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Paths, policies and families: The history of Icelandic family policies

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Family policies and child welfare in the Nordic countries

Builds on previous and ongoing projects

- PhD dissertation: *Family Policy in Iceland 1944-1984*
- Centre of Excellence in Welfare Research- RANNÍS + REASSESS *Þróun velferðarinnar 1988-2008* (Eydal and Ólafsson eds.)
- Project on Advanced Maintenance with Hrefna Friðriksdóttir Associate Professor, Faculty of Law UI
- Project with Heimir Hilmarsson MA student in SW on lone parent families
- Projects on parental leave with Ingólfur V. Gíslason Associate Professor Department of Sociology UI

The definition of family policy

- Family policy is defined to be *policies that are aimed at families with children under the age of 18 years: family law, child care policies and policies on transfer payments for families.*
- Policies on services, housing, debt reliefs and services and benefits for children with special needs, e.g. disabled children and policies regarding child welfare are left outside the scope of this presentation

Iceland and the Nordic welfare model



- The Nordic countries are usually categorised as belonging to the Scandinavian or Nordic welfare model
- From breadwinner model, where the fathers provide and mothers care - to individual model where both parents have equal duties - “dual breadwinner/dual carer family”
- Iceland: Shares the goal but **historically a different path – smaller welfare expenditure – less public support** (Broddadóttir et al. 1997; Júlíusdóttir, 1993; Ólafsson, 1999)

Expenditure on families with children as % of GNP/number of children 0-16 years

	D	F	Í	N	S
1960	0,06	0,07	0,07	0,09	0,08
1984	0,14	0,15	0,09	0,12	0,19
1997	0.21	0,19	0,09	0,17	0,20

1997 coherent family policy

- Fragmentary in nature and hardly referred to in public debates until the 1990s
- 1994 (the UN's Year of the Family) – debate + research on families was influential and promoted further debate and policy making (see, Broddadóttir, 1994; Júlíusdóttir, 1993; 1995)
- In 1997, the Icelandic parliament, Alþingi, passed a resolution on both the formation of an official family policy as well as measures to be implemented that would strengthen the position of the family In English at: [http://felagsmalaraduneyti.is/interpro/fel/fel.nsf/Files/resolution_public_family_policy/\\$file/resolution_public_family_policy.PDF](http://felagsmalaraduneyti.is/interpro/fel/fel.nsf/Files/resolution_public_family_policy/$file/resolution_public_family_policy.PDF)

FAMILY LAW- A NORDIC PATH

1910-20s: Revision of Family Law in all Nordic countries

- Marriage law: Two equal individuals with the same marital obligations - including obligations to provide for each other
- Child centered family: An explicit legal formulation of equal parental obligations as well as the best interest of the child when deciding custody after divorce (Therborn, 1993)

Examples on major changes of family law in the Nordic countries



Marital laws	D	F	I	N	S
Equality between spouses	1922 / 1925	1929	1920/ 1923	1918/ 1927	1915/ 1920
Revision	1969	1969	1972	1969	1968/ 1973
Act in respect of children					
Same for all children	1976	1975	1982	1980	1976

The Nordic countries have emphasized children rights and legal rights of same sex families in last decades

- Children's rights- including children's rights to provision and the care of **both parents**
 - joint custody 1992
 - joint custody main rule in 2006
 - possibility of court ordered joint custody in 2013
- Legal rights of same sex families
 - registered partnership in 1996
 - equal marriage in 2010



Jón Gnarr former Mayor of Reykjavik in Gay Pride 2010



CHILD CARE POLICIES, FOLLOWING THE FOOTSTEPS

Main goals of the Nordic child care policies



- The argumentations for care support for parents have mainly been of two different kinds:
 - to promote children's well becoming and being
 - to ensure gender equality and increased female labour force participation
- Last decades also:
 - to increase **fathers participation** in care

Iceland did develop fewer rights + much later in time



- In 1975 employed mothers entitled to 3 months paid maternity leave (paid through the unemployment insurance system)
- **In 1980 changed to universal scheme of 3 months paid parental leave**
- In 1987-1990 gradually increased to 6 months
- In 1998 fathers received the rights to two weeks paternity leave

Act on Maternity/Paternity Leave and Parental Leave in 2000

(no. 95/2000)



- The goal of the act is, “...to ensure children’s access to both their fathers and mothers. Furthermore, the aim of this Act is to enable both women and men [later changed to both parents] to co-ordinate family life and work outside the home”



Number of weeks of paid parental leave 2013

Weeks	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
Total	50	48	39	57	69
Mothers quota	18	18	13	14	8
Fathers quota	0	9	13	14	8
Father with mother	2	3	0	2	2

Day care – late start- private issue until 1973

- 1973: First law
- 1973-1990: Compared to the Nordic countries, **lower volumes of day care** - mainly part time for 3-6 years old
- Constant increase in female labour market participation - among the highest in the world (+ high fertility rates)
- Parents forced to seek private solutions, part time work, irregular working hours, children placed in different care during the same day etc....

Early 1990s new laws and increased volumes during the 1990s and 2000s

New laws: Preschools replace day care centres
+ nannies replaced by pre-school teachers

- 1994: The electoral alliance of parties left of the centre with the centre party in Reykjavik made an **increase in day care volumes on of the main political issues**
- **Gradual increase in volumes**; both number of children and hours pr. child- from part time to full time

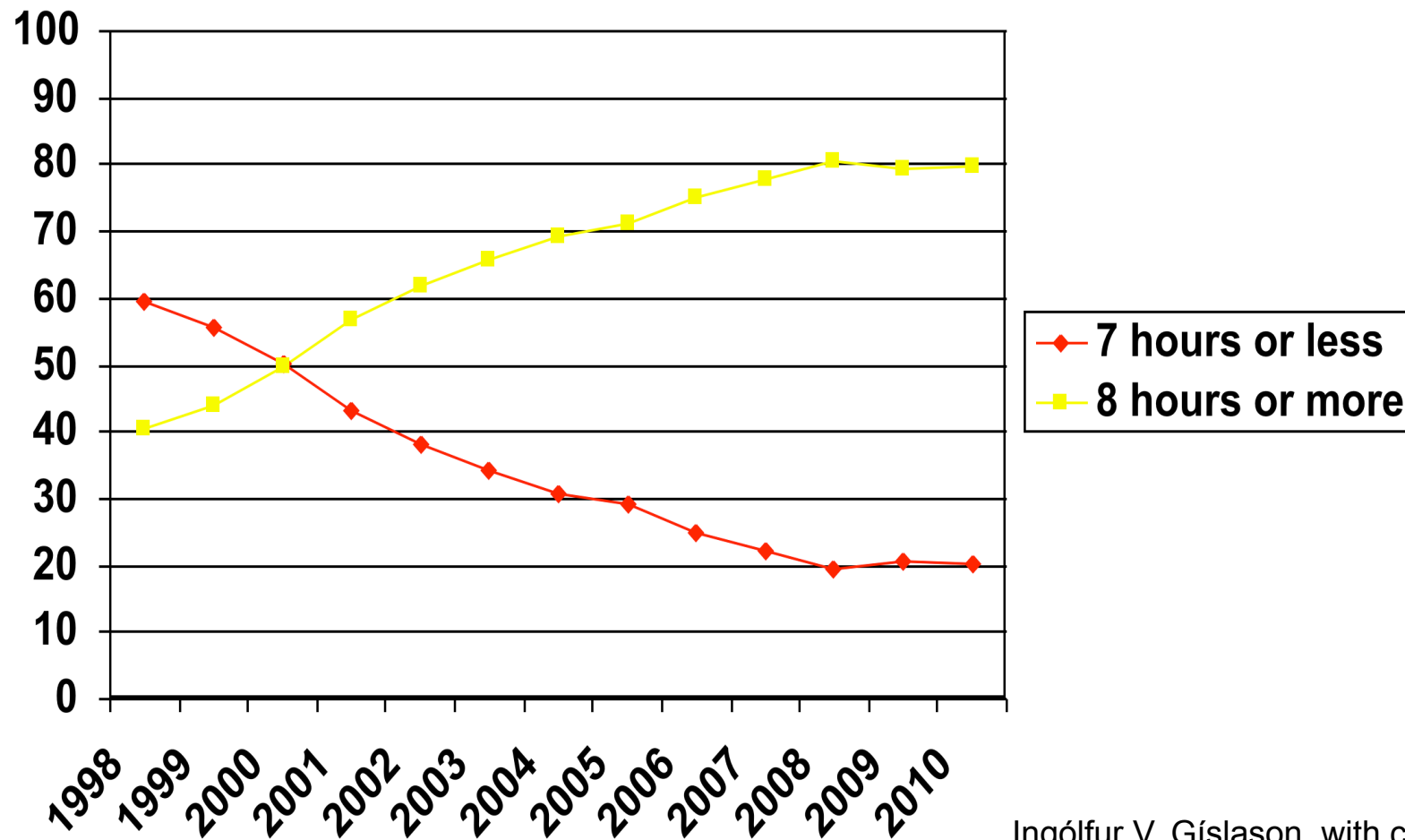
Icelandic children under 6 enrolled in public day care 1998, 2005, 2011

% of age group

(www.hagstofa.is)

Age	1	2	3	4	5
1998	12	65	87	91	88
2005	30	89	94	95	93
2011	29	94	96	96	95

Length of daily stay in kindergartens Iceland 1998-2010



Ingólfur V. Gíslason, with courtesy

	Denmark	Finland	Iceland	Norway	Sweden
0 - 1 year	Paid parental leave (50-64 weeks) Day care (19%)	Paid parental leave (58 weeks) Day care (1%)	Paid parental leave (39 weeks) Day care (8%) Care gap- private solutions	Paid parental leave (59 weeks) Day care (4%)	Paid parental leave (69 weeks) Day care (-)
1 - 2 year		Day care (40%) Cash for care (58%)	Day care (80%) Care gap- private solutions	Day care (80%) Cash for care (25%)	Day care (71%) Paid parental leave Municipal schemes of cash for care (2.1%)
3 - 5 year	Day care (97%)	Day care (74%)	Day care (96%)	Day care (96%)	Day care (97%)

In sum: Icelandic care policies

- The aim is dual caring but after the 9 month paid parental leave the care gap is mainly bridged by mothers
- The emphasis has been on extending the paid parental leave and to increase day care for children between 1-2 years
- Paid parental leave extended to 12 months in 2012 (5+5+2) but abolished in December 2013!
- The pre-school takes departure in children's best, no legal rights but high volumes



FAMILY BENEFITS: A DIFFERENT PATH

All Nordic countries: From breadwinner to individual model

- Gradually developed from the breadwinner model developed in the 1940s and 1950s to an individual model where both parents have equal rights to benefits - “dual breadwinner/ dual carer family”
- In the 1970s and early 1980s lone fathers gained the same rights to benefits and services as lone mothers
- Still traits of the breadwinner model, e.g. the system of advanced maintenance

Benefits for families with children 2014

- Mother/father wages for lone parents
- Advanced maintenance payments for lone parents
- Housing benefits (tested towards income)
- Social assistance (local authorities)
- + Extra support for students with children
- Child benefits— income tested lone parents receive a higher amount than two parent families

Child benefits: Income tested

- 2 parents with 2 children 3 and 7 years:
 - Income 800.000=10.584 pr. month
 - Income 600.000=22.918 pr. month
 - Income 200.000=38.918 pr. month
- Lone parent with with 2 children 3 and 7 years:
 - Income 800.000=17.114 pr. month
 - Income 600.000=27.114 pr. month
 - Income 200.000=47.114 pr. Month
 - Sweden 1050 SEK = $17.608 \times 2 = 35.216$ ISK

Fragmented benefit system

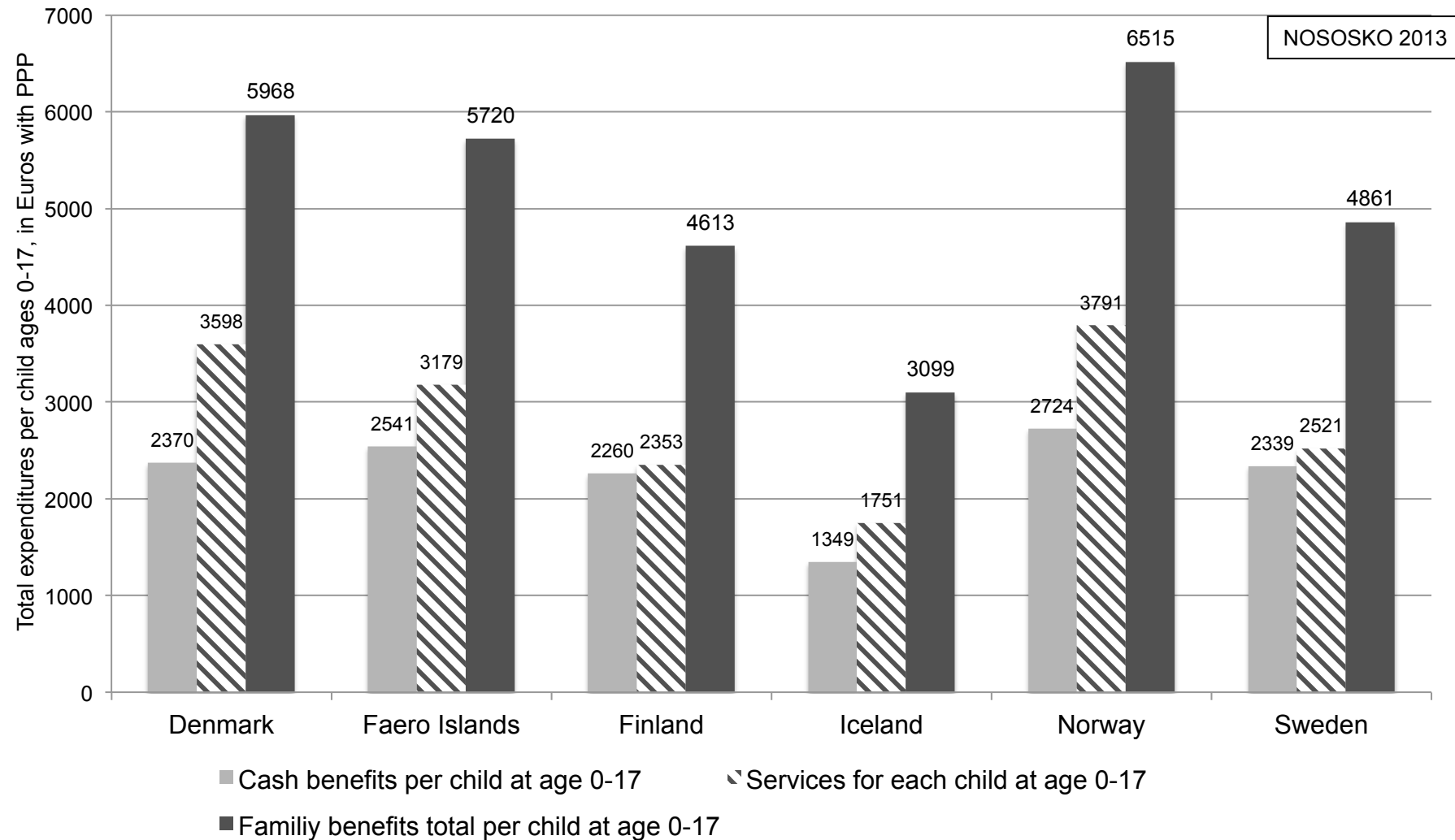
- Arnaldur Sölvi Kristjánsson (2011) analysed the outcomes for different two parent families and his study shows that the system is not coherent nor is the support systematic + the goals are unclear
- The system of advanced maintenance has in principle been unchanged from 1946 despite the radical changes towards the individual model in family law (Eydal and Friðriksdóttir, 2012) and parents that do not share residency with their children do not receive any benefits

Total incomes of parents with two children age 5 and
9 with median income

Incomes	RP	NRP
Income	418.000	418.000
Income tax etc.)	-124.202	-121.586
Mother/Father wages	6.777	0
Child benefits	29.929	0
Rental benefits	14.033	0
Maintenance	46.822	-46.822
Additional maintenance	11.706	-11.706
Total income	403.064	237.887

(Eydal and Hilmarrsson, 2014)

Ólafsson: Total expenditures on family benefits, per child at ages 0-17, in 2011



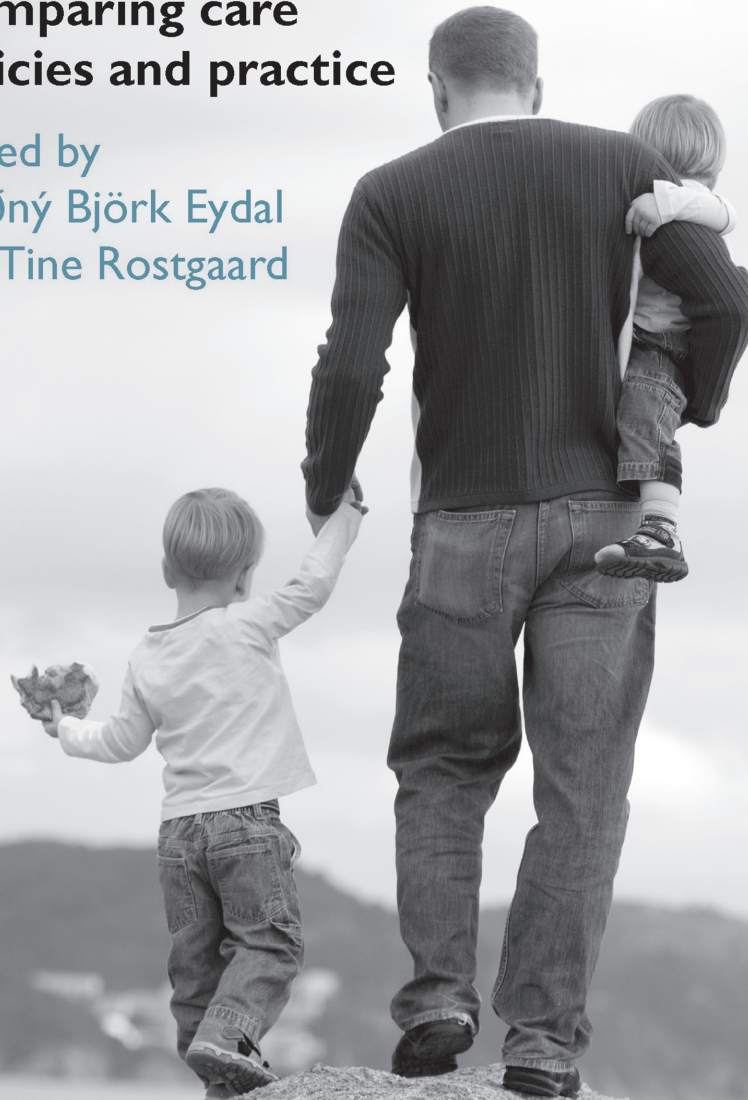
To conclude: Nordic goals but less support

- Family law- similar framework
- Child care policies- less support, shorter paid parental leave, care gap and no legal rights to preschool
- Family benefits, income tested child benefits, outdated system of child maintenance and in general lack of coherency in the system

FATHERHOOD IN THE NORDIC WELFARE STATES

**Comparing care
policies and practice**

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