

The future of the welfare state: paths of social policy
innovation between constraints and opportunities
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Governing welfare by reshaping welfare needs

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Introduction

By this paper I argue that articulation of welfare needs is a vocal feature in governing welfare. Welfare needs are articulated in terms of individual or collective needs but in fact their origin is more or less in domains of governing. Discourses of welfare needs are effective way to legitimate policy practises and policy change in contemporary society. Therefore, welfare needs and the process of reshaping them should be given more emphasis on welfare governance analysis.

In this paper I focus on welfare needs in the context of welfare state reform that can be described as a change from bureaucratic state to managerial state. The paper analyses welfare state reform discourse and need assessment discourse in social services. The aim is to demonstrate how the idea of welfare need structure these discourses. There are differences on the ways welfare needs are articulated by welfare state reform discourse and need assessment discourse. This feature is interesting as both of these discourses are part of reshaping welfare governance.

The paper should be read as an idea paper. Actually, I would like to have comments if the whole idea is worth of developing or not. If someone thinks it has some potential, it would be nice to have comments about how to proceed with it. The paper is structured in the following way. Firstly I discuss about welfare needs. Theoretically welfare needs are understood both as objective and interpretative matters. I define welfare needs as a nodal point in modernizing and reforming welfare state. Secondly I analyse welfare need interpretations at ideological and practical level of welfare state reform. Welfare state reform discourse and needs assessment discourse use ideas of welfare needs to legitimate change and to restructure identities and positions. Conclusion focus on the differences between these discourses and the consequences they have.

Objective and political welfare needs

Generally there are two ways to approach needs (Robertson 1998, Gough 2004). On the one hand, they may be defined as human needs having objective ground. By using this view needs are interpreted as objective,

technical problems based on empirical evidence or as conceptual matter. For example Doyal and Gough (1991) argue that needs can be separated from wants. If human needs are not satisfied serious harm of some objective kind occurs. Defined in that way, welfare needs, or at least basic human needs, are regarded as having universal base. Human needs are something that people require to be human and part of society. Doyal and Gough (see Gough 2004) define basic needs from this point of view. According to them basic needs are those kinds of needs that are fundamental for critical participation and critical autonomy. Critical participation and autonomy refer to reflective agency that allows people to evaluate society critically and regard it as non-determinate. This critical potential is a precondition for ability to adapt to changes and make a difference. Doyal and Gough define intermediate needs in relation to basic needs. Intermediate needs satisfy basic needs by protecting the health and autonomy of people. They have universal base and include such as food and water, education, security and care. The understanding of intermediate needs and the way they should be provided, however, evolve in time as the knowledge about human needs change and expand.

On the other hand, needs may be defined as cultural and political matters, and subjects to power relations. By this view needs become needs when there are interpreted as needs (Fraser 1989). Therefore, welfare needs as such do not have effect on social policy practices and solutions, yet welfare needs and the interpretation of these needs is a central concern of welfare state (Fraser 1989). The idea of need is important for welfare state policies as their foundation is based on cultural assumptions about justice (Pfau-Effinger 2005). This cultural understanding varies between nations and welfare states. The idea of justified need includes the understanding about social services, their provision and therefore also about relation between informal and formal care arrangements and the line between individual and collective responsibility.

Interpretation of needs is a political process. It is a process of recognizing needs and legitimating them. Particular needs are transformed into universal or at least generally justified needs. By this articulation process, welfare needs become recognised as potential social risks requiring social regulation and collective responsibility. This transformation of welfare need into social risk is a central logic behind articulation of needs. The need interpretations,

and therefore also struggles over welfare needs, occur at different levels and emergence between different kinds of agents. Various needs and political solutions to these needs constitute political structure as struggles over welfare needs draw the political lines between different political and cultural groups. For example "old needs" and "new needs" frame and reframe politics and political coalitions in society (Häusermann 2006). Different parties such as citizen movements, politicians, civil servants and professional, aim to create legitimacy for their interpretation about welfare needs, or for their ideas of justified welfare needs (see Robertson 1998). In welfare state context service provision is significant site for interpretations and negations over legitimate needs. Clients or customers and workers or professionals are involved at this level (see for example Moore 2009). Policy making concerns also need interpretations (see for example Ellingsæter 2007). In policy making various formal and informal collectives organise themselves around welfare need interpretations. Legitimacy struggles over needs evolve especially at this level. Legitimate welfare needs are explicitly incorporated in legislation by formal rules, but also various implicit interpretations over welfare needs shape society and policies (see for example Sutela 2001). Ideologies are particularly important because they formulate discursive resources which make it possible to identify welfare needs and to articulate legitimacy for interpreted needs.

Discursive power: interpreting welfare needs

Welfare governance is analysed here by using the idea of discursive power. Diverse interpretations about welfare needs confront each others in governing practises. These articulation processes produce social and political structure with differentiated positions. Relationships between various positions and different interpretations of welfare needs are understood here as power relations. The established interpretation of needs define relationship between individuals/groups and society. They define how individuals or collectives should behave or be involved in society. Discourses about welfare needs and their fulfillments produce understanding of normality and difference by creating inequality and hierarchies between and within categories (such as activity, professionals and user). Some definitions of welfare needs are valued and some are not recognised. Discourses of

welfare needs also embed the understanding of fulfilment of welfare needs. That is: what kinds of welfare governing practises are seen as appropriate and effective ways to manage recognized needs.

Need interpretations and articulations are related to changes that occur in society (Gough 2004). I conceive that the idea of welfare need is a nodal point in modernizing and reforming welfare state. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) have introduced the concept of nodal point. It refers to political concepts such as justice and equality that constantly become centre of discursive struggles and articulation practises. These concepts are empty in that sense that may be interpreted in several and even contradictory ways. These processes define and create power relations in society. By articulation practices the meanings of the phenomenon are constituted in a certain way. The outcome is a specific social and political structure that appears legitimate in society, even though new emerging articulation processes may challenge this structure in the future. By these kinds of hegemonic power struggles, the task of political strategies is to replace one model of meaning formation by another (Dyrberg 1997). These struggles change political discourses, create new understandings about reality and legitimate social relations in novel ways (see Laclau & Mouffe 1985).

From this vantage point interpretations about welfare needs are organised as discursive struggles. These struggles have consequences in society. They do not only structure the way welfare needs are understood and implemented, but they also create differentiated and structured system of positions for those who are subjected to that discourse. They organise the processes of exclusion and inclusion. Articulation of welfare needs constructs particular relations between excluded and included identities and way of interpreting reality. Relationships between various positions and different interpretations of welfare needs are understood here as power relations. This paper scrutinizes interpretations and articulations of welfare needs and on the ways this process produces social and political structure with differentiated positions.

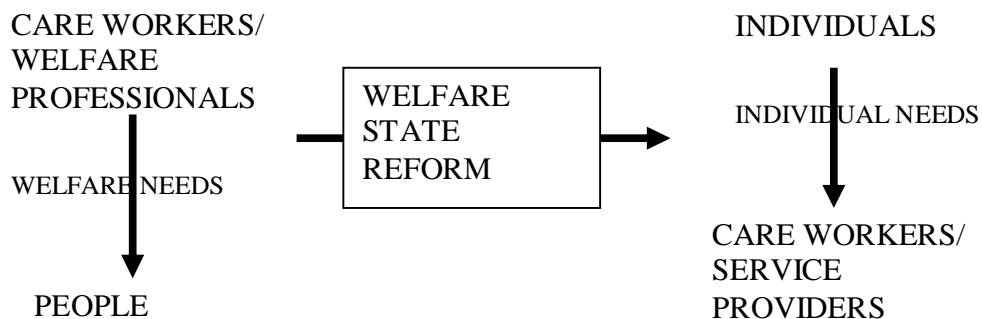
Different articulations are interrelated and various articulations about welfare needs are constructed in relation to each others. The prevailing interpretation of needs define relationship between individuals/groups and society. They point out the ways individuals or collectives should behave or

be involved in society. The discourses about welfare needs and their fulfillment produce understanding of normality and difference by creating inequality and hierarchies between and within categories (for example client versus customer). This struggle is simultaneously about political power and about cultural meanings.

From welfare needs to need for choice

It is justified to say that during past decades the ideological foundation of welfare state has been under reconstruction. The grand story in this respect is the appearance of managerial state and expansion of consumer society. By these processes beside state social and political relations in society has been reframed. I argue here that welfare needs have been used in this process to contribute and legitimate reform. I try here to demonstrate how interpreting needs has a significant position in welfare state reform discourse in context of welfare services. Need interpretations structure governing discourses and power relations.

The storyline behind this change is structured in a way that previous practices and ideas are unfavourable and managerial reform is a necessity for solving problems that welfare state has created (Clarke & Newman 1997). Picture 1 demonstrates the structure of this ideological discourse. The logic of this discourse is that firstly the power position between these positions is constructed as competing relation and secondly the direction of using power is changed to favour individual people.



Picture 1. Ideological positions: The logic and structure of governance change discourse in welfare services.

The discourse contains two main positions, that of care workers and that of people using services. The structure legitimates welfare state reform articulating unfair power relation between care workers and people. This power relation is based on the way peoples' needs are defined. In the old governing system care professionals define welfare needs and people have no power to articulate their needs. In the new governing system people define their individual needs and care workers satisfy these needs. People are given the power to choose suitable care for satisfying their individual needs (Rostgaard 2006). The consequence is that changing citizens' position in relation to social services becomes one of the core requirements in reforming the administration and society more generally (Häikiö 2009). The logic is that when people consider their own choices and needs they become self-responsible and by this consideration they also provide valuable input for governing purposes.

Nordic welfare model is a good example here. Universal needs and public responsibility has been core values in that model. The idea has been that municipalities provide social services for those people who need care and are not able to care for themselves (Anttonen & Sipilä 2000; Sutela 2001; Vabo 2006). Universalism in this framework refers to the principle that services are available for those citizens who need them and using services is not dependent on individuals' economical position. New public management framework, however, has questioned the universal foundation of social services in Scandinavia since early 1990s.

New public management underlines the requirement for more efficient and effective performance of public sector. It particularly criticises practises of welfare state for being ineffective and too hierarchical. One of the main reasons for the troubles in public sector and in society more general is the awkward position of citizens and service users. From this vantage point a client in welfare state context refers to people, who are expected to be passive and have no influence over the service. The clients are cared and disempowered at the same time (see Eriksen & Weigård 2000). Clients yield

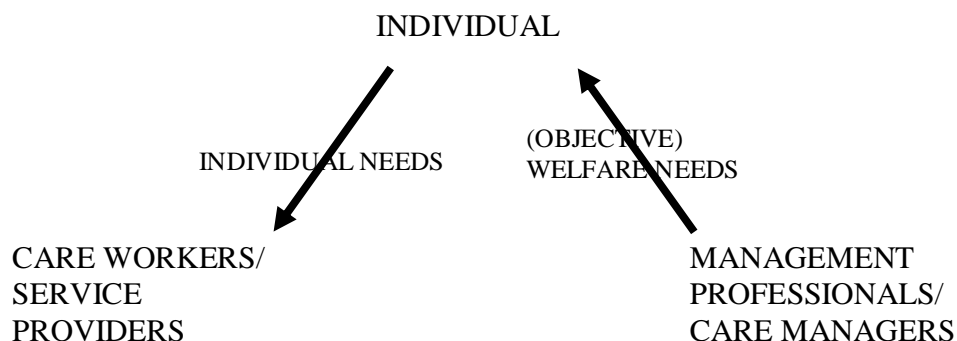
power to professions. They are seen as receivers and not as active persons and determinants over their own matters. In new public management thinking all this causes problems, because hierarchical and professional institutions are inflexible. The argument is that it is not people and their needs that are the first priority in these kinds of institutions. Instead "the language of consumerism makes new organisational forms appear as responsive and adaptable to individuals needs and wants, while the past is represented as an era one-size-fits-all solutions" (Vabø 2006, 418). The idea of responding to universal welfare needs as a way to good society is replaced with the idea of individual needs as the primary source of good society. This argument includes the idea that application of market mechanisms in society promotes the common good (Häikiö 2009).

This shift in thinking requires constructing the idea of demanding consumer. The freedom of choice, free choice or consumer choice (e.g. Montin 2000, Rostgaard 2006; Vabø 2006) is constructed around the idea that individuals have right to choose between social services on base of their individual needs and preferences. Demanding consumers are individual agents characterised with independency, autonomy, self-responsibility, activity, pride and wealth (Häikiö 2009; Clarke 2006; Rostgaard 2006). They know their own needs, want to make choices and are looking for satisfaction. Active users are able to articulate their needs in society. They also are able to look after that social care and care services are compatible with their individual needs.

Care workers are constructed in relation to these individual rights. By demanding consumers care workers loose their traditional power source. In welfare state context their power has been founded on the expertise. As professionals they know peoples' needs and solutions for meeting these needs. Professionals use this expertise on the other hand for taking care of the people and on the other hand for ensuring equality between people. Welfare state reform discourse challenges their expertise and identifies welfare professionals as power-seeking resource-maximizers. They are not serving people, they are determining them. They are articulating welfare needs not for people's sake but for their own benefit.

Needs in practice

During the period of consumerism, different methods have been generated to empower people to act as customers or consumers in welfare services. Typical for these solutions is that they imitate markets and create market like situations. Purchaser provider structure is a general solution in welfare services. This structure allows authorities to make decisions over local welfare markets and give limited power for service users to satisfy their individual needs in politically regulated markets. In practice free choice means typically that people with care needs may choose between public and private service providers (Rostgaard 2006). Before this situation occurs their needs have been assessed, recognized and categorized by public authorities. The picture 2 demonstrates the structure of needs assessments discourse. The logic of this discourse is that people have various needs that are both objective and individual. Objective needs are universal welfare needs and individual needs are particular means to fulfil these objective needs.



Picture 2. Practical positions: The logic and structure of need assessment practices.

This discourse contains three main positions that of care managers, individuals (potential service users) and care workers. By articulating two different kinds of needs the discourse reframe power relations and legitimates shift in control power. Objective welfare needs can be and have to be assessed independently. Therefore assessment has to be separated

from service provision. Individual needs can be met in diverse ways. Therefore people have to have possibility to choose how their objectively defined needs are satisfied individually. Needs are objective conditions and choice is a mean to fulfil these needs (Clarke 2006). Need assessment discourse includes the idea that only some of the needs can be cared publicly. Welfare needs should be balanced with recourses.

Need assessment is not something new that welfare state reform has caused. As Clarke (2006, 437) writes 'in social care the core of the knowledge/ power knot has been the assessment of the need – a locus of organisational control typically working through professional knowledge and skills.' But, as Clarke's statement indicates need assessment has nevertheless been under deconstruction and part of the discursive struggle around welfare state. Need assessment is important because it has effect on allocating services and prioritizing between needs (Vabø 2006). The ideas and practices of welfare state reform have challenged the previous structure and power relations within needs assessment procedures. Main challenge focuses on care workers and service providers. Need assessment practices imply restructured power relations between care managers and care workers. But, also service users find themselves as part of new kinds of power relations.

Needs assessment practices indicate that public authorities identify if citizens asking for care actually have a care need and is entitled to social services. In purchaser provider structure need assessment is separated from care work and service provision and typically attached to purchaser practices. This means that fewer people than before do the assessments (Rostgaard 2006). Continuous need testing by care workers is replaced with new practises in which some people specialize themselves with needs assessment (Vabø 2006). Needs assessment discourse identify professionals at purchaser side to be independent evaluators, and they seem not to have interest on the ways welfare needs are recognized. These independent assessors find optimal solutions to tensions between scarce recourses and extensive needs and wants.

Therefore new practises of needs assessment challenge the foundation of care workers professional power and service providers' practices (Raak Van et al. 2007). In Clarke's words, the change challenges the core of the

knowledge/ power knot of care professional position. Care workers do not only lose their competence and possibilities to assess welfare needs as part of face-to-face services, they also lose the authority and expertise to articulate and represent welfare needs in society. In this situation managers or purchasers gain new legitimacy for their authority. They do know both the objective welfare needs and the reasonable amount of resources for fulfilling these needs.

By this shift also the understanding of welfare needs have changed. Welfare needs are recognized in relation to service standards. These standards make it easier to assess needs (Rostgaard 2006). Standards give criteria for a need and assure that people have equal treatment. They also clarify to people what kinds of services they are entitled to receive and what kinds of needs are publicly recognized as objective needs. These standards define what kinds of welfare needs belong to collective responsibility in society. This all means that in practise various needs have to be articulated in details (Vabø 2006). Welfare needs have exact names and labels, and at best case they can be measured. In needs assessment process all welfare needs have to be agreed upon, otherwise they do not exist.

This kind of welfare need articulation creates interesting identities for involved parties. Welfare need assessment discourse identifies service users and those people articulating their individual needs as need maximizers. These people are only concerned with their own needs and articulate these needs for demanding more services for their own benefit. Individual needs become wants. Care workers on they side, are concerned about their own power to have more resources for care work and about possibilities to fit individual needs in service structure. They articulate welfare needs to legitimate need for new social services and having more care workers in the field. They are expanding welfare state and are kinds of resource maximizers. They are identified in the same way as in the welfare state reform discourse. Hence, the need assessment discourse blames those with care wants and care workers providing services. Independent assessors are heroes. They are concerned about making good use of the resources and able to identify objective needs. They are resource and need balancers. This position makes it possible for them to bridge scare resources, individual welfare needs and equal redistribution of resources.

Demanding consumer and public authority

It is worth noting that there is no single welfare state reform discourse or needs assessment discourse. These discourses are always interpreted and concretized in particular contexts. In this paper this fact has been sidelined. The focus has been generally on how needs have been interpreted and articulated in these frameworks. The aim has been to demonstrate how need interpretations are central nodal points in reforming welfare states. Need interpretations blur lines between public and private spheres, reframe individual and collective responsibility, and reshape identities. Welfare need articulations are effective way to legitimate policy practises and policy change in welfare state context. These articulations reflect political power and ideological bases of society.

These two discourses are operating at different level. Welfare state reform discourse is kind of meta discourse. It is a discourse that sets the framework for practical reforms. Needs assessment discourse is a practical discourse. It is connected to new practices implemented by various reforms. Therefore it is interesting that there are remarkable differences between these discourses and the ways they interpret needs. To conclude this paper I discuss about the different need interpretations between welfare state reform discourse and needs assessment discourse.

The main difference between these two discourses is the divide between objective welfare needs and individual welfare needs. Welfare state reform discourse identifies people with individual needs. It proposes that these needs are primary source of governing. If people are able to satisfy their welfare needs individually in markets or market-like-environment, the society would be governed effectively and appropriately. Needs assessment discourse identify people with individual needs, but defines these needs as potential problems because people consider only their own preferences and wants. If there is no limit for the needs, it would lead to over use of recourses. Therefore public services (and financing) should only serve the need for care, and markets may respond to the consumers' want (see Rostgaard 2006). Needs are both objective conditions and relational. Needs

are not only individual needs, they are connected to society and other members of society.

Because of these differences, demanding consumer has two meanings. In welfare state reform discourse the right to have individual needs and possibility to use consumer power is represented as a driving force behind thinking, a fact that argues for a change. People want to choose, and the whole society benefits if they act independently in welfare markets. In needs assessment discourse individual needs have been marginalized and replaced with objective needs. In this context demanding consumers can not demand for fulfilling individual needs, they can demand right to choose between providers after their needs have been objectively recognized. This kind of demanding consumer signals that defining justified welfare needs belongs to public authorities, where as the fulfilment of these needs is a private matter.

It seems that from practical perspective welfare state reform discourse celebrating consumerism and individual needs is unrealistic or unsatisfactory. Need interpretation is essential power source for public authorities. Needs assessment discourse does not, however, question the consumerist framework. Instead, it includes some elements of it (relation between individuals and care workers) to its' own structure and adds some new elements (relation between care managers and individuals; distinction between care workers and care managers). And, even these discourses seem to include contradictory elements their consequences for citizens are alike. By these discourses individualised responsibility for care increases and social risks become individualized. In welfare state reform discourse individual needs embeds the idea that needs do not have to be public articulated as social risks. Individual needs are articulated in the context of welfare services, but this discourse does not recognize political sphere where social risks are commonly justified.

In needs assessment discourse objective welfare needs are standardized and as such they have collective and relational foundation in particular context. In this kind of structure service users, however, lack opportunities to negotiate about unacknowledged needs (Bolzan and Gale 2002). These unacknowledged needs remain at private sphere. Another feature that increases individual risk, as Rostgaard (2006) says is right to choose

services and service provider on the base of individual needs and wants. Consumer power embeds the option of choosing poorly and making unfavourable decisions. Social welfare risks are replaced with individual risks of not meeting one's own needs.

These discourses only recognize people who are able to handle individual risks. They marginalize the fact that many lack the capacity to choose and act. And, in fact people who are most in need of social services have the weakest capacity to identify themselves as having individual needs, take action to satisfy these needs and cope with individualized risks. Both welfare state reform discourse and needs assessment discourse seem to ignore people who are unable to promote and defend their individual needs. Emphasising individual needs and risks dismiss beside collective (political) action efficient alliance between care workers/ welfare professionals and people with care needs that has existed at least in Nordic welfare state. This rejection of disadvantaged and their need for collectively interpreted welfare is a prize for power struggle over expertise.

the ideas of universal and collective welfare needs are replaced by ideas of diverse and individual needs. By this change collective responsibility is transformed into individual responsibility.

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