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**Changing Family Structures and Social Policy: Child Care**  
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# THE POLITICS OF SWEDISH CHILDCARE

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## Note on the structure of the text

This text on Swedish childcare has four sections. The first deals with the socio-historical construction of childcare in Sweden. By this we mean the way in which this area of social policy's become politically articulated and subject for policy design and institutionalization. The main time perspective for this section (as well as for most of the text) is, broadly speaking, the parliamentary period, but the nature of the subject-matter implies that particular attention be given to the postwar era and, even more narrowly, to the post-1960s. The organization of the text thus matches the rhythm and logic of the construction of childcare as a political field. The second section consists of an historical outline of Swedish childcare policies, following this line of reasoning. Here, empirical data as well as analyses and interpretations of policies and policy structure are presented. The third section deals with current forces of change, and the fourth offers some concluding remarks. A glossary of Swedish terms is provided at the end of the text, as is an appendix with statistical data on Swedish childcare.

## 1 THE SOCIO-HISTORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF SWEDISH CHILDCARE

To describe the politics of Swedish childcare is an interesting task, particularly in terms of the postwar era. As will become apparent below, the notion of a general welfare system has been very strong from its very conception during the 1930s and 40s. The Möller line (i.e. the inclusive, pragmatic and universalistic view on social policy named after the Swedish Minister of Social Affairs Gustav Möller) became a dominating mode for Social Democratic policy thinking at an early point in the party's 44 year-long unbroken position (1932-76) at the head of government. With this extraordinary period of political tenure, the development and logic of Swedish social policy is predominantly a Social Democratic affair. Swedish social policy patterns are thus part of the Social Democratic legacy. Both social policy generally and childcare have in this regard been central parts of the construction and consolidation of the Swedish welfare state – a project that, in turn, has defined the Social Democratic agenda.<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1 Framing the issue

Given this political dominance of the Social Democrats, the questions posed here will focus on the specifics of social policy patterns that are essentially Social Democratic. In the Swedish postwar case it makes little sense to approach the field of childcare as an open political and institutional field, where over time fundamentally different policy alternatives have been introduced and replaced, following party and institutional changes at the highest levels of government. Until 1976, the dominance was massive, with the Social Democratic state controlling most aspects of social policy making. During this time, the age-old centralism of the Swedish state asserted itself in an unambiguous way. Even today, the institutional edifice of classical Social Democratic social policy is surely very strong, impeding too abrupt or radical constitutive changes. The academic (and ideological) debate has therefore been more heavily concerned with interpretations and critique of the Social Democratic approach, than with articulating or elaborating policy and institutional alternatives as such.

How, then, should the Social Democratic approach to social policy be interpreted? A heated discussion followed in Sweden on the publication of feminist historian Yvonne Hirdman's 1989 study *Att lägga livet tillrätta* [Putting life right]. In her book (written in the framework of the 1980s' large official study of the economy and structure of power in Swedish society – *Maktutredningen* [Power Audit] – that delivered its final report, SOU 1990:44, in 1990), Hirdman argued powerfully that the main approach of the Social Democrats to social policy matters had been thoroughly paternalistic. The party interest, she claimed, had always been cool for arguments that threw any degree of suspicion on the assumed readiness of people to have their lives planned, evaluated and organized by the state. This became particularly clear in social policy matters, where the party seemed completely trapped in a robustly scientific, rationalist political sociology.

This account provoked a range of more or less sophisticated responses, many of which pointed to the gap between Alva and Gunnar Myrdal's more

Introduction

Long social democratic dominance in Swedish social policy



<p>children has thus in a manner of speaking been systematically unidirectional predicated on the gradual historical appropriation by the ascending and consolidating Social Democratic party of traditional Swedish modes of political and bureaucratic centralism.</p>	
<p>During the postwar era, one particularly visible aspect of Swedish childcare politics has thus been its virtually linear pattern of development. It's evolved from fragmented initiatives and uncoordinated schemes – both publicly and privately provided – towards an increasingly firm and ambitious public responsibility. Since the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there has been no equivalent to the continental or anglo-saxon models of large-scale provision of childcare (or of other primary social services) by non-public means, such as Charity associations, religious institutions or voluntary social organizations. The recognition that childcare's essentially a public matter has gained wide ideological and social currency.</p>	<p>Social policy a public concern</p>
<p>To describe childcare during the golden age of the welfare state therefore to a large extent amounts to describing public political action and legislation in the field. The issues at the center of the Swedish social and political stage have thus differed from childcare-related issues in many other countries in that they've systematically concerned how this service should be designed and adapted to cater for socio-economical and labor market needs; as well as tie in with the postwar process of individualization of the citizenry. In the Swedish context, underlying and fundamental questions of the breadth and depth of publicly provided services of this kind in the first place – or whether both sexes (at least in principle) should have equal access to the labor market or not – are virtually absent in today's mainstream political debate, as is the question whether families or individual persons should count as the primary unit for policy, support and taxation considerations. This has been a general social transformation since the 1960s, during which period, as Björnberg writes, 'the Swedish family structure has changed from a predominance of the male breadwinner family to a predominance of the dual breadwinner family'.<sup>5</sup></p>	<p>Ideological approaches</p>
<p>This abandonment of the breadwinner model in Swedish social policy can (somewhat surprisingly) in some ways be interpreted as a victory for liberal individualism, whereas it's often been subject to political criticism for moving in other directions.<sup>6</sup> In Sweden, the position now seen as the more 'traditionalist' side of social democracy is a position that embraces what Giddens refers to as Old Left solutions, including the idea of a comprehensive welfare state.<sup>7</sup> Against this new traditionalism stand views that stress the limited scope implied for non-public solutions to contemporary welfare needs.</p>	
<p>A striking aspect of the early Social Democratic approach to social policy is thus its continuity and stability. For what could possibly be reasons of political economy before and until the 1970s, a comprehensive commitment to the public provision of different kinds of welfare services evolved. As described below, the point of the debate on the future of the welfare state since the 1980s has mainly been to search and argue for non-public modes of service provision and distribution. But the conventional notion in this sense is that welfare is basically a common and public good, the financial</p>	<p>Stable postwar universalism in social welfare</p>



career plans. This, the opponents argue, means nothing less than to resurrect the breadwinner model, a political vision that has little coinage today's Swedish political debate. To argue that families should reassume a patriarchal organization and that work in the public and private fields, respectively, ought (either directly or indirectly) to be redivided along traditional gendered lines no longer seems to be a viable option. Even the main proponents of this view make major efforts to steer clear from the argument's ideological and social legacy. The discursive space thus doesn't seem to allow for this sort of traditionalism.

## **2 SWEDISH CHILDCARE POLICIES AND SERVICES FROM THE 1930s TO THE PRESENT**

For reasons of clarity, this section is divided into four historical parts. Of these, the first two periods, 1930s-1945 and 1945-1960s, are treated perfunctorily. The presentation of the contemporary and current system of Swedish childcare policies and development is surely the main theme that should be pursued in this context, and will therefore occupy most of the space below. This choice is supported by the obvious fact that the Swedish childcare experience prior to the 1960s hardly stands out as very exceptional. On the contrary, the policy patterns and approaches taken in Sweden at this time in a number of ways resemble those in many other West European countries at the time or later on. The Swedish development is more politically, ideologically and policy-wise interesting from the 1960s onwards, particularly when it comes to producing relevant knowledge for cross-European comparison. The latter parts of this section, i.e. 1970s-1980s and 1990s-2002, are therefore more thoroughly discussed.

### **2.1 1930s – 1945: Early childcare structure**

Childcare has been one of the central concerns of Swedish family policy and its welfare state, with political debate and policy formulations dating as far back as the late 1930s and early 1940s. Prior to this phase, childcare (as well as other welfare provisions in the more ambitious postwar sense of the word) was available on a very limited scale. It only marginally added to traditional patterns of care for children by their families (which effectively meant the domestically occupied mother) and was when available mainly provided by non-governmental organizations, foundations, and societies, financed by charities, private donations and the like.

When the problem of childcare began to be converted into a field of regular politics and the state thus acknowledged its unavoidable responsibility over how families should be organized, the main idea was 'that families who do not have enough resources of their own should have access to common resources at a community level'.<sup>11</sup> In this early frame of thought, the later connection between childcare and labor market needs was still not made. When the government began to view family structure as a political issue, the reason was rather the newly awakened political and moral sense of alarm over the extent of social misery that was characteristic of Swedish society at the time. A social and theoretical radicality was nurtured in

Structure of the empirical text

First part: early initiatives



## 2.2 1945 – 1960s: Foundations of universalism

After the Second World War, several parliamentary commissions renewed the public interest in childcare, as part of larger family assistance programs and reconsiderations on family policy. Given the unexpected and rapid economic recovery after the war and the growing demand for labor in Sweden, women who were not wage earners began to be considered a hidden labor reservoir. However, it soon became obvious that if more mothers of small children were to enter the labor force, then the public image of day care needed to be substantially altered and improved. By 1950 over 700 Swedish small children's day care institutions existed, with 30,500 children enrolled. Only 255 or one-third of these were run by municipal authorities. Public financial support to day care, moreover, only covered about 10 per cent of the total costs for such activities.

With the continuation of economic growth through the 1960s, more women entered the labor market and the production, but an even greater number were unable to do so by the lack of childcare. Both the Confederation of Swedish Employers (SAF) and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), therefore, wanted to accelerate the expansion of day care facilities. In this struggle these traditional political adversaries joined forces and created the *Women's Commission of the Labor Market*, which undertook its own investigation of the need for day care, and presented its views to the government in 1961. During the 1950s day care gradually developed into a municipal rather than state concern, and few private providers survived the 1960s. Towards the end of that decade a parliamentary investigation was commissioned once again to study and establish the need for a system of publicly run day care. It called for defining goals of childcare on theoretical-pedagogical grounds and for providing more formal and longer education for those working at public day care centres. Numerous other reforms in favor of families with small children were also passed during the 1950s and 1960s.

## 2.3 1970s – 1980s: Consolidation and growth

The Swedish welfare state is often described in terms of its ambition to let both parents combine family and work responsibilities.<sup>14</sup> Historically, the developments during the 1970s, when a number of reforms were carried out, stand out as the defining moment of these welfare state initiatives. Childcare for preschool children plays a major role here. One study claims that the most reasonable explanation of the relative Nordic advantage in terms of childcare policy and equality at the labor market is the welfare mix: 'through a combination of high levels of female employment, low levels of unemployment generally, well functioning childcare systems and generous terms for taking time off from work to care for young children'.<sup>15</sup> Judging by the occupational frequency of women 25-34 years of age, the impact of the 70s' childcare reforms was visible already in 1980, when 81 % of the cohort participated on the labor market. In 1997 the number had risen only by a fraction, to 82 %, suggesting that the system's early success in putting people to work had then long since peaked and that the function of childcare since 1980 thus rather had been to maintain an established system than bring about further changes in the established patterns of care

1960s: labor market growth creating need for daycare

Conciliation of work/family responsibilities

and work.<sup>16</sup>

The nativity peak (placing Sweden at the top of the European charts both in terms of fertility and labor market participation) in 1990 is conventionally explained by referring to family friendly sets of policy. Sweden illustrates the European trend in the 1990s that high levels of women labor market participation correlate positively with high fertility rates.<sup>17</sup> This is a reversal of the European situation in the 1970s, when high fertility rates instead correlated positively with low occupational frequency among women.<sup>18</sup> What remains unclear, however, in this line of reasoning is why the 1990 peak occurred at that particular time or why the rates soon afterwards fell dramatically, without equally drastic (however, not insignificant), simultaneous cuts in the relevant welfare systems. It thus seems that the relationship between fertility/nativity and participation on the labor market is more complex. This doesn't necessarily make the relationship spurious. Instead, it could mean that it's predicated on underlying social, cultural and economic patterns.<sup>19</sup> One study indeed concludes that the major reason why nativity rates vary to this extent is the productivity cycle. In times with lower levels of employment and slow economic growth a quantitative analysis shows that people are half as willing to have a first child as in good times, making this the single most comprehensive explanation.<sup>20</sup> The same study points to a second aspect of this line of reasoning as well: the positive correlation between relatively higher nativity rates and individual levels of income. The effect on having a first child of the income variable is very high.<sup>21</sup> Another interesting aspect is that the inclination to have a second and third child varies systematically with levels of education. The odds for more than one child are substantially higher for people with academic education.<sup>22</sup>

In 1973 the *Riksdag* [Swedish parliament] passed the first preschool law, which set high goals for the expansion of day care services during the next five years.<sup>23</sup> Although the idea of expansion was widely approved by national and municipal authorities, fiscal constraints prevented this from taking place at a pace that could keep up with increases in demand. In 1974 there were nearly 62,000 children enrolled in day care services nationwide, including approximately 30 parent cooperative day care facilities, providing service for nearly 300 children. Public efforts fell short by 40 per cent of the target goal of 100,000 new places in childcare by 1980. Under these circumstances new actors were encouraged to enter the scene. By 1985 266,000 children were enrolled in day care facilities, including 1,300 in nearly 100 parent cooperative day care centres.

The early parliamentary investigation *Barnstugeutredningen* (SOU 1972:26, 1972:27) identified parental participation as a main goal and suggested several different forms for enhanced participation and transparency, including regular parent-staff discussions, open house activities, and extended periods of socialization. Evaluations show, however, that in the public system, parents tended only to be invited to various activities as 'guests' of the staff, and that they did not gain markedly more influence this way. One suggested explanation was that parents might like to participate, but were unable to do so due to long working hours. Shorter working hours for parents with young children was thus proposed by a later parliamentary

Nativity rates and economic prosperity

First preschool law in 1973

<p>investigation, <i>Familjestödsutredningen</i> (SOU 1981:25), suggesting that the working days of these parents should not exceed six hours. Parents with children between 4-12 years of age were given the right to two days use of the social insurance coverage for illness-leave for visiting day care services or schools, a right that was withdrawn in the early 1990s and reinstated at the end of the decade. A concept of user or consumer influence was, furthermore, introduced by the official Democracy Audit (SOU 1985:28), which discussed increased possibilities for citizens to influence the services they used. In the context of day care systems this was interpreted mainly in terms of higher levels of parental influence over services.</p>	<p>User influence over childcare services</p>
<p>The pedagogical program adopted by <i>Socialstyrelsen</i> [The National Board for Health and Welfare] for day care in 1987 stated that collaboration between the staff and parents was a natural part of professional day care work and that it was the responsibility of the staff to promote it. While it was the responsibility of (the staff of) day care services to facilitate and encourage such collaboration and develop the required forms, no details on how this could be achieved were specified. The 1987 program states that cooperation between the staff and parents is a self-evident part of preschool activities: ‘it is a precondition for continuity between the home and preschool and for activities that are based on the children’s experience and life conditions’.<sup>24</sup> Parental collaboration can be defined as the meeting between parents and the staff, both the everyday <i>ad hoc</i> type, organized discussions etc. However, staff opposition to parental participation, whether paid or not, appears significant. Few parents seem willing to engage more actively in the internal activities of their child(ren)’s municipal day care facilities, especially if it requires overcoming opposition from the floor of this kind.</p>	<p>Pedagogy in childcare</p>
<p>The (re-)appearance of cooperative day care caused a lively debate at the time. Many of the parent cooperative day care services which started in the late 1970s and early 1980s practiced a special pedagogical philosophy not available at the standard municipal day care facilities, like Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf etc, or arranged their activities around a certain theme, like arts or outdoor life. These facilities often attracted parents who were less than happy with the pedagogical philosophy (or what they perhaps considered a lack of a pedagogical philosophy) of available municipal services. This first wave of parent coops acquired the legal status of voluntary associations, and they were the only non-municipal day care providers qualifying for public financial support prior to 1985.</p>	<p>Cooperative solutions</p>
<p>In the 1980s, parents had begun to consider day care a regular social right, rather than a dearly sought municipal privilege. The responsibility to produce childcare was accorded to municipalities in supplemental 1976 childcare legislation<sup>25</sup>, following the first law to formalize childcare in 1975.<sup>26</sup> Legislation was revised in 1995, when the present law was passed. The rather vaguely formulated demands on municipalities in the earlier law were now made more strict. Municipalities are under the 1995 legislation obliged to see to it that childcare is actually provided to meet real needs, and not only plan for it. Given, however, that local changes in demand may alter fast, a waiting period for families of no more than 3-4 months is tolerated. The law covers all modes of care for children 1-12 years old and</p>	<p>1995: revised legislation</p>

<p>stipulates availability either on the grounds of parents' or children's needs. This forced expansion of childcare facilities on all levels.</p> <p>Around 1985 a second wave of parent cooperatives started, when legal changes made it possible for parents to form economic associations and receive public financial support on terms similar to those enjoyed by municipal day care services. By 1987 the number of parent cooperatives had nearly doubled and three years later it reached 500. The speed of this dramatic growth was contested at the time. It was then, and still often is, claimed that only 'privileged' parents with higher education and better-than-average abilities to articulate and push for their day care needs were able to participate in or initiate this sort of care arrangements. By the trade union movement generally – and particularly by the unions organizing municipal employees – this was considered a threat to the underlying ideal of solidarity between different social groups, creating a strong union reluctance to accept parent cooperatives as legitimate actors in the provision of social services.<sup>27</sup> As one study shows, a similar reluctance from the unions' perspective is visible in connection to the professionalization of child minders.<sup>28</sup></p> <p>During the 1980s, however, to open and run private cooperative day care facilities was often the only viable solution for many working parents. With municipal facilities falling short of the need for places, this was at least a way forward. Today, the situation has changed, as matters of value seem to come through more powerfully. Some reports claim that Swedish childcare is becoming more qualitatively levelled, with cooperative (and some other) facilities getting an edge over public care.<sup>29</sup></p> <p>With increasing demand, it was often claimed in the early 1980s that municipal facilities were unable to provide childcare service on the scale needed. The stage was then set for the introduction of private and commercial services. Although this may be described in terms of an imbalance between supply and demand, ideological explanations can also be applied. All through the postwar era, the primary Swedish ideological dimension's been socio-economically grounded. This left/right struggle – i.e. the clash between successive Social Democratic governments and the non-socialist opposition – has defined Swedish political life to an extent that ought not to be underestimated. In political-economical terms, this has generated strong interest organizations on both sides of the main divide.</p> <p>Among the three non-socialist opposition parties represented parliamentarily for much of the post-war era – i.e. the Center (former Agrarian), the Liberal [<i>folkpartiet</i>] and the Moderate (former Right) parties – the relationship to the Social Democrats has, as will be apparent below, varied considerably. Together, however, these parties have made up the political alternative since the Social Democratic ascendance to power in the 1930s. After the 1991 general elections, the Christian Democratic party (which was founded in the early 1960s) has joined the conservative camp. The fifth non-socialist parliamentary party, the Greens (founded in 1982), first entered parliament in 1988.</p> <p>The failure of the Social Democratic postwar tradition of government leadership in the 1976 and 1979 general elections is thus often connected to</p>	<p>1980s: growth of coops</p> <p>Introduction of for-profit childcare</p> <p>Party views and approaches on social policy</p>
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<p>the influence during this time of neo-liberal turns of argument. In this ideological atmosphere, the traditional Swedish commitment to a universal, publicly regulated and run welfare system partly decreased, as the main ambition of a succession of non-socialist governments between 1976-82 was to dismantle this tradition.<sup>30</sup> This ambition, however, should perhaps not be taken too literally. Some writers argue that even the non-socialist governments during this period to a large extent were supportive in theory as well as practice of the notion of a generalistic welfare model, but always making the conventional point that it should be a little bit slimmer and thinner.<sup>31</sup></p>	
<p>This ideological context helps to explain the fact that the first ‘contemporary’ serious private commercial attempt at providing childcare was initiated in 1984 by a well-known Swedish global corporation: <i>Electrolux</i>, a company of the industrialist family Wallenberg’s sphere, with close links to interest formulation circles on the employer side. Under these circumstances, the motives for this venture into the field of childcare provision has probably to be interpreted in ideological rather than merely commercial terms, considering (a) that motives of profit were prohibited in childcare provision by a law – named after the new <i>Electrolux</i> subsidiary: <i>Lex Pysslingen</i> – passed by the reinstated 1982-85 Social Democratic government, and (b) that the initiative had no connection to the company’s regular fields of activity. A subsidiary company known as <i>Pysslingen AB</i> was thus formed in order to provide day care services throughout the country. The initiative met with heavy political opposition, symbolically marking the end, as it were, of the long tradition from 1938’s <i>Saltsjöbaden agreement</i> of tolerance, at least on the level of leadership, between industrial/employer and Social Democratic interests.<sup>32</sup></p>	<p>Family policy as ideological arena</p> <p>Industrial offer of day care in early 1980s</p>
<p>The non-socialist municipality of Nacka, a Stockholm suburb, subsequently set up two <i>Pysslingen</i> day care centers in 1986 without a commercial profit motive. Nacka devised a contracting-out agreement, with the manager employed by <i>Pysslingen</i>, and the rest of the staff municipally employed. In 1989 four new <i>Pysslingen</i> day care facilities opened in Stockholm, following the victory of the non-socialists at the municipal elections the year before. On the return to power of the conservative Carl Bildt-government in 1991, the hotly contested <i>Lex Pysslingen</i> was inhibited, paving the way for a wave of privately operated day care facilities. By November 1994 there were 27 <i>Pysslingen</i> facilities in the capital and its surrounding municipalities. In other parts of Sweden, however, public provision remained the norm, illustrating the distance not only geographically between Stockholm and other regions. Both ideological lines of conflicts and political practice in Sweden are traditionally defined in rather Stockholm-heavy terms. The main family and childcare policies that are instated during this period are, to sum:</p>	<p>Spread of for-profit solutions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Föräldraförsäkringen</i> [parental leave insurance system] that replaced the earlier, less ambitious maternity leave insurance. Fathers were now included and given the same status as mothers as beneficiaries.<sup>33</sup> The compensation levels were in principle put to 90% of the ordinary income of each beneficiary. Under the new system, the compensation was also in principle given the same</li> </ul>	<p>Parental leave insurance system</p>

<p>status as income from salaried work, i.e. being taxable and included in those regular earnings that are used to calculate future pension levels. For the benefit of parents with low or no prior incomes, a smaller amount of the day total was set at a secondary level of compensation: <i>garantidagar</i>. The main compensation principle (a blueprint of the sick leave insurance system) was used in the supplemented right for parents to take time off from work to care for sick children, for those (mostly relatives) replacing sick parents to care for sick children, for those parents accompanying children to health controls etc., and for parents who (twice/year) want to pay a visit to public childcare facilities with their children. The system expands rapidly throughout the 1970s-80s, mainly by successively extending the time of leave and by increasing the level of user flexibility. The insurance is in force from two months before the child's birth until the child's ninth birthday.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– <i>Särskild föräldrapenning</i> [special parental compensation] is instated in 1978 and adds the right of three extra months of leave until the child's first school year at secondary compensation levels.</li> <li>– <i>Havandeskapspenning</i> [pregnancy compensation] is instated in 1980, granting expecting women the right to leave between the sixtieth and eleventh day before giving birth.</li> <li>– <i>Flerbarnstillägg</i> [more-children compensation] is instated in 1982, raising the <i>barnbidrag</i> [children's allowance, from 1948] compensation levels for parents with three or more children (on the argument that full-time work is hard to maintain with more than two children).</li> <li>– <i>Faderskapspenning</i> [fatherhood compensation] is made available to expecting fathers for ten days in connection with a child birth, to enable fathers to be a part of the birth, connect to the baby, and care for home and other children.</li> <li>– In the early 1990s, the right to use the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> is divided equally between the mother and father. This right can be transferred at will by one to the other parent, with the exception of one month each that can only be used by the mother and father, respectively.</li> </ul>	<p>1970s-80s' benefits for families with small children</p>
<p><b>2.4 1990s – 2002: Crisis and reconstruction</b></p> <p>During this period Sweden exhibits exceptional rates of preschool children in publicly financed day care. This is sometimes seen as a corner stone of the more general 'family friendly' policy to permit women to combine work and child bearing, generating the lowest comparable rate of poverty among families with small children. Some writers go so far as to claim that Sweden is a 'child friendly' or even 'women friendly' society (but make no mention of why these policies are not friendly to men).<sup>34</sup></p> <p>Many writers seem to more or less share this view.<sup>35</sup> Compared to most other welfare systems, Sweden's noted for its commitment to equal access of both sexes to the labor market. In these aspirations, childcare, as is apparent from our account, has played a vital role from the 1960s on, increasing both-sex accessibility dramatically. But even as the system's</p>	<p>1990s: national coverage of childcare very extensive</p>

<p>been quantitatively successful in this respect, its qualitative outcomes are maybe less impressive. As observed by Klausen, ‘gender segregation has increased as more jobs were added’ 1970-93.<sup>36</sup> This more critical perspective is today shared even by the state itself. One study reflects that the road to gender equality on the labor market is maybe not so straight after all:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Through the 1970s and 1980s women’s occupational frequency increased strongly, to almost match men’s in the 1990s. During this period, however, part time work represented the larger share of the increase. Women largely shifted from wholly unpaid care-taking work to partly paid work of the same kind. The labor market was and is heavily sexually segregated. In 1999 half of all employed women work in the fields of children and elder care, health and education. Eleven percent of all employed men work in these sectors. In 1979 the right to a six hours workday was introduced for parents of small children, a right that has been predominantly utilized by women.<sup>37</sup></p> <p>Traditionally, the care for children has of course mechanically been accorded to women and mothers. One aspect of the gendering of labor market and family relationships that has some bearing on Swedish childcare patterns is the transformation of gender roles in this field. During the 1990s, an ambitious government study was initiated to investigate what it referred to as the myth of Swedish equality and the rational labor market (SOU 1998:6). One observation that’s made is that the internal family labor division regarding children’s care has changed. Women still spend more time caring than men do, but</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">in the 1960s it was very unusual for fathers to spend time caring for small children. Merely one percent of fathers occupied themselves with feeding, changing nappies, dressing and undressing their children. A larger percentage of fathers participated when they became a little older, but still the proportion was very low at a mere 14%. Today, 85% of fathers take part in the children’s care.<sup>38</sup></p> <p>An evolutionary perspective on citizens’ social rights being realized by and by through welfare state labor market structural developments thus doesn’t suffice. The logic of the welfare state and the reforms that are, rightly, attributed to its ideological orientation differs from the conventional normative scenario supplied by feminist critics – as well as the structurally differentiated life conditions experienced by men and women. The challenge here is to evaluate specifically in whose service the welfare state works. In this regard, positive ‘quantitative’ spill over has not proved a sufficient reason for all feminists to embrace the conventional welfare state model’s individualist conception of citizenship. In question here is the nature of the relationship between the institutional welfare state project and progressive politics in the average postwar Western state.<sup>39</sup></p> <p>Between 1970 and 2000, the expansion of Swedish childcare has been dramatic. At the beginning of the period 70.000 places were available. At the end there were 700.000.<sup>40</sup> Through the period of expansion a paradox was recurring: the more childcare became a generally available public social good (meeting certain standards of quality), the more demand for the service grew. During this period of expansion, the market seemed insatiable. During the 90s, the state pressure on the municipalities to deliver childcare at levels in keeping with the legislation increased. Today,</p>	<p>Critique of the system’s inability to lead to equality</p> <p>Labor market inequality and sexual division of labor</p> <p>Critique of citizen’s rights theory</p> <p>Expansion of childcare 1970-2000</p>
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<p>coverage is virtually complete in all parts of the country. Three out of four children between 1-5 have a place in childcare and two out of three between 6-9 use the <i>fritidshem</i>, as do 7 percent of 10-12 year olds.</p> <p>The principal form of non-municipal day care services during the 1990s, however, was parent cooperatives. Generally, parents are known to be attracted to this form by reason of its greater possibilities for participation and influence, aspects largely missing in municipal facilities.<sup>41</sup> According to several parliamentary investigations, parents should participate in the internal activities of this type of day care services.<sup>42</sup> They are not only expected to get insights, but also to directly participate in and thus be able to influence what goes on.</p> <p>Another parliamentary committee on reforming child care presented its conclusions in <i>Förskola för alla barn 1991. Hur blir det?</i> [Preschool for all children by 1991. How will it turn out?] (SOU 1990:80). The recommendations generated from this analysis was that the social service law be amended to include the legal right for all children between 18 months and school age (6-7) to a place in a day care facility by the year of 1993. It's relevant to mention here that preschool activities can take one of two or three forms. The most prominent one is enrolling in a day care facility, while using a professional child minder (or day care mother) is another. A less well-documented form is to engage in three-family day care, where families involved rotate in providing space and food in their own home, for one week at a time.</p> <p>The number of children six years old or younger attending regular day care services increased six-fold from nearly 62.000 in 1974 to nearly 362.000 in 1995, then declined to less than 320.000 by 1999. Expressed as a proportion of Swedish 0-6 year olds, it increased from the 1974 level of eight to approximately 60 per cent in 1999. The number of children nine years and younger who attended the services provided by a professional child minder decreased from nearly 156.000 in 1990 to less than half that amount, or below 70.000 in 1999. This represents an additional 11 per cent of all preschool children that attend family home services provided by a child minder. However, the greatest increase during the 1990s can be noted for children enrolled in after-school or leisure facilities (<i>fritidshem</i>). Enrolment in this type of care increased three-fold from nearly 110.000 in 1990 to nearly 335.000 in 1999. Approximately 40 per cent of all children 7- 9 years old now attend an after-school facility.</p> <p>In Sweden preschool activities for children 0-6 years old and childcare (<i>barnomsorg</i>) for children up to 12 years old refer to publicly financed and institutionalized care. In theory it's available to all working and studying parents with children below a given age. In the early 90's a major institutional reform took place, when the age for starting school was reduced from seven to six.<sup>43</sup> Many local school authorities responded to this change by introducing a 'zero class' in the organisational and physical proximity of (often in the same building as) the school-related facility <i>fritidshem</i> mentioned above. Today, the zero classes and the <i>fritidshem</i> typically function in wrap-around fashion.<sup>44</sup> In the transitory zero class pedagogical environment the staff includes teachers from the lower grades</p>	<p>Numerical aims for day care</p> <p>Figures of children in day care</p> <p>Zero classes and after-school facilities</p>
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<p>as well as the <i>fritidshem</i>-specific staff categories of <i>fritidspedagog</i> and <i>fritidsledare</i>. Pedagogical activities generally mix these approaches thematically as well as organizationally. After-school activities are available to children of working parents, both before and after school hours until the age of either 10 or 12.</p> <p>It can be noted that in the established approach to preschool childcare the teaching to children of skills in numeracy, literacy etc. is not emphasized. Instead of primarily being understood as a teaching environment, it's generally considered a place and time where children should be given space for social, physical and psychological exploration. The promotion of children's self-knowledge, relational and emotional abilities are given greater weight than tuition. Preschool pedagogical goals are in this way kept apart from those of the primary school system – a somewhat surprising aspect, considering that the Ministry of Education assumed responsibility for preschool childcare regulation and control from the Ministry of Social affairs in 1996. National childcare goals are stated as follows in one official document:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The social and pedagogical role of childcare has required that activities meet high quality standards, well-educated staff, adequate size and composition of children's groups and suitable, well-functioning premises. The importance of activities in contributing towards compensation for differences in the growing-up conditions for children from different parts of the population and in creating places of interaction for children from different ethnical, cultural and social backgrounds has been emphasized. In recent years, the value accorded to the preschool for educational policy, as part of 'life-long learning' [<i>det livslånga lärandet</i>] has become more important. This has led to reforms to increase availability and lower fees. In the long run, the declared goal is childcare wholly free of charge.<sup>45</sup></p> <p><i>Skolverket's</i> instructions for preschools stress that play is of great importance for children's learning and development abilities. Regarding the primary social and moral values that should be promoted by preschools, one recent information leaflet distributed to all facilities states that:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The basis for work in preschool childcare is democracy. The children are expected to learn to respect people's equal value. The staff will, in planning everyday activities, consider the children's own opinions, interests and experiences. Preschool childcare will, furthermore, work against traditional gender roles and lay great weight on environmental questions.<sup>46</sup></p> <p>This overriding agenda is apparently well received by users of day care. A study of the attitudes of parents finds a remarkable resemblance between the fundamental goals for preschool childcare and parents' expectations:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The results suggest that parents find it most important that in childcare institutions their children should be given an opportunity to develop their personalities. Also of high priority was that the children learn to respect others and to feel and express love and tenderness. [...] Generally speaking, parents tend to emphasize the development of social skills and they attach less importance to creative skills such as constructing things and expressive activities. The differences in attitude are slight, but men tend to attach more importance to creative skills, and women to expressive skills.<sup>47</sup></p> <p>Municipal day care services is the dominant form for providing preschool activities, usually in premises housing one to four groups of 15 to 20 children. Most day care centers are open from early morning until late</p>	<p>Approaches and goals in preschool childcare</p> <p>Democratic and moral values</p> <p>Parents' views on childcare goals</p>
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<p>afternoon, five days a week. Professional child minders are approved by the municipal authorities to provide day care services in their own homes for between two and five preschool children. They often have young children of their own, and may receive compensation for caring for these too.<sup>48</sup> Many parents enroll their child in the services provided by a child minder while waiting for a place in a local day care center. Some parents, however, prefer keeping their child(ren) with a child minder until they start school because of the small size and family-like atmosphere provided. This solution is more common in rural and provincial areas than in the more densely populated parts of the country.</p>	<p>Everyday organization of day care</p>
<p>The non-socialist government that carried the general election in 1991 introduced new features to the day care system. First, they removed most of the previous restrictions on the free establishment of day care services of <i>Lex Pyslingen</i>, and from 1992 onward private for-profit commercial firms could also receive public funding for running day care services. Municipal authorities were given even freer hands to arrange all types of social services in 1993. Rather than having funds earmarked for day care, schooling, youth activities, care of the elderly and so forth from the central government as earlier, they were given lump sum funding for the whole array of social services. The primary argument for the reform rested on the claim that inflexibilities in the old system made it insensitive to local needs, as well as unallowing for different, creative solutions in terms of municipal social service production.<sup>49</sup></p>	<p>Commercial solutions in the 90s</p>
<p>At present municipalities are free in this respect to decide how best to spend the funds from the central government, without having to adapt to any national regulations about allocation for specific activities or needs. This boost of local political autonomy has, in this sense, decreased the national government's possibilities by one remove to directly influence and guide the development of the availability and quality of childcare through public funds. This does not mean, however, that childcare funding is now beginning to flow from other than public sources.</p>	<p>Lump sum funding of childcare</p>
<p>The city of Stockholm introduced vouchers or 'service checks' for day care, schools and other services in 1993. This gave parents the right to choose in which facilities to place their child/children. This means that all types of providers, municipal, cooperative and private, receive the same compensation per enrolled child. The city of Gothenburg, on the other hand, decentralized its decision-making to a number of neighborhood sub-units [<i>stadsdelar</i>], making each responsible for the provision of social services. This means that private day care facilities receive different financial compensation for the same activities in different parts of Gothenburg.</p>	<p>Municipal administrative and political structure</p>
<p>The city of Stockholm initiated a similar geographical decentralization in 1996. It was first divided into 24 neighborhoods or districts and in 1998 redivided into 18 districts, each with its own local administration [<i>stadsdelsnämnd</i>], budget etc. Under this system, each local district and neighborhood administration is now responsible for providing its residents with many social services, like day care, care for the elderly and so forth. Each of these districts decides its own priorities and sets its own fees or tariffs for the services it provides. However, following the introduction of</p>	



<p>and put into ‘zero grades’. This transfer from day care facilities to the school system made for considerable savings in the municipal budgets. Rather than four to six children per day care employee, there were now 25 to 30 children for two or three ‘zero grade’ staff. In Gothenburg, parents could decide, with the advice of the teachers, whether to put their child/children in a ‘zero class’ at the age of six or to leave them in a day care facility until primary schooling begins at seven years of age. It’s possible that this kind of differences in economic and administrative rules can lead to regional differences in the possibility for the development of private and cooperative day care solutions.</p> <p>During the 1990s many municipalities also introduced various types of restrictions on the availability of day care services, in order to reduce costs. Previously, children of parents who were home after a second or third child birth, could retain their place at the local day care facility and thereby maintain social contacts with their peers. During the 1990s this right was revoked in many municipalities of the country. The unemployed and persons studying lost the right to have their children enrolled in municipal day care facilities as well. These austerity measures on the municipal level were directly related to the widening gap between state spending on childcare and the rising demand implied by larger cohorts of children. As noted above, the pressure for more places in childcare was rising sharply during the 90s. Government spending, however, during the period was almost constant. In 1990 the total public cost for childcare for 1-12 year olds was 4.2 billion €. <sup>51</sup> In 1994 it was 4.01; in 1995 4.09; in 1996 4,2; and in 1997 4.23. <sup>52</sup></p> <p>The only municipal response that was possible to adapt to these realities was to decrease the staff per child ratio. In 1990 the average day care center ratio was 4.2; in 1993 5.2; in 1997 5.7; and in 2000 5.4. <sup>53</sup></p> <p>In addition, many municipalities curtailed the availability of services in other ways. Tariffs of the fees paid by parents were increased in several ways. Most municipalities have income-related tariffs, while cooperative day care services often employ flat rate fees. The traditional net economical competitive advantage by cooperative over public day care solutions made possible by parent’s work contribution – lower tariffs – now disappears.</p> <p>Many municipalities both increased their tariffs, and introduced a second element in the calculation of parent fees: length of daily stay of the child(ren). The longer the stay the more parents pay, often with cut-off points at four, six and eight hours a day. This helped to reduce the demand for municipal day care services, as longer days become too expensive for most parents. With the introduction of the <i>maxtaxa</i>, conditions, however, change again.</p> <p>The Social Democrats introduced the idea of a maximum tariff late during the campaign for the 1998 general election. The Prime minister, Göran Persson, made a promise to impose an upper limit of 70 € for the first child and 50 € for the second child on the parents’ fee to day care services. He also stated that the municipal governments would be fully compensated for any eventual loss due to the imposition of an upper limit to the parent fee. The government hoped that by lowering the parent fee it could encourage</p>	<p>Municipal restrictions on day care in the 90s</p> <p>Curtailing availability to cut costs</p> <p>Introduction of the <i>maxtaxa</i></p>
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<p>in municipal or other day care facilities. Given the relatively low remuneration it was mostly used by women. The reform was consequential of a demand made by the Christian Democratic party, and was first implemented in July 1994. As the general election some months later returned the Social Democrats to power the law was annulled and the subsidy for parents to stay at home with their children terminated. However, the Christian Democrats propose to reintroduce the <i>Vårdnadsbidrag</i> if they join a new non-socialist government after the general election in September 2002.</p>	
<p>By mid-2002, however, the earlier consensus in favor of this initiative between the non-socialists has been broken, with the Center and Liberal parties (both of which tend to be seen by others as well as by themselves as ideologically markedly less rightist than the Moderate/conservative and Christian Democratic non-socialists; since the last historical coalition between the Social Democrats and the Center party in the 50s, parliamentary deals have regularly been struck between either party and successive Social Democratic minority governments) reconsidering their support. The present leader of the Center party, Maud Olofsson, observed at the June 2002 party convention that support among the citizens for this care solution is weak and decreasing, making party reorientation necessary.</p>	<p>Consensus on family policy between non-socialist parties broken in 2002</p>
<p>Non-municipal day care services (known as <i>alternativ drift</i> [alternative provision] or <i>enskild</i> [private] services in Swedish) expanded, as we have seen, dramatically after 1985. In 1988 there were just over 500 non-municipal day care centers that met public requirements for state support, but they reached nearly 1.900 at the end of 1995; an increase ratio of nearly four. The number of children enrolled in these non-municipal day care services increased from just 8.500 in 1988 to 47.000 in 1999, a nearly six-fold increase. On average in 1999 nearly 15 per cent of all preschool children enrolled in day care facilities attended non-municipal services. Large variations can however be noted between different parts of the country: in Uppsala county nearly one fourth of all children attended non-municipal facilities, while in the northern, sparsely populated Västerbotten region only about one out of twenty did.<sup>57</sup></p>	<p>Alternative provision of childcare in the 1980s-90s</p>
<p>A closer look at non-municipal day care services shows that a variety of forms are employed for organizing and running such activities; including parent coops, voluntary organization, worker coops, organizations with special pedagogics, a combination of these or 'other' forms etc. Nearly two-thirds of the non-municipal day care facilities in 1995 were either provided by parent and worker cooperatives or voluntary organizations. More than half of the non-municipal day care services were organized as parent coops in 1995, or 1.016 of them. Worker cooperative day care was a new form at the end of 1991, and between then and 1995 the number of worker coops increased from 13 to 157. In 1995 there were 250 non-municipal day care centers and after-school homes with a special pedagogics – e.g., Montessori, Reggio Emilia or Waldorf. They label themselves parent coops, but are usually organized as voluntary organizations or foundations. The parishes of the Swedish Church ran 47 day care centers in 1992, and there were, furthermore, several parent coops affiliated with the Swedish Church,</p>	<p>Different forms of non-public provision</p>

<p>taking the legal form of voluntary organizations.</p> <p>At the beginning of 1995 about 20 per cent of all day care was provided by private facilities in Stockholm, most of which were cooperative.<sup>58</sup> Parent coops are based on parental participation and influence, and parents have more roles than in municipal day care services. In 1986 there were only 18 parent coops in Stockholm, but by 1990 it had grown to 140, and by 1995 there are about 200 parent coops. During 1989 and 1990 parent coops represented most of the growth of day care in Stockholm. The reason for this is that it was often the only chance for parents to obtain a day care place. Municipal rules about sibling preference and the over-heated labor market meant that it was often hard to get a day care place for a first child in Stockholm.<sup>59</sup> A total study of coop day care in Stockholm in 1990 and 1991 showed that parent coops were often small organizations (one to two units), they arranged their own recruitment of children and they had shorter opening hours than municipal day care.<sup>60</sup> Parent coops had more parents with higher socioeconomic status, more two-parent families and fewer families with foreign backgrounds than municipal day care. Parents choose parent coops because of the lack of nearby municipal day care services.</p> <p>The average size of municipal childcare facilities is twice the size of parent cooperative day care services, with an average of 42 respective 20 children. Worker coops are about 50 per cent larger than parent cooperative day care services, while the size of private for-profit firms providing day care services approaches that of municipal services. Municipal day care services require more personnel than non-municipal, but parental participation partially makes up for the lower staff intensity in parent coops.</p> <p>By the end of 1995 the difference between the costs of municipal day care facilities and non-municipal services was about 10 to 15 per cent. The average municipal funding to non-municipal day care services came to 5142 € per child/year in 1995, while the total costs for running similar municipal day care services were 7031 € per child/year. Part of this difference is due to parent fees, which are included in the latter figure, but not the former. They were 12-15 per cent of the total costs of all kinds of day care services. Another part is due to the work obligation found in some types of non-municipal services. Yet another reason for the discrepancy is that non-public day care facilities are exempt from contributing towards the municipality's or local community's expenses for maintaining this social service. Part of the extra funds thus handed to each public childcare institution is deducted at the municipal source, creating the illusion that the gap is fairly substantial between the allocation of resources to public and non-public day care. In principle, the same amount of money follows each child in any given part of any given municipality, regardless of what sort of childcare facility is being utilized (again, there are no other government funding channels or structures).</p> <p>Nearly all (98%) parent coops stipulate some kind of work obligation or other parental participation, e.g., administration (94%), temporary relief for the staff's leaves of absence (91%), cleaning (74%), preparing food (31%). However, less than one-fifth (17%) of the other types of 'private' day care services require any parental responsibilities. Where they exist, parental</p>	<p>Parent coops the main non-public variant</p> <p>Difference in size between kinds of facilities</p> <p>Requirement for work etc in parent coops</p>
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<p>responsibilities on the average each month are 4.5 hours per child in parent coops, 0.8 hour/child in worker coops and 0.3 hour/child in other “private” day care services. For each day care facility this means an annual average of 61 hours in parent coops, 13 hours for worker coops and seven hours for other types of non-municipal day care services.<sup>61</sup> Other differences in the provision of non-municipal day care services, like a more engaged staff, can in part explain differences between the costs of municipal and non-municipal day care services.</p>	<p>Childcare in terms of right-left political split</p>
<p>One conclusion that can be made in relation to the system of Swedish day care is that the main ideological divide seems to exist between the publicly run system of day care and the commercial system of care – even though it would be exaggerated to say that the rift is of great importance today. But on this issue, the major right-left split in the Swedish 20<sup>th</sup> century state and society comes across very clearly. Attempts to give up the ultimate control of the state over this field arouses as much political controversy as can be aspired, but never aggregates into more than minority views. Few now argue that funding and quality concerns should be lifted out of state hands, given that the practical provision of day care is an open field. In a sense, this reflects directly on the notion in Sweden that the state is not always the major political problem. The Swedish tradition is thus markedly less liberal than the anglo-saxon political world; a phenomenon that is best linked to the Social Democratic appropriation of the state, and the central role for many decades on the party’s agenda of universalistic social policy reforms. For-profit day care is for this reason often interpreted as an aspect of the old ideological aspiration by the right side of the right to undermine the Social Democrats.</p>	<p>Parent coops an anomaly</p>
<p>The parent cooperative day care system, however, does not fit this pattern very well. Here, other forces seem to be at work. If we should try to label these, we would point in the direction of social philosophy, rather than of social politics. At the beginning of the parent coop wave during the 1980s, the Swedish day care system was characterized by severe shortage at the production end. Parents had few options then, and one of them was to get together over this sort of initiative. This could be described as a politically motivated move(ment), but the ideological overtones at the time were perfunctory. Nor were these initiatives directly ideologically orchestrated. The rationale behind these developments, therefore, seems at the outset third sector-driven. This to a large extent remains the case. There are few rivals to this assessment of the continuing strong wave of coops. Earlier, coops could also compete with lower tariffs, since they didn’t have to carry the burden of administration and legal responsibility of the municipalities, were able to use parents as labor and could use local knowledge and contacts to negotiate rents. Today, the fee gap between these and the other two organizational forms is less relevant, and with the introduction of the <i>maxtaxa</i> it will cease mattering.</p>	<p>Pedagogical differences</p>
<p>The remaining plausible reason to choose this type of day care would therefore seem to be that it has a pedagogical edge, compared to the other forms. The cooperative solution as a whole is thus possibly seen by parents as a more socially secure and pedagogically rewarding environment for their children. And this is maybe easier to assess for parents from better-off</p>	

<p>socio-economical backgrounds, equipped with sufficient readiness and education to take advantage of the structures of the pedagogical and educational system. An interesting aspect here is that scarcity of childcare seems to produce differentiation among users. When publicly produced childcare was unable to meet demands in the 70s and 80s, families with higher levels of income and education were over-consuming it, proportionally speaking. Academics, higher civil and private salaried employees, white-collar workers, and the like were over-represented during this phase.</p> <p>But the expansion of the day care system between 1987 and 1995 was exclusively taken advantage of by children of parents with blue-collar or lower civil servant or private salaried work.<sup>62</sup> An interpretation here is that more socially privileged families are more prone to identify and gain from different welfare systems. In that case, the cooperative alternative could now be subject to the same mechanism, which in turn could imply that it does indeed possess an edge, compared to other forms, under the condition that the group that has designated it as such is in fact right. One study remarks that whereas earlier inequalities in terms of access to preschool childcare disappeared during the 1990s, new systems of differentiation have since appeared. Children to parents living together, academics, of Swedish descent etc. are over-represented in privately run, for-profit and (particularly) parent cooperative day care centers, while children to lone parents, parents with lower levels of education, and immigration backgrounds are over-represented in publicly run facilities.<sup>63</sup></p> <p>The system of public day care for preschool children is thus an important part of Swedish social life.<sup>64</sup> The system is mature and the country now well covered, enabling both parents in families with small children to be active on the labor market to a large extent (with coverage better in urban areas with high occupational frequencies for both sexes, however). The acceptance and support for this aspect of Swedish social policy is strong among citizens. This is not surprising, remembering that the political support for the welfare state in general remained high even through the economically turbulent 1990s, when cuts in funding adversely affected the quality of a range of welfare services and sectors, including day care.<sup>65</sup> Some economic recovery has, as one study concludes, now taken place but: ‘the resources are still not at the level of the early 1990s. Much indicate, however, that day care services still enjoy the confidence of parents.’<sup>66</sup> System legitimacy thus appears to be stable.</p> <p>At the moment, the debate seems to take place in connection to political struggles to define appropriate levels of ambition for the state in terms of spending in the day care (and general welfare) sector. The <i>mactaxa</i>-system took effect in January 2002, and the Social Democratic party congress in November 2001 moved for a longer term ambition to make day care for preschool children available free of charge.<sup>67</sup> This will involve substantial economic input from the state, and the congress mentioned no date for the implementation of the ambition. The current minister of education, Thomas Östros, has stated that, given the <i>mactaxa</i>-reform, this step is logical. The <i>mactaxa</i> is the first major social reform following years of budget restrictions and cutbacks in service provision. It not only attempts to</p>	<p>Beneficiaries of expansion of the system</p> <p>Legitimacy and social cohesion</p> <p>Social democratic long term goals for childcare</p>
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<p>reinstate replacement rates that have been downgraded, as in sick or unemployment insurance systems. It reverses local increases in parent fees for childcare that were very unevenly distributed across municipalities. This is an attempt to reinstate universalism, appreciated by middle-class parents (which is more important than usual, given that 2002 is an election year). But the reform possibly hurts alternative providers of day care.<sup>68</sup> The concept itself can, however, be interpreted as a legislative reversal of the fragmentation of social services initiated by the non-socialist Bildt government in 1991-94.</p>	<p>Renewal of the welfare state</p>
<p>The most intense discussion today concerns how the welfare state may renew itself after the harsh 90s. Sweden shares the predicaments created by the period of austerity with a host of other European nations. If the Swedish Social Democrats will be able or willing to follow the examples set by the New Labor in the UK and the New Democrats in the US is unclear. Various propositions concerning privatization of the production of social services seems to be one major issue.<sup>69</sup> Again, the Social Democratic legacy makes the state hesitate in this respect. There's been radical political change on this score over the last decade, but the welfare system as a whole remains politically and funding-wise in the hands of the state, even though organizational innovation abounds in the field of welfare production. For-profit, as well as non-profit and third sector driven solutions have made substantial inroads.</p>	<p>No non-public funding</p>
<p>Only to reiterate this point: in today's Swedish childcare system the role of non-public funding is minimal. (And the same of course goes for most major social services, such as health care, primary, secondary and most of tertiary education.) Swedish childcare is maintained, regardless of provider or region, by the same funding principle: the municipal (and state provided) voucher to which every resident child is entitled. There may be a theoretical possibility that there are childcare facilities or schemes that function otherwise, but these are unmentioned in the literature and of no consequence here. The 2002 reform of the <i>maxtaxa</i> (discussed at length above), which introduced a ceiling for parent's fees for childcare (again, regardless of provider), also effectively barred the only conceivable alternative funding channel: exorbitant tariffs. Small children who don't attend any of the varieties of childcare mentioned in this presentation are thus generally to be found in their own homes, not in childcare settings other than those described above. Erler &amp; Sass' 1997 conclusion that there 'are very few forms of private childcare in Sweden – apart from care by one parent' is thus correct.<sup>70</sup></p>	<p>Children not in the childcare system</p>
<p>This group of, as it were, childcare absentees has not been studied rigorously. Given, however, that the norm today is the two-earner family, it may be inferred that to remain at home is a less viable option for couples with incomes in the lower strata. For a family with one or more children to live on one income only (i.e. after the regular parental leave allowances and time frames have run their course) only seems possible if the income is very decent indeed. Only a fraction of Swedish parents reasonably belong to this group. There are of course other parents, without these kinds of resources, who opt for keeping their preschool children at home, living more minimalistically. But again, the figures are uncompiled and the group</p>	

<p>probably limited, though we'd guess that this could be an easier route to travel for comparatively young parents, with low expenses yet run up. Following this train of thought further, a distinction that could be relevant – should systematic studies be undertaken to understand this category's life style – would be between those who take the minimalistic option for reasons of choice and those who do it for lack of any momentary alternative. Surely to keep small children at home until they have to attend school from the age of seven for ideological or religious reasons and therefore scrape by on meagre economical resources is quite a different thing than to scrape by for the time being, with hopes or plans to make conditions improve in the near or far future. We imagine that the latter situation is shared, for instance, by parents of small children in communities where demands for childcare for the time being exceeds supply.</p>	<p>The informal sector</p>
<p>Yet another inadequately mapped or quantified care context for the childcare absentees is the informal sector.<sup>71</sup> We sense, however, that informal solutions are of less importance than staying at home with one parent. The classical versions of informal day care would be to rely on grand parents or black labor. Some groups who are primarily reputed to work with black childcare are Baltic, Polish or other European/American women, either permanent residents or temporary visitors. We feel reasonably safe to assume, however, that this is a fairly marginal phenomenon, at least in terms of any sustained substitution for childcare. To have a resident black au pair in your home who walks the children to and from an ordinary day care facility is maybe a more common model, but even so the overall numbers are hardly great.</p>	<p>Feminist critique of individualism</p>
<p>How to assess the feminist critique of the welfare state's individualistic perspective on family and social policy is not only an empirical question. As we've seen, the day care system itself doesn't really differentiate between women and men as wage earners or receivers of care for their children. One discernible problem primarily with parent coop solutions is, though, that the very amount of everyday responsibility and participation required by members to some extent tends to shut single parents out, as they more often lack the extra logistical margins in the everyday running of their family life that are necessary for cooperatively engaged parents. Even if this form seems better equipped to promote virtues related to social cohesion and community building (as well as offer less economically and in other ways strained care) parent's life situations would clearly to some extent bear on the practical availability of this kind of day care.</p>	<p>Class and gender</p>
<p>At this point the categories of social class and sex/gender meet, indicating class as well as gender structures in the organizational and political economy of Swedish day care. One 2001 government study concludes that it's 'six times as usual that children whose parents have a tertiary education of three years attend non-public day care than children whose parents have only primary education'.<sup>72</sup> Another study echoes of the same theme in its conclusion: 'if the difference earlier were between those who had access to day care and those who did not, today it's rather between those who have high quality and low quality care'.<sup>73</sup> Swedish childcare in today's mature phase thus seems to be on the way to becoming yet another class differentiated social commodity. And as the classical emphasis on socio-</p>	

<p>economic equality of the Social Democrats might have to lessen in the wake of internal and external changes (at the same time as the party is becoming decreasingly able to count on being automatically reelected to power), so does childcare risk becoming subject to the same differentiating dynamics as do other (social) services and consumer goods.</p> <p>Reports today also indicate that at least in major urban areas, the distribution of staff with lower and higher qualifications is uneven. In Stockholm the concentration of staff with tertiary education in this professional sector closely follows the division of the city itself in terms of socio-economic prosperity. In those suburban parts of the city that are relatively harder hit in socio-economic terms the recruitment of highly trained staff is a bigger challenge than in the center and well-to-do suburbs. The same situation seems to obtain to the whole system of schooling and care.</p>	
<p><b>3 FORCES OF CHANGE</b></p>	Likely changes ahead
<p>What are, then, the primary forces of change in today's Swedish system of childcare? A whole array of phenomena, developments and restraints are often pointed to in reply to this question. We'll briefly present what we consider to be the most central of these.</p>	Demography
<p>The first is demographic change.<sup>74</sup> The childcare system (as well as society at large) has to cope with unstable birth rates. At the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 90s, as we have seen, nativity soared in Sweden. In 1990, the woman/child ratio reached an extraordinary 2.13. By 1999, however, it had fallen to a mere 1.5, a level unknown since 1809. The demand for places in childcare has therefore risen dramatically over the last decade. In 1980 a total of 408.000 children were enrolled in care. Of these, 359.000 were preschool children. In 1985 the numbers were 498.000/424.000, respectively; in 1990 571.000/462.000; in 1995 725.000/515.000; and in 1999 720.00/388.000.<sup>75</sup> This is the peak from the years around 1990 moving through the system. Current estimations, however, indicate that the number of Swedish 1-5 year olds will go down in the medium term. In 1993-1995 there were over 600.000 children in this age group. Prognoses for the next few years estimate the same figure to 450.000, a decrease of 25%. This demographic change will require adjustments in the childcare system. An observation here is that the increase in nativity rates during the 1980s leading up to the peak in the early 90s was almost as dramatic as today's expected decrease will be. The increase, as we've seen caused massive growth in the childcare system, and deepened Sweden's already strong reputation as an icon of universalist welfarism. This could hardly have been achieved if the patterns in nativity rates at the time had resembled those likely to come. An intriguing question is thus what this decrease will imply for the Swedish image. The changes are very likely to generate new perspectives on the Swedish welfare state tradition.</p>	Consolidation or threat
<p>At first glance, this decrease ought perhaps make for a consolidating phase in childcare, with organizational structures being adjusted down to decreasing demand with staff and location needs therefore being met</p>	

<p>relatively easily. But the picture is more complicated than that. Part of the reason is the imminent retirement of large cohorts of workers in the sector (and across Swedish society). Another aspect is the undersupply nationwide of highly trained staff. Today, the leading childcare staff category – the <i>förskolelärare</i> – is often found on compilation lists of very promising careers in the decades ahead. One problem here, however, is that wages are often criticized for being inadequate. But improvements are to some extent happening today, generated not least by the growing professionalization in the sector. Recent figures put the proportion of staff with tertiary training in preschool childcare at 54% (and in after-school facilities at 68%).<sup>76</sup> The same source concludes that the 1990s’ increasing professionalization in the childcare sector is visible in the following ways: by the fact that the number of children in day care (where education levels are higher) has increased, compared to the number of children cared for by child minders (where education levels are lower) and that staff education’s moved up across the childcare sector generally.<sup>77</sup></p>	<p>Universalism and cultural diversification</p>
<p>Second, there’s the issue of whether the ideological and institutional universalism of the childcare system may have to be retuned or even reconsidered following the general development in EU-countries towards ethnical and cultural diversification. This is a general trend today, and political and policy structures are constantly rethought to adapt to the changes that are thought to follow in patterns of, for instance, the consumption of social services. It’s hard, however, to be very precise in the assessment of this trend. We feel that the phenomenon of socio-political multiculturalism is somewhat less than addressed in an adequately sophisticated way today, at least in terms of social policy and at least in Sweden.</p>	<p>Changes in family patterns</p>
<p>Third, is the change in family structures. As indicated above the erosion of social values traditionally supporting familialism has been going on for quite some time. The problem of whether traditional familialism should be restored or not is no doubt a non-starter in today’s Swedish political culture. Common interpretations of the development stress that the requirements from the 1950s-60s for more labor made the old mode of thinking obsolete fast and that processes of individualization and social modernization have gone unusually far in Sweden, leading to a situation where patterns in family-making have become more open to renegotiation between partners more equal in economical and other terms than what was possible under familialism. (The unfixing of formality has its limits, however. Equal parenthood, adoption and family rights are not officially given to people in gay and lesbian relationships.) The direction of change in family structures is therefore peculiar in Sweden, compared to many other European countries. Here, it will by logical necessity be a matter of change starting <i>from</i> the dual career family pattern, not going <i>towards</i> it. The conceptual and political mode of this change is yet unclear.</p>	<p>The dual career norm</p>
<p>The growth of dual career families has thus been steady since the 1960s-70s. Today, as mentioned above, the norm is that both parents work. This does not, however, mean that the system does not generate or build on patterns of sexual discrimination. Women work part-time far more than men and are also discriminated in terms of wage levels. Employment levels</p>	

have been very high in Sweden throughout the postwar era, with the dramatic fall in levels during the early 90s constituting a socio-political shock. Today, unemployment levels have decreased, but are still far higher than before the shock. One official analysis concludes, however, that in principle, this is a time in when young Nordic women work, and family, child and social policies aim to support as powerfully as possible dual careers.<sup>78</sup> There is legislation in place today that theoretically prohibits employers to investigate potential or present employees' family or pregnancy plans. Pregnancy is not a valid ground for discharge from the work place, nor is usage of parental benefits or leaves of absence. Admittedly, employers often go to some lengths to find ways of cheating on the system in this regard. This is typically regarded by the majority of the population, though, as a rather offensive posture.

The living conditions of Swedish children are, naturally, shaped by these socio-cultural patterns. On 2000 study gives – in contrast to the vast majority of Swedish children who live with both parents – the following conclusions in connection to the family patterns in which Swedish children with separated parents (i.e. 17-18%) live.<sup>79</sup>

- For children under 10 every second child sees the absent parent at least once a week. Less than one out of ten have no contact at all. For these children the absent parent lives nearby in 30% of cases.
- Children 0-9 years old live alternatively with both parents about half of the time in every second case.
- In the same group, almost all children are with their mother at least one day/month, and 90% with their father.
- Almost one child out of five in the same age group do things together with both separated parents at least once a week and the parents of one out of two discuss matters that relate to the child each week. For adolescents, both figures decrease.

Given these patterns, the study notes, these children to a large extent live in a context supported by the social capital generated by both parents. In terms of inter-generational confidence and trust, 85-90% of all Swedish children perceive that their parents have enough time for them.<sup>80</sup> It may deserve mentioning that cohabitation is very common in Sweden. A 1995 statistical report on rates of children experiencing divorce/separation during childhood or adolescence notes that a fairly consistent 76-87% have grown up living with both their biological or adoptive parents.<sup>81</sup>

A fourth aspect is the visible inroads made by fathers into the parental leave system. At the outset, this service was almost exclusively directed at and used by women/mothers. Women are still far ahead of men as users of this social service, but alterations are slowly taking place. In 1980, fathers' use of the total number available days for parental leave was 5%, increasing in 1990 to 7% and in 2000 to just over 12%. Men's use of the parental leave system is positively correlated to higher levels of income for both parents.<sup>82</sup> Second child fertility rates for men who have taken parental leave with the first child are substantially higher than for men who have not but there's also a tendency to use up more days with the first than with later children.<sup>83</sup>

Children whose parents don't live together

Inroads made by fathers into the parental leave system

<p>When it comes to staying home to care for sick children (using <i>tillfällig föräldrapenning</i> insurance benefits), the share of days used by fathers has been 30-40% throughout the 80s and 90s.<sup>84</sup></p> <p>Most of these tendencies are open-ended and inconclusive. The question what forces of change are <i>really</i> at work today with regard to Swedish childcare is very hard to answer, partly because it is not merely empirical, but hinges on different theoretical conceptions of politics and the state in the first place. In our discussion we have given a number of independent interpretations that have seemed appropriate to us. Another, indirect way of assessing current tendencies is to study the approaches of the main actors involved: the parliamentary parties. One then has to assume (a) that the views put forth by the parties are sincere and deliberate, (b) that the proposed reforms and changes are intended to be carried through, given (c) that sufficient electoral support is received in the 2002 general elections to make it possible for each party to dominate in the legislative negotiations and committees of the new parliament, and (d) that the tables will not suddenly turn and the political field change in unexpected ways. All of these assumptions are, of course, very shaky. But a review of the positions could minimally provide the basis for some qualified guesswork. A modest speculation is that the future of Swedish childcare policy in a medium term perspective lies somewhere in between these official views and that the outcome of the election will have a heavy influence on the direction of the field for the next few years.<sup>85</sup> Major pre-election proposals by each party regarding changes in the present family policy structure are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– The conservative <i>Moderate</i> party proposes to shorten the period of paid parental leave [<i>föräldraförsäkring</i>] to care for newborn and small children from 480 to 360 days/child, maintaining present economical levels (at 80% of regular income, with a break-off point at 2369 €/month, which gives a highest possible benefit rate of 1895 €/month, before income taxation).<sup>86</sup> The cut does away with the complete 90 days secondary insurance period [<i>garantidagar</i>], during which flat rate compensation is given at the very modest level of ca. 180 €/month, and one regular support month. This month is the specifically designated <i>pappamånad</i> [father's month], only available for use by the father of the child. The party furthermore proposes a universal contribution of 300 €/month to parents with 1-3 year olds, taxfree. This new contribution will decrease proportionally if the child attends public day care. Another plan is to introduce a modest tax deduction generating approx. 40 €/month and child, as well as make parent's costs for day care up to 2400 €/year tax deductible, making the moderate party the only one connecting tax eases to childcare.</li> <li>– The liberal party <i>Folkpartiet</i> wants to keep the <i>barnbidrag</i> – i.e. the flat rate allowance, which is now set at 95 €/child and month (with increased levels for parents to more than two children) that is received by all parents – intact. The party proposes to raise the break-off point of the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> (making the highest possible net support level 2527 €/month) but wants to reduce the total length of it by one month. It also wants to hitch the lower</li> </ul>	<p>Inconclusive tendencies</p> <p>An indirect approach to assess current trends: party programs</p> <p>The moderates</p> <p>The liberals</p>
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<p>levels of the contribution up. Like the Moderates (and the Christian Democrats), Folkpartiet suggests a flat new contribution/child to all parents, at levels just above those proposed by the Moderate party. A liberal specialty is the proposition that remuneration levels in the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> should increase from 80 to 90% of earlier income, on the condition that the right to paid leave is used by both parents (until the mid-90s, this had been the regular level).</p>	<p>The agrarians</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The non-socialist Center party proposes to double the universal child allowance during the first five years of the child's life; keep the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> more or less intact, but raise both the break-off point (generating 2779 €/month) and the contribution floors. This is the sole party in the non-socialist coalition camp that doesn't advocate a new general child contribution. It also wants to keep the economic incitements for father's to make more use of the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i>, and extend the right to shorter working hours for those with small children from six to four hours work a day.</li> </ul>	<p>The christian democrats</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The conservative Christian Democratic party wants a modest raise in the universal child allowance, specifically for 13-16 year olds. It proposes to shorten the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> to 360 days, raise the break-off point to a very ambitious 3127 €/month net and raise the floor of the contribution. As in the Moderate proposition, the secondary period with a symbolic economic compensation is abandoned. The Christian Democratic approach is also very ambitious when it comes to the levels in the new conservative proposition that parents should receive a universal allowance for each child. The party suggestion is 8000 €/year for 1-3 year olds, free of tax, an amount that would surely go some way towards making ends meet for an ordinary family, if there is a breadwinner with a decent income present as well (in practical keeping with the party's belief in the <i>vårdnadsbidrag</i> from 1994). It further proposes a right to three years leave of absence from work when children are small.</li> </ul>	<p>The social democrats</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Social Democratic party generally wishes to keep the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i>, but in the longer run extend it, primarily by introducing more fathers' months. In a recent proposal the party states that it wishes to legally curb the discrimination of pregnant mothers (and parents on parental leave) by employers, and to initiate parliamentary talks on individualized parental leave, i.e. to formally split the right to parental leave between both parents.<sup>87</sup> It also proposes a slight raise of the break-off point, making a 2527 €/month net benefit level, as well as a raise of floor levels. The party also wants to boost the child allowance and raise the relative benefit levels for families with more than one child (and not only to those with more than two).</li> </ul>	<p>The socialists</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The socialist left, earlier communist party <i>Vänsterpartiet</i> that was unprecedentedly successful in the general elections 1998 and together with <i>Miljöpartiet</i> has supported the Social Democratic government in parliament during the mandate period wants to extend the</li> </ul>	

<p><i>föräldraförsäkring</i>, but has not declared by how much. It also proposes a raise of the break-off point (second only to the level proposed by the Christian Democrats) to 2843 €/month, as well as a floor raise. Like the Social Democrats, <i>Vänsterpartiet</i> wishes in the long term to extend the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> by introducing more father's months.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The green party <i>Miljöpartiet</i> has the most expansive view among the seven parties when it comes to the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i>. It proposes to lengthen the insurance period to 540 days, with 80%-level benefits for 450 and 90%-levels for 90 days, keeping the present break-off point and raise the compensation floors. It wants to reinstate a specific, extra contribution for parents who use the government student loan system – i.e. for parents primarily in tertiary education.</li> </ul> <p>This review has surely some bearing on the future political fate of Swedish childcare. One thing that comes through clearly is that three of the conservative parties wish to introduce an ambitious new policy of a direct taxfree monthly benefit, particularly for parents of 1-3 year olds. The reform is large enough to approach economic levels that would compete with salaried work – particularly if it is a matter of low paid or part time work. Net contribution levels ranging between 300-667 €/month and 1-3 year old child are, at least near the top end, close to low net wage levels. An aggressive scheme of this kind would no doubt be a potential rival to other means of contributing to a family's economic survival, given that a primary income is present in the family as well. With more than one child the situation becomes even more promising in terms of family sustenance. Given that the suggestions only are aimed at families with 1-3 year olds the time span's too brief for most parents today to be able to make simultaneous multiplied use of the benefit. Furthermore, compensation levels are hardly high enough to enable sole parents to support themselves.</p> <p>Other things that become apparent are the parliamentary consensus to keep the <i>maxtaxa</i> and the lack of non-socialist consensus in family and childcare policy matters. There are three policy clusters. The first cluster – that wishes to keep and expand on the system in force today – consists of the Social Democrats and its two support parties. The second is the left side of the right, with <i>Folkpartiet</i> and the Center party (who are often referred to as the mid-parties), who wish to keep the present childcare system intact, but boost the economy of families with children considerably. The third cluster is the right side of the right, with the Moderates and Christian Democrats, in whose suggestions a general will to steer away from today's care systems, at least for 1-3 year olds, is visible. Instead, these young children should be cared for in ways that families see fit, given the greater economic freedom the parties imply in their propositions.</p> <p>Current pre-election debate in Sweden seems to indicate not only that no party's heavily opposed to the established childcare policy system; bids are now made right and left to impose numeric ceilings on children's group sizes in day care, countering through new legislation the municipal tendency by fiscal measures to curtail the ability to maintain what is perceived as sufficiently small pedagogic groups. There seems to be a</p>	<p>The greens</p> <p>Assessment of party views</p> <p>Parliamentary clusters on childcare and family policy</p> <p>Too austere conditions for childcare during the 90s</p>
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<p>consensus that the politics of Swedish childcare have been too austere for some time.<sup>88</sup></p> <p>The outcome of the elections could (given that assumptions a-d above hold water) lead to policy changes, but given the input implied in each party's propositions, the right side of the conservative camp has to gain enormously for any big changes to be possible. No polls so far predict that this is about to happen. Instead, most signs seem to point in the direction of a new Social Democratic minority government.</p>	
<p><b>4 CONCLUSIONS</b></p>	<p>Today's system comprehensive</p>
<p>We would lastly like to make some concluding remarks on the politics of childcare in Sweden. The first is empirical: the system of publicly supported childcare has expanded dramatically since the 1970s, and has now reached comprehensive levels of national coverage. A second reflection is that graver opposition to the system is both politically and ideationally marginal.<sup>89</sup> The support for social services of this kind in the field of childcare is on average high, as is the support for the dual career possibility. There is no indication that Swedes generally would want to replace this basic model. The Swedish debate seems to concentrate on how the system should be tuned and refined, never quite redefined. A ready interpretation here could be that the extraordinary Social Democratic political influence during the 20<sup>th</sup> century has created a hegemonic situation in Swedish social policy matters. The material and literature on preschool childcare discussed in this text indicates that the system plays an important role in furthering social cohesion. There is hardly any indication of the opposite.</p>	<p>System support strong</p>
<p>A third observation that can be made is that the firmness of the state's former grip over modes of childcare provision has lessened. Funding, as well as safeguarding of quality standards, is still in firm public control, but a range of different organizational forms for care are now allowed for and viable. In terms of social cohesion, therefore, we perceive no overt threat to stability or inclusiveness connected to Swedish childcare policies. On the contrary, these policies seem to be interpreted by most Swedish families as well as political parties as a fair contribution towards the practical, economical and institutional support of what has become the normal Swedish way of life for families with small children. From a broad socio-political perspective the tensions inherent in the policy system are not acute and there are no current indications of any constitutive changes, unless a fiscal (or other) crisis like the one during the early/mid-1990s should reappear. The main challenges today thus rather have to do with the system's ability to deal with non-conformist, non-presumed life styles and family patterns. Being a near universalist model, the Swedish childcare policy nexus always has and will conceivably continue to exert a certain institutional pressure to conform on Swedish families. The implications of this pressure therefore deserve analytical mapping and elaboration.</p>	<p>Legitimacy and social cohesion</p>
	<p>State's former grip has lessened</p>
	<p>Challenges for universalism</p>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Erler & Sass observe that ‘for decades family policy was a political issue of the first priority’ in Sweden. 1997, p 33.

<sup>2</sup> The Myrdals’ qualities are testified to by the fact that both became Nobel laureates, independently of each other. Gunnar in economics and Alva for her international peace work.

<sup>3</sup> Cf Rothstein 1985.

<sup>4</sup> Cf Björnberg’s view that Alva Myrdal ‘was primarily responsible for formulating the ideology behind public childcare in the 1930s’. 1997, p 122.

<sup>5</sup> Björnberg 1997, p 116.

<sup>6</sup> A 2001 government study identifies as the most important legislative changes in this context the passing during the 1970s of three sets of legislation: the 1971 law that made individuals, not families, the primary units for income taxation, the 1974 law ensuring the right to parental leave of absence with newborn and young children, with economical compensation via social insurance systems, and the 1974 initiative making for general and expansive public provision of childcare. Ds 2001:57, p 144.

<sup>7</sup> Giddens 2000, p 28.

<sup>8</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 223, *our translation*. Cf SOU 2001:52, p 255.

<sup>9</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 223f.

<sup>10</sup> Östberg 2001, p 133.

<sup>11</sup> Björnberg 1997, p 122.

<sup>12</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 201.

<sup>13</sup> SOU 2001:52, p 242.

<sup>14</sup> Cf Esping-Andersen 1996; Stephens 1996.

<sup>15</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 141. Cf SOU 2000:3, p 48.

<sup>16</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 150, table 5.2.

<sup>17</sup> Cf Vogel, Joachim 2001: *Uppskjutet föräldraskap bland Europas unga* [Postponed parenthood among the young of Europe] *Välfärdsbulletinen* 2001:3. Cf also Hoem 2000, p 119.

<sup>18</sup> Cf Ds 2001:57, p 154-55, diagram 5.3.

<sup>19</sup> Cf Ds 2001:57, p 103.

<sup>20</sup> Hoem 2000, p 128.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p 129. Cf SOU 2000:3, p 48.

<sup>22</sup> Hoem 2000, p 137, table 5. The correlation holds for both sexes through the educational system, with the blunt exception of postgraduate men’s and women’s inclination to have a third child. Here, men score very high on the odds for a third child whereas women score exceptionally low, suggesting the presence of intrinsic structural inequalities in the academic career system.

<sup>23</sup> Defined in *proposition* 1973:136; *betänkande* 1973:SoU30; *riksdagsskrivelse* 1973:372.

<sup>24</sup> Cf Björnberg, 1997, p 123.

<sup>25</sup> Law SFS 1976:381.

<sup>26</sup> Defined in *proposition* 1975/76:136; *betänkande* 1975/76:SoU28; *riksdagsskrivelse* 1975/76:219.

<sup>27</sup> Sigvard Marjasin, the Chairman of the Swedish Municipal Workers Union, SKAF, traveled the country up and down debating parent cooperative day care with representatives of the consumer cooperative movement. He was strongly opposed, although he attended HSB day care himself in his early years.

<sup>28</sup> Cf Jansson 2001.

<sup>29</sup> Cf Pestoff 1998.

<sup>30</sup> Sainsbury, for instance, notes that ‘strong public involvement has characterized childcare in Sweden’. 1996, p 95.

<sup>31</sup> Cf Rothstein 2002, p 28.

<sup>32</sup> The word *pyssling* is, incidentally, a noun referring to the little people/gnomes who live in the forest or in dark corners of barns, stables or other uncrowded buildings on farms, according to traditional Swedish lore. It’s perhaps symbolical that family policies created for modern corporatist industrial society in this sense were toppled by this small phantom from the backward rural woods.

<sup>33</sup> The major, but not only, source here is Ds 2001:57, chapter 7.

<sup>34</sup> Leira 1993.

<sup>35</sup> Cf Eme, Bernard *et al.* 2000, p 15.

<sup>36</sup> Klausen 1999, p 269.

<sup>37</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 145, *our translation*. Cf Björnberg’s conclusion: ‘Women and men in Sweden are highly segregated on the labour market’. 1997, p 117.

<sup>38</sup> SOU 1998:6, p 49.

<sup>39</sup> Cf Eme *et al.* 2000, p 25.

<sup>40</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 227. Cf Bergqvist & Nyberg 2001, p 243.

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<sup>41</sup> Pestoff 1998.

<sup>42</sup> Ståle 1995.

<sup>43</sup> These changes make comparisons between various forms of child care and their development over time more difficult. In 1996 58% of all children between the age of 0-12 were enrolled in child care activities of one type or another, and seven attended non-municipal services. Only one third of the children between 7-12 years old were enrolled in school-related after-school facilities, or *fritidshem*. Three fourths of the children between 0-6 attended some kind of preschool activity. Nearly all (97%) six year olds attended some kind of preschool activity (*ibid.*). But, our focus is on day care centers and 43 per cent of children between 0-6 years old were enrolled in this form of preschool activity in 1996, while one of eight attended non-municipal services. Cf table 3 in the appendix.

<sup>44</sup> There are claims that the closer links in most respects between schools and the *fritidshem* has clouded the limit, making it impossible to define where one activity/facility ends and the other begins. This could, in turn, threaten the pedagogical integrity, particularly of the latter. Bergqvist & Nyberg 2001, p 248.

<sup>45</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 226, *our translation*.

<sup>46</sup> *Skolverket*.

<sup>47</sup> Björnberg 1997, p 124, *our translation*.

<sup>48</sup> Jansson 2001.

<sup>49</sup> The law is defined in prop.1991/92:150. Cf Bergmark 2001, p 32ff.

<sup>50</sup> It's worth noting that some writers view the 1995 tightening of the legal demands on municipalities to actually provide childcare for parents in work or education as a recentralizing move, partly countering the decentralizing trend. Bergmark 2001, p 52.

<sup>51</sup> As exchange rates between SEK and € vary, conversions in this text have been made using the flat ratio of 10:1. The official rate on August 11, 2002 was 9.19821.

<sup>52</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 232, table 7.4. Figures for preschool childcare only were not available from this source.

<sup>53</sup> Bergqvist & Nyberg 2001, p 257, table 4.

<sup>54</sup> All in all, the conclusion, particularly since the introduction of the *maxtaxa*, is that childcare is heavily subsidized, making it realistically available to virtually all families, regardless of economic resources. Cf Jonsson 2000b, p 105.

<sup>55</sup> *Dagens Nyheter*, October 19 2001. 49% voted in favor, 39% against, while 12% were undecided or didn't vote. 62% of families with children were in favor, and 75% of those with children below 6 years supported the idea of a *maxtaxa*.

<sup>56</sup> 11-18% of costs in the childcare system are covered by parent fees, the rest from public funding.

<sup>57</sup> *Socialstyrelsen* 1996. Cf Trydegård 2001, p 96.

<sup>58</sup> Ståle 1995.

<sup>59</sup> Sundell *et al.* 1991.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> *Socialstyrelsen* 1995.

<sup>62</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 229.

<sup>63</sup> SOU 2001:52, p 275f. Cf SOU 2001:79, p 97.

<sup>64</sup> Cf Björnberg's remark that the 'expansion after the war of social citizenship rights in terms of material goods and services has created a basis for social identity in Sweden.' 1997, p 135.

<sup>65</sup> Svallfors 1996.

<sup>66</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 243.

<sup>67</sup> Between 1990 and 1999 the proportion of parent's fees in financing day care rose from 10 to 18 %. SOU 2001:79, p 97.

<sup>68</sup> Similar reforms are now planned for elder care.

<sup>69</sup> Giddens 2000.

<sup>70</sup> Erler & Sass 1997, p 45. Figures provided by Trydegård show the very low proportion of all childcare employees in Sweden 1993-2000 holding other than public employment. Of nearly 140.000 staff in 1993, more than 130.000 worked in public facilities. In 2000 the total number of employees was over 115.000, with about 10.000 employed in non-public facilities (i.e. in both for-profit and non-profit facilities). 2001, p 91, table 1. In relative terms the proportion of non-public employees has increased between 1993-2000, from 4,1 % to 10,2 %. Of these, those employed in third sector facilities, mainly coops, are 1999 as many as all other non-publicly employed together. *Ibid.*, p 92, table 2.

<sup>71</sup> Cf Svedberg's observation that knowledge on the informal sector's role in the Swedish welfare system is scarce and fragmented. 2001, p 141, footnote 2. The usual interpretation is that this is a direct reflection of the marginality of the sector itself.

<sup>72</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 235.

<sup>73</sup> SOU 2001:52, p 282.

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<sup>74</sup> This is also the first welfare policy challenge defined in the final report presented by the major Swedish Welfare audit account committee led by sociologist Joakim Palme (son of the former prime minister Olof Palme): SOU 2001:79. Other main challenges that are highlighted in the broad social and welfare policy perspective of the committee are related to financing, internationalization, inequality and legitimacy.

<sup>75</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 228, table 7.1.

<sup>76</sup> Bergqvist & Nyberg 2001, p 258.

<sup>77</sup> At [www.scb.se](http://www.scb.se) Statistics Sweden (SCB) hosts an official database covering most aspects of most sectors of the national accounts. It's very vast, user-friendly and publicly largely available free of charge. In the field of childcare [*barnomsorg*], for instance, an array of statistics concerning location and form of facilities, type of provider, level of staff education, children's group size etc on the municipal, regional or national levels per year etc can easily be obtained for those with a basic knowledge of any Scandinavian language. The figures are precise. In 1998 31.252 people thus belonged to the academically trained main staff category of *förskolelärare*. 25.343 people were in the category *barnskötare*, with secondary school level education. 569 people were in the category 'other', and 1140 staff were untrained, nationally.

<sup>78</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 153.

<sup>79</sup> Jonsson 2001a, p 87f.

<sup>80</sup> Jonsson 2001a, p 90. Cf the remark that even though the availability of absent parents is relatively high, the social resources enjoyed by children with step-mothers or -fathers is somewhat lower. *Ibid.*, p 100.

<sup>81</sup> The age cohorts included in the study were women born 1949, 1954, 1959, 1964 and 1969; and men born 1949, 1959 and 1964. SCB 1995:1, p 53, table 6.4.

<sup>82</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 215.

<sup>83</sup> Cf SOU 1998:6, p 52. Different explanations of why men's and women's respective use of the insurance system varies considerably are discussed at length in this study, carefully considering stereotypes, career implications and micro-negotiation strategies/patterns in different family contexts. We refrain, however, from going deeper into this theme, as our main focus lies elsewhere.

<sup>84</sup> Ds 2001:57, p 202.

<sup>85</sup> As the system is constantly being revised changes are equally constant regarding, among other things, levels of contribution and compensation. Terminology also changes. Since this primarily is an historical overview, this suggests a certain descriptive vagueness in the text. Words and facts change, as does the relationship between them. We've chosen, however, not to dwell on this or trace the changes in detail.

<sup>86</sup> A compilation that's been helpful here was printed in *Dagens Nyheter* on August 4, 2002.

<sup>87</sup> *Aftonbladet*, August 25, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> Sweden is of course not the only case in point here. Cf Lindbom 2002, p 312.

<sup>89</sup> Cf the observations provided by Eler & Sass that 'public or state childcare is judged very positively by the parents'. 1997, p 45. They use an even stronger formulation at the last page of their article, where parents in Sweden 'are extremely positive about the quality of day nursery care'. *Ibid.*, p 46. Björnberg also uses the words 'extremely positive'. 1997, p 125. Cf also Ds 2001:57, p 243.

**APPENDIX: TABLES ON SWEDISH CHILDCARE<sup>89</sup>**

**Table 1. Number of children enrolled in preschool childcare 1974-1999 (x1000)**

Year	Day care center		Child minder		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
1974	62	17 (1975)	-	7 (1975)	-
1980	129	36	125	15	254
1985	184	32	162	19	346
1990	268	57	156	17	424
1994	338	-	129	-	467
1995	361	-	123	-	484
1996	366	-	110	-	476
1997	363	-	96	-	459
1998	338	-	82	-	420
1999	318	-	69	-	387

**Table 2. Number of children enrolled in non-municipal preschool childcare 1986-1999 (x1000)**

Year	Day care center	Child minder
1986	1.3	-
1988	8.5	-
1995	43.1	2.1
1999	47.2	3.5

**Table 3. Proportion of age cohorts enrolled in childcare 1990 and 1999 (x1000)**

Age cohort	1990		1999	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1-2	103	44	108	60
3-6	263	64	350	82
7-9	143	49	238	63
10-12	22	8	24	7

**Table 4. Proportion of preschool children enrolled in childcare by parents' occupation 1999 (x1000)**

Occupation	Number	Percent
Employed/studying	331	89
Unemployed	40	62
Parental leave	69	27
At home	8	20
Other	16	68
Total	464	76

**Table 5. Age of youngest child by mother's participation on the labor market 1997 (percent)**

Age	Full-time	Part-time	Other	Total
-1	9	14	77	100
1-2	20	45	35	100
2-7	26	58	16	100
7-13	35	58	7	100
13-16	54	40	6	100

**Table 6. Proportion of father's use of parental leave insurance system 1974-1996**

Year	Share of all father's using the system (%)	Father's share of used days (%)	Average of used days
1974	2.8	0.5	-
1977	7.0	2.2	-
1987	24.5	7.3	27.1
1990	26.1	7.7	32.9
1993	27.0	10.1	39.5
1994	28.1	11.4	39.5
1995	27.9	9.6	34.3
1996	31.1	10.6	30.5

**Table 7. Reasons for choosing type of day care, early 1990s (percent, multiple replies possible)**

	Type of day care provider			
	Pyslingen	Public	For-profit	Coop.
Close to home	78	56	46	18
First-visit positive impression	69	46	38	20
Positive hearsay	39	43	31	24
Offered place	31	46	28	13
Knew parents of enrolled children	36	24	21	25
Siblings enrolled earlier/presently	13	24	13	17
Pedagogic approach	0	1	31	20
Number of children's groups	8	10	23	11
Close to work-place	5	5	5	2
External environment	25	24	5	6
Desired cooperative alternative	5	0	0	53
Desired public alternative	10	17	0	0
Desired for-profit alternative	13	0	5	0

**Table 8. Costs for parental insurance and child allowance 1996-2000 (million €)<sup>89</sup>**

	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Parental insurance</b>	1421	1328	1413	1559	1684
<b>Child allowance</b>	1456	1442	1683	1677	1888
<b>Total expenditure<sup>89</sup></b>	4421	4092	4389	4794	5111

**Table 9. Unemployment ratio 1990-2000 (percent of labor force)**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Men</b>	1.6	3.3	6.3	9.7	9.1	8.5	8.5	8.5	6.9	5.9	5.0
<b>Women</b>	1.7	2.6	4.2	6.6	6.7	6.9	6.9	7.5	6.0	5.2	4.3
<b>Total</b>	1.6	3.0	5.2	8.2	8.0	7.7	7.7	8.0	6.5	5.6	4.7

**Table 10. Employed persons with a work week usually less than 35 hours 1990-2000 (percent)**

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
<b>Both sexes</b>	23.3	23.5	24.1	24.9	24.9	24.3	23.5	23.0	22.5	22.0	21.5
<i>1000s of people</i>	1043	1032	1016	987	978	968	933	904	895	896	894
<b>- of which men</b>	16.5	16.7	17.7	18.7	19.9	19.9	20.5	20.9	20.9	22.0	22.4
<b>- of which women</b>	83.4	83.2	82.2	81.3	80.1	80.1	79.5	79.0	79.1	78.0	77.7

**Table 11. Age cohort in the Swedish labor force by sex, age and children 2000 (percent)**

	16-19	20-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	Total
<b>Married/cohabiting men</b>	-	80.5	91.9	94.1	93.2	74.9	88.5
<b>Single men</b>	28.8	65	81.1	82.5	79.9	61.9	66.2
<b>Women with children -7<sup>89</sup></b>	-	-	78.9	85.1	82.1	-	79.7
<b>Women without children -7</b>	-	-	83.2	88.0	86.6	65.5	74.5
<b>Women with children 7-16 only</b>	-	-	83.9	90.1	88.5	78.5	88.8
<b>Women with children -17</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	84.2
<b>Married/cohabiting women</b>	62.5	69.1	82.7	88.9	88.3	66.3	81.5
<b>Single women</b>	32.6	54.7	76.8	80.9	80.3	63.3	63.2

**Table 12. 0-9 year old children's family relations and social conditions 2000 (percent)**

Family type		Sees absent parent		Lives with other parent		Geographical distance to absent parent		Parents spend time with child together	
		Each week	Never	Shared living	Never	0-1 km	>30 km	Each week	Never
<b>Both parents present</b>	82	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Absent father</b>	15	46	10	16	46	31	18	18	44
<b>Absent mother</b>	3	80	0	66	2	39	14	21	36
<b>Absent father/mother</b>	18	49	9	24	38	30	17	19	43

**Table 13. Marriages (actual numbers) and civil status/average marriage age 1951-2000**

	Marriages	First marriage		Remarriage	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
1951/55	53660	28.0	25.3	42.1	36.9
1956/60	51682	27.6	24.6	42.2	37.6
1961/65	56559	26.6	23.7	42.3	37.8
1966/70	52318	26.0	23.6	42.2	37.7
1971/75	41155	26.9	24.6	41.1	36.7
1976/80	39574	28.4	25.8	41.6	37.6
1981/85	37240	29.7	27.1	43.0	39.1
1986/90	54750	31.1	28.4	44.8	41.1
1991/95	35172	31.4	28.3	45.7	41.6
1993	34005	30.9	28.3	45.8	41.5
1994	34203	31.2	28.7	46.1	42.0
1995	33642	31.5	29.0	46.2	41.8
1996	33484	31.8	29.3	46.5	42.3
1997	32313	32.2	29.6	46.8	42.8
1998	31598	32.4	29.9	47.1	43.2
1999	35628	32.9	30.4	47.1	43.1
2000	39895	33.1	30.6	47.2	43.2

**Table 14. Divorces (per 1000 married women) and number of children (percent) 1980-2000**

	Divorces	Number of children >18				
		0	1	2	3	4
1980	11.4	34.1	29.3	27.7	7.3	1.5
1982	11.9	34.8	28.7	28.5	6.6	1.4
1984	11.9	35.7	28.7	27.8	6.5	1.3
1986	11.4	36.7	28.0	27.2	6.8	1.3
1988	10.7	38.8	27.3	25.6	6.8	1.6
1990	11.3	37.8	26.3	26.4	7.5	2.0
1992	12.9	36.2	26.3	27.0	8.0	2.6
1994	13.3	36.8	24.8	27.6	9.7	3.5
1996	13.2	35.3	23.6	27.7	10.0	3.4
1998	13.0	36.6	22.3	27.6	10.3	3.5
2000	13.6	-	-	-	-	-

**Table 15. Separations yearly for married/cohabiting couples 1991-92 by woman's age (per 1000)**

	23 y/o	28	33	38	43
<b>Married without children</b>	34	35	30	25	-
<b>Married with children</b>	52	27	22	19	16
<b>Cohabiting without children</b>	93	72	60	55	-
<b>Cohabiting with children</b>	80	55	53	55	55

**Table 16. Attitudes on divorce/separation 1995 (percent)<sup>89</sup>**

	Agree	Disagree	Can't say	Total
<b>Men</b>				
43 y/o	58	36	6	100
33 y/o	56	40	4	100
28 y/o	51	41	8	100
<b>All men</b>	55	39	6	100
<b>Women</b>				
43 y/o	68	27	5	100
38 y/o	65	27	7	100
33 y/o	64	32	4	100
28 y/o	62	30	8	100
23 y/o	63	30	8	100
<b>All women</b>	64	29	7	100

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**Table 17. Average age of mother at birth of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> child 1974-2000**

	<b>1<sup>st</sup> child</b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> child</b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup> child</b>
<b>1974</b>	24.4	27.3	29.8
<b>1976</b>	24.8	27.6	30.3
<b>1978</b>	25.1	27.9	30.6
<b>1980</b>	25.5	28.3	31.0
<b>1982</b>	25.7	28.6	31.3
<b>1984</b>	26.0	28.7	31.5
<b>1986</b>	26.1	28.9	31.5
<b>1988</b>	26.2	28.9	31.6
<b>1990</b>	26.3	28.8	31.5
<b>1992</b>	26.7	29.0	31.4
<b>1994</b>	27.2	29.3	31.5
<b>1996</b>	27.5	29.8	31.8
<b>1998</b>	28.0	30.2	32.3
<b>2000</b>	28.2	30.6	32.7

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## GLOSSARY OF SWEDISH TERMS

<i>alternativ drift</i>	non-public provision/distribution
<i>barnbidrag</i>	support to all parents with children of 0-18 years (95 €/month and child)
<i>barnkrubbor</i>	early form of nursery home
<i>barntädgårdar</i>	early form of kindergarten
<i>barnomsorg</i>	childcare
<i>barnpeng</i>	state funded, municipal voucher system for day care for children 1-5 years old
<i>barnstugeutredningen</i>	official 1972 childcare study (SOU 1972:26, 27)
<i>betänkande</i>	comment by standing parliamentary committee on law proposal
<i>Centerpartiet</i>	non-socialist, formerly agrarian, party
<i>daghem</i>	day care facility for 1-5 year olds (all different providers)
<i>dagmamman</i>	child minder caring for 1-5 preschool children in private home
<i>Ds</i>	minor departmental series of Swedish official studies ( <i>DepartementsSerien</i> )
<i>Electrolux</i>	Swedish manufacturer of home appliances that pioneered for-profit daycare
<i>enskild drift</i>	non-public provision/distribution
<i>familjestödsutredningen</i>	official 1981 family policy study (SOU 1981:25)
<i>fritidsledare</i>	staff at <i>fritidshem</i> without tertiary education
<i>fritidshem</i>	after- and preschool-day facility for 6-12 year olds
<i>fritidspedagog</i>	pedagogue at <i>fritidshem</i> with tertiary education
<i>folkrörelse</i>	popular movement (worker's, absolutist's, liberal, religious etc)
<i>Folkpartiet</i>	liberal party
<i>förskola</i>	general term for the system of preschool facilities
<i>förskolelärare</i>	pedagogue at <i>förskola</i> with tertiary education
<i>föräldraförsäkring</i>	comprehensive insurance system for parents with new-born children
<i>garantidagar</i>	90 days of the <i>föräldraförsäkring</i> at lower compensation levels
<i>IOGT/NTO</i>	international organisation of good templars/national temperance organisation
<i>Kristdemokraterna</i>	christian democratic party
<i>lex Pysslingen</i>	1982 law prohibiting commercial day care, revoked 1986
<i>LO</i>	Swedish trade union confederation
<i>maxtaxa</i>	2001 law setting upper limit for families' total expenditure on childcare
<i>Miljöpartiet</i>	non-socialist, environmental party
<i>Moderaterna</i>	non-socialist, conservative party (formerly the Right party)
<i>proposition</i>	law proposal to parliament from the cabinet
<i>Pysslingen AB</i>	Electrolux subsidiary company pioneering for-profit day care
<i>Riksdag</i>	the Swedish parliament
<i>riksdagsskrivelse</i>	parliamentary promulgation of law
<i>SAF</i>	Swedish confederation of employers -2000
<i>Saltsjöbadsavtalet</i>	central 1938 Swedish corporatist agreement between capital and labor
<i>Skolverket</i>	National agency for education
<i>Socialdemokraterna</i>	social democratic party
<i>Socialstyrelsen</i>	National authority for health and welfare
<i>SOU</i>	major series of Swedish official studies ( <i>Statens Offentliga Utredningar</i> )
<i>stadsdel</i>	local municipal administrative level
<i>stadsdelsnämnd</i>	local municipal administrative board
<i>Svenskt Näringsliv</i>	successor of SAF 2000-
<i>tillfällig föräldrapenning</i>	insurance system covering temporary leave to care for sick children
<i>TCO</i>	Swedish confederation of professional employees
<i>vårdnasbidrag</i>	support for care-givers (non-socialist policy briefly in effect in 1994)
<i>Vänsterpartiet</i>	socialist (formerly communist) party

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