: 98-99) the “women friendly” profile strengthened the Labour Party’s position, as it appealed to more electors. Until the mid-1990s about 40 per cent of Norwegian electors voted for Labour.

The Conservative, the Liberal, the (agrarian) Centre and the Christian Democratic parties also had their women’s organisations, but very little research has been conducted in respect of their claims and actions.¹⁹ Lønnå (1996) describes the close relationship between the Liberal Party (Venstre) and the Women’s Rights Association. The women’s movement of the Conservative Party (Høyre) was

¹⁹ The Norwegian Communist Party also had its woman section, but the party has not been represented in Parliament since 1957. The far right wing Progress Party, the Socialist Left Party, and far left wing Red Election Alliance and the Maoist Worker’s Communist Party, have never had women’s sections. However, the three latter parties have established “political committees for women’s issues”.

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apparently less well organised and had less impact on party politics than the Labour women’s movement (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 80). According to interviews with women politicians from the Conservative Party, it was a common view in the party that part-time *kindergartens* were best for children, because “research had shown it to be so” (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 78). However, there was disagreement on this matter between housewives and employed women from the Conservative Party. But they certainly agreed with the scepticism that existed towards public engagement in the building of daycare institutions.

*Women’s liberation movement*

Despite the conflicts over ideology and strategy between the different groups of the women’s liberation movement of the 1970s, they all agreed with the principle of public full-time daycare institutions for all children, preferably for free (Nagel 2007: 63). 20 When the socialist Women’s Front (*Kvinnefronten*) was established at the University of Oslo in 1972, its main demand (besides improving the working conditions of women working at the university as cleaners and in the canteens), was in fact for more daycare institutions for the children of students (Haukaa 1982: 36).

Civil disobedience and direct actions were a quite novel element in the women’s movement in Norway. Hernes (1982: 153) has pointed out how direct actions constructed a “female public sphere” where the value of political issues concerning private life could be demonstrated before later being integrated into the practices of the political establishment. The women’s liberation movement always demanded more than was fulfilled, as is the case of demands for “free daycare institutions for every child”.

Examples of actions performed by the women’s liberation movement that related to childcare issues are numerous. For example, in 1971 the New Feminists organised a large exposition in the streets of Oslo, called “Nyfeminist 71”, which focused on children growing up; the dangers associated with traffic; playgrounds and

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20 The Marxist-Leninist/Maoist domination in the largest “new” women’s organisation, the Women’s Front (*Kvinnefronten*, founded in 1972) was the main source of conflict in the women’s liberation movement at the time. The New Feminists (*Nyfeministene*, founded 1970) were inspired by the organisational model of the US Women’s Liberation Movement, which emphasised organising in non-hierarchichal basis groups without leaders (Haukaa 1982; Romning 2005; Korsvik 2006a).
daycare institutions (Haukaa 1982: 28-29).\footnote{Traffic problems were an important issue for the women’s movement, as Norway at the time had a very high death rate for children in traffic. Other issues included demands for higher salaries for women, abortion rights and giving preference to women on party lists in local elections.} When the chief financial officer in Trondheim decided to cut the grants to daycare institutions in 1972, the New Feminists and members of the Women’s Rights’ Association protested by distributing paper dolls representing children to all the members of the city council, saying things like: “I am also your responsibility” and “Why is daddy’s car more important than daddy’s children?” (Haukaa 1982: 103). In 1972, when the local authorities in Bergen wanted to use funds earmarked for daycare for other purposes, the New Feminists and other women’s organisations responded by creating an action committee for daycare institutions (*Aksjonskomiteer for daginstitusjoner*) (Nagel 2007: 57). After several political stands, distribution of flyers, door-to-door actions, and the collection of 7,000 signatures, the local council eventually granted more money for the building of daycare institutions.

It is a common view that the women’s liberation activists first and foremost saw daycare as a means to women’s emancipation. However, they were also concerned about the contents of the institutions and wanted them to be “better” (Haukaa 1982: 29). The 1970s was a period of experimentation with new and alternative ways of living, but what the women’s liberation movement meant by “better” daycare, apart from being a non-religious socialisation for solidarity, needs to be investigated further.

The equal participation of fathers in childcare and housework were other important issues for the women’s liberation movements (Haukaa 1982: 10; Irgens 2007: 24). When the New Feminists held their first national meeting in 1973, they agreed upon a programme that emphasised the importance of a father’s leave and shorter and more flexible working days for parents of small children. In the women’s liberation movement care was seen as a positive quality that should be valued more, also by men. This has been explained by the institutionalisation of care since the 1960s, which created new employment options for women and also new demands for formal qualifications (Haukaa 1982: 75). However, the “human-friendly” ideals of the antiauthoritarian and slightly hippie inspired movement can also explain the emergence of the ideal of the caring “soft man” in the 1970s. The inspiration came from Denmark, but remained rather marginal in the less urban Norway and was a
popular subject of ridicule (Stensrud 1983). The “soft man” phenomenon and the attempts to start a men’s movement (which never took off) need further investigation.

In 1977 the parental leave scheme extended from twelve to eighteen weeks, and fathers gained the right to use all of it, except for six weeks reserved for the mother. We have not found any research on men’s or women’s movements’ claims and actions for the extension, or the share, of parental leave in the 1970s. An analysis of different actors’ agency needs to be carried out.

The Daycare Act of 1975

In 1972 the Committee for daycare institutions (Daginstitusjonsutvalget) (appointed by Parliament in 1969) delivered a report about pre-school institutions. Both pedagogical aspects and women’s economic independence and liberation from a one-sided mother’s role, were highlighted. The committee report set itself the radical ambition of social equality and even recommended men to do half of the housework (Seip 1994: 276-277). The market’s need for labour was also pointed out, and the committee report concluded that local governments should be obliged to build daycare institutions. The 1972 report can be seen as a compromise between the traditional women’s organisations’ view of kindergartens primarily as a pedagogical arrangement and the women’s liberation movement’s emphasis on men’s role and women’s emancipation. Yet the women’s liberation movement was not satisfied with the report’s conclusions. Movement activists were more concerned with structural questions and wanted to implement the six hours working day (Gulli 1992: 150-151).

The economic stagnation following the oil crisis reduced the expansion of many welfare arrangements proposed in the optimistic early 1970s. This was also the case with childcare arrangements, and the bill on daycare presented by the government in 1974 was less ambitious than the proposals contained in the 1972 report. The bill stated that daycare institutions should make be available, but to the disappointment of the women’s movement, it did not oblige the government to put in place the means to finance daycare provision, and the responsibilities for kindergartens still remained decentralised and private (Seip 1994: 276-277). The local

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22 The demand for the six hours working day has since the 1970s been crucial for the women’s movement in Norway, and it was even endorsed by the Labour Party around 1980. The Conservative victory in the 1981 general election did, however, prevent its implementation (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 95).
municipalities were left to decide the number and kind of daycare institutions (full-time or part-time) that should be built (Knutsen 1991: 195). The difference between the committee report and the law proposal has been explained by the fact that the Committee for daycare institutions consisted of “experts” who did not take “realistic” political measures (Knutsen 1991: 197). However, it is worth remarking that the idea of full-time daycare for children was still controversial in the 1970s. The view that children were the family’s responsibility was a part of the “Norwegian people’s soul”, as several of the politicians dealing with family politics at the time have explained (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 82). Research provided arguments that supported such scepticism. A report from the Institute for Social Research (INAS) from the beginning of the 1970s stated that it was not good for children to be too long in kindergartens, and that part-time was “best” for them. “Children’s best interest” was apparently the main argument in the parliamentary debate against full-time daycare institutions (Korsvold 2005: 109). On the other hand, what provoked the harshest disputes on the kindergarten issue in Parliament, was the question of the Christian preamble (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 81).²³

Although the women’s liberation movement opposed the Act on Daycare (and other equality reforms, except the abortion act), it was approved by a large majority in Parliament. Movement publications of the period are full of debates concerning the daycare act, but research into these debates still remains to be undertaken.

During the 1970s the two-income family became more common and in 1979, 195,000 children in Norway had parents that were both employed. Only 18 per cent of the children had a place in daycare institutions. What did the others do? Some 36 per cent were looked after by a childminder, and 46 per cent by neighbours, family members or the parents working at different times (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 89).²⁴

²³ In 1975, Norwegian Parliament decided, after animated debate, not to include a Christian preamble into the Act on Daycare. However, this preamble was added to the Act in 1984, after the Conservative victory in the general election in 1981. The issue of the Christian preamble in legislation on public daycare and general education continues to be a controversial issue in Norway (see, e.g., the homepage of the Norwegian Humanistic Association, http://www.human.no).

²⁴ The figures are from the White Paper on daycare institutions in the 1980s (Stortingsmelding 93 om barnehager i 80-årene). This White Paper was rejected by the Conservative government after the 1982 election. According to Knutsen (1991: 199) the pace of building of daycare institutions slowed down during Conservative rule.
Finland: Daycare or homecare – or both?

As we saw in the previous chapter, Association 9 placed the issue of childcare on the political agenda. The demands for public childcare were raised by well-educated middle-class women, who formed the core of the Finnish daycare movement of the latter part of the 1960s. However, the lack of adequate childcare had been a problem for working-class women for a long time. Yet, only in the new political and cultural climate of the late 1960s did the issue enter onto the political agenda. During the 1960s, the Social Democratic Women’s Federation in Finland, like its counterparts in the other Nordic countries, had gradually moved from a maternalist equal value perspective towards support for equal rights and the dual-earner model. Together with other left-wing women’s organisations, liberal women and women from trade union organisations, the federation joined forces with Association 9 in the new daycare movement of the late 1960s. The political climate was at the time highly receptive to suggestions from the daycare movement and many of the movement’s proposals were realised during the 1970s (see, e.g. Bergqvist et al. 1999; Tyyskä 1995; Kantola 2006).

As a result of the pressure from the daycare movement, several public committees and working groups were appointed to examine the issue of childcare in the period between 1966 and 1972. This work initially followed the idea of the male breadwinner family, but later perceptions and attitudes began to change rapidly. “Gender equality” began to dominate in discourses concerning childcare reforms.

Particularly important for changing opinions in favour of the dual-earner model was the Committee on the Status of Women that had been established by the Finnish government in 1966 at the initiative of Association 9. The committee submitted its report in 1970 (KM 1970). The proposals included the establishment of a universal daycare system, the extension of maternity leave, and the establishment of paternity and parental leave. The committee acknowledged the potential gender equality paradox of family policy, arguing that “the longer the maternity leave is, the greater the danger of discrimination against women on the labour market. This discrimination would decrease, if men were also to take childcare leave” (KM 1970: 88, translation by MR). The committee proposed an extension of the maternity leave from 6 to 12 weeks, and suggested that the leave should be followed by a childcare leave that would gradually cover the child’s first year and which parents could share between them.
In 1972 the Council for Equality between Women and Men (TANE) was established – as had been recommended by the committee. In many ways, TANE continued the task of Association 9 to channel new ideas on sex roles and women’s position to public debate.\textsuperscript{25}

\textit{The Daycare Act of 1973}

Although the childcare debate had been initiated by the Social Democrats, it was the right-wing government that in 1970 appointed a committee (KM 1971) to examine both public daycare and the question of child homecare allowance (i.e., the term “mother’s” wage was no longer used) (Tyyskä 1995:95). The committee suggested that both daycare and homecare should be supported, but placed greater emphasis on homecare. According to Bergqvist et al. (1999: 147) it also “decided to endorse the principle of a public responsibility for the upbringing of small children, just as the public sector accepted a responsibility to guarantee an education to all children.”

According to Tyyskä (1995: 96) “the clash between the views of proponents of equal value and the proponents of equality/liberation policies stamped the Daycare Committee process.” The committee was far from unanimous.\textsuperscript{26} In the next government (a caretaker government consisting solely of Social Democrats) the post as Minister for Social Affairs was held by Alli Lahtinen, who was a supporter of the daycare model, and she appointed a new committee since she was critical of the proposals of the previous one. On the basis of the proposals by the new committee (KM 1972), the government presented a bill that emphasised the development of municipal daycare (both institutional and family daycare) that in the long run would cover all preschool children (Bergqvist et al. 1999). Support for the homecare of children (as had been suggested by the previous committee) was not included in the bill (Anttonen 1999: 37-38).

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\textsuperscript{25} TANE, the Council for Equality between Women and Men, is a permanent parliamentary advisory body, consisting of politicians and representatives of party-political women’s federations. Since TANE also consists of representatives from opposition parties, it has been able to take a more independent and critical role than the governmental gender equality bodies (Holli & Kantola 2006).

\textsuperscript{26} A majority of the committee members formally expressed their opposition to the report. These protests made manifest the divide that existed in childcare thinking. The chair of the committee (Pirkko Aro, Liberal Party) argued for a system that made provision for both institutional care and homecare of children, but the political centre and right on the one hand, and the political left on the other hand, argued for their own reform models that contradicted one another (Tyyskä 1995: 96, 99).
The daycare reform was mentioned in three different government programmes (Karjalainen IIA/1970, Paasio II/1972 and Sorsa I/1972). The third programme noted that a daycare act was due to be approved, while support would also be given to other forms of childcare. This programme clearly reflects Centre Party demands for an equal development of public daycare and homecare. By implication the freedom of choice discourse was already a dimension in Finnish childcare policy when the government proposed equal development of different alternatives to enable parents to choose the form of care that was most appropriate for them (Rauhala 1996: 171; Kantola 2006). The choice rationale also received support “from outside” partisan politics, from the organisations representing the politics of equal value (e.g. the Martha Association and the National Council of Women’s Organisations (Tyyskä 1995: 95).

The parliamentary handling of the proposal for a daycare act in the late autumn of 1972 turned out to be a stormy political event. Yet, the planning documents give the impression that political conflict was largely absent during the planning stage of the act. The atmosphere of tension and the emotional arguments surrounding the debate in Parliament was surprising when compared to the harmonious tone of the planning documents (Rauhala 1996: 172). Women MPs were very active in the debate – they were responsible for almost two thirds of the speeches (65 out of 102) made during the parliamentary stage. At the time, it may be noted, women held 22 per cent of the Parliament seats (Tyyskä 1995: 158; Bergqvist et al. 1999: 148).

In the proposal, the government did not prioritise any single model for organised public daycare. It argued that different arrangements (nurseries, municipal family daycare, open daycare centres etc.) should have an equal position so that in each circumstance the most appropriate form of services could be chosen (Rauhala 1996: 171). The proposal responded to feminist demands for the state to take responsibility for the organisation of childcare. It did not meet any opposition in the parliamentary debate but the differences in perceptions and understandings of women’s paid work and childcare between the left and right were clearly articulated.

27 Governments at that time were short-lived, reflecting the political turbulence of the period.
28 NKL (Naisjärjestöjen keskusliitto, in English: National Council of Women’s Organisations) argued for public support for a number of childcare options, including the option to look after young children at home. It argued also for flexible work arrangements, part-time work for parents and paternity leave, in other words, reforms that clearly supported mothers’ employment. Within partisan politics, the conservative Coalition Women’s League was also arguing for a daycare solution that would support different forms of care (Tyyskä 1995: 95-96).
in individual speeches (Kantola 2006). According to left wing MPs, building up childcare services was necessary to support women’s labour market participation. The importance of women’s paid work was held to be beneficial for the whole of society. In the centre/right wing discourse women’s paid work was constructed as a potential source of social problems, and childcare was framed as a class issue (ibid: 53-54). The Centre Party women had expressed criticism of the earlier committee report on women’s position, claiming that it ignored the needs of rural women and housewives (Tyyskä 1995: 96). The centre/right parties were critical to the idea of mothers’ employment. Instead, they emphasised the right of mothers to choose to stay at home. They idealised the meaning of the nuclear family and the home, challenging thereby the working mother discourse (Kantola 2006: 55-56). The Centre Party asserted that it would reject the proposal unless the government also committed itself to support children’s homecare – the party argued that the daycare act as such offered nothing to those women who chose to take care of their children at home (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 148).  

The Women’s Committee in the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) and the women’s organisation of the left-socialist party (SNDL) had become advocates of daycare services in the late 1960s – in cooperation with Association 9. In the 1970s, all unions became active on the issue of daycare (Tyyskä 1995). In 1970 the SNDL organised a daycare seminar at which the Minister of Social Affairs, Anna-Liisa Tieko (SKDL) pointed out, in her opening speech, that the lack of childcare came to be recognised as a serious social problem only after middle class women, finding themselves in the same situation as working class women, also experienced it as a problem (see Julkunen 1994: 195).

Rauhala (1996: 173) emphasises that the supporters of the daycare act did not reject the homecare alternative in their statements during the debate in Parliament. The conflict had more to do with the way of prioritising public support to childcare; i.e. should the emphasis be on the homecare of the children or on the development of

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29 The Centre Party had argued for a care allowance scheme in which homecare, family daycare and institutional daycare were treated equally (Anttonen 1999: 37-38).
30 Women in trade unions started to gain a voice in the early 1970s, precisely at the height of the debates on childcare policy. The creation of the system of tripartite wage and benefit negotiation between representatives of the government, and the central organisations of employees and employers increased the power of trade union women. It was in this context that they started to win concessions in respect of concrete family policy measures. For example, maternity and parental leaves were (and still are) set out in these agreements (see Tyyskä 1995: 99-100).
institutional daycare (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 148). Kantola’s (2006) conclusion is that a feminist discourse about the importance of childcare for women’s labour market participation had only partially filtered into the parliamentary debates in the early 1970s and it was mainly represented by female MPs from the left wing parties. Still, even among the left wing women, childcare was still perceived and presented as a “women’s issue”. The childcare issue was discussed in terms of the “mother and child”. Care responsibility did not yet resonate with fatherhood.

Despite strong demands from the Centre Party, the Daycare Act did not include any support for the homecare of children (Anttonen 1999). According to Tyyskä (1995: 98), the act was in this way “essentially social democratic women’s legislation, with a focus on increasing daycare spaces”. The 1973 Daycare Act was a victory for the daycare movement in Finland. Yet, as the political left aimed for full coverage of services in the long run, the new act did not guarantee any right to daycare for each and everyone. Rather it formalised a goal of daycare for all children under school age in need of care (cf. Rauhala 1996). In practice the daycare services initially lagged behind the rapidly increasing demand, and the prioritising of services for children from low-income and lone parent families was still a reality (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 148). The victory of the left wing policy line in the daycare reform animated all left wing women’s organisations to redouble their efforts in respect of family policy issues and to campaign for more reforms. Women active within the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) argued for public arrangements to reduce women’s responsibility for the family. The left-socialist women in SNDL pushed for holding onto the agreed quotas and adopted the call for more daycare as its key theme for the International Year of the Child in 1979 (Tyyskä 1995: 98-99). Left-wing women’s organisations actively pushed the government to adhere the goals of building enough daycare places to meet the needs of families. Gradually daycare services became a universal social service, i.e. a service to all families with children (cf. Hiilamo 2002).

Although the different participants in the childcare debate agreed that childcare was a collective responsibility, they had different approaches when it came

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31 The Centre Party argued for a care allowance scheme in which homecare, family daycare and institutional daycare were equal to each other. In 1973 an additional payment to the child allowance for children under three years of age was established (Anttonen 1999: 39).

32 In 1970 there were about 28,000 daycare places subsidised by the state – in 1980 the number had increased to almost 132,000 places (Muuri & Vihma 1991: 2).
to the childcare issue and how to enact the new act. Political views on childcare, and on how the women’s movement ought to approach it, also remained polarised after the reform. Thus, although the equal value-oriented part of the movement (such as the Martha Association and the National Council of Women’s Organisations) also argued for more daycare places in the 1970s, calls for public support for home/parental care along the lines of a family-centred discourse, strengthened again towards the end of the decade (Tyyskä 1995: 100). The political divide on the childcare issue had not disappeared, as can be seen in the chapter on the 1980s.  

*Extending maternity leave and the establishment of paternity leave*

Universal maternity benefit, for a 12 week period (72 days), had been established in the Sickness Insurance Law of 1963, but it took seven years before mothers received a corresponding right to maternity leave in the Employment Contracts Act – initially receiving a right to 9 weeks leave in 1970, and then to 12 weeks leave in 1971 (Haataja 2004; 2007). The Committee on the Status of Women (KM 1970) had suggested that the maternity leave should be followed by a childcare leave which would gradually cover the child’s first year and which parents could share between them. The emphasis of policy reforms was however on extending the maternity leave, and the idea of parental leave was not realised until the 1980s.

In 1974 maternity leave was extended from 12 to 29 weeks. After this extension, the development of the scheme turned out to be something that both the political Left and political Right were concerned with, but in each case this goal was framed differently. Motives, value judgements, and socio-political and economic arrangements all varied from one political actor to another (Dahlström 1993: 98). In the 1970s the political parties in Finland – and women activists – still had different perspectives on fathers’ parental leave rights. For the Social Democrats, the arguments concerning the importance of the father’s active carer role were based on its positive and encouraging effects on women’s labour market status. The Conservatives opposed a father's parental leave scheme, arguing that they lacked information concerning its effects on children. Even equality between mothers was

33“Confusions” in the debates over the best model of public childcare policy were manifested in the divide within the women’s movement between the left- and right-wing women, but also within the left between men’s and women’s perceptions and ideologies in both party politics and within trade unions (see, e.g., Tyyskä 1995).
raised as an issue when the Conservatives referred to lone mothers’ situation and claimed that they would be put in an unequal position compared to mothers who had a spouse to share the leave with. The Conservatives’ argument is indicative of the fact that fathers did not yet figure as active parents in the Finnish discourse on family life. This was the case not only in conservative circles but also in other political parties (Dahlström 1993).

Left Socialists and Communists (SKDL) argued, amongst other things, that the father should participate in childcare only under the supervision of the mother. Basically the left supported the idea of shared parental responsibilities. However, it stressed that whether or not maternity leave should be changed to parental leave was something that needed to be reviewed from the point of view of the advantages it held for the mother and child and for the enforcement of gender equality. Only the Liberals clearly argued for the father’s parental leave using arguments that focussed on the father-child relationship and the father’s position and role in the family (Dahlström 1993).

In 1974, immediately after the right to maternity leave had been extended to 29 weeks, a committee was established to investigate the maternity leave and benefit. As the maternity leave had just been extended, the committee did not suggest any concrete extension, but argued instead that it should be gradually developed into a leave of 12 months. It was also argued that fathers – and adoptive parents – ought to have their own right to parental leave and to benefits. Gender equality was a crucial framework for these arguments. Also the committee emphasised that if only women are entitled to the benefits this would have a negative impact on their position in the labour market. Therefore it supported the idea of shared parental leave and of fathers’ own leave rights (Haataja 2007: 18).

In the late 1970s maternity leave was defined as “compensation for a woman for her pregnancy and confinement of a child and for the loss of income that is due to the leave she needs, but it is no childcare benefit as such” (Answer to OQ/268/1977vp).\(^{35}\) In 1979 the female dominated trade union TVK (Toimiala- ja

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\(^{34}\) Representatives of the employers’ organisations were critical of the idea of shared parental leave and argued that father’s leaves could cause “significant problems in economic life and public administration” (KM 1975, in Haataja 2007: 18).

virkamiesjärjestöjen keskusliitto, in English Confederation of Salaried Employees) expressed its dissatisfaction with a government proposal to extend the maternity leave, arguing instead for parental leave (Tyyskä 1995: 191).

Finnish fathers received a right to paternity leave (in connection with the birth of a baby, 6-12 work days) in 1978, earlier than in other Nordic countries, except Norway (1977). In 1979 the government proposed (HE131/1979) that one month of maternity leave be transformable to a parental leave that the father could use, providing the mother approves it. According to Anita Haataja (2007: 20) the gender equality argument was not that strongly represented in the government’s partly contradictory reasoning. On the one hand, the government argued for the family’s freedom of choice in deciding how the leave should be used. On the other hand, it underscored the importance of breastfeeding, and securing enough time for that purpose.38

Summary

In the 1970s many of the radical views of the 1960s found their way into official documents in both Norway and Finland. Equality between men and women became a dominant element in discourses on childcare and working life, as well as in many other domains of society. Despite its fundamental scepticism of state reforms and revolutionary ideology, the grass roots women’s liberation movement had an impact on the official discourse in Norway, due to its influence upon more reformist women in the establishment, not at least in the Labour Party. In Finland, even though the autonomous feminist movement was weaker, women within the political parties managed to ensure the implementation of a law that required municipalities to build daycare institutions (or corresponding daycare services). In both Finland and Norway the parental leave schemes were lengthened in the 1970s, and in Norway fathers could also make use of it. In Finland fathers had not yet gained the right to parental leave, but in 1978 they obtained the right to paternity leave, to be taken immediately after the birth of a child. The discourse of men as caring fathers seems to have had greater

36 In 1982, 81% of the 340,000 members in TVK were women (Tyyskä 1995: 191).
38 One argument for father’s right to “maternity” leave was that not all women took the whole leave but returned to work early (a similar argument was expressed in Norway). There was no statistics on how common this was but the benefit, which was not yet earnings-related, was low and there were probably economic reasons for women’s early return to work (Haataja 2007: 21).
resonance in Norway than in Finland, maybe due to the influence of Danish antiauthoritarianism upon parts of the Norwegian Left.
4. The 1980s

Norway: Relative consensus in family policy, the “women’s government” and the Section on Men’s Role

While the 1970s were characterised by an extensive debate around questions of daycare, but little economic support, the 1980s were characterised by less debate and more economic support. “Women’s politics” was assimilated into “general politics”. The level of conflict within the women’s movement declined and cooperation became possible between groups that until recently had been bitter enemies (Haukaa 1982: 170). After five years of conservative government, the world-famous Labour “women’s government” (with 40 per cent women and Ms Gro Harlem Brundtland as prime minister) took over in 1986 with the ambition of improving childcare policy (Rieber-Mohn 1994; Arbeiderhistorie 2001). The government initiated a plan to escalate the building of daycare institutions in local municipalities. This was followed up by a White Paper entitled “Daycare Institutions Towards the Year 2000”. Children’s needs were emphasised more than gender equality, and it was seen as important to improve the contents of daycare provision, as well as the quality of the employees (since problems of staff recruitment were evident).

The new interest in children is apparent in the extension of the parental leave scheme. After a decade in the doldrums, the parental leave scheme was gradually augmented in the years that followed from 18 weeks in 1987 to 42 weeks with full salary (or, as an alternative, 52 weeks with 80 per cent) in 1993 (Eeg-Henriksen 2005: 73). The expansion of the parental leave scheme in the late 1980s and early 1990s passed without major conflicts in Parliament, but different arguments were raised as to why this was a good thing (Håland 2005: 27). The Labour Party and the Socialist Left Party were ideologically influenced both by ideas of equal status and of women’s liberation, and adhered to the view that both the mother and the father, with support of society, should care for the children. They also supported the view that the right to parental leave should depend on the mother’s prior employment. The non-socialist parties were divided in their views, but shared the maternalist and equal value oriented ideology of increasing the status of the work mothers do at home, and therefore supported lengthening the parental leave period. Yet, they did not support

39 In 1981 the New Feminists approved an anti-capitalist programme, and at the same time the Women’s Front adopted some feminist standpoints in their programme. The fight against pornography from 1977 onwards seemed unifying as it also mobilised traditional women’s organisations, including women from political parties and trade unions (Haukaa 1982: 170).
the dependence of the parental leave entitlements on mothers’ earlier work, as they saw it as unjust to housewives (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 115-16). Unfortunately, no research on the 1980s women’s grass roots movements’ claims and actions on childcare has yet been carried out.

The Section on Men’s Role

One of the most noticeable actors in Norwegian family policy in the late 1980s was the Section on Men’s Role, appointed by the “women’s government” in 1987 (Bergman 2004: 235). The 13 members (ten men and three women) of the Section were top-level bureaucrats, having their background in the state administration, working life and academia, as well as one “macho symbol” represented by an actor famous for his performances in the action movies of the period. The leader of the section was initially the young Jens Stoltenberg (the future Prime Minister of Norway), who was soon to be replaced by Arne Wam, the husband of the leader of the Labour women, Sissel Rønbeck.\(^{40}\) The aim of the section was to initiate debates, raise consciousness and analyse men’s role in order to change society in a more gender equal direction (Oftung 1992: 94). Stoltenberg, himself a young father who changed his baby’s nappies in public on several occasions, declared that care made men’s life richer and more harmonious. The empathy men internalised through the act of caring for children would even prevent divorces and sexual abuse of children, according to Stoltenberg. Besides, he thought that to base the allocation of parental leave on the mother’s income constituted discrimination against men (Oftung 1992: 95-96). In the summer of 1988 a fierce debate between the leader of the Section on Men’s Role, Arne Wam and the equality ombud, Ingse Stabel, was at the centre of media attention, as Wam wanted to reserve 12 weeks of the parental leave for fathers. This obligation was necessary to make fathers independently responsible, he argued. Stabel stated there was a huge gap between men’s demands for rights and their actual participation in care. No men demanded to care for the old and sick, she argued. Besides, in view of the physical demands of giving birth women should have priority, the equality ombud claimed. She wanted the mothers’ leave to extend for a full year and argued that nothing should be reserved for fathers (Oftung 1992: 100).

\(^{40}\)“Mannifest. Førebels statusrapport frå mannsrolleutvalet”, Ministry of Consumers and Administration, 1989.
The Section on Men’s Role was often ridiculed by men at the time, as well as criticised by the women’s movement because of the assertion that women’s struggle for equal status hindered the change of men’s role. The Section on Men’s Role was controversial, but it definitely raised questions about men as fathers and carers. The conclusion of the report submitted by the section in 1991 was not as ambitious as the earlier debates had promised: two weeks of fathers’ quota in the parental leave scheme was proposed, and this was implemented in 1993. When the then minister of family affairs, Sissel Rønbeck had proposed exactly the same (14 days of fathers’ leave) about a decade earlier, she found support for her proposal in government, but not in the Labour Party’s parliamentary group where men were in the majority (she gained the support of all the women). One of the arguments against her proposal was that it would be waste of money, as fathers probably would just go fishing during their leave (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 74). Ten years later the situation was different, and only the Conservative Party and the far right wing Progress Party voted against it, because they considered the father’s quota to be a “straitjacket” (Håland 2005).

The Section on Men’s Role was not a NGO, but it raised public debates that had an impact on childcare policy. Besides, it was the only male dominated body at the time that spoke up for men’s role in childcare. More research is necessary to evaluate its impact in relation to its claims and demands.

Finland: A historical compromise confirms a dual model of childcare policy

The 1980s were an important decade in Finnish childcare policy. In the mid-1980s a political compromise was established that confirmed a dual model of childcare policy in Finland, offering both public daycare services and cash-for-care. This model has been in effect since then. After the reform, cooperation between the different party-political women’s organisations, as well as their cooperation with feminist and other women’s organisations started to increase. In 1988 NYTKIS (Naisjärjestöt yhteistyössä; in English Women’s Organisations in Cooperation) was established as a

41 This was one of the arguments applied by the feminist psychologist Hanne Haavind when she withdrew from the Section in 1989, according to its preliminary report “Mannifest. Forebels statusrapport fra mansrolleutvalet”, p. 8-9.
42 Oftung (1995) claims that at that point of time there was no actual men’s movement in Norway, although there were self-help oriented groups like the “Mannskomiteen 88”, which had organised open meetings where men could talk about their problems since 1988.
network, representing all party-political women’s organisations, the National Council of Women’s Organisations, the Feminist Association Unioni and the National Association of Women’s Studies in Finland (Tyyskä 1995: 68-69; Bergman 2002: 169).

Compromises
The previous chapter showed that daycare and homecare were two competing discourses and policy strategies within the broad women’s movement in Finland. The advocates of a dual breadwinner model with institutional daycare of children as one of the core elements won the initial struggle when the daycare legislation was approved in 1973. However, the Centre Party women did not give up their idea of support for homecare of children and continued to push for it during the 1980s. They received strong support from the women in the Conservative Coalition Party, the Martha Association and the National Council of Women’s Organisations (Tyyskä 1995: 103-104). Their arguments gained widespread sympathy, not least because the municipalities had not been able to build up daycare to meet the demand. The shortage of daycare places especially affected middle class women, since priority for the available daycare places was given to low-income families and lone mothers. The political climate was therefore becoming favourable to childcare alternatives other than that provided by daycare institutions. A statutory experiment with a children’s homecare allowance was carried out in 1978-1980, and some municipalities began to pay homecare support on a voluntary basis to reduce the demand for places in institutions (Säntti 1982; Bergqvist et al. 1999: 149).

However, the idea of “wages-for-mothers” or – as it was renamed later – the homecare allowance – was not popular in more radical feminist circles. When the Minister for Social Affairs, Marjatta Väänänen (Centre Party) suggested “mother’s wages” in the late 1970s, this proposal was harshly criticised by many feminists. The Women’s Union criticised it in the organisation’s political programme of 1979 and activists within the network Feministit-Feministerna strongly condemned the idea, calling the “mother’s wage” “a dishonest and perverse idea, created by the trinity of capital, the state and patriarchy”. Yet, contrary opinions were also expressed. In a “letter to the editor” in Akkaväki, the magazine of the Women’s Union in 1981, the right of women to stay at home with small children was met with sympathy. In the following issue “a group of Union members” opposed this idea by referring to the
political programme of the Union. According to them, the new women’s movement in Finland “opposes an increase of part-time work and the introduction of mothers’ wages. Instead, we demand a six hours’ working day” (Bergman 2002: 222-223).

At governmental level, however, the feminist criticism of support for homecare was ineffectual. Instead, there was a strong body of opinion in favour of reaching some sort of political compromise. During the 1980s, most governments were coalitions between the Social Democrats and the Centre Party, the two major adversaries in the issue. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health was led by two women ministers with different views on the issue; one of them from the Centre Party and the other from the Social Democratic Party (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 149). The Social Democrats declared willingness to back the homecare allowance if the Centre Party agreed to increase the capacity of municipal daycare services.

The decisive factor, however, was probably the threat by the Centre Party to impede government cooperation, if the Social Democrats opposed the establishment of a child homecare allowance. The result was a historic political compromise in 1984. The law reform was based on the assumption that from 1.1.1990 a municipality would be obliged to offer the parents of children under three years of age a place in municipal daycare or a child homecare allowance, according to the parents’ wish (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 150).

The homecare vs. daycare discussion was also divisive within the unions. In line with several other left wing organisations, instead of directly supporting the child homecare allowance, TVK (Confederation of Salaried Employees) began to campaign for higher “baby bonuses” to cover the cost of childcare either within the home or outside the home. SAK (Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions) also started to put more emphasis on the reconciliation of family and work, for example in its family policy programme, but was criticised by its women members for accepting the “myth of gender equality.” According to Tyyskä (1995: 106) there was a gender conflict within both trade unions and left-wing parties over childcare issues. For example, the male leaders of the unions and parties were not as critical towards the homecare allowance as were many women in the same organisations. The childcare issue touched upon a difficult dilemma in many women’s lives, and resulted in debates over motherhood within the left wing women’s organisations. However, women within the

43 “The baby bonus” was an additional child allowance payment for children under the age of three.
trade union movement cooperated over the issue, and they were able to put pressure on the government to increase daycare places and to improve the daycare system. For women in SAK and TVK the primary goal was to secure equal opportunities for women and men to participate in working life. Care work was articulated as a common responsibility of women and men – also in reality (Tyyskä 1995: 191).

Feminist opposition to the homecare allowance was considerably weaker in Finland than it was in Norway and Sweden. One reason for this was that this allowance was framed as part and parcel of a general childcare package in Finland that included support for daycare and that aimed at increasing parents’ freedom to choose the most suitable care form. Another reason may have been many women’s preference for homecare allowance in a situation where few alternatives to full-time employment existed for mothers with small children. Possibly, the “cultural feminist” and “difference” emphasis in the feminist movement in Finland towards the latter part of the 1980s contributed to the weakening of the protests (Bergman 2002: 223-224).

**Parental leave**

The reform of the maternity leave system occurred at the same time as the conflict over the daycare versus homecare divide was solved. It was, however, pushed aside to the sidelines of the “big drama”. In the reform that entered into effect in 1985, a major part of the leave was defined as parental leave that is sharable between the parents. The total length of the leave was extended by 24 benefit days to 258 days, of which 158 days were sharable parental leave.

According to Anita Haataja (2007), when parental leave began to be developed in 1980, the arguments were partly contradictory. On the one hand mothers’ interests and their right to maternity leave were to be defended, on the other hand there was increasing concern over the negative impact longer leaves had on mothers’ positions on the labour market. One concern was over the breastfeeding of the baby, which was considered to be important and, plausibly, endangered if men were to take long leaves. The parliamentary discussions on parental leave reforms in the 1980s are scant, but manifest certain scepticism towards the impact of fathers’ extended rights to parental leave (Rantalaiho 2008).

The parental leave reform, however, reflects the increased activities of women in the trade unions, and the role of the Council for Equality between Women and Men (TANE) as an important actor arguing for the equal sharing of parental
responsibilities between men and women. Already in 1974 TANE had demanded a four months parental leave that could be shared between the parents, arguing that extending the leave to also cover male employees, would decrease discrimination of young women in the labour market (TANE 1997: 28-29). At the time of the 1984 parental leave reform TANE had begun to strengthen its focus on men’s role in gender equality work. A few years later, in 1988, TANE established a subcommittee on men’s issues that started to serve as a forum for cooperation between organisations, networks and researchers interested in issues of men and gender equality. Fatherhood and men’s presence in their children’s lives developed into core issues in the activities of the subcommittee, which itself became the key actor in Finnish fatherhood politics.

Summary

The 1980s debates on childcare developed rather differently in Norway and Finland. In Norway the focus turned from “women’s rights” towards children’s well-being and fathers’ self-fulfilment. The autonomous feminist movement lost activists, and many of the former members found themselves in the establishment, even in government. The “women’s government” and the Section on Men’s Role established by it had great symbolic power, and the gender discourse was characterised by the claim that women had become emancipated and liberated, and now it was men’s turn. The emphasis was on caring for children as a way for men to realise themselves, which in turn would involve a change in the direction of a more harmonious society with less violence and fewer divorces. The reforms of the “women’s government” were not only symbolic, since an effort was made to create more daycare institutions. In addition, the parental leave schemes were extended and the idea of fathers’ own quotas was introduced. With the exception of the fathers’ quota, similar reforms were implemented in Finland. However, the Finnish political climate was different, as the debate on childcare led to a historical compromise between the advocates for homecare allowance, represented by the Conservatives and the Centre, and the Social Democrats, Socialists and Liberals demanding daycare for all children. The establishment of the cross-political cooperation forum for women’s organisations NYTKIS in 1988, illustrates that the political culture of compromise went deeper than mere governmental horse-trading. On the other hand, a division of labour occurred between different women’s movement organisations at this time, and the role of the
Council for Equality and the party-political women’s federations became stronger, including childcare issues (see Bergman 2002: 169; Kantola 2006: 58).

5. The 1990s

Norway: The war on cash benefit

As described in the previous chapter, the early 1990s were a period in which there was increased activity in the childcare sector in Norway; with the extension of the duration of the parental leave scheme to one year and the introduction of a fathers’ quota of two weeks. This chapter will concentrate on the most outstanding issue in the childcare debate of the decade, namely the battle over the cash benefit.

Since the 1970s, the Christian Democratic Party had been an advocate of homecare allowances for families with children up to the age of three who did not make use of daycare institutions (Rieber-Mohn 1994: 81). However, the public debate on this issue did not take off until the general election campaign of 1993, when the introduction of a cash benefit was the main electoral issue for the Christian Democrats (Korsvik 2006b: 19). A one year long parental leave, more daycare institutions and the introduction of a “father’s quota” were amongst Labour’s main electoral promises. The Labour Party won the election, but the Christian Democrats did not abandon the idea of the cash benefit. The disputes over the issue continued throughout the 1990s. In the 1997 election campaign the introduction of the scheme was again the Christian Democrats’ main electoral promise, and their popularity with the voters had never been greater.\(^4^4\) The coalition government of the Christian Democrats, the Centre and the Liberal parties had the support of the Conservative and the Progress parties when the cash benefit was introduced in 1998 (Arbeiderhistorie 2001: 207).

The debates over the question of the cash benefit ended the relatively peaceful time period in the family policy field in Norway. When the bill was discussed in Parliament in 1998, there had not been such charged debates since the battle over Norwegian membership in the EU in 1994, according to the former minister for family affairs, the Labour politician Karita Bekkemellem Orheim (Håland 2005: 26). Both issues evoked strong feelings, but the dividing lines were different. Contrary to the EU-debate, the views on the cash benefit followed a clear right-left political axis, with the right supporting the reform and the left, including the trade unions (teachers’

\(^4^4\) While 7.9 per cent voted for the Christian Democrats in 1993, 13.7 per cent did so in 1997. In 2005 the figure was 6.8 per cent (http://www.ssb.no/stortingsvalg/)
and nursery nurses’ organisations in particular), opposing it. Women’s organisations were split, roughly between the equal value oriented ones supporting the reform, and the equal status and women’s liberation oriented ones opposing it. Although the official argument was for cash benefit for “families” and not explicitly for “mothers”, and although it did not oblige the recipients to stay at home but left them free to choose e.g. private care by a childminder or a relative, it was obvious for the participants in the debates, both supporters and adversaries, that this was a gendered issue.

The Housewives’ Association and people from traditional Christian backgrounds as well as the non-socialist parties saw the reform as a recognition of the work of housewives, while women activists from the Labour Party and the other socialist parties, as well as feminists in grass roots organisations, in the public administration, and in academia, saw it as a strategy to force women “back to the kitchen” (Håland 2005: 26-43; Korsvik 2006b: 19). Advocates of the reform emphasised the family as the basis of society and made use of arguments based upon the notion of “choice”. According to them, the cash benefit would give parents the possibility to choose to stay home and spend time with their children, or to use private arrangements suitable for their needs. In addition, it was argued that it was unfair that families with children in daycare institutions received more public support than other families did (Håland 2005).

The opponents saw the cash benefit proposal as a backlash against gender equality since no fathers would stay at home for “pocket money” (as the allowance was rather low), and argued it would make women economically dependent on their husbands, in addition to weakening women’s career opportunities and pension rights. It was thus criticised for both being an attack on women’s liberation and on the welfare state, as parents would be rewarded for not using a public service. The freedom of choice argument was brushed aside on the grounds that there was a lack of places for children under the age of three in daycare institutions and those places that were available were expensive, so in fact there was no real choice (Arbeiderhistorie

One exception is the sociologist Kari Wærness, who did not think the cash benefit would have such a negative effect on the gender division at large (cf. Bergman 2004: 231).
It was argued that the state should build more daycare institutions instead of financing private arrangements, i.e. unregistered childminders, through the new cash benefit scheme. Besides, the opponents of the scheme often emphasised that it was good for children to stay in institutions with professional carers. The most radical opponents, as the already mentioned Women’s Front and the feminist group Ottar (established in 1991), demanded, in addition, a six hours working day and free daycare for every child (Korsvik 2006b: 19).

Local actions were carried out both in favour of and against the cash benefit during the 1990s. It was a visible issue in the International Women’s Day demonstrations on 8th March, where it was fiercely contested. Stavanger, a city on the west coast that is considered to be rather conservative and religious, proved to be exceptional in this respect. The city’s 8th March committee turned into a battlefield between supporters and opponents of the cash benefit scheme in both 1994 and 1995. Young, well-educated women occasionally started an autonomous “housewives’ group”, the only purpose of which was to promote the issue with the slogan “Share the goods – cash benefit now”. Even some members of the local radical feminist group Ottar supported the reform, before withdrawing from the organisation once it characterised the cash benefit as “reactionary”. A noteworthy feature of the 8th March women’s parade in Stavanger in the mid-1990s was the presence of elderly men who carried placards with the slogan: “Value housewives” on them (Korsvik 2006b: 20).

Finland: A “united” women’s movement cooperates over childcare policy
The economic recession in the first part of the 1990s hit Finland very hard and welfare policy expenditures were cut. The recession transformed not only the economic structures of the welfare state, but also the opportunity structures for many women. Unemployment rates shot up from almost nothing to 16.6 per cent in 1994 and remained high throughout the 1990s. This dramatic change was manifested, for example, in women’s maternity leave benefits: in a few years the share of minimum benefits increased from under 5 per cent close to 30.47 The economic recession began a period of transformation that has been interpreted as having changed the ethos of the

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46 It is worth noticing that in the 1990s it was almost impossible to obtain places in daycare institutions for children under the age of three, unless the family had “special needs” (lone mothers, refugees, parents with psychiatric problems, children with disabilities, etc.).

47 A flat rate minimum maternity benefit is paid to mothers/fathers who have not been employed or whose wages have been very low.
Finnish welfare state (Julkunen 2001). A new model of welfare governance was debated and an economic discourse started to permeate public policymaking more forcefully than before (Kantola A. 2002).

The political left and trade union women had campaigned for a faster pace to the building of daycare services throughout the 1970 and 1980s, but the demand still outpaced the supply at the end of the 1980s. Municipalities were hard pressed to meet the demands and the requirements of the 1984 childcare reform, which came fully into effect in 1990 (Kantola 2006: 58-59). The reform guaranteed parents an unconditional right to choose either public daycare or subsidised homecare for their children less than three years of age, and in order to meet this demand municipalities, for example Helsinki redirected the services to this age group. As a consequence, many older pre-schoolers were left without daycare. This was against the ethos of the daycare legislation, which aimed to provide universal services for all pre-school children (i.e. children under the age of seven). The municipal decision was therefore fiercely contested by the left wing and the trade union women’s movement (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 150).

In 1991, to ensure that the aims of the 1984 childcare agreement were carried out in practice, Parliament approved a reform that obliged municipalities to guarantee that the right to daycare services should cover all pre-school children by 1995 (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 150; Kantola 2006: 64). But in 1994 the Centre-Conservative coalition government proposed postponing the completion of the reform, using economic arguments. This was hard to accept for large parts of the women’s movement.

As was emphasised in the previous chapter, cooperation between different women’s organisations and across party-political lines had already become more conceivable in the late 1980s, and was manifested for example, in the establishment of the network NYTKIS in 1988. In the 1991 general election, women’s representation in Parliament rose to 39 per cent. The same year women MPs took a further step in the networking that had already begun in NYTKIS, and established a Women’s Network in Parliament. This Network included women MPs from both government and opposition parties. The Network strongly opposed the postponement of the daycare reform, and with only some minor deviations from the original reform,

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Another strategy was to pay a municipal homecare allowance to parents with children under three years of age in order to reduce the demand for daycare services.
it was finally decided that the right to daycare would cover all pre-school children by 1996 (Bergqvist et al. 1999: 165; cf. Kantola 2006). According to Kantola (2006: 70) the 1994 parliamentary debate on childcare “illustrated how the 1970s feminist working mother discourse had become the dominant discourse in Finland.”

The 1991 reform had also included provision for the extension of the homecare allowance by one age group to also cover three year old children. The Network of Women MPs was not completely unanimous on the issue and the old daycare vs. homecare divide was evident in the discussions. Yet, in 1994, there was consensus in the network to accept a delay of this extension of homecare allowance to this age group as long as the statutory right to public daycare was secured (Kantola 2006: 65). The plan to extend the homecare allowance to three year old children was never realised.

**Cuts and cosmetic reforms**

Parental leave was extended in 1991, immediately before the economic recession, but it was cut again both in length and in benefit levels in 1993. The cut in length was motivated by the strengthened position of fathers as receivers of an individual right to paternity leave, i.e. their paternity leave was no longer reduced from the total length of the parental leave. The situation of lone mothers, who thus lost a part of their parental leave, was – unlike in the 1970s – not discussed in Parliament. The 1993 cuts in parental leave did not lead to activity in the Network of Women MPs similar to that which occurred earlier in respect of securing the right to daycare for all children.

Studies on the impact and role of the women’s movement when it comes to childcare policy in the latter part of the 1990s are scarce. This may indicate that as the major childcare reforms had already been undertaken, the attention of the women’s movement had shifted to other issues instead (cf. Kantola 2006). In other words, there was no similar call for women’s activism in respect of childcare policy as there had been in the 1980s. When it comes to childcare policy, the focus was directed to the gendered use of the existing rights for leave, in particular to the fathers’ low take up of the parental leave. In addition, particularly towards the end of the 1990s, family policy debates increasingly started to focus on the problems parents experienced in combining family and paid work.

**Men and childcare**
In Finland the demands for childcare and parental leave rights have been predominantly a women’s issue. According to Jaana Vuori (2004: 33), the question of men’s participation in childcare seems to have emerged in response to the increasingly problematic linkage between women, children and the home, and not as a result of men’s own home and family related social activism. Yet, since the late 1960s sex-role movement, male activists have also been involved with these issues although we can hardly talk about a “movement” when it comes to men or fathers.

In the late 1980s and the 1990s men’s engagement in childcare debates started, as in Norway, within the formal gender equality institutions that argued for the extension of fathers’ parental leave and initiated campaigns to encourage men to use their leave rights. In the early 1990s the Sub委员会 on Men’s Issues of the Council for Gender Equality (TANE) initiated a working group “Fathers and Children” (Rantalaiho 2003: 213). From the beginning, TANE has paid attention to men and through establishing the subcommittee in 1988 it pushed more directly for gender equality policy to include men and men’s views (cf. Kumpumäki 2006). In 1990 the Subcommittee on Men’s Issues submitted the statement “Man and child” in which it demanded an extension of paternity leave. The rationale for more leave for men was connected to the father-child relationship. Fathers’ care leave experiences were considered to “give the father an alternative perspective away from working life” (Kumpumäki 2006: 12). In 1998, the Ministry of Social Affairs appointed a committee to examine how the father’s position could be promoted. In its report, the committee (KM 1999) initiated, among other things, moves to extend the parental leave by 25 days, and the allocation of this extension to fathers (i.e. a father’s quota).

Equal opportunities in employment for both women and men has been the main context for discussing fathers’ childcare responsibilities and rights in Finland. Yet a shift in focus is perceivable in the 1990s discourse that started to emphasise men’s rights as fathers, and the need to approach childcare also from men’s perspectives (cf. Rantalaiho 2003).

When the formal gender equality institutions are defined as part of the Finnish gender-based movement, it is evident that the men’s movement has had an impact on Finnish childcare policy since the 1980s – especially when it comes to approaching men’s parental leave rights and responsibilities. The role and impact of an

49 Already in 1973 the Council for Equality between Women and Men, TANE, proposed that the childcare leave should be extended to men (Kumpumäki 2006: 6).
independent men’s movement is less clear, since it seems that men have not (yet) organised as a movement to fight for a childcare policy that would meet their needs and wishes (cf. Jokinen 1999: 31; Hearn & Niemi 2006).

A men’s movement within academia (i.e., researchers on men and masculinities) that started to emerge in the late 1980s and the early 1990s has also become a critical voice on childcare issues. Research on men’s childcare practices and take up of parental leave has increased the visibility of men’s parental responsibilities in general. The gender bias in Finnish childcare policy has been raised in critical studies and debates on fatherhood (e.g. Vuori 2001 and 2007; Rantalaiho 2003). The debate on men’s role has not, however, focussed on conflicts in childcare policy similar to the debates that were held on women’s role in the 1960s and early 1970s – neither is there any comparable movement arguing for men’s rights as “carers” as there was arguing for women’s rights as “workers”.

The rainbow families’ rights in focus

Although a social movement advocating citizenship rights for sexual minorities was established in Finland already in 1975 (Sexual Equality, SETA), homosexual parents’ rights came onto the political agenda only in the 1990s. Lesbian women started to mobilise on family related issues, and established an interest organisation called “Rainbow Families” in 1997 in order to demand equal rights for families with lesbian, homosexual, bisexual, trans-gender and non-heterosexual parents. In party politics, the Left Alliance (the successor of the Left Socialist and Communist organisations) and the Green Party, in particular, actively started to advocate family related rights for lesbians and gay men. The demands (e.g. for the right to register a gay/lesbian partnership and the right to artificial insemination and adoption) expressed by the Rainbow families and by SETA, began to receive more support in Finnish society (Kuosmanen 2009).

Feminist welfare state research

In the 1990s feminist research on the welfare state gained a position in Finland that enabled it to influence debates on childcare policy. Both within mainstream and feminist welfare policy research the focus was directed to cross-country comparisons of welfare state arrangements, models and regimes. In Finland this meant that the Finnish welfare state and its family as well as gender policies were compared with
other Nordic countries, where shared parenthood had been in the focus of gender equality debates to a larger extent. Such comparisons revealed how Finland in some respects lagged behind its neighbours and in other respects (e.g., the legislation on daycare) was a frontrunner, particularly if compared to Norway. Feminist scholars pointed out the plausibly negative impact of the Finnish homecare model on women’s labour market position (see, e.g., Anttonen 1994). It would thus be tempting to argue that some feminist scholars took an “activist role” by pointing out how the welfare state is a gendered institution with gendered outcomes.

Summary

The economic backlash of the early 1990s also hit the Nordic countries, but had more serious consequences in Finland than in Norway. In Finland cuts in already approved childcare arrangements took place. The broad cooperation between women with different ideological backgrounds did, however, secure the dual childcare compromise of the 1980s. Whereas in Finland the discourses of fathers as carers seemed to lay a decade behind the corresponding debate in Norway in the 1980s, the opposite was the case with the debate on the cash benefit. This debate turned into a gendered battlefield in Norway much later than in Finland.

6. The 2000s

Norway: The daycare compromise, minorities’ and fathers’ rights

When researchers evaluated the cash benefit scheme in 2001, they concluded that the reform was significant in its political significance but had few practical consequences (Ellingsæter & Gulbrandsen 2001). Many parents received the support, but the reform had not changed their habits. Parents were not more at home with their children than before, but there was a small decrease in mothers’ average working time. The number of children in daycare had actually increased, and continued to do so. However, a report from the Institute for Labour and Social Research (FAFO) showed that 90 per cent of families with a background in Pakistan, Somalia and Vietnam received the cash benefit (compared with 60 per cent of ethnic Norwegians) (Kavli 2001). These findings gave new arguments to the opponents of the scheme. Researchers, left wing politicians and feminist activists saw the cash support as hindering integration and increasing the isolation of women with an ethnic minority background in Norwegian
society (Ahmadi 2006). This debate, as well as most of the following issues treated in this chapter, have not yet been analysed by researchers. Mass media sources have thus been used to give an outline of current debates in childcare issues.  

During the 2000s a rapid growth of daycare institutions has taken place in Norway. In 2003, all political parties agreed upon a “daycare compromise”, the aim of which was to provide for more and cheaper daycare institutions, by obliging the municipalities to take more responsibility for the daycare sector, and to set a maximum price for the parents’ fee. The compromise was possibly inspired by the Finnish model, as the “cash benefit”, financed by the supplement to the child allowance scheme given to families with children between one and three years old of age, was also increased. As a consequence, families who made use of childcare institutions lost a sizeable part of the child benefit, but according to Håland (2005: 40-41), this was approved without any debate in Parliament and received little media attention. “Freedom of choice” has remained an important argument in the debate on childcare in the 2000s, but while the non-socialist parties understood this as the families’ freedom to choose between different forms of care, the socialists interpreted it to mean freedom for parents (mothers especially) to choose employment (Håland 2005: 42).

In 2005 a coalition between the Labour, the Socialist and the Centre parties won governmental power and gained a majority in Parliament. Further development of the childcare sector (more daycare institutions and an extended fathers’ quota) was one of the “red-green government’s” main political issues. The Socialist Left Minister of Finance Kristin Halvorsen declared that she would resign if places in daycare institutions could not be provided for every child by 2007. This goal was not accomplished (and the minister did not resign), but the building of daycare institutions has been intense. The question to whether this rapid expansion is occurring at the expense of the quality of daycare provision has been a subject of much debate.

Daycare is a growing business, and the role of private companies in the sector is

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50 For an example, see http://nrk.no/nyheter/bakgrunn/821050.html
51 http://www.stortinget.no/inns/inns-200203-250.html
52 “Get rich on daycare” (“Rike på barnehager”), NRK 29.11. 2006 (http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.1400722); “Earn millions on daycare” (“Tjener millioner på barnehager”), Aftenposten 20.5. 2008 (http://www.aftenposten.no/nyheter/iriks/article2435371.ece)
increasing. Trade unions that organise employees in daycare institutions have reacted critically to the fact that it is possible to “make oneself a millionaire on offering pedagogically weak daycare institutions”, and have demanded a law that forbids private profiteering at the expense of public welfare arrangements.

In 2006 the “red-green government” declared that every child has a legal right to a place in a daycare institution. While having belonged to the Ministry for Family Affairs since the 1970s, daycare policies were now placed under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education (Gulbrandsen 2007).

“Women’s issues” and gender equality have been less represented in the debates on childcare in the 2000s, although the role of fathers as carers is a recurring topic. Moreover, there has been increasing attention to the rights of “minorities”, whether ethnic, homosexual, or lone parent families. In 1998 the Labour Women’s Network advocated the right for homosexual and single parents’ families to adopt children. Suitability as a parent should weigh more heavily than sexual orientation, they argued, and they wanted to implement juridical equality between registered cohabitation, partnership and marriage. The politics of the Labour Women’s Network became more or less the same as the party’s politics, and in 2000 the Labour government proposed a law that allowed singles and homosexuals to be foster parents (Arbeiderhistorie 2001: 208). In June 2008 Parliament approved a bill in which homosexual and heterosexual couples are legally juxtaposed in marriage, i.e. a gender-neutral marriage law was introduced in Norway.

The frontlines in the disputes on these issues have been between the equal status and women’s liberation and the homosexuals’ organisations on the one side, and the religious and traditionalist organisations on the other side. In Norwegian parliament the Christian Democrats and the Progress Party, as well as some members of the Centre Party have opposed it, whereas the majority of the representatives of all the other parties, including the Conservative Party, have supported it. The right of

53 While 41 % of the daycare institutions were run by private persons or institutions in 1990, the share was 56 % in 2006 (Gulbrandsen 2007: 55). In Norway it is forbidden to make profit on running private schools, but not on running private daycare institutions. http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.1400722
54 “Demand a ban on profit making on daycare!” (“Krev forbud mot barnehageutbytte!”), declaration from the Norwegian Union of Municipal and General Employees (Fagforbundet), 29.11.2006 (http://www.fagforbundet.no/Modules/KB_Publish/ShowArticle.asp?PageID=615&ArticleID=15458&ShowMore=1
“Expensive and bad” (“Dyrt og dårlig”), publication of the daycare institutions’ teachers’ union Første stege. Tidskrift for førskolelærere 1.12.2006
http://www.utdanningsforbundet.no/UtfTemplates/Page____46394.aspx
55 http://www.nrk.no/nyheter/1.5969210
lesbian women to artificial insemination seems to be especially frightening for its opponents, who have created networks to preserve marriage as an institution restricted to man and woman only, and to “preserve the father” (and not “reduce him to a sperm cell”). The movement against the matrimonial law, juxtaposing hetero- and homosexual couples, has mobilised thousands of people in protest.

Father’s leave and the father’s quota have been hot issues for discussion in the 2000s. In 2006 the father’s quota was extended to six weeks. The same year the government appointed a Commission on Equal Pay, with the aim of finding ways to reduce the wage gap between men and women. When the commission presented its proposals in February 2008, one of the means proposed was to divide the parental leave scheme into three parts; one part for the mother, one for the father, and one part to be shared between the parents as they wished. The argument was that mothers’ long absence from the labour market is one of several reasons for them earning less than men. To divide the parental leave scheme into three equal parts, as it has been practiced in Iceland since 2003, would “force” fathers to be more at home so that mothers could go out to work. However, this radical proposal was nipped in the bud. Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg (cf. the chapter dealing with the Section on Men’s Role in the 1980s), declared that a division of the parental leave scheme into three parts would prevent mothers breastfeeding and that many mothers prefer to have a longer leave from work. In September 2008 the consultative bodies will deliver their comments to the proposals of the Commission on Equal Pay.

In the spring of 2008 the Men’s Panel, a similar constellation to the Men’s Role Section twenty years earlier, delivered a report where a less radical parental scheme was suggested. According to the panel, the parental leave scheme should be

56 One example of such a network is the "Nordic Network for Marriage" established in 2007 to prevent juridical equality in marriage between heterosexual and homosexual couples in the Scandinavian countries (www.bevarekteskapet.no). The internet sites “Parent’s Rights” (www.foreldrerett.no); "Yes to Father" (www.JatilFar.no); ”Mother, father, children” (www.morfarbarn.no) and the more definite Christian ”Yes to marriage – between man and woman” (www.jatilekteskapet.no) seem to be closely related to the Nordic Network for Marriage.

57 "Support for Breastfeeding" (Ammehjelpen) is a particular organisation in the Norwegian feminist landscape. It was founded in 1968. At the time very few mothers breastfed their babies, and the organisation saw breastfeeding not only as a question of the baby’s health or as a means of strengthening the emotional bonds between mother and child, but also as an anti-capitalistic means to fight the producers of substitute breast milk (e.g., Nestlé) or as an anti-authoritarian means to undermine the power of arrogant health authorities (Korsvik 2008: 227). Their demand is for the right to breastfeed babies whenever and wherever the mother wants to. In the 1970s it was considered to be provocative for women to breastfeed in public. Today this is common everywhere in public places in Norway. "Support for Breastfeeding" gives advice to mothers having problems with breastfeeding and is a consultative body for government proposals.
divided into four parts, where one quarter should be reserved for each of the parents and two quarters should be shared between the parents according to their own wishes. In June 2008 the leader of the Men’s Panel, the Labour politician Arild Stokkan-Grande, proposed an increase in the father’s quota to three months, in order to appease the association “Support for Breastfeeding” and other women who did not want to lose any of their parental leave. The idea would be to add it to the current scheme, which is 44 weeks with full salary or 54 weeks with 80 per cent of the previous salary.

A recent debate in Norway has focused on the fact that about 20 per cent of fathers do not have the right to fathers’ quotas, as this is bound to the mother’s income. This has been seen as being unjust to couples where the mother is a student, unemployed, on sickness leave or a housewife. The current decade has seen a strong increase in the immigrant population, and as around 50 per cent of immigrant women are not employed, a large percentage of immigrant fathers do not have the right to fathers’ quota.

Finland: Flexible childcare policy rules and a new focus on homecare

In Finland new developments have taken place in the 2000s, and childcare policy reforms have also been carried out. In recent years the Finnish economy has performed relatively strongly after recovering from the effects of the recession in the 1990s. Yet, families with small children in particular have become economically more vulnerable. The issue of “time squeeze” that started to become important in the late 1990s has become an even more important theme in the intense debates on the reconciliation of the family and working life. The role of the public childcare policy is also relevant in this context. Childcare policy has become a central argument in discussions of the sustainability of the Finnish welfare society and policy proposals are often framed in terms of the need to secure the future labour force. In this context

58 The Men’s Panel was established by the government in 2007, and like the Section on Men’s Role it was an object for both ridicule and attack. Unlike the Section, the members of the Men’s Panel were solely male. Novel developments since 1987 include the participation of Sámi and migrant organisations, as well as activists from associations working with violent men, and even a pressure group for divorced fathers. Their mandate was to participate in the public debate, as well as to make recommendations to a forthcoming White Paper on men, men’s roles and gender equality. In their conclusion, the Men’s Panel also recommended compulsory military service for women and health checks for all men.


60 Aftenposten June 29, 2008
fathers’ rights to parental leave have been developed and fathers have been encouraged to use these rights in a much more determined way than had been the case as late as in the 1990s. The dual model of Finnish childcare policy has continued, but the centre/right governments have increased the child home (and private) care allowances, while at the same time many municipalities struggle to maintain the quality of daycare services.

Some of the Rainbow Families’ demands for equal rights to family life and to family policy measures have been realised in recent years: since 2002 same-sex couples have had the right to formalise their partnership, in 2006 Parliament adopted a law on artificial insemination which entitles single women and lesbian couples to treatments, and in 2006 some parental leave rights were extended to same-sex parents in registered partnerships (Kuosmanen 2009).

Shared childcare responsibilities and flexible schemes

The list of childcare policy reforms undertaken since 2000 is extensive, including the establishment of a father’s quota arrangement and increased flexibility in taking of parental leave. Family diversity is increasingly being recognised, as registered same-sex couples are entitled to parental leave and benefit, and non-resident parents are entitled to temporary care leave (i.e. the right for leave to care for a sick child). More reforms are under consideration, for example, the government is examining the possibility of reforming the parental leave scheme along the lines of the “Icelandic model”, where the leave period would be divided into three equal parts so that one part is for the mother, one for the father and one is to be shared. If such a reform were to be realised, it would be a victory for the Finnish gender equality movement that has been arguing for such a reform for a long time.

So far, there is not much research into the role played by the women’s or other gender based movements in respect of the policy processes that have led to these reforms (but see Bergman 2004; Kuosmanen 2009). Criticism of the Finnish homecare allowance scheme mainly comes from feminist scholars, yet (and in contrast to Norway) no serious demands to abolish the system have been made. Rather it seems that the homecare allowance has become an institutionalised part of the Finnish childcare model, and has even gained a more crucial position in it. Reasons for the lack of strong criticism of homecare allowances are many. The mid-1980s compromise linked homecare allowances and daycare services strongly
together and this might account for a reluctance to question the homecare allowance.

Another reason not to criticise the homecare allowance scheme too much, at least not for party political actors to do so, is that it has been popular. Compared to Norway, the migrant population in Finland has been relatively small, and thus the integration arguments that have been raised in Norway would not (yet) resonate in a similar way in Finland.

The homecare movement: challenging the legitimacy of daycare?

At the turn of the 2000s, organised groups of home mothers started to demand the improvement of the homecare allowance. They mobilised around the collective identity of maternalism claiming to promote the interests of marginalised and alternative voices on childcare. In 2002, they founded a new vocal movement in the form of an interest organisation, *Lapsiperheiden keskusliitto* (Association of Families with Children). Despite its neutral name and general framing (that often gives the association a role as a spokesperson in matters concerning family and childcare policies), the activists of the association present the homecare allowance as an important means for taking the interest of children, and especially the smallest ones, into account (Bergman 2004). The association argues for mothers’ (parents’) right to choose to stay at home with their pre-school children should they want to do so. The association campaigns for a considerable increase in child homecare allowances and instead of relying on subsidised daycare services, it wants parents to receive a monthly allowance that can be used either for buying care services or for homecare (http://lape.fi/fi/yhdistys-hallitusohjelma.html).

The demands were expressed in a discourse that was framed around arguments about the best “interest of the child” and the general well-being of children. The debate on the best model of childcare exploded, filling Finnish the media (Jallinoja 2006). The two competing “ideologies” were there again, the difference now being that as the *homecare side* still could rest on the old arguments, the other side, the one that speaks for *mothers’ right to employment*, had lost some of its reference points in society in which the debate on family life increasingly focuses on a “time squeeze” in families with small children and its negative effects on children’s wellbeing. The side arguing for a women’s right to paid work has thus now been placed on the *defensive*.

The intensified role of feminist scholars
Since 2000, feminist research has articulated the consequences of the long care leaves or pointed out how inflexible the Finnish childcare policy system is, just as it did in the 1990s. The growing importance of feminist scholars could have a significant impact on the development of family policy. In a small Nordic country, like Finland, political actors are, both directly and indirectly, influenced by researchers. The fact that researchers repeatedly and persistently point out the gendered realities of care and explain its connections to the unequal gendered citizenship (e.g., Anttonen 1994 and 2003; Salmi 2006) can be counted as an increasingly important form of feminist activity (cf. Kantola 2006). Feminist scholars were highly visible in the public reaction to the centre/right government’s proposal to downgrade the statutory right to public daycare in 2007. Feminist scholars also defended the right of women and children to the benefits of the universal system (*Helsingin Sanomat* 4.6.2007). The plans to cut daycare rights received a cold reception, and the Government was forced to withdraw its proposal.\(^6^1\)

Kantola (2006) argues that when it comes to the question of childcare the role of the feminist movement and the gender equality bodies has decreased, and the role of academic research has increased. In the first half of the 1990s feminist scholars identified Finland as a potentially women-friendly welfare state and universal services, such as childcare, were seen as the key to that women-friendliness (ibid: 60-61). In the late 1990s, the focus of feminist scholars started to shift to the gendered outcomes of Finnish childcare policy, elaborating the development of childcare policy from a gender equality perspective (Anttonen & Sointu 2006; Haataja 2004), but also from perspectives that pay attention to various situations in which mothers (and fathers) make decisions about care arrangements (Salmi 2006). These studies indicate the emergence of a more critical approach to the women-friendliness of the Finnish childcare policy model. The reasons are intertwined: women typically take long care leaves whereas there is little evidence that men are significantly more active as carers than they were before, at least not when it comes to their take up of parental leave and other childcare leaves. All motivations for the women’s movement are in fact present

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\(^6^1\) The idea was to reduce the right to daycare services so that families where a parent is “actually available for care” would no longer be entitled to full-time services. The right of low-income families to services free of charge was also to be abolished, according to the proposal. Later the same government increased the maximum fee payable for daycare, thus distinguishing itself from the policy development that has been characteristic for the Nordic regimes since the 1990s (Rantalaiho forthcoming).
– unless, then, the women’s movement has changed its understanding of the relationship between care and women’s social citizenship.

Summary
Up to the 2000s the employment rate of mothers in Finland was higher than it was in Norway, and the coverage of daycare was far more developed. More recently, a certain convergence is apparent in the childcare models of the two countries. In Norway, a rapid development in daycare provision has taken place and mothers’ employment rates are currently higher than they are in Finland. However, there are also important differences. The ideal of shared parenthood and fathers’ participation in childcare has had more concrete results in Norway than in Finland, following the increase of the fathers’ quota and an ongoing debate on its further augmentation. Currently, it looks as if the Finnish authorities are also seriously planning to develop the parental scheme in such a way that fathers would be encouraged to take a bigger part of the leave.

The critical debate in Norway about the cash benefit scheme has no counterpart in Finland. On the contrary, it seems as if support for the homecare of children is an institutionalised part of Finnish family policies. In Finland a family-centred movement emerged during the decade, arguing for better benefits for homemakers. The “daycare compromise” in Norway in 2003 made daycare institutions cheaper and more available than before. At the same time the cash benefit increased in value, although not in terms of its takeup. An exception is immigrant families where a large majority receives the support. This, and the fact that many immigrant fathers do not have the right to father’s leave due to their wives’ lack of paid work, has become a critical issue.

In Norway, more so than in Finland, the present decade has been characterised by greater attention being given to the right of minorities. Immigrants form a larger share of the population in Norway, and the impact of welfare arrangements on the immigrant population is given more attention by researchers. Organisations representing gay and lesbian rights have a strong influence on official policy making, and despite rather large mobilisations on the part of Christians and traditionalists, the law juxtaposing heterosexual and homosexual marriages (including all the rights on parental leave) was approved in June 2008. In Finland a law that allows two persons of the same sex to register as a couple was approved in 2002, i.e. about ten years later
than in Norway. The rights of homosexual parents have been placed on the agenda in Finland and pressure from the association “Rainbow families” has resulted in some changes in parental leave legislation (Kuosmanen 2009).

7. Conclusion

This research review of political actions and claims by women’s movements and other gender-conscious organisations in Finland and Norway on childcare and parental leave issues relates the development of this policy field to women’s political mobilisation and claim making. The impact of Finnish and Norwegian women’s (and some men’s) actions and organising in the making of welfare policies has been highlighted through an examination of childcare and parental policy reforms in the period ranging from the 1960s until today. In particular, issues such as institutionalised daycare services, allowances to support the home care of children and the issue of paternal quotas in parental leave schemes have been controversial issues and have also often divided women’s organisations.

Our review on research undertaken in Finland and Norway shows that the state and the public apparatus are important arenas for feminist strategies, negotiations and coalition building in childcare issues and parental leave policies. In the Nordic countries it is not always easy to draw a strict borderline between civil society and the state. One easily gains the impression that there are few actors behind the policies, or that all reforms come “from above”. We have tried in this report to emphasise that one should not underplay the significance of women’s activism and politics. It is important to highlight the political rationales and actors behind the policies and to analyse the major debates and “significant voices” that have helped shape the formation of childcare policies. Whereas research on the family and parental policies is relatively abundant in Finland and Norway, studies highlighting the impact of groups, organisations and movements that have promoted policy-making and legislation on such issues are less common. In particular, this is the case in respect of developments since the 1980s onwards.

In both Finland and Norway women have used a combined strategy based on a mixture of “inside” and “outside” organising. Outside organising and claim making has been more significant in Norway in childcare issues, while large parts of the Finnish mobilisation were channelled through established party-political...
organisations. "State feminism” is a concept coined to describe the close affiliation between civil-society based feminism, institutionalised state politics and research. No doubt, the state feminist approach has been of strategic importance when it comes to the development of childcare and parental leave policies in both Finland and Norway. Yet it is also important to note that civil society based mobilisation is of utmost importance for changing public discourses and cultural practices. Undoubtedly, childcare and parental leave policies in both Finland and Norway have gained from this combination of “inside” and “outside” organising and claim making from women and other gender-conscious actors.
References


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Appendix 1 Organisation map Norway

Map over relevant actors the childcare landscape in Norway 1960s – 2000s
(Apart from certain state initiated equality and childcare related political organs, these are all non-religious NGOs. Associations organising private companies that run daycare institutions are not included, Neither pedagogical organizations such as the Steiner movement etc.)

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<td>Sámi Women’s Forum (1993)</td>
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| Single parents’ organisations | Association of Single Parents (1966) |      |      |      |      |


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\(^{62}\) The woman’s policy committee of the Socialist party, and the woman’s policy committees of the Workers’ Communist Party (Marxist-Leninists), their election alliance, and their descendant (2007) Red, is not taken into account as there are even less independent of the party than those mentioned here.

\(^{63}\) Since the 1960s the (Moscow oriented) Norwegian Communist Party has had less than 1% of the votes in parliamentary elections.

\(^{64}\) Only non-religious NGOs which deal with questions of childcare beyond fathers’ rights after divorce is taken into account.

\(^{65}\) Contemporary sources refer to a men’s movement in the 1970s, but further research is necessary to reveal information about this.
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## WOMEN’S MOVEMENTS, GENDER-BASED AND MINORITY GROUP ACTORS: ORGANISATION MAP FOR FINLAND

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<td>Naisten kulttuuriyhdistys ry (The Culture Association of Women) (1979)</td>
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<td>Vihreät Naiset (Green Women’s Association) (1993)</td>
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<td>Men’s movement organisations</td>
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<td>Miessakit (Miessakit)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family &amp; child welfare organisations</td>
<td>MLL – Mannerheimin lastensuojeluliitto</td>
<td>Yksinhuoltajien ja yhteishuoltajien liitto</td>
<td>Elatusvelvollisten Liitto r.y. (Association of Non-Resident Parents)</td>
<td>Lape - Lapsiperheiden etujärjestö (Interest organisation for families with children)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>LSKL – Lastensuojelun keskusliitto (1937)</td>
<td>Väestöliitto (Family Federation) (1941)</td>
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<td>Lape – Lapsiperheiden etujärjestö (2001)</td>
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<td>Sámi Soster (Sami Social and Health) (1998)</td>
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<td>Lesbian/gay organisations</td>
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<td>SETA - seksuaalinen tasavertaisuus ry (Sexual Equality)</td>
<td>Mummolaakso (Grannyvalley) Lesbian and bi-sexual</td>
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</table>
| Academic organisations | SUNS – Suomen naistutkimuksen seura  
(Association for Women’s Studies in Finland)  
(1988→) | women’s association.  
(1994→) | Sateenkaariperheet  
– Regnbågsfamiljer ry  
(Rainbow families)  
(1997→) | Suomen miestutkimuksen seura  
(Association for Men’s Studies in Finland)  
(2007→) |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Formal equality institutions (gender/ethnicity) | RONK – Romaniasiain neuvottelukunta  
(Advisory board on Romani affairs in Finland)  
(1956→) | TANE - Tasa-arvoasioiden neuvottelukunta  
(Council for Gender Equality)  
(1972→) | Tasa-arvovaltuuttu  
(The Ombudsman for Equality)  
(1987→) | Vähemmistövaltuutettu  
(1991/2001→) |
| – | Tasa-arvolautakunta  
(The Equality Board)  
(1987→) | | Tasa-arvolautakunta  
(The Equality Board)  
(1987→) | Sámediggi - Saamelaiskäräjät  
(1996→) |
| – | TANE:n miesjaosto  
(TANE Subcommittee on Men’s Issues)  
(1988→) | | TANE:n miesjaosto  
(TANE Subcommittee on Men’s Issues)  
(1988→) | ETNO – etnisten suhteiden neuvottelukunta  
(Advisory Board for Ethnic Relations)  
(1998→) |
| Trade unions | SAK - Suomen ammattiliittojen keskusjärjestö  
(Central Organisation of Finnish Trade) | | | Tasa-arvoksikko  
(The Gender Equality Unit)  
(2001→) |
| STTK – Toimihenkilö-keskusjärjestö (Confederation of Salaried Employees) (1943→) |
| AKAVA – Korkeasti koulutettujen työmarkkinajärjestö (Confederation of Unions for Professional and Managerial Staff in Finland) (1950→) |
| Other organisations | Other organisations | Yhdistys 9 (Association 9) (1965/6-1970) |


Remarks to the table:
Notice that organisations often cooperate in/belong to central or umbrella organisations (e.g. all women’s political party federations cooperate within NYTKIS).

**The map is not all-inclusive.** A number of organisations (local groups, short-lived organisations and groups, smaller groups of activists, etc.) are not included in the map. Trade unions have a central role in debates on childcare through the central organisations, and their women’s sections and committees, but so do many trade unions which are not mentioned in the map (e.g. Suomen Kätilöliitto ry *The Association of Midwives in Finland*, and LTLO – Lastentarhaopettajaliitto, *The Association of Kindergarten Teachers in Finland*) have been active in childcare policy issues. The men’s movement has also organised through the internet (websites and blogs) and mailing lists. For almost ten years one virtual room for men’s activists was the mailing list for men ([man@kaapeli.fi](mailto:man@kaapeli.fi)) organised by TANE’s men’s section in 1997-2006.

**Translations from Finnish into English** may differ from the review report. In the map we have mainly used the English terms that the organisations themselves use. In the review text we sometimes use terms according to the research literature reviewed.