

How welfare regimes influence judgement of deservingness and public support for welfare policy

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This paper seeks to explain why previous empirical studies have found a connection between welfare regimes and public support for welfare policy that concern the living conditions of poor and unemployed. Previous attempts to establish the theoretical link between welfare regimes and public support for welfare policy, or call it the expected electoral feedback process, have not been successful. The empirical studies have had large difficulties in finding the expected effects from regime dependent differences in self-interest, class-interest, and egalitarian values. This paper develops a new theoretical macro-micro link by combining the literature on deservingness criteria and the welfare regime theory. The basic idea is that four regime characteristics – degree of selectivism, degree of generosity, degree of job opportunities, and degree of cultural distinctiveness of poor and unemployed – influence the judgement of deservingness and thereby public support for welfare policy.

Introduction

In Esping-Andersen's famous 1990 book he distinguished between liberal, conservative, and social democratic welfare state regimes. Furthermore, he argued in 1996 that these regimes developed along regime dependent trajectories in their transition from industrial to post-industrial societies. Also Pierson (2001) emphasises the impact the welfare regimes have on 'the new politics of the welfare state'. The idea of regime dependent transition follows the historical institutionalism, which in the recent decade has become a mainstream position in comparative welfare state research. However, it is also broadly recognised that the notion of 'path-dependency' is often under specified, i.e. it is not clearly spelled out how the feedback process actually works (e.g. Pierson, 2000; Goul Andersen & Albrekt Larsen, 2002). One theoretical possibility is that the path dependency observed by comparative welfare state scholars partly is caused by a connection between welfare state regimes and public support for welfare policy. In general we do not have good comparative survey data on public opinion towards the welfare state but a number of scholars have started out by analysing items primarily made available by the International Social Survey Program (ISSP). At first glance the findings from these studies point in different directions; some find (some) evidence for a regime pattern, especially if they restrict the analysis to the countries that come closest to Esping-Andersen's ideal types (Evans, 1996; Svallfors, 1997; Heien & Hofäcker, 1999; Andress & Heien, 2001), other do not find the expected pattern (Bean & Papadakis, 1998;

Gelissen, 2000; Arts & Gelissen, 2001). However, a closer review of the previous studies reveals that to some extent the differences are caused by differences in the items used as dependent variables. The items that measure attitudes towards policies that primarily concern poor and unemployed actually seem to follow a regime pattern (Larsen, 2005). Thus, in terms of support for welfare policy in the ‘narrow’ or ‘American’ meaning we have indication of a pattern with low support in the liberal regimes, moderate support in the conservative regimes, and high support in the social democratic regimes.

Nevertheless, one thing is to find the expected pattern, another thing is to explain how this pattern comes about. In this latter respect none of the previous empirical studies have been successful. With (often implicit) reference to the power resource theory (Korpi, 1983) scholars have looked for different class effects. Especially the position of the middle class – believed to form a ‘welfare coalition’ with the working class in the social democratic regimes and to form an ‘anti-welfare coalition’ with the upper class in the liberal regimes – should be of relevance. But the empirical studies do not find such a class effect; actually class differences seem to be very similar in the different regimes (e.g. Evans, 1996; Svallfors, 1997). With reference to rational choice arguments of concentrated versus dispersed cost, Pierson (2001) e.g. point to the fact that the ‘welfare clientele’ (those who receive benefits plus public employees) is very big in the social democratic regime, moderate in the conservative regimes and low in the liberal regimes, scholars have also looked for effects from short-term self-interest. In most studies there is a positive effect from being unemployed (e.g. Svallfors, 1997; Gelissen, 2000; Andress & Heien, 2001) but otherwise it has been difficult to find the expected effects. These ‘disappointing’ findings often lead scholars to emphasise the importance of ‘culture’ or ‘dominant welfare state ideology’ (e.g. Andress & Heien, 2001) but it remains a residual explanation and an underspecified line of reasoning. Actually, it is a general characteristic that the grand theories of welfare state development and thereby also the previous empirical studies guided by these theories have a rather ‘mechanic’ perception of the electorate. This position stands in contrast to modern election research, where it is broadly recognised that voter’s stand on concrete policy issues cannot directly be deduced from their self-interest, class-interest, or internalised values and norms (e.g. Merrill & Grofman, 1999).

With this research frontier as our point of departure the aim of the paper is to create a theory that explains how characteristics of the three welfare regimes influence attitudes towards welfare policies that concern the living conditions of poor and unemployed; call it a theoretical construction of the missing link between welfare regimes and attitudes or a specification of the intervening variables. At an overall level we will try to operate with a more reflexive ‘political man’, where policy attitudes is open to different perceptions of reality. Such a position fits nicely with studies that have shown that attitudes towards concrete policy proposals are highly dependent on the framing of the political issues (e.g. Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Kinder & Sanders, 1996; Nelson, Clawson & Oxley, 1997; Kangas, 1997). At a more concrete level we base our line of reasoning on a combination of the welfare

regime theory and the literature on deservingness criteria, which for some strange reasons have lived rather separate lives. In the first section we briefly introduce some of the main arguments within the deservingness literature and criticise the tradition for being ‘institution blind’. In the following four sections we describe how four different regime characteristics are likely to influence the public perceptions of poor and unemployed and thereby the judgement of deservingness and the support for concrete welfare policies. We discuss the impact, which degree of selectivism, degree of generosity of pursued welfare policy, degree of job opportunities at the (regime dependent) labour market, and degree of culturally distinctiveness of poor and unemployed, have on the judgement of deservingness. In section six we describe how this add up to the overall expectation (which without much discussion is taken for granted in the empirical studies) that support for welfare policy is low in liberal regimes, moderate in conservative regimes, and high in social democratic regimes. Finally, we summarise the arguments in two models and discuss further application of the suggested theoretical framework.

The five deservingness criteria and public support for welfare policy

The main effort of the deservingness literature has been to pinpoint which criteria the public uses to judge whether a person or a group deserves help. In that regard, the studies conducted by Fegin (1972), Feather (1974), Cook (1979), De Swaan (1988), Will (1993) and Van Oorschot (2000) are extremely helpful to our purpose. On the other hand, the studies have – in our opinion – not been very successful in finding the independent variables that influence the public perceptions, which is the raw material for the judgement of deservingness. The one expectation is the importance of the welfare clientele in question. The literature on deservingness seems capable of explaining the pattern of public support for welfare policy that Coughlin found in his pioneering cross-national study (1980). He found what he calls ‘a universal dimension of support’ because the ranking of the deserving groups followed the same line in all the countries included in his study. The public was most in favour of support for old people, followed by support for sick and disabled, needy families with children and unemployed. The group given least support were people on social assistance. Petterson (1995), Van Oorschot (2000), Van Oorschot & Arts (2005) and others have confirmed this ranking. But besides this distinction between groups of recipients, the deservingness literature has been rather weak in terms of causality. At least the literature seems to overlook societal factors and many of the proposed explanations at the individual level seem to operate in different directions (Lepianka, 2004).

Therefore it is fruitful to combine the empirically deduced deservingness criteria with the regime theory as it delivers a theoretical description of the context in which the public makes these deservingness judgments. However, before doing so we need to take a closer look at the deservingness criteria found by the previous studies. If we follow the review in Van Oorschot (2000), we arrive at the following five criteria:

- 1) Control (the less in control of neediness, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 2) Need (the greater level of need, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 3) Identity (the higher degree of group belonging, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 4) Attitude (the more grateful, docile and compliant, the higher degree of deservingness).
- 5) Reciprocity (the higher previous or future payback, the higher degree of deservingness).

Both Van Oorschot's empirical findings on the Dutch case (2000) and the previous studies show that the issue of control is especially important. Thus, the key to explaining modest support for unemployed is the perception that they are much more in control of their situation than e.g. disabled, sick and pensioners. In De Swaan's (1988) historical study of the modern welfare state, he labelled the criterion 'disability'. In Cook's (1979) study of Americans' views on supporting the poor, she labels the criterion 'locus of responsibility'. Finally, Will (1993) also found that the most important deservingness criterion was the degree to which the problems facing poor families were beyond the immediate control of the individual family. Naturally, the level of need also plays a part, but within the Anglo-Saxon poverty tradition 'need' is more or less taken for granted; as welfare policy is all about support for those in need. The application of the need criterion is more difficult in social democratic regimes where everybody are entitled and in conservative regimes where those who pay contributions are entitled. We will return to this question below.

The identity criterion refers to the importance of feeling a shared identity with the groups who are to be supported. Using the label of proximity, De Swann argues that the boundary of the area can be defined by kinship relations, by place of residence, or more generally, by the boundaries of a certain identity group, like 'our family', 'our town', 'our church' or 'our people'. The attitude criteria refer to the ways recipients respond to public support. De Swann uses the term 'docility' to highlight that poor who hide their misery and ask for nothing are seen as more deserving than those who make impudent demands. Cook uses the terms 'gratefulness' and 'pleasantness'. Finally, the attitude criteria can be linked to a more general criterion of reciprocity, e.g. such behaviour as 'the smile of thanks', but also in a modern context actively looking for a job, willingness to participate in re-insertion programmes. Oorschot furthermore argues that needy who at the moment are unable to reciprocate might fulfil this criterion if they have contributed to 'us' in the past, or are likely to do so in the future.

Thus, the large support for public assistance to the old found by Coughlin and others might be explained by the perception that 1) they are not in control of their neediness, 2) they belong to 'us', 3) they are often grateful, docile and compliant, and 4) they have contributed

to 'us' during their working age. At the other extreme, the low support for the group on social assistance might be caused by the perception that 1) they could get a job if they wanted, i.e. they are in control of their neediness, 2) they do not fully belong to 'us', 3) they are often ungrateful, and 4) they have often not contributed much to 'us' in the past. It is more difficult to see how the old and people on social assistance differ in terms of need. However, the major task in the following is to theorise how the regime context influences the ability of poor and unemployed to fulfil these seemingly universal deservingness criteria.

The link between degree of selectivism and fulfilment of deservingness criteria

According to Esping-Andersen (1990, 2000) the three welfare regimes are distinguished by differences both in welfare state, labour market, and family structures. But it is especially on the state dimension we can find theoretical inspiration from previous studies. Within welfare *state* literature it is a classic thesis that systems dominated by universal programmatic structures of benefits and services, i.e. the ideal type policy of the social democratic welfare regime, and system dominated by a selective programmatic structure of benefits and services, i.e. the ideal type policy of the liberal welfare regime, generate quite different public discussions and perceptions of recipients. The typical coverage of the incidence of long-term unemployment in liberal and social democratic welfare regimes is quite different. If we take USA, the country closest to the liberal ideal type, the unemployed is covered by a short period with unemployment benefits and after that those in need, i.e. those not having private savings or insurances, are covered by selective benefits and services such as Medicaid, TANF, food stamps, general assistance etc. In contrast unemployed in Sweden, the country closest to the social democratic ideal type, are covered by a long period with unemployment benefits combined with a large number of citizenship-based services and benefits such as general healthcare, child allowance, basic old age pension, housing allowances etc. Means-tested social assistance is available to those who have not qualified for unemployment benefits but it only plays a minor role.

Following Rothstein (1998), the first step of the argument is simply to point out the fact that a selective policy that aims to provide 'the needy' with economic resources or what Rothstein calls basic capabilities must determine 1) who is needy, and 2) how much they need. Therefore *'the public discussion of social policy in a selective system often becomes a question of what the well-adjusted majority should do about the less well-adjusted, in varying degrees, socially marginalized minority'* (Rothstein, 1998:158). The general fairness of the policy is also open to challenge as the majority might start asking *'a) where the line between the needy and the non-needy should be drawn, and b) whether the needy themselves are not to blame for their predicament'* (Rothstein 1998:159). Relating this argument to the deservingness criteria presented in the previous section, one could say that a system dominated by selective welfare policies opens discussions of 'need' and 'control' (see table 1). The identity dimension of deservingness is also influenced by this logic connected to

selective policy as ‘*the very act of separating out the needy almost always stamps them as socially inferior, as “others” with other types of social characteristics and needs*’ (Rothstein, 1998:158).¹

Furthermore, one could argue that the boundaries between ‘them’ and ‘us’ generated by selective welfare policy highlight who benefits from the welfare state (i.e. those who pay little or no tax and receive targeted benefits) and who loses on the welfare state (i.e. those who pay tax, but do not receive any benefits). Thus, the reciprocity of the system will be perceived as being very low, which probably increases the importance of grateful, docile and compliant attitudes among those who receive targeted benefits or services. Finally, one could argue that this logic of selective welfare policy might generate vicious circles or even self-fulfilling prophecies because the ‘needy’, exactly because they are labelled as not being ‘ordinary’ people, alter their behaviour. It creates a further division between ‘them’ and ‘us’ and probably makes it more difficult to find grateful, docile and compliant attitudes among recipients. This social mechanism is e.g. known from ethnic second-generation immigrants, who because they are labelled as outsiders sometimes start practising the religion and culture of their country of origin much more intensively than first-generation immigrants; even though they are born and educated in the new country and may never have visited their country of origin.

Table 1. The effects from respectively selective and universal social policy on different dimensions of deservingness.

Dimensions of deservingness	A welfare state dominated by selective benefits and services	A welfare state dominated by universal benefits and services
Need	Open the discussion of whether recipients are in need	Close the discussion of whether recipients are in need
Control	Open the discussion of whether recipients are to be blamed	Close the discussion of whether recipients are to be blamed
Identity	Define the recipients as a special group distinguished from the well-adjusted majority	Define the recipients as equal citizens who belong to a national ‘us’
Reciprocity	Highlight the boundary between those who give and those who receive	Blur the boundary between those who give and those who receive
Attitude	Open the discussion of whether recipients receive benefits and services with a grateful, docile and compliant attitude	Close the discussion of whether recipients receive benefits and services with a grateful, docile and compliant attitude

The logic of systems dominated by universal welfare policy, i.e. the ideal type social democratic welfare regime, is in all aspects contrary to the welfare policy within the ideal type liberal regime. In the Scandinavian systems of ‘Rolls Royce universalism’ no line needs to be drawn between the needy and the non-needy. Thus, the discussion of need and to what extent the poor and unemployed are in control of their neediness becomes more or less irrelevant. As Rothstein argues, *‘welfare policy does not, therefore, turn into a question of what should be done about “the poor” and “the maladjusted,” but rather a question of what constitutes general fairness in respect to the relation between citizens and the state. The question becomes not “how shall we solve their problem?” but rather “how shall we solve our common problem (healthcare, education, pensions, etc.)?’* (Rothstein, 1998:160). Instead of defining a line between ‘them’ and ‘us’, the universal benefits and services actually help define everybody within the nation state as belonging to one group. The vicious cycle of selective welfare policy is replaced by a positive circle where the whole population is given the basic capabilities that place them *‘on a more or less equal footing in respect to their ability to act as autonomous citizens’* (Rothstein 1998:157). It is probably no coincidence that the link between welfare policies and a well-functioning democracy, often analysed within a so-called citizenship perspective, has been intensely explored by Scandinavian social scientists. Thus, within this regime welfare policy is not just seen as a measure to avoid poverty, generate security or even economic equality, but also as a way to generate free, responsible and democratic citizens, who can produce and reproduce a democratic nation state. Following this line of reasoning, we should also expect universal welfare policies to have a high symbolic value for the nation state. One could say that the clear boundary between ‘them’ and ‘us’ within the ‘liberal’ regime is replaced by a clear boundary between citizens and non-citizens. The issue of race and immigration will be discussed below.

The reciprocity discussion is also suppressed in the social democratic regimes. For the majority of people it is not an easy task to calculate whether one is net-winner or net-loser, even though welfare states dominated by universal policy have been shown to be the most redistributive nation states in the OECD area. If the cost-benefit analysis is done at the individual level in a given year, the calculation could be manageable. The market value of the universal benefits and services received in that year should be subtracted the amount paid in VAT, income tax and different duties. But the calculation is complicated, and it becomes even more complicated if the cost-benefit analysis is done at the household level and within a lifetime perspective. In that case, the amount of VAT, income tax, duties etc. paid by the family over a lifetime should be subtracted the value of free education for the children, the old-age pension of one’s partner, the likely use of free hospitals, the likely use of unemployment benefits etc. The point is that the programmatic structure, but also the very size of the ideal type social democratic regime (see also Korpi & Palme, 1998) blur the boundary between net-winners and net-losers, which makes it difficult to judge whether recipients of benefits and services have reciprocated. And combined with the influence on the other dimensions of deservingness, the most likely end result is that an ordinary citizen does

not start to calculate at all.² Finally, as the institutional logic suppresses the discussion of need, control, identity and reciprocity, the attitudes among recipients of benefits and services also become more or less irrelevant. Nobody expects citizens – including the poor and the unemployed – to be grateful because they receive a basic old-age pension, have access to free hospital treatment, heavily subsidised childcare etc. Following this line of reasoning, which highlights the institutional logic, we have theoretical reasons to believe that the poor and unemployed in the liberal regimes will be asked to fulfil much harder deservingness criteria than the poor and unemployed in the social democratic regimes. Not because the citizens in the liberal regimes have very different egalitarian values but because their welfare state is dominated by selective welfare policy.

Now the question is how this reasoning applies to the welfare policy conducted by the ideal type conservative regime. In terms of expected support for welfare policy, the previous empirical studies simply put – without much further discussion - the conservative regimes in between the ‘extreme’ liberal and social democratic welfare regimes. However, in terms of degree to which poor and unemployed are covered by selective policy more substantive arguments can be made but it is important to have the overall conservative regime context in mind. The primary programmatic structure of the welfare policy of the conservative regime is compulsory insurance systems financed by social contributions from employers and employees. Entitlement of benefits and services through this insurance mechanism might suppress the deservingness discussion even more than a universal programmatic structure. As these people have paid the insurance, the discussion of need, control, and attitude becomes more or less irrelevant. And the boundaries of ‘us’ can simply be drawn between those who paid their contribution (and their families) and the others. The same goes for the question of reciprocity. ‘Earmarked’ compulsory contribution (in contrast to universal benefits and services typically financed through general taxes) makes it clear that recipients of welfare benefits primarily have paid themselves. Thus, in cases where the male breadwinner of the ideal type conservative regime becomes long-term unemployed, he very easily fulfils the deservingness criteria.

However, the combination of benefits in relation to contributions, strong job protection, and generous early retirement schemes for the insider male breadwinners (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1996, 2000) has the result that long-term unemployed and poor should mainly be found among the outsiders, i.e. the women and the young. In the golden-age ideal type conservative regimes, these groups were covered by the male breadwinner’s income and his social security entitlements. This system is still in practise in the South European countries. The European Labour Force survey e.g. shows that in 1995, only 6.8 pct. of the Italian unemployed received public benefits (unemployed defined as people answering that they would like a job, they are looking for a job, and they can begin within two weeks). The share is 8.6 in Greece, 23.8 in Spain, and 27.3 in Portugal (Gallie & Paugam, 2000:8). Thus, most unemployed are not exposed to any welfare *state* policy at all. Those ‘bad risks’ that are not absorbed by the family are sometimes supported by rudimentary social assistance schemes, which are

extremely selective. Thus, for this small minority, the effects of selective policy discussed above should be present, but still they do not live in systems where selective welfare policies dominate. What dominates is the family.

However, in recent decades, the Northern Continental European countries have experienced a break-up in the stable family patterns, which was a crucial premise for the effectiveness of the golden-age conservative welfare state regime. As a result, these countries have organised social assistance schemes, and in many countries the formal obligations towards children have been reduced. Gallie & Paugam speak of ‘advanced intergenerational autonomy’ in Germany and ‘relative inter-generational autonomy’ in France and Belgium (2000:17). As a result, thoroughly organised social assistance schemes are set up to cover the risks of the outsiders and the insiders who a) get fired, b) do not find a job after the relatively long period on unemployment benefits, and c) are too young to enter the early retirement schemes. In this case, we have a more developed selective welfare policy than in the Mediterranean countries but poor and unemployed do still not live in a system where selective welfare policy dominates. Thus, on a one-dimensional scale of the degree to which poor and unemployed is covered by selective policy we can defend the argument that is high in liberal regimes, moderate in conservative regime (with big internal variations), and low in social democratic regimes.

The link between degree of generosity and fulfilment of the need criterion

The degree of generous and the degree of selectivism of the welfare regimes are often not distinguished clearly from each other – probably because they go together. In terms of poverty risk empirical studies have demonstrated that the risk tends to be highest in the liberal regimes, in-between in conservative regime, and lowest in social democratic regimes; at least if we take the countries closest to the ideal types.³ However, in terms of the influence on the judgement of deservingness it is fruitful to treat the level of generosity as a separate dimension that can work in different directions.

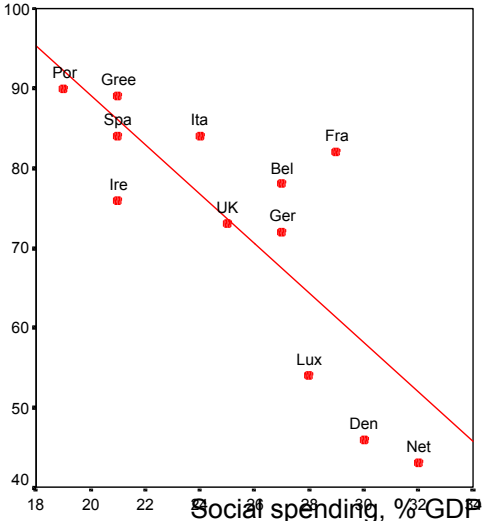
On the one hand, it is a classic argument that pursuing a welfare policy that allows recipients to continue a normal life style reduces the risk of stigmatising (otherwise) poor and unemployed citizens, i.e. prevent them from being defined as deviant from ‘us’. According to the deservingness literature this should make it easier for poor and unemployed to fulfil the identity criterion. So again one can speak of a self-reinforcing process in the liberal regimes, where tight fist welfare policy creates a culturally distinct underclass, and in the social democratic regimes, where generous welfare policy prevents the creation of a culturally distinct underclass.⁴

On the other hand if the pursued welfare policy – following whatever principle – manages to provide (potentially) poor and unemployed groups with good life conditions and possibilities to improve their life conditions, e.g. through active labour market policy, one should expect the public to make tougher judgements of those still living in need. As

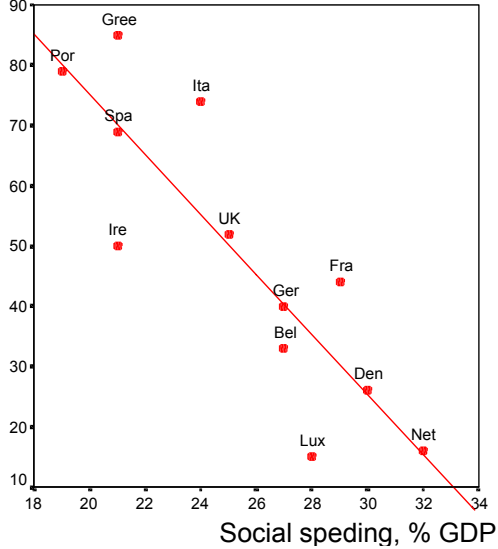
anecdotal evidence one could point to the fact that in Denmark not even a person concerned with welfare policy issues, as myself, gives money to ‘needy-looking’ beggars. The rationale is that these beggars are not really needy, as the Danish welfare policy provides ‘the bottom’ with some of the best living conditions in the world (e.g. Hauser et al, 2000). To put it boldly, it fosters the perception that if you give money to ‘hungry’ beggars at the Danish railway stations, they will spend it on beer. The point is that more advanced welfare states (or at least welfare states believed by the public to be advanced) will experience a feedback process that influences the judgement of ‘need’. Thus, we have a feedback process that can restrain what above seemed to be self-reinforcing processes in the liberal and social democratic regimes.

Figure 1. Connection between level of social expenditures and perception of sufficient protection of ‘the poor’ and unemployed.

Disagree that poor are well-protected % (1993)



Disagree that unemployed are well-protected % (1993)



Question: Do you personally think that the following people are sufficiently well protected in your country?
 Source: Figures based on Taylor-Gooby 1995 table A11.

This argument is supported by Taylor-Gooby (1995), who by means of Eurobarometer data from 1993 on the aggregate level finds a strong connection between social expenditures and the perception that the poor and unemployed are sufficiently well protected in their country (see figure 1). Looking at the perception of protection of unemployed, we find a tremendous variation between the covered European countries. In Greece, 85 pct. disagree with the statement that unemployed are sufficiently well protected, whereas only 16 pct. disagree in

the Netherlands. The cross-country variation is smaller when we turn to the protection of ‘the poor’ as they more or less per definition experience economic hardship. However, we still find that only 43 pct. in the Netherlands and 46 pct. in Denmark disagree with the statement that ‘the poor’ are sufficiently well protected in their country. Social spending as percentage of GDP is a slightly better predictor of perception of protection of unemployed ($R^2=0.74$) than of perception of protection of the poor ($R^2=0.63$), but in any case we face rather reliable connections. Thus, it seems fair to expect that the level of welfare state expenditures will influence the degree to which the public finds low income groups needy. And if they really are perceived as being in need, it only opens the question of control; what have they done with their benefits? But still we have the contrary effect on the fulfilment of the identity criterion, which makes it difficult to make expectation about the overall influence degree of generosity has on support for welfare policy.

The link between degree of job opportunities and fulfilment of the control criterion

Esping-Andersen and a number of ‘institutional economists’ have shown that the programmatic structure of the welfare state has a huge impact on – or at least is interwoven with – the labour market. In his 1990 book, Esping-Andersen described how welfare policy creates important structures that influence how workers through early retirement can exit from the work force, how workers can claim paid absence from work, and how especially women can enter the work force (Esping-Andersen 1990: chapter 6). However, his real interest was how these institutional regime differences have influenced the transformation from industrial to post-industrial economy (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1996, 2000). The pressure on the industrial production structure comes from external factors such as increased economic integration and new technologies and from internal factors such as the women’s desire to participate in the work force.

The most discussed indication of these pressures is the high rates of unemployment that haunted most Western welfare states during the 1980s and 1990s. Very generally speaking the situation is that the social democratic regimes have followed a trajectory where new jobs were generated in the public sector. It boosted employment considerably, created opportunities for women, and prevented declining wages in service jobs. At the same time, an active labour market policy was designed to train manual workers for new post-industrial jobs. The liberal regimes followed a neo-liberal trajectory where new service jobs are provided in the service sector. It also boosted employment and created opportunities for women, but at the same time it established a large number of working poor. Finally, conservative regimes followed a labour reduction route. It did not boost employment in the service sector, but instead protected the male insider against the risk of unemployment through strict job protection and early retirement schemes (Esping-Andersen, 1996).

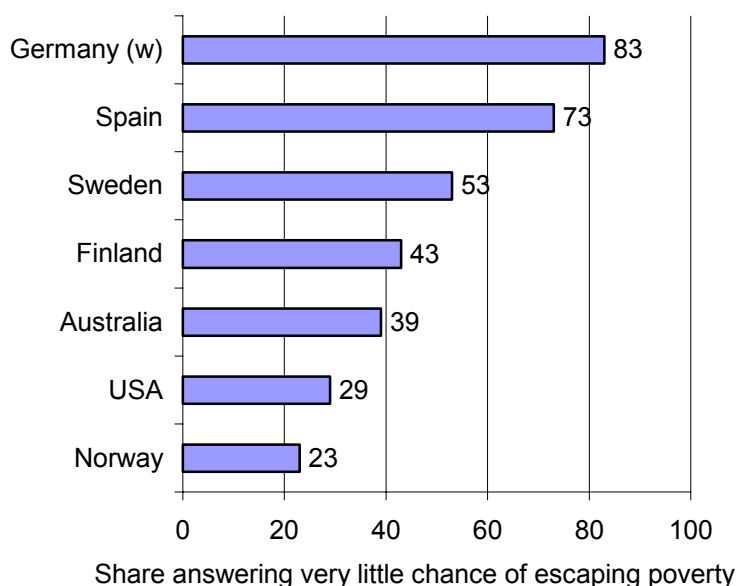
Now the point is that these different employment trajectories associated with the different welfare regimes might also influence the public perception of poor and unemployed.

Especially the degree to which poor and unemployed groups are believed to be in control of their neediness might be influenced by job opportunities. Therefore the poor and unemployed in the conservative regimes should be seen as less in control of their neediness than the poor and unemployed in the social democratic and liberal regimes where job growth in the public and private sector respectively has generated job opportunities. Recent empirical studies actually support such an impact from labour market structures. Using Eurobarometer surveys Gallie & Paugam found a clear connection between level of unemployment in European countries and a perception of poverty as being due to laziness among unemployed (2002:21). Using the World Value Study the same finding is reached by Larsen (2005). Blekesaune and Quadagno (2003), using the ISSP role of government module, also found a strong connection between level of unemployment and support for welfare policy.

Furthermore, we will argue that not only the degree of service sector expansion (and thereby unemployment rates) but also the differences in the wage setting mechanisms in each regime matters. We expect poor and unemployed to be perceived to be more in control of unemployment in countries where individuals are able to negotiate the wages themselves. This is possible in liberal regimes, where the importance of unions has always been modest, and where the position of the unions has been further undermined by the neo-liberal employment strategy during the 1980s and the 1990s. To put it boldly, this institutional setting is believed to facilitate the perception that everybody can get a job in the private service sector if they only are willing to reduce their wage demands. This is not possible in social democratic and conservative regimes, where the unions still have considerable influence on wage setting – especially in blue-collar sectors. So poor and unemployed cannot escape unemployment by lowering their wage demands. Finally, the degree of job protection for the ‘insiders’ (Lindbeck & Snower, 1988), which is very high in the conservative regimes, might also contribute to the perception of poor and unemployed being out of control.

Thus, the perception of unemployed as ‘victims’ of the general labour market structure might be especially pronounced in conservative regimes, where strong unions not only prevent low wage jobs, but also obstruct employment of outsiders through high job protection of the insider male breadwinner. So based on the argument of structural differences in service sector expansion, wage setting mechanisms and job protection, we would expect the labour markets to facilitate perceptions of little control of neediness among poor and unemployed in conservative regimes, medium control of neediness in social democratic regimes, and high control of neediness in liberal regimes.

Figure 2. Share answering that most poor people have very little chance of escaping poverty. Available Western countries in the World Value Study 1995-1997.



Question: In your opinion, do most poor people in this country have a chance of escaping poverty, or is there very little chance of escaping? 1) They have a chance. 2) There is very little chance.

Source: World Value Study 1995-1995 (Western countries selected)

This theoretical suggestion is supported by findings from the World Value Study 1995-1997. Asking respondents about ‘poor people’s’ chance to escape poverty, we find, with one exception, the expected regime pattern (see figure 2). In the two conservative regimes West Germany and Spain respectively 83 pct. and 73 pct. answer that the poor have very little chance of escaping poverty. With 53 pct. in Sweden and 43 pct. in Finland we find two social democratic regimes in the middle, and with 39 pct. in Australia and 29 pct. in USA we find the liberal regimes at the other end. The exception is Norway, where the share responding ‘very little chance of escaping poverty’ is smaller than in USA. But actually this position fits nicely with our ‘labour market’ argument, as Norway in the mid-1990s (and in the 1980s) due to revenues from the oil resources experienced unemployment rates well below those in the other included countries. Unfortunately, the question was not asked in the other waves of the World Value Study or in the other international survey studies but the scarce data we have seem to support our argument.⁵

The link between degree of culturally distinctiveness of poor and unemployed and fulfilment of the identity criterion

So far we have argued within a framework that emphasises the importance of feedback from welfare regime institutions. However, this kind of institutional reasoning has always been

open to more ‘functional’ explanations of welfare policy (e.g. Cameron 1978; Rodrik 1996). Within our framework one could argue that the very size of the nations could influence the poor’s and the unemployed’s ability to meet the identity criterion. Esping-Andersen’s ideal type countries vary tremendously in terms of number of inhabitants. At the one end we find Sweden with 9 millions inhabitants, in the middle Germany with around 82 millions, and at the other end USA with 293 millions. Using Durkheim’s old terms, one could suggest that it should be easier to uphold mechanic solidarity, i.e. solidarity based on similarity and closeness, in a small state than in a large state. In terms of deservingness it should therefore be easier for poor and unemployed to fulfil the identity criterion in small nation states. We do not have any large social democratic regimes (the largest is Sweden with 9 millions inhabitants), but the line of reasoning is challenged by the fact that we have both small conservative welfare state regimes (Austria Belgium, Portugal, and Greece) and relatively small liberal welfare state regimes (New Zealand, Australia, and Canada). A more sophisticated argument is that it is not so much the very size, but rather the homogeneity of a given country that matters. Following this line of reasoning Alesina et al. (2003) have e.g. made measures of degree of religious, linguistic, and ethnic fractionalization in different countries. Trying to explain differences in social expenditures (Alesina & Glaeser, 2004) using 52 both developed and (economically!) undeveloped countries, they found no correlation with religious fractionalisation, a weak correlation with linguistic fractionalisation (disturbed by Belgium), and decent correlation with ethnic fractionalisation. They also established a measure for race fractionalisation (based on the distinctions from the US census but still the operationalisation remains a bit blurred), which turns out to be quite strongly correlated with social expenditures (bi-variate 0.66).

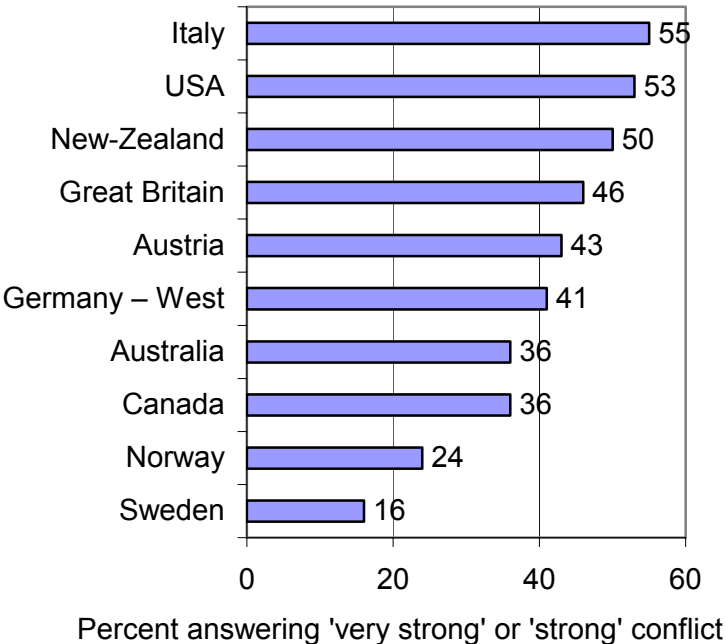
However, differences in racial fractionalisation might be able to explain the difference in support between USA and Europe but their analyses cannot explain the substantial difference between social democratic and conservative regimes (and it can be discussed whether including less developed countries in the sample creates more control problems than it solves). Therefore we would argue that it is not so much the homogeneity of a given country but rather what we will call the culturally distinctiveness of poor and unemployed that matters. The degree of homogeneity within a nation state will of course determine the potential for culturally distinct poor and unemployed but we find the distinction important because (as discussed above) the pursued welfare policy might help to create or suppress historical social divides.

The extreme case is USA, where the poverty rates among American Indians, Afro-Americans and Hispanics are three times higher than among Caucasians. Therefore it is no wonder that many American scholars have analysed the tight link between the issue of welfare policy and the discussion of race (e.g. Ouadagno, 1995; Gilens, 2000). By means of survey data, Gilens convincingly shows that the Americans’ attitudes towards targeted welfare state schemes are highly influenced by their perceptions of ethnic minority groups.⁶ European social science has been much less aware of the influence, which the absence of

culturally distinct poor and unemployed might have on public support for welfare policy (see e.g. Bay & Pedersen, 2003; Larsen, 2005). However, the combination of increased immigration and economic recession fuelled a political discussion during the 1990s that actually revealed the universality of the deservingness criteria discussed in the first section. Were these immigrants really in need and out of control – or were they rich groups from the Third World that could afford travelling? Were they our responsibility – or did they have an identity total different from ours? Did they receive our help with the right attitude – or were they ungrateful? And would they reciprocate in the future or continue to be an economic burden? The cultural distinctiveness of these groups was indeed a precondition for this European discussion.

It is not an easy task to measure the (perceived) cultural distinctiveness of poor and unemployed across countries; we do not even have comparative measures on the share of poor and unemployed with a different ethnic background.⁷ However, turning to comparative survey material, we have been able to find a single indicator from the ISSP social inequality survey from 1992, which partly measure what we are interested in. The respondents were asked about the intensity of the conflict between unemployed and employed (unfortunately the question was not asked in other ISSP surveys). Figure 3 shows the share that finds the conflict between unemployed and employed to be ‘very strong or strong’.

Figure 3. The perceived level of conflict between unemployed and employed in 10 Western Countries covered by the ISSP 1992 module. Pct.



Question: In all countries there are differences or even conflicts between different social groups. In your opinion, in <R's country> how much conflict is there between the unemployed and people with jobs?

Source: ISSP 1992 module

Only 16 pct. of the Swedish respondents think that the conflict between employed and unemployed is 'very strong' or 'strong'. In Norway, the share is 24 pct., which still is far below the level found in any other country (we do not have data from Denmark and Finland). As expected USA, the country closest to the ideal type liberal regime, is at the other end of the scale; 53 pct. of the Americans indicate that the conflict is 'strong' or 'very strong'. In between we find Germany (W) with 41 answering 'strong' or 'very strong' conflict. Thus, using this indicator of the culturally distinctiveness of the poor and unemployed in the countries closest to the ideal types we find a difference between the social democratic and conservative regime, which was not captured by Alesina & Glaeser's analyses. Nevertheless, we should not pretend that the item comes out with any clear-cut regime pattern. The two social democratic regimes distinguish themselves whereas the difference between the conservative and liberal regimes is blurred. With 36 pct. the conflict is lower than expected in Australia (which supports the argument of an Antipodean regime, Castles 1996) and Canada and with 55 pct. the conflict is higher in Italy than expected. The latter might be caused by the fact that the item probably also capture cross-national differences in the degree of insider/outsider divide at the labour market. However, at least in empirical studies that only analyse the countries closest to Esping-Andersen's ideal type, we believe that differences in culturally distinctiveness of poor and unemployed help to explain the different levels of public support for welfare policy. Whether the degree of culturally distinctiveness simply is a precondition for the very creation of the different regimes or actually is created by the conducted welfare policy is up for discussion.⁸ Actually we find it most logical to speak of a self-reinforcing dialectic process (see figure 5 below).

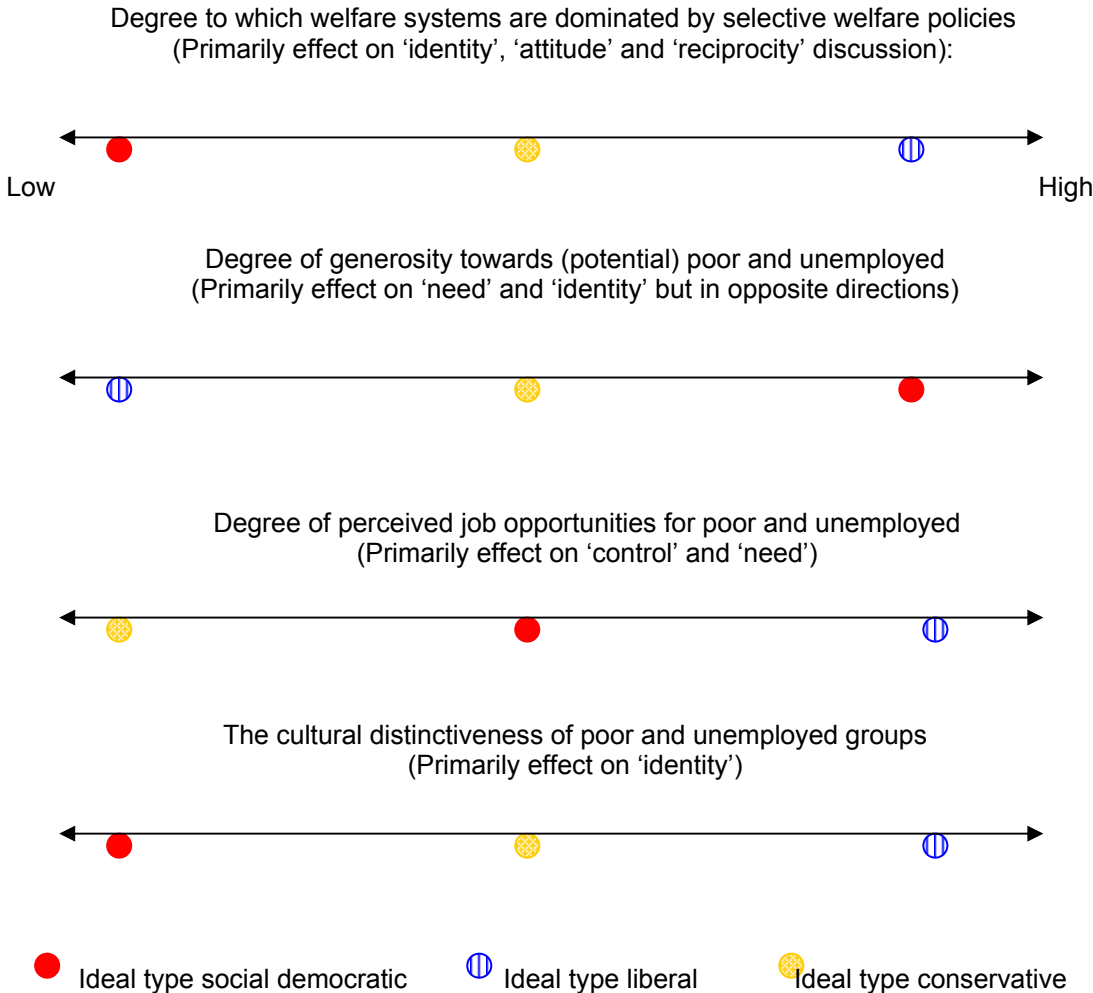
The four regime characteristics, perception of poor and unemployed and fulfilment of deservingness criteria

In figure 4 and figure 5 we have summarised our arguments in the previous four sections. The former figure summarises the variation in the independent variables. Or in less technical terms, how each ideal type welfare state regime is placed on the four dimensions, which we believe are important for the public judgement of deservingness. The logic of figure 4 is that a position to the left should make it easier for poor and unemployed to fulfil the deservingness criteria, and a position to the right should make it more difficult (expect the generosity dimension as it has effects in opposite directions).

The ideal type liberal welfare state regime has positions to the right on three of these four dimensions. The degree to which the welfare system is dominated by selective welfare policies is high, the degree of perceived job opportunities for poor and unemployed is high, and the cultural distinctiveness of poor and unemployed is high. This suggests that poor and unemployed in the ideal type liberal regime will have difficulties meeting the deservingness

criteria. However, on the one hand, the low degree of generosity (the position to the left) might ease the public judgement, as the poor and unemployed in the ideal type liberal regime clearly are in need. But on the other hand, the low generosity makes it difficult to obtain a lifestyle close to that of the majority. This should make it more difficult to be defined as belonging to ‘us’. Overall we expect the poor and unemployed in the liberal welfare regime to have most difficulty fulfilling the deservingness criteria. And therefore we expect the level of public support for welfare policy that improves the living conditions for poor and unemployed to be low. The causal reasoning behind this argument is illustrated in figure 5.

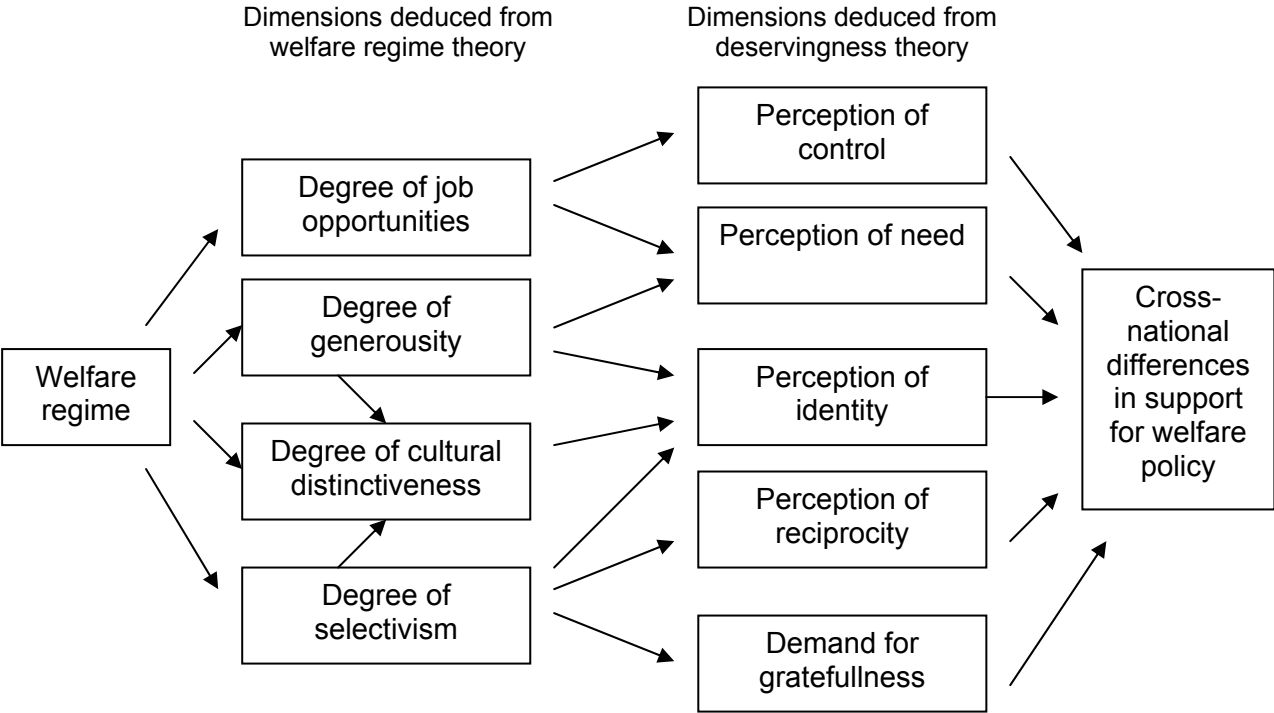
Figure 4. Four regime dimensions that influence perceptions of poor and unemployed. The theoretical position of the ideal type countries of Sweden, West Germany and USA.



In the ideal type social democratic welfare state regime, the degree of selective welfare policy is low, and so is the cultural distinctiveness of poor and unemployed. These positions should make it easier for poor and unemployed to fulfil the deservingness criteria. The perceived job

opportunities are believed to be lower than in the liberal welfare state regime, which should decrease the perception of poor and unemployed being in control of their neediness, but still not as low as in the conservative regimes. Finally, the social democratic regime has a high degree of generosity, which on the one hand potentially opens the need discussion, but on the other hand makes it much easier for poor and unemployed to obtain a lifestyle close to that of the majority. The latter should make it easier to be defined as belonging to ‘us’ and thereby fulfil the identity criterion.

Figure 5. The theoretical link between welfare regime and cross-national differences in welfare attitudes.



Finally, we argued that the ideal type conservative welfare state regime has a middle position in terms of degree of selective welfare policy, degree of generosity towards poor and unemployed, and degree of cultural distinctiveness of poor and unemployed. In terms of fulfilling the deservingness criteria in the ideal type conservative regime, the position on these three dimensions suggests that it should be more difficult than in the social democratic regime and easier than in the liberal regime. However, on the dimension of perceived job opportunities, we argued that the ideal type conservative regime has a low position, which should make it easier to meet the (not in) control criterion. Still we believe that in the overall judgement of deservingness, the poor and unemployed are worse off in conservative regimes than in social democratic regimes. Hence, we expect public support for welfare policy to be higher in the ideal type social democratic regime than in the ideal type conservative regime.

One could argue that these cross-regime expectations are part of a circular argument because we already know the result; namely that support for welfare policy in the ‘narrow sense’ should end up being high in the social democratic regime, medium in the conservative regime, and low in the liberal regime. In favour of this argument speaks the fact that the model contains contradiction forces without a theory of the relative importance of these forces. Thus, without hesitation we will admit that the model presented in figure 5 is more an explanatory framework than a testable theory. However, firstly, just the task of explicitly pinpointing the intervening variables between welfare regimes and the regime pattern of public support found in previous empirical studies is a theoretical step forward. Secondly, we are in need of new theories about the regime dependent electoral feedback process, as previous studies have had difficulties in finding the expected effect from class-interest (deduced from the power resource theory), the effect from self-interest (deduced from rational choice institutionalism), and the effect from egalitarian values (deduced an underspecified culture thesis). To put it heroically the grand theories of welfare state development need a better micro-foundation.

Thirdly, the idea of a link between welfare regimes, judgement of deservingness, and public support for welfare policies that concern the living condition of poor and unemployed actually might help us explain why OECD’s job strategy (1994, 1996) has been implemented so differently. At first glance all the Western countries shared the idea of an ‘active’ labour market policy, where supply-side problems should be prevented by a ‘tougher’ treatment of unemployed, but policy outcomes has been fundamentally different; even in cases with similar ‘colour’ of the parties in power. Studying the implementation of ‘workfare’ in social assistance schemes in 7 Western countries, Lødemel & Trickey (2000) e.g. operate with a continuum from ‘human resource development’ to ‘labour market attachment’. USA was the prime example of a labour market attachment strategy, which ‘promoted quick job placement, even at low wages, in the expectation that ‘work first’ is the best way to build (or forestall loss of) work habits and skills’ (2000:227). Denmark was the country that came closest to the ideal type of human resource development (2000: 297). Naturally, it is difficult to make this kind of judgment, and Lødemel & Trickey’s ranking is pretty inductive. It is striking, however, that the harshest reform of social assistance schemes took place in the country where the public has the most negative perception of poor and unemployed and the softest reforms took place in the countries where the public has the most positive perception.

Fourthly, the theoretical framework can be an inspiration for future empirical studies (which probably can make much better operationalisations than the few items have been able to find in existing data material) and be used to generate a number of lower level theses that are more testable (see e.g. Larsen, 2005). Finally, it gives a new perspective on the future public support for welfare policy; maybe it will not depend so much on the future configuration of class-interest, self-interest or shift in egalitarian values. Maybe it will depend more on changes in the ‘political men’s’ regime dependent perceptions of reality.

Notes

¹ Even people or groups in favour of welfare policy are believed to contribute to this institutional logic, as the typical argument for better policy is that the group is even more different than initially presumed and therefore has even more special needs. In his influential work, Jordan (1996) also criticises poverty research for carrying this liberal logic, as it has been preoccupied with measuring and categorizing the low-income groups along poverty lines, social minimum lines, or demographic and socio-economic categories. It could be perceived as a scientific effort to describe the size of the ‘needy’ group and how it differs from the ‘ordinary’ people.

² This argument is in line with Goul Andersen’s findings on the Danish case. He shows that even if we delimit the analyses to the group of private employees without own or family experience of unemployment, there is no majority against the welfare policy in general. He also shows that support for increased public expenditures in a given area is not higher among employees working in this area (Goul Andersen, forthcoming).

³ In 2000, 17 pct. of the Americans had an income below the relative poverty line (less than 50 pct. of the median income) compared to 8.3 pct. in Germany and 6.5 pct. in Sweden. The estimates of the proportion of citizens living below the poverty line are heavily influenced by the method of calculation. Here we have simply taken the overall figures provided at the webpage of the Luxembourg Income study.

⁴ Therefore we seem to reach the same result as the power resource theory; namely that it basically becomes easier to create good living conditions for ‘the bottom’ in highly ‘institutionalised’ welfare states (Korpi & Palme 1998). But our line of reasoning is different.

⁵ Alesina & Glaeser (2004) rightly argue that the American perception of poor having good chances to escape poverty does not coincide with the facts. Referring to Gottschalk & Spolaore (2002), who compare USA and German, and Checchi, Ichino & Rustichini (1999), who compare USA and Italy, reality seems to be that the poor are more ‘trapped’ in USA than in Germany and Italy. In USA, 60 pct. of the bottom quintile in 1984 were still in this quintile in 1993 compared to 43 pct. in Germany. In USA, 25 pct. of the fathers in the bottom quartile have children who also are in this quartile. In Italy, the share is 21 pct. To explain this paradox, Alesina & Glaeser refer to different ideologies (p. 76) and later to a general negative perception of poor caused by racial divides (133-183). In contrast, we point at regime-dependent labour market structures as a more straightforward explanation. Job growth in the private service sector and the ability of individuals to negotiate the salary might

not on average increase the chance of moving out of the lowest quintile but the possibilities of getting a job give the public the impression that each individual has a decent chance.

⁶ In principle, the American public was, according to Gilens, not against state intervention, which should be expected from Lipset's argument about Americans being embedded in a culture of liberalism. Instead the negative perception of recipients of welfare benefits was the major obstacle for public support. Gilens finds a strong connection between perception of the work ethic among blacks and attitudes towards welfare spending (2000:69). Gilens also reports a so-called "Welfare Mother experiment" where white respondents are given different frames of reference. One group is asked to think of a black mother receiving welfare, another group to think of a white mother receiving welfare. The result is that negative stereotypes of black mothers are a much better predictor of public support for welfare spending than negative stereotypes of white mothers on welfare (2000:99).

⁷ Lambert & Penn (2001) made a first attempt to distinguish different ethnic groups in the LIS/LES data, but so far (to our knowledge) no comparative studies of the link between ethnicity and poverty have been made.

⁸ Alesina & Glaeser (2004) consistently argue in favour of the latter point. A few Scandinavian historians occupied with the creation of the social democratic regimes have also followed this line of reasoning (Christiansen 1986, Rojas 1995:100; Kuhnle & Kildal 2002). However, as discussed above poor and unemployed not only to be different but also need to be recognised as being culturally different. Here Alesina & Glaeser argue that political parties that are already against welfare policy have a great incentive to use the overrepresentation of ethnic groups among poor and unemployed in their political argumentation. The line of reasoning is clearly taken from the American experience and following Gilens (2000) and Oudagno (1995), Alesina & Glaeser conveniently show that the race issue have been used to prevent welfare state development in USA, all the way back to the founding fathers. However, Alesina & Glaeser (2004) do not discuss the possibility that the process of distinguishing a given minority group as 'spongers of the welfare state' also is the outcome of selective welfare policy, a tight-fisted welfare policy that forces unemployed to have a quite different lifestyle than the majority, and a labour market structure that generates the perception that poor and unemployed are in control of their neediness. To some extent it is a 'chicken and egg discussion', where Alesina & Glaser (2004) would argue that the racial divides came prior to the building of the modern welfare state, and 'hardcore' institutionalists would argue that racial divides are a social construction, which has been facilitated by institutions. Esping-Andersen seems to be open to both dynamics (Esping-Andersen 1990:23-24).

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