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**Recent Changes in European Welfare State Services:
A Comparison of Child Care Politics in the United Kingdom,
Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands***

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Abstract

This paper examines recent policies and politics of services, in particular child care services in European welfare states. It is argued that social (care) services are becoming an increasingly political issue in postindustrial societies and are at the very center of welfare-state restructuring. Some countries have recently developed new policy programs for child care—but there are important differences among these programs. To understand these differences as well as some common features, the paper argues that it is necessary to examine the institutional organization of child care and short-term political factors as well as the rationales articulated in political debates to support or impede various policies. The paper concludes that a comprehensive system of child care provisions is still far off in most countries, despite a rhetoric of choice and postindustrial care and labor-market patterns.

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Almost all West European welfare states have been confronted by mounting new phenomena since the late 1970s, such as the withering away of the policy-informing idea of "full employment for all," growing female labor-market participation, demographic change (aging, fertility), increasing social differentiation (living-arrangements, migration), and the growing influence of European integration on domestic policy—to mention just some problems. These phenomena undercut some of the basic assumptions on which post-World War II welfare states were built, among them assumptions about the family, gender relations, the life cycle, and the "standard worker" (Esping-Andersen 1993; 1994:167; Myles/Street 1995). They are related to the development towards postindustrial societies and "post-fordist life cycle" (Myles 1990) that urges new social arrangements and alterations in the "states/market/family" nexus. Also, since the late 1970s and early 1980s, the debate about the "welfare state crisis" has gone public in most West European countries, and the need to restructure the welfare state—for economic as well as social reasons—has begun to become more generally accepted. The politics of retrenchment started to substitute for policies of welfare state expansion (Pierson 1994, 1996). The Golden Era of the welfare state definitely seemed to have come to an end. In this paper recent changes in a particular sector—day-care provision for children—will be analyzed in four European countries, focusing on both policy arrangements as well as the rationales articulated in political debates on child care. Why child care? And why this approach?

1. THE INTERPRETATION OF CHANGE IN POSTINDUSTRIAL WELFARE STATES

Many countries made changes in their welfare policies in the 1980s. These changes are difficult to understand, for they often lack a coherent policy format, are directed towards new fields of policymaking and are the (often ambiguous) result of the chemistry of long-term historical developments and short-term political factors. Historical developments in creating welfare state provisions have been studied extensively and have engendered a very rich collection of both historical case studies and comparative work on welfare states (Titmuss 1974; Castles 1978; Korpi 1983; Baldwin 1990; Esping-Andersen 1990; Ginsburg 1992; van Kersbergen 1995). The notion of different clusters of welfare states, as developed in Esping-Andersen's regime theory (1990), has been particularly influential. His distinctions among a liberal cluster, a Social Democratic cluster, and a conservative-corporatist cluster have proven to be very useful in understanding differences in the historical development of welfare states.

However, welfare state regime theory has a basic shortcoming: it focuses strongly on labor-market participation, as well as on related social security schemes such as pensions and sickness benefits—in short, on transfer payments—and neglects the role of social services almost entirely. In general, we know much more about wage labor and social insurance arrangements from an international comparative perspective than we do about personal and social care services. But social services are becoming more important in the context of post-fordist or postindustrial life-cycles. Recently, scholars have begun to extend the notion of welfare state typologies towards services (see Alber 1995). Anttonen and Sipilä (1996) have developed a (carefully formulated) typology of social-care regimes. On the basis of children's day-care facilities and care for the elderly,¹ they distinguish a Scandinavian model (extensive universal public services), a family-care model found in Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Italy (a very limited supply of social care services and a relatively large informal grey market), and a British or Anglo-Saxon means-tested model in which services are intended exclusively for people with limited means. The other continental countries (Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Belgium) belong, albeit to different extents, to the subsidiarity model.² The role of the state is restricted to the role of subsidizer in case lower organs in society (family, private religious initiatives) fail to take up their responsibility. The countries that group together in the various social-care regimes show some similarities with Esping-Andersen's clusters, but reflect even more obviously the poverty regimes found by Leibfried (1993) (Anttonen and Sipilä 1996:96-7).³ In gen-

¹Of course, child care facilities and care for frail elderly people are not the only relevant services. Anttonen and Sipilä therefore conclude that it should be useful to extend the analysis to health and education services.

²These countries show huge differences between child care services on the one hand and services for the elderly on the other. Germany and the Netherlands have very low public services for children, but do much better with regard to services for the elderly, whereas Belgium and France have extensive services for children but are somewhat remote concerning services for the elderly. Therefore, Anttonen and Sipilä have problems classifying these countries in clear categories.

eral, this research seems to confirm the rather secure grounds for extending welfare-regime typology to services.

Research that starts from the perspective of gender relations comes to other conclusions. Gender does not get much attention in the welfare state regime approach. Women are only mentioned insofar as they participate in the labor market. Further, although the family is mentioned as a feature of the conservative-corporatist cluster, the theoretical status of the family is unclear in the other countries (Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994). Ostner and Lewis (1994) have developed a more gender-sensitive framework analyzing 1) the way in which women are treated in tax and social security systems; 2) the level of social-service provision, particularly with regard to child care; and 3) the nature of married women's participation in the labor market. They distinguish three breadwinner models: a strong breadwinner model (the U.K., Ireland, Germany, and the Netherlands), a modified breadwinner model (France), and a weak breadwinner model (the Scandinavian countries, especially Sweden) (Lewis and Ostner 1994).⁴

Both the extension of regime theory to services and the development of new models starting from a gender perspective are helpful to understanding the differences among welfare states and I will refer to them in this paper. We will see whether breadwinner and social care regimes will coincide concerning child care arrangements. However, we should be cautious about using them for the analysis of contemporary developments, for they are much better equipped to analyze long-term historical developments than current changes in policies and politics. As in Esping-Andersen's model, social-care regimes and breadwinner models heavily depend upon either long-term developments or on static comparisons at one moment. The regime approach, particularly as laid out by Esping-Andersen, has been criticized for these reasons.⁵ As Pierson has argued, retrenchment politics is not simply the reverse of welfare state expansion, but has its own dynamics (Pierson 1994). Moreover, a regime-theory approach may be misleading because it easily overemphasizes the meaning of different models as fixed and stable identities, and therefore gives few clues to explain new and emergent models of welfare and service provision. As Taylor-Gooby argues:

The regime approach is much more successful at giving accounts of stability than of change because it categorizes welfare states by policy outcomes and rests on the careful analysis of existing structures of interests. It finds change more difficult to understand, since new departures in policy, in some countries at any rate, are driven by more short-term political factors, by institutional detail, and by perceptions of the national economic context. (Taylor-Gooby 1996a:121-2)

Certainly, regime typologies—including social care and gender regimes—are useful for understanding historical developments and differences and similarities in welfare structures and outcomes of social policies. To understand recent changes in welfare provisions, we must, I argue, include short-term political factors as well. With regard to my specific point of interest—the politics of child care as an example of welfare state restructuring in relation to the development of post-fordist life-cycles—the question of basic arguments, which I refer to as rationales, to legitimate various policies, is also important; issues concerning care and life cycles go beyond “expenditures and cuts” and redistributive policies, and have given rise to political

³Leibfried (1993) came to a similar clustering of countries as Esping-Andersen, but added a fourth regime, “the Latin Rim,” which is characterized as rudimentary welfare states, with residualist facilities together with older traditions of welfare connected to the Catholic Church.

⁴For some critical remarks about these breadwinner models, see Hobson (1994) and Bussemaker (1997).

⁵From a welfare state regime perspective, one may expect only small changes within different structures of welfare provision and social services (cf. Esping-Andersen 1990; 1994; 1996). In more recent publications, Esping-Andersen distinguishes three distinct routes to governmental response to economic and social change, which follow his former welfare state typology (Esping-Andersen 1994; 1996).

debates about the legitimacy of various welfare arrangements. Older rationales underlying child care policies are being contested and new rationales articulated in political debates.⁶

In short, we have to analyze both changes in social programs and institutions as well as the political factors that may create space for shifts in rationales to support or impede new initiatives concerning child care, and the political debates in which they are articulated. The first refers to "what is"; the second to "what ought to be." In the political context the "what is" and "what ought to be" questions are often intertwined; in a scientific analysis, one has to try to unravel them. In my analysis I will focus particularly on the rationales articulated by governments and political parties, considering that they are the main political actors.⁷

I think child care provisions are an interesting case-study because they provide a window into the way various countries deal with the organization of social services (cp. Mahon 1997).⁸ Furthermore, they are interesting because they are related to different fields of policies such as family-, gender-, labor-market-, and education policies. Moreover, child care has become an increasingly political issue in many countries, and has become much debated in the political arena.

My analysis will focus on four countries: the U.K., Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands. Three of them are—so to speak—European prototypes of different welfare-state (Esping-Andersen) and social care (Anttonen and Sipilä) regimes within Europe: Britain for the liberal, means-tested regime⁹; Sweden for the social-democratic, Scandinavian regime; and Germany for the corporatist, subsidiarity regime. The fourth country, the Netherlands, is a hybrid of different welfare state typologies, particularly the conservative and the social democratic regime types, although one can recognize some similarities with the liberal regime as well (see Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994; Bussemaker 1997b).

The questions to be answered are: first, what are the historical backgrounds of child care facilities in different welfare states—for their legacies may have influenced recent policies (section 2). Second, what changes have occurred since the 1980s in provisions and policies and how are they related to long-term relationships between child care and welfare—c.q. services and gender regimes (section 3)? Third, how should recent changes in child care provisions be interpreted from the perspective of political change and the rationales articulated in political debates (section 4). Finally, the question of the role of distinctive factors (historical legacies, short-term political factors, institutional change and political rhetoric) needs to be answered in relation to contemporary child care politics (conclusions, section 5). With regard to the subject of this paper, the relation between family- and labor-market policies will prove to be of special importance.

⁶I have written more extensively on the notion of rationales as a tool for understanding social policies in Bussemaker 1997c (forthcoming).

⁷It should be very interesting to extend the analysis to other participants in the debate, such as employers, trade unions, the women's movement, and welfare organizations. Pierson (1994) has made a strong argument that welfare states have helped structure the development of interest groups. Apart from Sweden, where feminists, pro-family groups, and social democrats formed coalitions with regard to child care, such strong interest group coalitions do not seem to have developed in other countries.

⁸It is very difficult to get comparable data about amounts and structures of different forms of (institutionalized) child care in various countries. Systems differ in important respects, and the data themselves are often based on different standards. Moreover, until recently, it was very difficult to get the right data for even one country, because they were not systematically gathered. It is only recently that, thanks to scholars working on international comparative research and publications of the European Commission Network on Child Care, data have become more comparable. Therefore, the data presented in this paper should be regarded with caution, especially for the earlier periods.

⁹Esping-Andersen (1990) describes the U.K. as a combination of both residual and universal features; however, it is the most liberal welfare state within Europe.

2. CHILD CARE PROVISIONS BETWEEN 1945 AND THE LATE 1970S: HISTORICAL BACKGROUNDS AND POLICY LEGACIES

At the time of the Second World War provisions for child care were rather incidental and often covered only a particular group of children (the children of poor or single parents). In the postwar period, however, in almost all European countries provisions of state support for families increased, but the question as to whether or not this should include public child care facilities was answered in quite different ways.

Countries that had experienced severe economic and social damage as an effect of the war, among them the U.K., the Netherlands and, of course, Germany itself, directed their policies towards strong breadwinner arrangements and traditional gender relations in the postwar era. The effects of the war on child care policy became especially clear in the U.K. During the war, the need to attract women to the labor force as an "additional power for industry" was regarded as a "matter of first importance to the war effort," as the Minister of Labour stated in 1941 (Cohen and Clarke 1986:1). This led to a rapid expansion of day nurseries during the Second World War. However, as soon as the war ended the wartime nurseries were rapidly dismantled.¹⁰

The framework for postwar social policy was already laid out in the Beveridge Report of 1942. The novel idea of universality laid the basis for comprehensive social security schemes, including family allowances. But public child care was in no way part of it. With regard to children, care in the home was emphasized. Beveridge was clearly convinced of the desirability of the breadwinner model, assuming a caring housewife at home: "The great majority of women must be regarded as occupied on work which is vital though unpaid, without which their husbands could not do their paid work and without which the nation could not continue" (Beveridge 1942:49).¹¹ This notion of family policy was implemented in British postwar policies. Immediately after the war, the Ministry of Health published a circular which expressed the opinion of the Ministers that the proper place for small children was at home with their mothers:

They [the Ministers] are also of the opinion that, under normal peacetime conditions, the right policy to pursue would be positively to discourage mothers of children under two from going out to work; to make provisions for children between two and five by way of nursery schools and classes; and to regard day nurseries as supplements to meet the special needs of children whose mothers are constrained by individual circumstances to go out to work or whose home circumstances are in themselves unsatisfactory from the health point of view or whose mothers are incapable for some good reason of undertaking the full care of their children (Ministry of Health [1945], Circular 221/45, cited by Moss 1991:132).

Such assumptions about child care policy have a remarkable continuity in the postwar period. In 1968, a ministerial circular reaffirmed the strong notion of breadwinner arrangements and the task of mothers in caring for their children at home. The circular states that "wherever possible the younger pre-school child should be at home with the mother . . . because early and prolonged separation from the mother is detrimental to the child" (Ministry of Health [1968] Day Care Facilities for Children under Five: Circular 37/68, cited in Moss 1991:133).

The citation indicates the influence of psychoanalytic theories, as laid out by authors like Bowlby, on the separation thesis. Mothers were assumed to need to stay at home to care for their young children. Within that context, public child care was seen as an "evil," although sometimes necessary for specific groups, rather than a virtue of a comprehensive welfare state.

¹⁰By 1938 there were 4,000 places in public nurseries, and over 9,500 in nursery schools. By the end of the war there were 1,300 day nurseries in England and Wales, providing child care for 62,000 children. Scotland and Northern Ireland had similar provisions (Cohen 1993:516). In 1950 the number of places dropped to 42,000 and continued to fall until there were 21,000 places in 1969 (Cohen and Clarke 1986:2).

¹¹See Pedersen 1993 for a good analysis of Beveridge's ideas on the family.

Consequently, publicly-funded child care was restricted to "at risk" children.¹² Nursery education for children three years and older was much more prized and increased somewhat in the 1970s; the White Paper (DES 1972) laying out Mrs. Thatcher's education policy was especially important for the increase in the number of nursery schools. These schools were—in line with the non-separation thesis between mothers and children—only available for a few hours a day. Moreover, they arose from assumptions about education policies, not from family policies. The differences in assumptions between day nurseries (child care) and nursery schools is reflected in the organizational structure. Day nurseries fell under the purview of the central Department of Health and Social Security, while the nursery schools and classes for children three years and older act in accordance with the department of Education and Science (Ergas 1990:179). There has been no coordination between the two responsible departments. An important feature of child care in general has been its institutional fragmentation (Randall 1995:337).

Despite a strong breadwinner-ideology—which as such was not very different from the postwar ideology in countries like Germany and the Netherlands—the labor-market participation of (married) women in Britain has been higher than in Germany and much higher than in the Netherlands, especially since the 1970s (see Table 1, p. 30). Consequently the need for child care was greater. There are two ways mothers have tried to solve the combination of paid labor and care for children. First, many of them have been working part-time (see tables 2 and 3, pp. 30 and 31), a fact that is often explained by the lack of more comprehensive provisions. Because compulsory school starts rather early—children go to school at age five—and because there is part-time "pre-primary schooling" for children between three and five for a couple of hours a day (nursery schools and playgroups), this helped mothers with somewhat older children to participate in the labor market in small part-time jobs. Informal care traditionally has been the second way of solving the problem of lack of public child care. Informal care through the help of relatives or friends has been much more outstanding than in the other countries. In fact, women who worked full-time most often used the help of maternal grandmothers, while for mothers working part-time the help of husbands or partners was most common (Cohen 1993:519).

Altogether, the role of national and local authorities has been very limited with regard to child care provisions for working mothers under "peacetime conditions." In general, British governments emphasized the role of private responsibility. After the war the role of the state was largely limited to the supervision of child minders and care facilities. The strong emphasis on private responsibility, together with strong ideological discrimination and institutional fragmentation between day nurseries and nursery schools have been important legacies in later periods.

Other countries that had been involved in the war, among them the Netherlands and, of course, Germany, also developed strong breadwinner arrangements after the war.¹³ Both showed a very strong return to prewar family orientations in the 1940s and 1950s. Unlike the U.K., the Netherlands had not experienced war nurseries to the extent Britain did. In Germany there had been child care facilities, but they had been part of the fascist ideology and eugenic concerns most Germans wanted to "forget" when the war was over. On the other hand, the perception of a close relation between child care and totalitarianism was stronger in the Netherlands and Germany than in the U.K.

After the war, a strong rhetoric emerged in both countries concerning the dynamics and the renewal of the economy (cp. the German *Wirtschaftswunder*). However, family policies were formulated in an opposing discourse. They were targeted at the creation of stability and the restoration of the prewar (family) order (cp. for Germany, Ostner 1994; for the Netherlands,

¹²In the 1968 Circular they were described as children of single parents, children whose mothers were physically or mentally "ill" or otherwise unable to look after their children (cp. Moss 1991:133).

¹³That is not to say that there is a logical connection between participation in the war and strong breadwinner arrangements. France is the exception here, developing into a "modified" breadwinner model (Ostner and Lewis 1995).

Bussemaker 1997c). For example, Dutch politicians, divided on many issues, all agreed that strong family life was a condition for rebuilding the country. Immediately after the war, the Dutch government cooperated with volunteer organizations in a campaign with the slogan "restoration of the family is restoration of the population" (Bussemaker 1993:100). The Ministry of Social Work, established in 1952, had as one of its main tasks the "support and advancement of religious, denominational and private social work on behalf of the protection, preservation, restoration and consolidation of the family-community as the constituent and structuring power of society" (quoted in Bussemaker 1993:114).

In Germany, a separate Ministry of Family Affairs was established in 1953 (later the name was changed to Ministry for Family and Youth Affairs). As in the Netherlands, this Ministry was dominated by Catholic ministers. Its task was to support and to protect the family as the origin and the basis of all social life (the *Urzelle Menschlichen Lebens*) and, in line with notions of subsidiarity, to help the family to develop as the social unit that precedes the state and other higher organs of social life.

In Germany, the revival of marriage and family referred to a notion of "privacy," meaning "freedom from immediate state intervention" as the opposite of the Nazi policies, which had abolished the private world (*Lebenswelt*). Public child care was not at all seen as a condition for such a "healthy family life." In addition, the East German system with its extensive public child care and high full-time female labor-market participation was heavily criticized; communism would create a "fatherless society" (Ostner 1993:98).

More generally, both in Germany and the Netherlands the absence of public child care was part of a discourse against totalitarianism, either fascist or communist (Bussemaker 1997c; Ostner 1993:98). In contrast to public involvement, a traditional family life, with children cared for at home by their mothers, was seen as the proper strategy to combat totalitarianism. As one of the documents of the German Ministry of Family Affairs argued:

Millions of inwardly healthy families with a healthy collection of children begotten in wedlock are at least as important against the threat of communist danger from Eastern child-unfriendly nations, as all military defences. (Franz-Jozef Wuermeling, "Bedeutung und Sicherung der Familie," in: *Bulletin* 5-8-1954, P. 1290, cited in Joosten 1990: 39)

Moreover, assumptions about the relationship among child care, poor relief, and philanthropy were not of much help in expanding public child care. The more both countries targeted their policies towards the elimination of poverty, and the more they emphasized the role of the state (together with employers and employees in a corporatist negotiation structure), the less attention was paid to child care. The notion that public child care is something for "children in need"—associated with day nurseries and philanthropy—was kept alive until the late 1970s (Bussemaker 1997c; Pettinger 1993). There was no space for a discourse on public child care; instead, the absence of such facilities was proof of the achievements of the welfare state. The dominant discourse emphasized the idea that child care is not necessary in a generous and well developed welfare state with extensive transfers to families.

As in the British context, a strong breadwinner ideology assumed that young children should be cared for by the mother at home. However, there were also striking differences with the British situation. Both the German and the Dutch governments developed more arrangements for family support than did the British. The notion of subsidiarity, well-known in Germany and the Netherlands, thereby played an important role. Subsidiarity refers to the idea that the first responsibility for care lies within the family, the smallest organ of society. But the notion also assumes the state to have a special duty in upholding the capacities of families to practice their responsibility. As a result, both countries developed rather generous family allowances, benevolent maternity benefits and, especially, generous family wages and social insurance schemes for (male) workers, who were assumed not only to have to support themselves, but also their wives and children, in good as well as in bad times (in case of unemployment or sickness for example) (Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1994; Sainsbury 1996:30; Ostner 1993). Subsidiarity, together with the notion of organicism, also implies hierarchy, patriarchy, authority, and

order, the latter to be provided by the "higher" members of society. The order of the family was characterized by a dominant father and willingly subordinate members under his authority (van Kersbergen 1995:202). Therefore it is not surprising that men were entitled to receive social benefits, whereas married women often were excluded from receiving benefits in their own right. In the course of the time, when welfare arrangements in general and breadwinner entitlements in particular became more comprehensive, the notion that child care was not necessary in a well-developed welfare state became even more influential. As a result, Germany and the Netherlands hardly developed public child care between the 1950s and the late 1970s.

Though public child care was not regarded as something the state should provide, both Germany and the Netherlands developed the so-called playgroups (*Kindergartens*) for children three years and older, particularly in the 1970s. These are partly comparable to the English nursery schools. In Germany, playgroups increased suddenly after the Deutsche Bildungsrat (the German Educational Council) was established in 1970. The central idea, laid out by the Bildungsrat, provided the basis for the policies in the 1970s:

It is the commonly held view that during its first three years of life, a child's development is best furthered if its family provides an understanding and stimulating environment. It is hard to see how children of this age can experience more stimulation outside such a family. For three- to four-year-olds, however, this conclusion is no longer valid. (Deutscher Bildungsrat [1970], *Empfehlungen der Bildungskommission: Strukturplan für das Bildungswesen*:40, cited in Pettinger 1993:214)

In the Netherlands, too, playgroups grew rather rapidly in the 1970s; and, as in Germany, these playgroups were argued for exclusively using children's need for attention, care, and room to play and to prepare for school. This point of view is reflected in a study on the desirability of child care commissioned by the government and carried out by the Working Group on Policy Analysis for Child Centres in 1974. The working group concluded that the interests of children should be central to child care and did not see as desirable "greater numbers of women going out to work than is currently the case, even if good and financially accessible (. . .) day-care centers are available" (Rapport 1974:6). The attitude towards playgroups was very different from the attitude towards public child care.

Playgroups were supposed to contribute to the social well-being of children; in addition, arguments for pre-education and easing the transition from family to school were used in favor of these facilities (Bussemaker 1993; 1997c; Pettinger 1993:223). Compulsory schooling begins at age five in the Netherlands, but almost all parents take the opportunity of sending children to school at age four. German children start primary school at age six. As a result, *Kindergartens* in Germany partly have the role schools fulfill in the Netherlands. In both countries the role of playgroups and kindergarten has been undisputed.

However, the playgroups have not been much help to working mothers. Most of them were only part-time and for a couple of hours, sometimes in the middle of the day, therefore only allowing mothers to have (small) part-time jobs (tables 2 and 3, pp. 30 and 31). More generally, the hours of social services and schools in both Germany and the Netherlands assumed that there was someone available to care for children before, after, and in between hours in (play) schools. This applies in particular to the German situation, where schooldays often end around 12:30 p.m. or are rather irregular, assuming an "immobile woman" waiting at home with a hot lunch (Leibfried and Ostner 1991). For a short time, the so-called new "host-parenthood" projects seemed to be an alternative for providing a more acceptable solution for the shortage of child care provisions. Between 1974 and 1979 the German federal government provided support to some state and local governments to carry out experimental programs with host-parenthood or childminders (*Tagesmuttern*) (Ergas 1990:174). The conclusion of this experiment was that "[T]he care services are as different from one another as the life-style, qualifications, and living quarters of the childminders themselves" (cited in Pettinger 1993:221).

Since then, Germany intended to develop standards for child minding, but became very reluctant to expand this kind of service. In the Netherlands as well, childminders (*gastouders*) de-

veloped, albeit somewhat later than in Germany. Because of the variety of forms of childminders and because of the semi private/public organization of them, it is difficult to get a clear picture of the role of childminders within the larger field of child care.

So far, there are a many similarities between the German and Dutch postwar policies. However, there are also important differences between the two countries. Although the ideology of family relations and the merits of breadwinner arrangements was not so different, the extent to which both countries succeeded in turning this ideology into practice diverged—with consequences for child care provisions. The Netherlands seems to have been more successful in implementing the breadwinner ideology than Germany was. For example, women's labor-market participation has always been considerably higher in Germany than in the Netherlands (see table 1, p. 30).

The main explanation for the striking features of the Dutch situation in comparison to Germany, and especially its low female labor-market participation, is political and economic. The political explanation refers to the specific social and political system of "pillarization," (*verzuiling*) which created a segregated but stable political and social system. Within this system, family policy was one of the few points most political parties agreed upon; as a result, family transfers and restrictions on women's labor-market participation were developed quite rigidly and straightforwardly (Bussemaker 1997b). The second explanation is economic: the country's relative prosperity made it possible, at least until the 1960s, to pay high breadwinner wages. The productivity per working hour was relatively high and socioeconomic conditions were relatively favorable for a strict division of labor between men and women, rather more than was the case in Germany (Plantenga 1997). As an effect of higher female labor-market participation in Germany, more German women were forced to find informal solutions to solve the problem of child care, for example, the help of unpaid relatives or paid child minders and nannies at home. In both countries, only a few women used public child care as a means of participation in the labor market—there simply were almost none of these provisions. In addition, some found a place in "private" denominational initiatives, which by the 1960s often received subsidies from municipalities but had some freedom in allotting places, especially in the Netherlands, where the socially and politically institutionalized system of pillarization (*verzuiling*) generated many provisions for different, rather segregated, religious (denominational) and "quasi"-religious (liberal and socialist) social groups (Bussemaker 1997b). Many women used a combination of arrangements, combining play groups with informal arrangements, for example.

In short, the overall picture of child care provisions in Germany and the Netherlands is one of a patchwork of different kinds of arrangements, very different in structure, organization, financing, allotment, and quality. In fact the policy was directed towards the elimination of full-time public child care facilities by developing a comprehensive system to help the family to uphold its responsibility in the organization of care—a system that created strong policy legacies. In addition, the ideological notion that public child care is related to totalitarianism and is not necessary in well-developed welfare states also strongly contributed to the rejection of public child care. The strong ideological distinction between child care and playgroups in Germany and the Netherlands reflects the distinction between day nurseries and school nurseries in the U.K. And, as in the U.K., child care provisions were institutionally fragmented.

The postwar situation in Sweden was different from the countries mentioned thus far. Although many people thought, especially in the 1950s, that it was preferable for women to stay at home to take care of their children, this belief was not as strong as in countries like Germany and the Netherlands. First, they had experienced less damage as a consequence of the war, and therefore less reason to "restructure" prewar notions of family life. Second, concern about the population, already an issue before the war, continued to attract attention. In 1954, a commitment to the family led to new initiatives, among which was an evaluation of the government's financial support for families. As early as 1955 rather generous maternity benefits were arranged, providing women flat rate benefits for three months, and the possibility of another three months of unpaid leave. Third, the very influential notion of "women's two roles," developed by Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein in the late 1940s contributed to a more positive atti-

tude towards women and the labor market (Lewis and Aström 1992:66). Although the notion of "two roles" assumed that women should stay home when the children were small, it also assumed that women would work before having a child and after the child left school. Fourth, related to the latter, the recognition of a shortage of workers in the early sixties was not, as in other countries, solved by attracting workers from southern European countries and former colonies—although some initiatives in this direction had been taken (Broberg and Hwang 1991:93)—but by stimulating women's labor-market participation. The rather homogeneous culture of Sweden, and the absence of colonies, might have been some reasons for this choice, but more important were the substantial costs related to immigrants—where, unlike countries such as Germany and the Netherlands, they were allowed to bring their families and to have Swedish language instruction during paid work (Gustafsson 1994:51). In comparison, the costs of bringing married women into the labor force were reasonable.

These features, and especially the stimulation of women's labor-market participation in the 1960s, made Sweden develop in a different direction. Restraints on women's labor-market participation and equal opportunity policies were less prominent than in the other countries. Social Democrats, the main political power, changed in the sixties from a "difference perspective" to an "equality perspective" with regard to gender-relations. Support for women's labor-market participation grew in the 1960s and in 1968 a joint task force report on equal opportunity by the Social Democrats and the trade union confederation concluded that "there are thus strong reasons for making the two breadwinner family the norm in planning long-term changes within the social insurance system" (Lewis and Aström 1992:67; Hirdman 1987:42).

By then, the Swedish Social Democrats were much more in favor of gender equality than their Social Democratic counterparts in the other countries. Moreover, both the women's movement and other parties (particularly the Liberal and Communist parties) were much less divided over child care as a public issue than they were in the U.K., Germany, and the Netherlands (cp. Broberg and Hwang 1991:93).

Social Democratic governments, which had been in power without intermission between 1960 and 1976, started to implement equality policies in the early seventies (Lewis and Aström 1992:64). These policies paved the way for a comprehensive system of public child care facilities. First, in 1971, tax law was changed, calling for separate income taxes for wife and husband, thus stimulating women's activities to earn an income. Then, in 1974, the Parental Insurance Act changed maternity benefits into parental benefits, thereby extending the right to care to fathers (see table 5, p. 31). The Parental Insurance Act originally provided benefits for six months, but was lengthened later (to twelve months in 1980). In addition, a Child Care Leave Act was established in 1979 giving parents the right to (unpaid) leave until the child was one-and-a half years old (see table 6, p. 32). This Act was part of employment legislation.

Concerning child care, a Child Centre Commission was installed in 1968, and in 1975 an Act on Pre-Schooling was adopted that obliged municipalities to grant claims for places to all six-year-olds. Unlike the other countries, a more unified focus on care, socialization, and education developed in Sweden from 1968 on, first implicitly, but slowly becoming a more explicit part of policy (cp. Gunnarsson 1993:502). Between 1976 and 1980 programs were developed to extend child care with 100,000 more places. Since then, child care has developed quickly. In 1975, 15 percent of all children had a place in the child care system, in 1980 the figure had increased to 34 percent (Gustafsson 1994:51; Sainsbury 1996:99). Child care facilities in Sweden have always been seen as an important part of preschooling (we should keep in mind that compulsory school starts as late as age 7). Apart from reasons of education, the labor-market participation of women was an important argument for extending child care. This was reflected in a strongly coordinated child care policy. General policy falls under the National Board of Health and Welfare and also county administrations. As with most welfare provisions in Sweden, administration is delegated to municipal authorities.

Overall, it was particularly through the programs developed after 1975 that the government took up the main responsibility for public child care. Since then, a strong feeling of communal responsibility for universal child care is a main characteristic of the Swedish welfare state.

Within Europe, Sweden, together with some of the other Scandinavian countries, particularly Denmark and Finland, certainly took the leading position concerning public child care.¹⁴ The coordination of education-, family- and labor-market policies that had already begun back in the 1960s created an important basis for a more coherent social policy. Together with the fact that discourses on child care were much less ideologically outspoken or part of an emotional political rhetoric (such as the one about totalitarianism) than was the case in the other countries, it contributed to some distinctive legacies in Swedish social policy.

The postwar period of welfare state expansion produced some important legacies concerning welfare, gender, and social care services in general and child care in particular, both institutional and ideological.

First, the influence of the war and the perceptions of the war on national welfare state ideologies appears to have deeply affected child care politics, although in different ways. In the U.K. the opposition between wartime nurseries and peacetime mothers at home was especially important. In Germany and the Netherlands the equation between child care and totalitarianism, either fascist or communist, was particularly powerful as an argument against any public child care.

Furthermore, related to the topic of the war, there is a deep legacy in different countries of welfare state structures that were founded upon a strong division of labor between men and women and between the public and the private spheres. Strong gender divisions, often formulated in terms of "equal but different" developed in the U.K., Germany, and the Netherlands. But, whereas the British system was based more upon the notion of family responsibility, together with a rather "universal" system of welfare for male breadwinners, in Germany and the Netherlands the idea of subsidiarity—which referred both to the notion that the first responsibility for care lies within the family, and to the notion that the state has a duty to support families in carrying out their responsibility—was more influential. For different reasons—concern about the population, less damage from the war, and the stimulation of women's labor-market participation in the tight labor market of the 1960s—Sweden moved into another direction.

Third, there was some ambivalence about child care policy as a matter of education policy, family policy, and labor-market policy, particularly in the U.K., but also in Germany and the Netherlands, which engenders questions about the relationship among different fields of policies. Whereas kindergartens and nursery schools have been highly valued as part of education policy, child care for young children has been a heavily contested ideological issue. Consequently, child care has been ideologically contested and institutionally fragmented. Again, Sweden is the exception, with a more integrated policy developed since the late 1960s.

In addition, there were also clear tensions between notions on how child care should be organized, according to dominant ideologies ("what ought to be"), and what took place in practice ("what is"). In both the U.K. and Germany a strong breadwinner ideology assumed that women should care for their children full-time at home; however, due to labor-market participation by women, other solutions, particularly informal care, were necessary. In the Netherlands ideology and practice coincided more, based on the notion that child care for small children is an evil. In Sweden too the "what is" and "what ought to be" questions were not very far apart, but coincided in a way very different from the Netherlands. In Sweden child care policies were extensively discussed in the political arena in the 1970s, and here a rather broad consensus developed about the need for extensive public child care. Consequently, a rather coherent system of child care provisions started to develop in the 1970s. More recently political interest in child care has increased in the other countries as well. What changes have occurred since and what kind of political forces have contributed to it, and what rationales have been articulated to support or impede child care provisions? To these questions I will turn now.

¹⁴Only France and, to a much lesser extent, Belgium, also developed a comprehensive system of public child care, but their policies were, unlike Sweden's, built upon the belief in the benefits of early education, and inspired by pronatalist policies, rather than stimulation of women's autonomy (Jenson 1980; Hantrais 1993; Gauthier 1996:181).

3. DEVELOPMENTS IN CHILD CARE PROVISIONS SINCE THE 1980S

If we compare child care services around 1980 and their development since then, there are some striking differences. Sweden certainly had the most comprehensive system of public child care, financed through taxes. The system was fairly universal. In 1980, 22 percent of children under three and 65 percent of children aged three to compulsory school age were in a municipal child care centre (*daghem*) or family day care (childminders, *familjedaghem*). All together, 34 percent of all children pre-school age were in public child care. However, half of the parents themselves still cared for their children: 13 percent used parental benefits, 15 percent were full-time homemakers, and 18 percent of the parents combined work with care and both shared the responsibilities. In addition, only 14 percent of the parents made use of private care and another 6 percent relied on unpaid care by friends or relatives (Sainsbury 1996:99). As table 4 (p. 31) shows, Sweden has even extended its system since. In 1993, 32 percent of children 0-3 years old and 76 percent of children three years old to compulsory school age had a place in the child care system, almost all of them in public funded child care. Thus, in the 1990s, the Swedish child care system is still the best example of a model that focuses on extensive public responsibility. Sweden's child care policy certainly fits within the Scandinavian model of extensive social care services (Anttonen and Sipilä 1996), and is largely compatible with the way Esping-Andersen defines the features of the social democratic welfare state. As Gustafsson, who applied Esping-Andersen's model to child care provisions, concludes: "Child care is universal, it is used by both the middle class and the working class. It is an example of a high-quality provision, which is supported by the middle class in the same way as Esping-Andersen characterizes the development of old age pension insurance" (Gustafsson 1994:51). Moreover, child care is part of a strategy to increase women's labor market participation and dual earner families.

The picture of the U.K. is, compared with the Swedish case, almost the reverse and represents a private responsibility model (cp. Ergas 1990:177). In 1980 public child care was provided for only 2 percent of the children between 0-3 years old, most of them from poor families or families "at risk." The situation for older children is better (40 percent of children 4-5 years old are covered by some form of registered care), primarily as an effect of part-time "pre-primary schooling" and an early compulsory school age of five years, while recently children have been allowed to go to school at the age of four. In 1980 registered child care services existed for 65 percent of (part-time) playschools and playgroups, for 25 percent of childminders and for 10 percent of public nurseries (OECD 1990: 133). In the 1990s, publicly funded child care is still restricted to children "at risk" and not related to labor-market participation of women or postindustrial life cycles more generally. Between 1986 and 1993 public funded child care decreased with 15 percent for children 0-3 years old but increased 25 percent for children 4-5. In 1993 only for 1 percent of children between 0-3 years old were covered by publicly financed child care. They are in particular for "children in need" and organized on the municipal level (European Commission Network on Child care 1996:123). As an alternative to public provisions, parents rely more than in other countries on the help of relatives or friends. The size of the informal sector is particularly strong; in 1980 only 30 percent of working mothers with pre-school children paid for care; in the same year only 20 percent of preschool children were covered by registered care services (Sainsbury 1996:97-8). The British child care structure resembles the characteristics of a liberal welfare state, as well as a liberal model of social care services. Anttonen and Sipilä describe the British means-tested model as a society "in which the state assumes responsibility for the provision of social care services but seeks at the same time actively to downplay its responsibilities and the quantity of public services" (Anttonen and Sipilä 1996:96). Although "downplaying of responsibilities" seems to be difficult concerning child care, because provisions have been very marginal since the war nurseries were dismantled, British policy succeeded in decreasing even these very marginal provisions even further in the 1980s.

Germany did not have many public child care facilities in 1980 either. Only 2 to 3 percent of children 0-3 years old were covered by public child care (European Commission Network Child Care, 1990). If we add the very small number of private initiatives organized by parents

themselves to the officially regulated public child care provisions, there might be provisions for around 4 percent of all children 0-3 years. As a proportion of the children of working mothers, this represents about 14 percent (Pettinger 1993:217).¹⁵ In addition, as a survey carried out in the second half of the 1970s found, half of the children 0-3 years old whose mothers were in the labor force were cared for by grandparents or older siblings, while about 18 percent could be looked after by the mother while she was working. For most of the parents these solutions were the "second choice" (Pettinger 1993:218).

The situation of children 3 years and older was much better (around 65 percent) (European Commission Network Child Care 1990), but most of them were in kindergartens, which are only open a couple of hours a day. In addition, many people relied on informal care by friends or families, or on an rather extensive network of (semi-) private arrangements, such as host-parenthood. Since 1980 the provisions for children 0-3 years old have remained unchanged, while there is a small increase in public child care facilities for older children. Public subsidies to host-parents or *Tagesmütter* or *Tagespflegestelle*, which showed a sharp increase in the 1970s, declined in the early 1980s, thus having a negative effect on the expansion of child care provisions (Ergas 1990:183). The German structure of facilities—or better the absence of public child care for young children—reflects some of the features of the conservative welfare regime, such as well-developed and generous social insurance schemes for breadwinners, and ill-developed services for working mothers. It also features a traditionally strong breadwinner ideology. The counterpart of this policy is that Germany heavily depends upon the voluntary contribution of parents, in accordance with the ideology of subsidiarity (cp. Anttonen and Sipilä 1996).

Finally, the situation in the Netherlands shows some similarities with the German case, such as a strong breadwinner ideology, a strong emphasize on subsidiarity and large transfer payments to families. However, the percentages of children covered by public child care in 1980 were even lower than in Germany. In the Netherlands, only 1 percent of children 0 to 3 and 50 percent of children 3 to compulsory school age were covered, the latter mainly in play-groups or early education (European Commission Child Care 1990). An EU survey of child care in the early 1980s reported that the level of provisions for young children was the lowest of the member countries (Sainsbury 1996:98; Hooghiemstra et al. 1993:205). Since 1980 public child care provisions have increased, particularly after 1990; in 1993, 8 percent of children 0 to 3 years old were covered. The Dutch expansion of provisions is primarily an effect of a policy program called the Stimulatory Measure on Child Care, inaugurated by government in 1990. This program was directed towards the creation of public facilities to facilitate the labor-market participation of working mothers (both married and single mothers). The percentage of children in the three and older age category who found a place in a center is lower (6 percent), but is partly compensated by the fact that children start school early; if we count these children, as is normal procedure, then there is state-funded (mainly part-time) care for 56 percent of children aged between three and five (European Commission Network on Childcare 1996:91).¹⁶ In addition, there has been an extremely strong increase in women's labor-market participation since 1980 (see table 1, p. 30) and a lot of social security arrangements have been individualized, although child care leave schemes are still rather marginal (see table 6, p. 32). Over all, the Netherlands seems to be moving away from the subsidiarity model.

¹⁵However, it is unclear how many of these private initiatives by parents existed in 1980. Many of them are of recent date, so these percentages might even give a flattering picture.

¹⁶The Dutch case is a bit puzzling because, based on its similarities in social expenditures with the Scandinavian countries, we might have expected higher public child care facilities. However, other reasons—such as prosperity and the means of putting family ideology into practice in a strongly segregated society—may provide arguments as to why the Dutch system has been poorer in child care for a very long time than the traditional example of Germany. For these reasons, I think it is problematic to take the Netherlands as an example of a conservative welfare state, as Gustafsson (1994) does. The Netherlands differ from Germany concerning the level of expenditures (which are traditionally higher in the Netherlands than in Germany), a more solidaristic view on income distribution, and an ideology which in general—and again in comparison with Germany—focuses more strongly on equality (albeit perhaps not so much with regard to gender).

All together, public child care has shown moderate expansion in Sweden and the Netherlands for 0 to 3 age group since 1980, whereas the U.K. has shown a decrease of publicly funded child care for the same age group. Childcare for children three years old until compulsory school age has expanded in all countries. These care facilities may be full-time public child care, as is largely the case in Sweden, or small part-time provisions (from five hours a week up to a half day) such as kindergartens and playgroups, as is the case in the other countries.

So far, the picture is not very surprising. However, table 4 (p. 31) only shows public child care facilities. If we add private child care, the figures for the U.K. are considerably higher. Britain shows a huge increase in privately financed child care. Between 1986 and 1993 the number of places in private care increased with 39 percent (European Commission Network on Child Care 1996:123). In the Netherlands private child care facilities increased too. There were almost no private provisions in the early 1980s, but in the mid-1980s new initiatives have emerged in the private sector; some companies set up their own creches, others bought in places in existing facilities, while still others negotiated agreements with the Childcare in the Netherlands Foundation (Stichting Kinderopvang in Nederland [SKON]) which sells these facilities to companies on a supply and demand basis. As in the Netherlands, German profit-making services for child care traditionally have been very marginal; however, unlike the Netherlands, they hardly developed in the 1980s. As a consequence, profit-making services still account for a very limited portion of the total supply (cp. Ergas 1990:182). Even Sweden shows an increase in private child care. The 1980s showed some initiatives of employers to revalue the market. The employers' association and the Swedish Federation of Industry financed the establishment of a private, for-profit day care company (Mahob 1997:16). In 1992 a non-Social Democratic government decided to abolish the municipal monopoly on receiving state subsidies (Lex Pyslingen), opening the door further for private organizations to arrange day care (Gustafsson 1994:52-3). However, most day care is still publicly provided. Furthermore, the table does not tell much about other forms of child care, such as informal care through friends or relatives, and other forms that are unregistered.

In addition, the organization and financial structure of child care in most countries has gone through some changes which do not show up in the table. Although public child care is organized and partly financed by state subsidies, parents are supposed to contribute as well. In some cases municipalities or communities (Sweden, the Netherlands, Germany) are also involved. In general, there seems to be a common trend towards decentralization of the financing and organization of child care in the 1980s and 1990s. Governments are inclined to give more responsibilities to the municipal or regional level. There also seems to be a common trend to increasing the contributions of parents, although there are important differences among countries. The Swedish state still pays a larger part of each child care place compared to the other three countries. Furthermore, the involvement of employers (the U.K. and the Netherlands) is a new phenomenon. Some employers now organize child care or pay for child care for their employees.

All together, the differences explored from a more long-term historical point of view seem to show up in some more recent policies as well. However, there are also changes in comparison to the previous time, as well as striking differences among countries, which need some further explanation. Most countries show a tendency towards more privatization and deregulation, both in countries where public child care was ill-developed and those where public child care was already quite extensive. At the same time, some other, older forms of child care expanded in some countries in the 1980s, such as childminders and *Tagesmütters*. And public child care increased in both Sweden and the Netherlands. How to explain these developments? Furthermore, the divergence between Germany and the Netherlands is striking: how to explain the differences in child care provisions since the late 1980s? And what about the political debates and the rationales articulated for either change or continuity in policies, the data do not tell much about?

To put it differently, are recent policies mainly guided by familiar notions of the state/market/family nexus in the four countries, or is there some evidence for new departures in policies and changing rationales?

4. CHILD CARE POLITICS BETWEEN RETRENCHMENT AND POSTINDUSTRIALISM

In this section I will focus more closely on the political forces which may have generated new departures in policies, as well as the rationales which have been used either pro or contra child care provisions.

The British development certainly reflects the conservative rejection of any involvement of the state, apart from the most severe cases of "need." The successive conservative governments of Thatcher and Major argued strongly against any state responsibility for child care. Even the very marginal provisions for public child care that existed in the early 1980s became the subject of discussion. For example, the Secretary of State for Health and Social Security argued in 1984 for increasing privatization of child care as part of a strategy to stimulate voluntary and private initiatives. He argued that statutory authorities would hold up an "overall strategic view and responsibility in the community but would see themselves rather less as service-providing agencies and rather more as enablers of voluntary and private provision" (cited in Ergas 1990:179). Public child care provisions indeed decreased in the 1980s. In addition, policy measures about the amount and details of standards about the quality of child care have been left to local authorities. There has been no sign of a coherent national policy in the 1980s; in fact policies have become more decentralized (cp. Moss 1991:134).

In conservative rhetoric, the role of both the family and the market are emphasized, particularly if there is no situation of "risk." The responsibility of mothers has been stressed for solving the problem of the combination of paid work and care for children. Thatcher explicitly rejected publicly funded child care arguing that "it would swing the emphasis further towards discouraging mothers from staying at home" (quoted in Gauthier 1996:184). In a very straightforward "free market ideology" statement David Willetts, Director of Studies at the Centre for Policy Studies, argued in 1988 that we should regard "the decision to have a child as the same as any other spending decision in these days of contraception. It is the same as deciding to buy a CD player or a car . . . it is an entirely personal matter" (*The Guardian* 14.7.1988, cited by Moss 1991:132).

While children are seen as a responsibility of the community in Sweden, and as a "gift of God," to be protected by the family as well as the community, in Germany and the Netherlands, they seem to be part of an ideology of possessive individualism in Britain—an ideology that became more clearly pronounced in the 1980s than ever before. Although Willetts's argument may sound somewhat exaggerated, even for Britain, the argument that children are the property of their parents, who are responsible for them, finds some more widespread support. In 1988 government policy stressed the responsibility for child care in gender-neutral terms as an issue for parents themselves to solve:

Our view is that it is for parents who go out to work to decide how best to care for their children. If they want or need help in this task they should make the appropriate arrangements and meet the costs. Our objective is that there should be a range of day care services so that parents can make a choice. Public provision by local authorities should concentrate on the particular needs of children from families with health or social difficulties (Hansard, Col 150, 12-7-1988)¹⁷

Nonetheless, the decision about whether "to go out to work or not" is not something one can decide in absolute freedom—disconnected from assumptions about breadwinner arrangements and gender division of paid and unpaid work.

Apart from the family, the role of the market is stressed. Employers are the new actor in the discourses of child care. Their role has come to the forefront in the late 1980s, when, quite suddenly, the threat of a "demographic time bomb" was discussed after the publication in December 1988 of a report of the National Economic Development Council (cp. Randall 1995:

¹⁷For similar arguments, see John Patten, junior minister in the Department of Health, who stated in Parliament that "day care will continue to be primarily a matter of private arrangement between parents and private and voluntary resources, except when there are special needs" (Hansard 18-2-1985, col. 397).

336). Rather remarkably, the threat of a "demographic time bomb" had a much more explosive impact in the U.K. than in other countries, even though the U.K. is favorably placed in its demographic structure (Taylor-Gooby 1996b:101). But again it is argued that the role of the state should be very marginal. Instead, the government pinpoints employers to take their own responsibility in a rather alarming discourse:

employers in this country must realise that the only way to defuse the demographic time bomb ticking away underneath them is by taking the initiative themselves to support family life and to support mothers who want to work (John Patten, Home Office Minister with responsibility for coordinating government policies for women, quoted in the *Independent*, 12-1-1989, also cited in Moss 1991:137)

The government has tried to stimulate employers to sponsor nurseries. In 1991 the government introduced tax relief for employers providing work-place nurseries. The effects however were limited; high costs prevent more employers from providing such facilities. The government tried to stimulate employers once again to provide child care as part of the project "Opportunity 2000" (Gauthier 1996:184). The idea of "Opportunity 2000" is to create "win-win situations" which serve both the interests of employers and (female) employees.

Apart from employers initiatives, private services were also growing; childminders and nannies particularly seem to go "to business."¹⁸ The Children's Act of 1989, which came into force in 1991, tries to regulate some of these private initiatives with minimal standards. The Act forces local authorities to make conditions when registering private services and to provide child care for children "in need." It also provides minimum requirements for inspecting services. Apart from the Children's Act, regulations had been carried out for childminders; the only form of child care that experienced some official support, among other reasons because of its low costs, its flexibility, and because it is considered to be the closest substitute for the mother and the child's home (Moss 1991:134).

Over all, the involvement of the state has been rather marginal. Moreover, the notion that women's labor-market participation needs to increase because of the "demographic time bomb" is not formulated very straightforwardly. For example, at the same time John Major signed the Opportunity 2000 project, he argued that "it is not for the Government to encourage or discourage women with children from going out to work" (cited in Ginsburg 1992:173).

Conservative rhetoric about women's labor-market participation is in itself not very clear and shows ambivalence. Whereas Thatcher and Major generally emphasized that women should stay at home, the secretary of Employment stated in 1993 that "we are determined that women should be allowed every opportunity to participate as fully as possible in the labor market. The Government . . . will continue to encourage women to make the most of the opportunities available" (Hansard, Col. 638, 2-7-1993). But what about the family if women enter the labor force? Conservative ideology about the family shows a huge gap between the political rhetoric in which the virtues of family life are stressed, and the policies to turn these ideas in practice. The family is assumed to fill the gap between separate individuals (remember Thatcher's phrase "there is no such thing as society, there are only individuals and families"),¹⁹ but without any support from the government. In general the rhetoric about family values does not result in concrete measures to improve the situation of families, although some conservatives seem to become more aware of the gap between perceptions and policies. David Willetts, cited above with regard to "children as an entirely private matter," noted in 1993 that there is a great gap between ambition and reality (Willetts 1993:20) within contemporary family life, because increasingly economic reality is in conflict with the perception of men seeing themselves as breadwinners, "while they see women as pre-eminently responsible for domestic work" (Willetts 1993:8-9).

¹⁸They already showed a huge increase in the second half of the 1980s. this growth was partly an effect of the registration of childminders that had been "unregistered" before (cf. Moss 1991:139).

¹⁹In the late 1980s, Thatcher showed more interest in family issues; her concern was in particular the presumed relation between family breakdown and crime and other social ills (Lister 1996:14-15).

Willems's solution is to try to reverse the decline of family responsibility, rather than to create more public provisions to facilitate the combination of work and care for both parents. From this perspective, Willems's ideas mesh with the liberal assumption that the gendered division of work is a matter of private decision-making, and that public policies should be limited. These ideas are more widespread, and were especially heard in relation to the very political issue of single parenthood in the early 1990s. Many publications from think tanks, such as the Institute of Economic Affairs, linked single parenthood to problems of crime, stability and incivility (cp. Lister 1996:15). The rhetoric about single parents and their dependency on welfare has been particularly strong (in the U.K., as well as in the Netherlands single mothers participate less than married mothers in the labor market, whereas in most other countries, including Germany and Sweden, the relation is the other way around).²⁰ But the answer is found in a rhetoric of restoration of family life, rather than in supporting these families with social provisions like child care. Moreover, the notion that public child care might contribute to a sense of belonging, community life, and overcoming some problems of postindustrial societies is inconceivable in British conservative rhetoric.

Child care has become a strongly political issue in the U.K. Labour reviewed its (restrictive) attitude towards child care policies in the 1980s and pleaded in 1989 for obliging local authorities to provide comprehensive child care services through partnerships between local councils, employers, and community groups "to make this cost effective with funding from central government to help finance new initiatives" (Labour Party [1989]), *A New Future for Women*, cited in Cohen 1993:521. See also Labour Party [1990], *The Best Start, Labour's Policy in Education and Care for Young Children*. Also, trade unions and employers are slowly becoming more favorable to either public or private child care provisions; trade unions argue that child care is important for creating equal opportunities in the labor market, while employers argue that child care would help companies to be competitive in a world market. Under pressure from these forces, and particularly opposition by the Labour Party, which argued strongly for more interventionist policies of child care in the 1992 election campaign, the conservative government announced the development of more out-of-school places beginning in 1993. They promised to develop up to 50,000 places in three years (Gauthier 1996:184). In 1994 Prime Minister Major announced a provisions for all children four years and older at medium notice for all parents who wanted to take it up. But not a word about child care for younger children. A rhetoric of "diversity" and "choice" is the fig leaf for a limited role of the government in creating child care. As Major argued in 1995: "We want to promote choice and diversity by building on the existing wide range of providers, including the private and voluntary sector" (Hansard, Col. 310, 26-1-1995). The rhetoric of choice certainly does not mean an expansion of public child care; in fact, one of the other tasks, cost-effectiveness, seems to be more important than stimulating the availability of diverse provisions, thereby creating real possibilities for choice. The Conservative government emphasizes again and again the value of choice and diversity, adding that expansion can only be made when resources are available (cp. Hansard, Col. 1013, 17-3-1995). Moreover, there is no clear policy for creating child care for small children (0 to 3 years old).

The return of Labour to power as an effect of the 1997 elections may change the situation in a more fundamental way, expanding the public as well as private provisions for child care. Although Blair is clear that he doesn't want to change the market economy, has distanced himself very clearly from "old Labour" demands about national state services, has argued for the value of family life, and has promised not to increase taxes, women's labor-market participation is regarded much more positively and unambiguously than among Conservatives. Therefore, although it is unclear whether public child care will strongly expand under Labour, it may lead to more coordinated policies to stimulate others (employers, voluntary organizations) to do so.

The recent end to Conservative power may also affect the British attitude towards the European Union and therefore, indirectly, social policies concerning child care. With Blair sign-

²⁰For a good analysis of the position of single mothers, see Hobson (1994).

ing the Maastricht Treaty, British social policy may develop into more social regulation and these may indirectly affect child care policies. In addition, Labour probably has fewer problems than the Conservative government in signing European arrangements concerning parental leave.

In Germany, changes in child care policies are rather recent (and therefore, for the most part do not show up in the statistics yet). The 1980s did not show much change. As we saw before, the subsidies for host-parenthood projects (*Tagesmütter*) declined in the early 1980s, but slowly increased again in the late 1980s. No other forms of child care have been developed by the government in the 1980s. It was only after the German unification in 1989 that child care became an important point of discussion. Immediately after 1989 a small increase in publicly funded child care occurred in former West Germany, while former East Germany showed a decrease. German unification forced the country to combine the former East and West German policies into one. The difference between the two Germanys was remarkable: in East Germany 50 percent of the children 0 to 3 years old were covered by public child care, in West Germany only 2 percent of such children were covered (European Commission Network on Child Care 1996:40-6).²¹ In 1991 Germany passed a new federal Act on Children and Youth Support (*Kinder- und Jugendhilfegesetz*). One of the aims of the Act was to create a comprehensive and coherent system of provisions for children 0 to 6 years old, governing the regulation of child care centers, kindergartens, after-school care facilities and childminders. The Act facilitates procedures for establishing childminding. The Act pays more attention than the former Youth Support Act to the role of education in the various child care provisions. Furthermore, it allows for care based on parental initiatives, apart from professional and institutionalized child care. In fact, the law codifies the initiatives already taken in the 1970s and 1980s by parents themselves; these "self-help" provisions were established by lack of institutional provisions, as well as by parents who rejected the values carried out by institutional provisions. Interestingly, the new Youth Act introduces the concept of "subsidiarity" for the development of these child care policies. The notion of the family incorporated in the classical idea of subsidiarity remains unchanged, but for the rest subsidiarity does not so much refer to private charitable, religious organizations or parish welfare organizations but rather to the numerous reforms of parental initiatives and self-help measures into the public education and advisory services (*KJHG* 1990, Section 26). In fact, the Act "takes into account the requirements for ideological plurality in the services provided" (Pettinger 1993:214).

As such, the Act itself did not lead to an expansion of child care provisions; the regulation and development of child care was delegated to the *Länder* and the communes, who are responsible for the implementation of the Act. The differences in policies among *Länder* are substantial.

But it was not only child care that was a problem; a lot of other provisions had to be adjusted to each other after unification, among them the regulation of abortion. The new abortion act (Act on Pregnant Women and Family Assistance Act, passed in 1992) came into effect in 1993, and meant a much more restrictive law than the former East German abortion law. The expansion of provisions for child care is often regarded as an "exchange" for a more restrictive abortion act (European Commission Network on Child Care 1996:41; Ditch 1996:57). By this law the German government committed itself to "guarantee" public child care for children between three and six years old in nursery schools (kindergartens), to take effect from 1996 (European Commission Network on Child care 1996). Because not all the *Länder* succeeded in implementing this arrangement, a transitional measure has been arranged up till 1999.

While the provisions for children 3 to 6 years old have been expanded recently, the provisions for children up to three years old have deteriorated or stabilized. Municipalities, which are responsible for the administration of the 1992 Act, often have paid less attention to child care

²¹Information here refers to the situation in the former West Germany. The generous and comprehensive child care facilities and (parental) leave schemes in France and, to a lesser extent, Belgium, for example, cannot be explained by such a theory.

for younger children. In addition, some *Länder* have challenged the Act because of its high costs (Ditch 1996:60).

Whereas concrete policies were still in their infancy, the political rhetorics seemed to value child care for older children highly in the early 1990s, not only within the SPD, but also the within the CDU/CSU. The need for (public) child care facilities has been argued against the background of changing gender and family relations. In a modern rhetoric of plural roles, changing family patterns and the "right to work" of both men and women, child care provisions take a central place. As in the U.K., a rhetoric of choice has been formulated, but in the German case "choice" refers not so much to various child care provisions, but to family life and paid work. As Bundeskanzler Kohl said in 1991 in a discussion about the Act on Children and Youth Support:

We want every person, man or woman, to be able to decide freely between family and career, or for a combination of both. Therefore, and also considering the position of single fathers and mothers—the supply of public child care facilities and other forms of child care should increase. The German government will really do its best to secure a right to a child care place in the Law on Children and Youth Support (*Verhandlungen 1990-1991; band 155, 12/5:81*)

When Kohl said this in 1991, political parties in the Bundestag other than the CDU/CSU began laughing. One year later, however, they all agreed with the regulation to guarantee a place in child care.

However, the 1992 Act was more an effect of German unification rather than a transition of the German welfare policies towards postindustrialism and gender equality. Although some important changes have been made in other social policies, such as an extension of child care leave (gradually extended up to thirty-six months and partly paid in 1993 [see table 6, p. 32]), few other things have been done to combine work and family care. For example, schedules of schools and kindergartens are a hindrance for full-time labor-market employment and better part-time jobs; shopping hours have extended a little bit but are still rather restricted. Moreover, there is still an effective rhetoric that links child care to totalitarianism and particularly to former East Germany. As the CDU recently put it in a pamphlet: "It was socialist but not social, to wake up small children from their sleep at five in the morning, to bring them in chock-full means of transportation to institutions ('einrichtungen'). In all these institutions . . . children were exposed to a one-sided ideological model of control" (CDU, *Die Sozialpolitische Entwicklung in Deutschland - Familien Förderung*, place and year unknown).

Of course with both the extension of child care leave and the right of a place in a kindergarten there is a comprehensive solution for the combination of work and care; one can take child care leave for the first three years (with cash benefits for the first six months, and income-testing thereafter), and use kindergartens when the child is three years or older. However, such a solution is especially appealing if one earns a good income or if one has a partner with a breadwinner income. For low income groups the solution of long leave is less attractive. For women who earn an their own income, the solution might not be very attractive as well, because a break of three years may have huge consequences for a professional career. Moreover, the combination of long leave and kindergarten is not at all flexible, and assumes a rather rigid pattern of care (the first three years at home, and thereafter only part-time in a public provision).

In conclusion, we may say that German political rhetoric about free decisions between career and family life or combinations of the two sounds sympathetic, but that the actual policies cut down some of these possibilities in practice. A combination of a career and family life is still troublesome. Though the guarantee of a place in kindergarten for children three years and older certainly is an important change in the traditional German policy it does not contribute much to the combination of paid work and care. This is a transformation, moreover, that is difficult to explain from long-term historical developments, but can only be rightly understood in the context of German unification.

As in Germany, it was only around 1990 that child care policies seriously started to change in the Netherlands. And although the rhetorics of a combination of work and care show some similarities in both countries, the actual reasons for a redirection of policies are quite different. In the Netherlands a rationale of economic efficiency has been highly persuasive for building broad-based support for investment in child care. Whereas in the 1960 public child care was regarded as something immoral in a well-developed welfare state where mothers were supposed to take care of their children at home, and in the 1970s and 1980s it was regarded as a part-time welfare provision in the interests of children, in the 1990s it is viewed as an economically productive instrument of policymaking, in order to increase women's labor-market participation and therefore the competitiveness of the Dutch economy (Bussemaker 1997c). A consensus about the necessity for restructuring the welfare state has contributed to these changes in rationales.

As in many other countries, debates about the need for cutbacks, targeting, selectivity, and incentives—in short, retrenchment—started in the 1980s. Originally most of these debates focused on social security arrangements like the Disability Act, the Unemployment Act, and pensions, and child care was not part of the discussion, although it slowly became a more political issue. In 1983 the government set up an Interdepartmental Working Group on Child Care in 1983 whose brief was to generate proposals which would lead to child care regulation. However, the responsible minister, Christian Democrat Brinkman, in that time well known for his neoconservative ideas, particularly with regard to family policies, preferred not to wait and expressed the view that child care shouldn't be organized by general regulations, arguing that this would make child care a "right" and elevate it to the level of, say, education or health care (Bussemaker 1993:218; Bussemaker 1997c). In the Christian Democratic ideology, which was still influential in the 1980s, state-funded child care embodies both the evils of government interference and control over private life and the indifference and selfishness of individual citizens who allow their own interests to prevail over those of their children. The reinstatement of personal responsibility and of traditional values and social ties, they believe, are the best remedies for bloated welfare state spending. Here we find traces of the original Roman Catholic principle of subsidiarity that comes down to a reserved policy on care measures: responsibilities should be decentralized to the lower level communities in society, among them the family and voluntary initiatives.

More generally, neoconservative rhetoric related every plea for expansion of public child care to "state education" (referring back to notions of totalitarianism), to selfishness and egoism of parents (meaning mothers), and to "American situations"—a pejorative in the Netherlands. Minister Brinkman, again, expressed a very pronounced view on the topic in the mid-1980s:

Is it not absurd that in many families the norm is for children to come home when it suits them? The notion of "the icebox is open, switch the TV on, mom and dad will get home sometime" is hardly family life!! (. . .) Very many families no longer exist as such because both man and woman have to work or want to work and that value is considered of more worth than raising a child. (. . .) And then, of course, you could set up day-care centres and after-school facilities, but then you're leaving your children to fend for themselves (quoted in Bussemaker 1993:204; Bussemaker 1997c).

As far as the government recognized the importance of women's labor-market participation, they preferred a policy of informal child care and tax-deductions, as the secretary of state Kappeyne van de Copello, responsible for women's equality policies, argued (Bussemaker 1993: 227). Such an approach, the government argued, would increase parental choice among different forms of child care without putting a burden on the state.

However, the more neoconservative rhetoric of traditional family life, combined with the liberal solution of informal care, rapidly lost ground in the late 1980s. Instead, a moderate neo-liberal discourse, also known in the Netherlands as social liberalism, gained ground with regard to welfare state restructuring. Within this approach, child care is presented as a means of increasing economic productivity and competitiveness, and is coupled with a rationale of efficiency. This rationale provides sound arguments for the expansion of child care: these facili-

ties can contribute to the stimulation of—still very low—labor-market participation by women and thus reduce the costs of the welfare state, while at the same time countering the waste of female talent and state investment in women (e.g., education) because the expectation is that women will remain in the work force after having children.

The rationale of efficiency has the potential to create a bridge between neoliberal and feminist actors, particularly the women's groups in political parties and trade unions. Both argue that women's labor-market participation needs to increase, and that child care provisions are a condition for that. By the late 1980s, liberals and Social Democrats, along with influential advisory bodies such as the Social Economic Council and the Scientific Council for Government Policy (*Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid* [WRR]) all emphasized strongly the significance of child care for the labor market; at issue here were no longer families or the state, but rather employees, companies, and government.

The neoliberal argument had become so hegemonic at the very end of the 1980s that now even the Christian Democrats could concur with expansion of child care as an instrument of labor market policy. The argument that women's labor-market participation should be stimulated to insure funding of the welfare state and the assumption that child care can play a significant role therein was hardly debatable by the end of the 1980s. Formerly expressed moral and social objections are now few and far between.

The report *A Working Perspective* from the Scientific Council for the Dutch Government (WRR 1990) was very important for justifying and legitimating the policies of a new coalition cabinet made up of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats inaugurated in 1989, which argued for "a strong impulse because of labor-market considerations" (quoted in Bussemaker 1993:229). It was this coalition cabinet that developed the policy program to increase child care, the so-called Stimulation Measure, in 1990. The cabinet reserved a total of NLG 300 million for investment in child care over the ensuing four years—the period would later be extended until 1997. This policy led to an increase of 70,000 places in a short period of time. Whereas in 1990 only around 2 percent of children 0 to 3 years old were placed in state-funded day care, by 1993 this had risen to 8 percent.

The focus of the policy program was in particular on services for working parents, with employers expected to supplement public funds by buying places for their employees. The idea is that government (nationally through the stimulatory measure supplemented with local funding), parents, and companies will each contribute to child care. Parental contributions are calculated according to income; special deductions are created for companies. In addition, the regular day-care centers should reserve a certain percentage of their places for companies to buy them. The ideals are only partly successful; sometimes there is limited interest from companies and parents face long waiting lists—as a result of which places remain unused even though there is great demand.

Single mothers were regarded as a special case in many political debates. Their labor-market participation, as in the U.K., has been extremely low. But politics towards single mothers are still very ambivalent. A new welfare law, long debated and finally established in 1996, has the aim of stimulating the labor-market participation of single mothers, but an exception is made when the children are under five. At the same time, local authorities are stimulated to find public child care for single mothers, also with children under five, in order to stimulate their labor-market participation (Bussemaker et al. 1997). This law passed under the responsibility of the Kok cabinet, a unique combination of liberals and Social Democrats (and Christian Democrats excluded since decades), inaugurated in 1994. This government further stimulated child care facilities, public as well as private. In 1995, new incentives have been made for employers, who get a tax deduction of 20 percent for the costs they pay for child care for their employees. This incentive is part of the governmental attempt to stimulate companies to set up their own child care policy through the idea, borrowed from the U.K., known as "Opportunity 2000." Though some expansion in child care may occur, given the steady increase in women's labor-force participation, the ball has been put in the employers' court.

The situation will be further complicated when child care policy undergoes far-reaching decentralization in the mid-1990s. Since 1996 a main part of the responsibility for funding has shifted from national to local governments. Municipalities now have a budget that is no longer ear-marked exclusively for child care. As a result, child care must compete with other interests and provisions, such as a new soccer pitch or language courses for migrants.

In short, we may conclude that in the 1990s the significance of child care for the labor market has been strongly emphasized; at issue are no longer families or the state, but rather employees, companies, and government. A more neo- or social-liberal oriented economic rationale has been extremely functional in expanding child care facilities. What appears as pervasive in the public discourse on child care is the rationale of efficiency, productivity, and financial viability (Bussemaker 1997c). As a result, the expansion of child care facilities is more an effect of alterations in labor-market policy and fiscal restructuring than an effect of coordinated post-industrial policies about welfare, care, and work.

As we have seen, Sweden stood far apart from the other countries in 1980 and child care has further increased since then. It is remarkable that the bourgeois coalition government that was in power from 1976 to 1982 did not at all change existing child care policies. In fact, they did not intend to dismantle the Social Democratic model. However, changes occurred in the 1980s, concerning both expansion and deregulation of child care provisions. In 1985, with the Social Democrats in power again, legislation was enacted to guarantee child care for all children between one-and-a-half and six years old, beginning in 1991. However, due to the rise in fertility rates, as well as cutbacks in expenditures, this goal has not been reached.

The Conservative Party voted, together with the Centre Party, against the expansion of public child care. They were concerned about the role of parents, which—they thought—might weaken as a result of public child care, as well as about the exclusion of private child care in government proposals. Also here, a rhetoric of choice emerged:

Parents have—and should have—the primary responsibility for the care and upbringing of their children. This presupposes that the parents themselves can choose between many different alternatives on more or less equal terms. In order to increase the freedom of choice and reduce the difference in the financial support given to municipal child care and to other child care, conditions must be improved not only for alternative child care centers but also for parents who care for their own children and those who arrange for care themselves. (Conservative Party [1986/7], *Moderat partimotion till riksdagen 1986/1987: So 610. Familjepolitiken* [Conservative party platform 1986/1987, So 610, Family Policy]. Stockholm: Riksdagstrycket. Cited by Broberg and Hwang 1991:96)

Choice refers here mainly to the stimulation of various forms of child care parents can choose. But the choice and diversity argument also implied creating the possibility of caring for children at home. The Conservative party together, with the Liberal parties, presented in the 1988 elections a proposal for a child allowance instead of grants to municipal day care providers, thereby stimulating private initiatives and the possibility of caring for children at home by the parents themselves. But they lost the elections and had to wait until 1991 to bring some of their ideas into practice. The argument of “choice” embedded in the proposal for a care allowance is, as in the Netherlands, based upon a more neoliberal or social-liberal discourse. Although neoliberalism certainly did not become fully hegemonic in Sweden, they had, as Mahon states, an argument: “by stressing the importance of people’s different needs, the advocates of a neoliberal counter-revolution highlighted some of the limitations of a system which strove for universality in the form of standardized “one size for all” solutions” (Mahon 1997:15).

The late 1980s reflected a shift towards the valuation of differences and variety and an emerging consensus about the problems of standardized solutions in current society. The positive side of the standardized solutions is the strong coordination among provisions. Such coordination is still much more developed than in the other countries, while both educational and care purposes for children, as well as the combination of work and care for the parents, are integrated in governmental policy. The National Board of Health and Welfare, the government

authority for social and health questions, stated in 1987 with regard to the Pre-School Educational Program:

Pre-school [editor's note: this term refers both to public child care and kindergartens] should combine the tasks of providing good educational support for the children's development as well as good care and supervision. . . . Society must make it possible for people to combine parental roles and professional roles so that even parents with small children can participate on more equal terms in professional life and community life in general. (National Board of Health and Welfare, *Pedagogiskt program för förskolan* [Pre-school Educational Program], Stockholm: Allmänna förlaget, 1987:12, cited by Broberg and Hwang 1991:83)

The 1987 Pre-School Educational Program also reflected some changes concerning deregulation that rapidly appeared in the 1980s. The program reported that the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdagen*) "has decided that municipal guidelines for educational activities in preschool should be drawn up in each municipality" (National Board of Health and Welfare 1987:9, cited by Broberg and Hwang 1991:84). Municipalities are assumed to be the proper authorities to insure day care to local needs. As Broberg and Hwang argue, "State regulation has . . . shifted towards general guidelines governing day care activities in municipalities, combined with support for research and development" (1991:84). Furthermore, the late 1980s showed increasing support for childminders (*familjedaghem*) over child care centers. The rationale for this choice was based upon pedagogic arguments (it should resemble the home environment more closely), as well as upon the argument that it should provide a closer connection to the neighborhood (which was assumed to be better for children and to improve the participation of childminders and parents within the neighborhood) (cp. Broberg and Hwang 1991:94). Apart from childminders, cooperatives run by parents themselves or by parents who rented premises and employed a teacher expanded. Like childminders, most of them received some public funds.

It was not until the early 1990s that policies changed more radically. In 1991, a bourgeois government came into power (until 1994). This government was much more right-wing than the one that governed between 1976 and 1982, and it discussed some of the features of the so-called Social Democratic model more explicitly. The severe depression Sweden went through at that time provided some sound arguments for another direction of policies. Although the Swedish welfare state, despite the rhetoric of the bourgeois government, was not as radically restructured as one might have expected (Pierson 1996:171), there occurred some important changes in child care policies. The government decided to abolish the municipal monopoly in receiving state subsidies, opening the door for private organizations to arrange day care (Gustafsson 1994: 52-3). In addition, a lot of municipalities cut the money for child care. The contribution of parents for their children's day care increased, which made day care less universal.

However, the 1994 elections brought the Social Democrats back to power; a sign that support for the extensive social provisions and the social democratic model was still notable, particularly since the end of the depression was not at all in sight. Also, in discussions in the early 1990s about whether or not Sweden should join the EU, child care provisions were often mentioned as a highly valued cornerstone of Swedish social policy, which might be threatened by the EU (the compensation rate for parental leave, as other insurance programs, has indeed decreased to 75 percent). In 1995 new legislation was enacted, obliging municipalities to offer all parents who work or study child care facilities for children between 0 and 12 years old. This legislation seems to work: most municipalities fulfilled their obligations, although they sometimes have problems meeting the requirements with regard to quality (European Commission Network on Child Care 1996:111). Furthermore, since 1993 it has been possible for children to go to school at the age of six if there are enough places at school; since 1997 municipalities are obliged to provide this opportunity for all children who are six years old.

Recently, new problems have occurred as result of financial decentraliation. Municipalities don't get specific earmarked money for child care anymore, but have to decide for themselves how much they will spend on child care. In many cases the contribution of parents has in-

creased, which creates problems for lower income groups (European Commission Network on Childcare 1996:111-3).

Furthermore, most public child care provisions assume a rather "9 to 5" schedule on the part of the parents. Parents who work weekends, evenings, or rather irregular hours—a growing group—are practically excluded from access to public child care (Gunnarsson 1993:509,512). Besides, some groups are clearly underrepresented among the users of child care, particularly working-class children and the children of immigrant families, whereas children of middle-class and highly educated parents, as well as children of single parents, are overrepresented (Gunnarsson 1993:511).

Sweden still shows enormous support for publicly financed child care. Although the bourgeois government in the early 1990s framed rhetoric in terms of more choice, privatization, and restructuring of public services, the concrete changes have been quite moderate. However, the development towards deregulation and—albeit to a lesser extent—the opening of private initiatives have changed some of the assumptions of the older child care policies. Without doubt Swedish policies have been the most coordinated, integrating education, care, and the responsibilities of parents with regard to paid work and care at home. However, a main question is to what extent these policies can cope with contemporary phenomena of increasing flexibility and shifting work hours. This development may easily undermine the legitimation of Swedish child care policies, which are, in the end, apart from being built upon the notion of gender equality and rather balanced relationship between labor-market participation and family life, also rather rigid in their assumption of working schedules, continuous working careers, and full employment.

On the whole, we can conclude that in Sweden and the Netherlands initiatives have been taken to expanding public child care facilities, particularly for small children, while Germany and the U.K. have expanded provisions for older children, or have promised to do so. Overall, provisions for very young children (0 to 3 years old) are, apart from Sweden, still marginal. In the other countries child care for young children is still contested, although somewhat less than before. Childminders have gained some popularity, and for many seem to be less threatening than day care centers. Moreover, an important argument is that they are cheaper.

Child care for somewhat older children, three years old and up, is highly valued in all countries, as it already was. It is very often part-time and directed to education and not related to labor-market participation by parents. That is an important explanation for the selective expansion of provisions in Germany and the U.K.

However, "expansion" does not tell the whole story; there is also the story of deregulation and decentralization, diminishing governments' responsibility. These developments often contribute to higher costs for parents and therefore jeopardize the universality (as in Sweden), to more involvement by employers (the U.K. and the Netherlands), to a decrease of quality of public child care in general (Sweden) or for a special group of children (as in Germany for children 0 to 3 years old).

In all countries child care has become a more important political issue. It has been a point of discussion between left- and right-wing parties in an era of retrenchment politics. In this context, a main question has been whether expansion of child care can contribute to a more efficient economy. In both the U.K. and the Netherlands this idea has gained ground. Labor-market participation by women is becoming more important for economic and demographic reasons. In the U.K., however, the awareness of the economic and social needs of an increase of women's labor-market participation has not led to more state involvement. Instead the role of employers has been emphasized. In the Netherlands the role of both the government and employers has been emphasized, and the government has invested in child care.

In Sweden child care especially became a political issue in the early 1990s, when a bourgeois government questioned some of the basic assumptions of existing policies. In the same period discussions about Sweden's entry into the European Union contributed to the political discussion: the comprehensive system of child care is for many an important symbol of the Swedish

welfare state. Finally, in Germany, unification increased the political meaning of child care. The two entirely different systems in West and East Germany had to be adjusted.

Since the 1980s, some rationales have been used in political debates which are in favor of more public child care provisions. They refer to the need for an increase of women's labor-market participation, to demographic developments, to a "modernization" of family policies, and to the interest of education for young children. On the other side, the rhetoric of choice has served to limit public child care, whether in favor of private provisions, private voluntary initiatives, or more traditional family care. Despite the rise of rationales to support policy initiatives, child care is still institutionally and ideologically fragmented, particularly in the U.K. (cp. Randall 1995) and to a lesser extent in Germany and the Netherlands. The rationales advanced for the support of policies seem to be much far-reaching than what has become legislation and is concretely implemented. In general, child care politics have dominated child care policies.

5. CONCLUSION

The relation between child care, welfare state, and service regimes is complex. Child care itself is a complex issue, both from a normative and an institutional point of view. It refers to different normative, and often contested, notions about the good life and human organization, to various religious orientations and associations with political systems. It is also complex because it refers to various fields of policies (education-, family- and labor-market policies), and to rather complex institutional frameworks through which child care provisions are provided: at home, through the market, the voluntary sector, the semi-public/private sector of childminders or parents' cooperatives, and indeed the family itself. Child care is at the center of a lot of ongoing discussions about the aims, means, and consequences of welfare policies.

Although there is some evidence that child care policies in the four countries examined here still fit rather well in the welfare state regime typology, we should be very cautious about drawing general conclusions from this. Other studies have shown that child care policies may differ a great deal in specific welfare-state regime types (Leira 1987; Bussemaker and van Kersbergen 1996; Gornick et al. 1997) and that it is therefore inaccurate to apply the theory of welfare-state regimes to child care, as for example Gustafsson (1994) proposes.

But even when we restrict ourselves to the four countries examined here, there are also some notable differences in recent child care policies and politics among rather similar countries, indicating some changes between countries. The differences in recent policies and politics in Germany and the Netherlands—grouped together in the typology of social care regimes of Anttonen and Sipilä—are striking. In Germany, despite the 1992 act, which promised a "guarantee" of kindergarten for children three years and older that is formulated in a universal social rights discourse, the notion of subsidiarity is still alive and nothing is being done for younger children. In the Netherlands, on the contrary, the central rationale is much more strongly based upon efficiency, profits, and market principles. The Dutch approach seems to be closer to the liberal model. The expansion of child care services in the Netherlands has been integrated in broader welfare-state retrenchment policies, which resemble a liberal-oriented approach much more than a conservative-corporatist one, thereby deviating from policy routes one may expect in terms of regime analysis (cp. Kloosterman 1994).

These changes cannot be explained from a welfare regime typology, but are influenced by political factors. In Germany, changes in policies were deeply influenced by more short-term political factors (unification). In the Netherlands, the turn in policies was an effect of a common concern about welfare expenditures, as well of changing perceptions about the national economy and society, which, among other things, led to a very different behavior towards women's labor-market participation in a very short period of time. Even in the U.K., where child care policies show a lot of continuity, there was some change in policies in the early 1990s to stimulate employers to create child care provisions, a change that may be explained by a national perception of fear of a "demographic time bomb," rather than by traditional liberal welfare-state configurations (although, of course the solution—putting the responsibility on the shoulders of employers instead of the state—is rather liberal). Finally, in Sweden, the national per-

ception of the national welfare state in the context of the EU has played an important role in child care policies.

The analysis allows us to draw some more general conclusions about continuity and change in child care politics over a longer time span. First, there are some striking continuities. The argument that public child care for young children is related to poverty and children "at risk" is still there, particularly in the U.K., although it can also be heard in Germany and the Netherlands. In fact, children of single or divorced mothers are the new category of "children at risk." However, the political debate nowadays is not directed only towards the protection of children, but also towards the parents, particularly the mothers, to gain their own income. Labor-market participation of women is often mentioned as the solution, while a right for public child care for small children isn't established in these countries. However, the situation in the European countries is still far from that in the United States, where recent policies simply limited the right to AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) for single mothers without providing any right to public child care.

Another obvious continuity in almost all countries is the lack of attention for the role of fathers. In political rhetoric explicitly gendered concepts of mothers and male breadwinners nowadays have been substituted by gender-neutral term of "parents." In the process of reformulation the responsibility of fathers as fathers has somehow gotten lost. Only in Sweden has the role of fathers gotten more attention in both policies and politics. In the U.K., fathers are sometimes mentioned, not so much as caregivers, but, rather, in relation to the breakdown of the traditional family role, and therefore of their patriarchal role as the head of the family. In the entire range of institutions involved—the state, the market, voluntary work, informal arrangements, semi-public/private arrangements like childminders—fathers are absent as an independent category. They only occur in the category of "informal arrangements," together with nannies, grandmothers and other relatives.

Changes have occurred in the associations of public child care to international references to political systems. The arguments for rejecting child care policies used in the 1950s and 1960s by referring to communist and fascist politics, particularly important in Germany and the Netherlands, have lost some of their meaning, although in Germany unification has given rise to new debates about state control and the "unsocial" child care institutions of the former East Germany. And a new point of reference has entered the debate; by now some opponents of child care provisions outside the family refer to "American situations," understood as a pejorative. They view care for small children at home as an alternative for a strong capitalist free market society. But, with regard to older children (three years and up) quite different arguments are being used. Here it is a "continental" or a *Rheinlandisch* welfare-state model that is used to legitimate the selective increase of child care provisions in only kindergarten and playgroups.

Important changes have also occurred in the way breadwinner arrangements and gendered family roles are valued. A main rationale for support of child care provisions outside the home, both public and private, is the necessity to increase women's labor-market participation for economic and demographic reasons. In addition, changing labor-market and employment patterns (flexibility), and the combination of labor-market participation and child care by both parents are mentioned as rationales to support day care outside the home. In various countries there is a reference to the development of more postindustrial life cycles that press for change. Traditional notions of breadwinner arrangements have lost some of their legitimation in keeping women from the labor market and arguing for full-time child care at home. In the U.K., Germany, and the Netherlands, the traditional strongly gendered breadwinner ideology has been replaced in political debate by an ideology of equal treatment, freedom of decision between family and career, and notions of choice and diversity. This kind of rhetoric sounds like something that fits pretty well into postindustrial societies and more fragmented labor-market and family patterns. However, there is still a huge discrepancy between political rhetoric and concrete policies. The widely used notion of "choice" is particularly problematic. Choice often refers to a rather minimal role by the state. In Britain choice and diversity are used as legitimation to leave child care provisions as a responsibility of employ-

ers, voluntary organizations, and families. There is a huge gap in the U.K. between the rhetoric of choice and the existing provisions, which are so minimal there is hardly any opportunity for choice. In Germany and also in the Netherlands, choice refers more to the "choice" of various work and career arrangements within a family, including a more traditional distribution of work between man and woman, nowadays formulated in gender-neutral terms. Even in Sweden, where the rather universal child care facilities are assumed to provide for a dual breadwinner family and are still widely supported, conservatives were rather successful at introducing the notion of choice, both to plead for more private child care facilities, as well as to increase the conditions for parents to choose more traditional work and care relations. Although the rhetoric of choice and diversity sounds rather sympathetic, as rhetoric it does not supply the conditions for choice. In practice it often has been used as an argument to impede policy initiatives for (public) child care. To be sure, the argument of "choice" makes sense in societies where labor-market and family patterns are becoming more fragmented, where life cycles are less predictable, and where the notion of the reflexive individual has assumed a new centrality (Mahon 1997). The problem is how to deal with choice and diversity and with equal opportunities and guaranteed availability of services simultaneously.

All told, the relationship between policies (what passes into legislation and is implemented) and politics (the rhetorics and rationales that are articulated) is rather complex. It is only in Sweden that rationales coincide to a reasonable extent with legislation and implementation. In the other countries, contemporary politics show huge gaps between the rationales articulated and the policies.

From the perspective of changes in the labor market, employment structures, family relations, demographic predictions, and changes in the life cycle more in generally, much far-reaching steps are necessary in all four countries. Apart from Sweden, child care policies are still very ill-developed. A more comprehensive and coordinated policy, attuned to the varied and changing needs of parents and workers in contemporary societies, is lacking in all these countries. Even in Sweden, so far the most comprehensive and coordinated case, changes might be necessary. In this case, this is not only for economic reasons, but also because the existing provisions assume, despite their generous features, rather stable and predictable labor-market patterns. The assumption of full employment for both men and women has become problematic, now that labor-market patterns are showing more fragmentation.

But there are signs of change. As Randall concludes for the U.K., the pressure for change is there: "the ideology of motherhood has been challenged and the issue of child care has slipped out of the confining contexts of welfare or educational policy and is now increasingly acknowledged as an employment issue and a necessary component of equal opportunity strategies" (Randall 1995:348). I believe this argument does not make sense only for the U.K., but also for the Netherlands and, albeit to a lesser extent, for Germany.

In addition, the EU might play a role in changing child care policies, although a very indirect one. In 1992 a recommendation on child care was adopted in the EU, which included leave for parents to look after their children, as well as encouragement for men and women to share responsibility for the care of children. However, so far, the recommendation has not led to much action. But fear of unequal competition among European countries with very different service structures, together with the call from employers that an increase of child care may help firms to be more competitive in world markets because it may increase labor supply and keep down wage demands, may give new impulses for expansion of child care provisions.

This is not to say that there is no opposition, but at least the rhetorical opposition comes more and more from right-wing or neoconservative movements. As another citation from the U.K., here from Patricia Morgan, research fellow at the Health and Family Unit of the Institute for Economic Affairs and an explicit opponent of public child care, makes clear, they are afraid of an emerging consensus between very different groups about child care provisions: "The campaign for day care is like a juggernaut racing downhill. It carries an unlikely band of fellow-travellers—feminists and advocates of 'alternative lifestyles', together with industrialists, trade unionists, left-wing academics and right-wing government spokespersons. There is an almost

universal consensus in the media that the mass provision of day care is both desirable and urgently required" (Morgan 1996:124).

Although this is a very rhetorical argument itself, child care definitely is becoming a more political issue and leaving the margins of either welfare, education, or feminist politics. The main question is in which direction hegemonic rationales will develop. There are some signs that, as far as a hegemonic rationale may develop in the various countries, it will focus particularly as an instrument to increase women's labor-market participation. But child care provisions should be more than an instrument of economic policies: the inadequacy of current provisions lies not only in the actual curtailment of women's economic activity, but also in the limitations it imposes within such areas as education, leisure activity, and participation in public life (cp. Bussemaker 1997b, 1997c, see also Cohen and Clarke 1986:3). A coordinated and comprehensive system of child care provisions is a condition for a society that wants to take both the care and education for children, and the participation of parents in various spheres (private and various public spheres), seriously. It is a condition for a social policy that is attuned to the needs and desires of citizens of a postindustrial society.

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Appendix: Tables

Table 1: Female Labor Force as a percentage of Female Population 15-64, 1960-1990*

	1960	1970	1980	1990
Germany				
women	49	48	50	57
married women	32	36	46	47
Netherlands				
women	26	31	36	53
married women	7	17	33	47
Sweden				
women	50	59	74	81
married women	41	55	76	87
U.K.				
women	46	51	58	65
married women	35	49	62	69
Average	43		54	62

* for the UK data refer to women 15-60 because the pension age for women was 60.

Source: OECD (1992) *Economic Outlook, Historical Statistics 1960-1990*, Paris (OECD): 29, Table 2.8. Sainsbury 1996: 105, table 5.1, *Women's labour market participation rates 1960-90*. Statistisches Jahrbuch 1993, various years.

Table 2: Size and composition of part-time employment 1979-1990, in percentages

	parttime employment as a proportion of male employment			parttime employment as a proportion of female employment			women's share in part-time employment		
	1979	1983	1990	1979	1983	1990	1979	1983	1990
Germany	1.5	1.7	2.1*	27.6	30.0	30.6	91.6	91.9	90.5
Netherlands	5.5	7.2	15.8	44.0	50.1	61.7	76.4	77.3	70.4
Sweden	5.4	6.3	7.3	46.0	45.9	40.5	87.5	86.8	83.7
U.K.	1.9	3.3	5.0#	39.0	42.4	43.8	92.8	89.8	87.0

* all data for Germany under 1990 are for 1988.

all data for UK under 1990 are for 1989.

Source: OECD (1991), *Employment Outlook 1991*. Paris: OECD, table 2.9.

This table does not show the differences within part-time jobs. In general, many women in Germany, the Netherlands, and the U.K. have small part-time jobs (less than 20 hours a week, while Swedish women often have large part-time jobs (around 32 hours a week). In 1985 for example, two-thirds of the women with part-time jobs in Germany, the U.K., and the Netherlands worked less than 21 hours a week, whereas in Sweden, 68 percent of the women with part-time jobs worked 20-34 hours a week in 1989 (O'Connor 1996: 87).

Table 3: Employment participation rates of mothers of children aged 0-4, in 1988

Employment participation rates of mothers of children aged 0-4, in percentages:

	full time	part time
Germany	15.6	18.1
Netherlands	4.2	28.9
United Kingdom	11.3	15.1
Sweden	19	50

Source: European Commission Child Care Network, *Child Care in the European Community*, 1990, 1996; Cohen, Bronwen and Neil Fraser (1990) *Childcare in a Modern Welfare System. Towards a New National Policy*. London: Institute for Public Policy Research table 4.4; Yearbook of Nordic Statistics 1991: 321-2.

Table 4: Percentage of children in publicly funded child care services in 1980, 1987/88 and 1993

Country	Year	For children under age of 3	For children aged 3 to compulsory school age
Germany	1980	2-3	65
	1987	2-3	65-70
	1993*	3	75-80
Netherlands	1980	1	50
	1987	1-2	50-55
	1993	8	71
Sweden	1980	22	65
	1987	31	69
	1993	32	76
U.K.	1980	2	n.a.
	1988	2	35-40
	1993	1	40

*data from 1990

Source: European Commission Child Care Network, *Child Care in the European Community*, 1990, 1996; Gornick, Meyers and Ross 1997, "Supporting the Employment of Mothers: Policy Variation across Fourteen Welfare States," 1997, table 1.; Yearbook of Nordic Statistics 1995: 321-2.

Table 5: Maternity leave benefits 1950-1975

	1950		1960		1975	
	duration in weeks	pay	duration in weeks	pay	duration in weeks	pay
Germany	12	50	12	75	14	100
Netherlands	12	100	12	100	12	100
Sweden	8	LS	12	FR	30	90
U.K.	4	FR	18	FR	18	FR

LS= Lump sum x (e.g. 60) = percentage of regular earnings; FR= flat rate benefits.

Source: Gauthier, A.H. (1996) *The State and the Family. A Comparative Analysis of Family Policies in Industrialized Countries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, table 4.5

Table 6: Child care leave schemes, 1990

Country	paid optional leave	unpaid optional leave	duration in months	year introduced
Germany	yes	—	18	1979
Netherlands	no	yes	6	1990
Sweden	no	yes	18	1979
U.K.	no	yes	10	1976

Note, for the Netherlands and Sweden the period covered by the paid maternity leave (and for Sweden parental leave) is not included.

In Germany a 6-months child care leave was introduced in 1979, and was extended to 10 months in 1986, 12 months in 1988, 15 months in 1989, 19 months in 1990 and finally to 36 months in 1993.

In the Netherlands a 6-months parental leave was introduced in 1990 for workers in the public sector. It is not transferable and allows each parent to reduce his/her hours work down to 20 hours per week. In the UK a 29-week leave with a right to reinstatement was introduced in 1976.

Source: Gauthier, A.H. (1996) *The State and the Family. A Comparative Analysis of Family Policies in Industrialized Countries*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, table 10.5.

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