



# SNoW

Sino-Nordic Welfare Research Network

## Sino-Nordic Welfare Research Network

Financed by NordForsk (2011-2013) & Nordic Council of Ministers (2013-2015)

SNoW Website Launched!

Visit us at:

<http://www.uib.no/en/snow>

News on  
2015 SNoW PhD Course  
See page 3

News on  
2014 SNoW Conference  
See page 5

### Universal social programmes – key characteristic of Nordic welfare states? A note on recent literature

By Tord Skogedal Lindén,  
Uni Research Rokkan Centre, Bergen, Norway

Students of social policy learn that universalism is a key characteristic of Nordic welfare states. Many studies of Nordic welfare states are thus concerned with how reforms of existing and the introduction of new welfare arrangements influence the degree of universalism. While for example pension systems over the years may have lost some of their universal character through a stronger link between work history and actual pension benefit, the increased childcare coverage, sometimes even accompanied with a legal right to a place after a certain age, could exemplify

### In this issue

- Research note
- News on SNoW activities
- Book presentation
- Book review

### Editors

**Stein Kuhnle**

University of Bergen

[stein.kuhnle@isp.uib.no](mailto:stein.kuhnle@isp.uib.no)

**Ren Yuan**

Fudan University

[yren@fudan.edu.cn](mailto:yren@fudan.edu.cn)

### Editorial Assistant

**Regina Kanyu Wang**

Nordic Centre, Fudan University

[regina@nordiccentre.net](mailto:regina@nordiccentre.net)

### Editorial Board

**Peng Xizhe**, Fudan University

**Xiong Yuegen**, Peking University

**Pan Yi**, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

**Lin Ka**, Zhejiang University

**Wang Zhikai**, Zhejiang University

**Kinglun Ngok**, Sun Yat-Sen Univ.

**Klaus Petersen**, University of Southern Denmark

**Pauli Kettunen**, University of Helsinki

**Åsa Lundqvist**, Lund University

**Rolf Rønning**, Lillehammer University College

**Anneli Anttonen**, University of Tampere

a development in the other direction. Universalism is often contested, illustrated lately by how the universal child benefit has been proposed changed in Norway and actually made conditional in the UK. However, it is not always easy to state whether a welfare benefit or service is universal, or whether Nordic or other welfare states become more or less universal in character. A book from 2012 and an article to be published in 2014 are among the latest contributions to this debate, drawing on the above examples as well as other fields of social policy.

In the volume *Welfare State, Universalism and Diversity*, edited by Anneli Anttonen, Liisa Häikiö and Kolbeinn Stefánsson, the aim is to clarify what is meant by universalism and to offer empirical studies of developments in both Nordic and liberal welfare states. In ten chapters altogether 12 authors deal with such issues at length, including for instance chapters on unemployment, pensions and care. The editors start by stating that universalism is a much used but still not well understood concept in need of clarification. Given its many different meanings they suggest to refer to “varieties of universalism” instead of providing one single definition. The somewhat modest conclusion is then that “this book hopefully has succeeded in clarifying multiple meanings given to universalism” (p. 190). The authors do not conclude directly on whether universalism is decreasing, but come up with many reasons for why this may or may not happen. Reasons include the economic crisis undermining universal programmes and more “general economic considerations” in favor of such programmes (p. 193; investments in human capital or administrative efficiency).

The issue of whether or not universal programmes are declining is the focus also of a forthcoming article in *Social Policy & Administration* by Daniel Béland, Paula Blomqvist, Jørgen Goul Andersen, Joakim Palme and Alex Waddan. Similar to Anttonen et al.’s (2012) “varieties of universalism” the authors speak of “degrees of universality”. Their historical analysis of universal social programmes in Canada, Denmark, Sweden and the UK concludes that “there is no such thing as a universal decline of universality” (p. 1). The article covers pensions, health care and family policy (child benefit and day care). The authors identify large variation, pointing at signs of decreased universalism in some areas, but not all. Signs of decrease are strongest within pensions. Within healthcare the researchers find limited evidence of change. Summing up the analysis for countries rather than social policy fields they find that the two representatives of the so-called “social-democratic regime” have higher levels of universality than the “liberal welfare states”.

One could argue that the debate on basic income is also related to the debate on universalism in that a basic income would be a true universal social programme. In the recent book on *Money for everyone*, Malcolm Torry (2013) presents arguments for the introduction of a basic income that are used in debates on existing welfare policies, such as dignity or administrative simplicity. The basic income debate is probably so heated because it goes to the core of the welfare state; should everybody get something regardless of their contribution (or non-contribution)? Basic income may not be at the top of the agenda in many European welfare states, but the issue of universalism is and will remain prominent in both Nordic and European countries as it involves questions of efficiency and justice, which are crucial in social policy reform. Students interested in this topic should consult both the literature on universalism and basic income.

#### Literature:

Anttonen, A., L. Häikiö and K. Stefánsson (eds.) (2012), *Welfare State, Universalism and Diversity*, Edward Elgar.

Béland, D., Blomqvist, P., Andersen, J. G., Palme, J. and Waddan, A. (forthcoming 2014), The “Universal Decline of Universality? Social Policy Change in Canada, Denmark, Sweden and the UK”, *Social Policy & Administration*. doi: 10.1111/spol.12064

Torry, M. (2013), *Money for everyone: Why we need a citizen's income*. Policy Press.

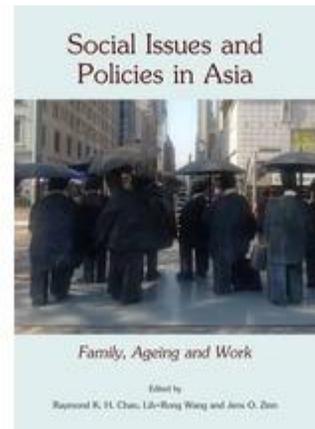
## Book Presentation

## Social Issues and Policies in Asia. Family, Ageing and Work

edited by Raymond K. H. Chan, Lih-Rong Wang, Jens O. Zinn.  
(Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014)

Raymond K. H. Chan, City University of Hong Kong, participated as a keynote speaker at the SNoW Workshop at the Nordic Centre, Fudan University, in October 2013. He is one of the editors of the new book in Social Issues and Policies in Asia, which highlights the challenges of family life, ageing and work. The motivation for the book and analyses is the observation that in the past few decades, societies in Asia have experienced rapid and dramatic changes in their economic, social and political spheres. The authors argue that despite the wide diversity among these countries, a few general trends can be observed.

From the publishers' description of the book, which we reproduce, we can read that:



*“globalization has swept across Asia, bringing intensive economic interactions, with a strong commitment to liberalism and market capitalism. Wage labour has become the common form of employment. Individuals, as well as countries, are increasingly exposed to the competitive and uncertain global market. Employment protection, particularly for vulnerable labour groups - youth, women, seniors and migrants - has become a pressing issue for most Asian governments. Industrialization and urbanization have had a major impact on demographics, family structures and normative frameworks. The declining fertility rate has been recognized as a defining feature of a modern society, leading to small families and reducing instances of multi-generational co-residency. Changing family structures have contributed to changes in family values and roles, especially the role of women. Sometimes willingly, sometimes compelled, women are entering the workplace in increasing numbers, particularly as migrant workers. Similarly, the elderly are experiencing changes in their roles and participation in society. Family duties compete, and are often in conflict with, the demands of work. The issue of providing adequate and quality care to family members has been exacerbated by the fact that Asian societies are ageing. It is commonly acknowledged that, in Asian societies, personal care and support needs are primarily met by family - both immediate and extended - and, to a lesser degree, by community networks. Governments had gradually established their own social welfare systems in an effort to support economic growth and sustain their legitimacy by meeting certain recognized social needs. The success of these ventures varies across societies, and, naturally, there have been criticisms of the breadth and depth of these provisions. This book addresses social issues related to family, ageing and work that arise from these changes in Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Philippine and Sri Lanka. These societies represent different levels of economic and social development, but face similar challenges and their social interventions can be usefully compared. This variety of subjects provides the reader with a more comprehensive understanding of the changes that have occurred, the problems that have emerged and the strategies that have been adopted. This volume provides insight into ways of addressing social issues in this rapidly changing part of the world.”*

### 2015 SNoW PhD Course

The first SNoW PhD Course on **“Analyzing Welfare Institutions, Policies and Politics in China and the Nordic Countries”** was organized at the Nordic Centre, Fudan University, Shanghai, during 17-21 October 2013.

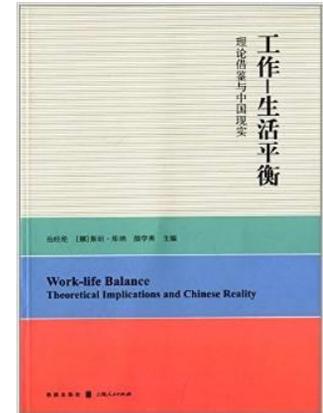
**The second SNoW PhD Course will be organized at the Nordic Centre during 3-6 November 2015.** A *Call for papers* will be made in the beginning of 2015, and the course will be announced in the SNoW Newsletter no.1/2015 (March) and on the SNoW website (<http://www.uib.no/en/snow>)

## Book Review

## Support the Work-Life Balance: Combining the employment-friendly family policies and family-friendly employment policies

Yuan Ren (School of Social Development and Public Policy in Fudan University)

My academic partner Professor Stein Kunle visited Fudan University this May and gave me his new book *Work-life Balance* as a present. This book, co-edited with Professor Yue Jinglun and Mr. Yan Xueyong from Sun Yat-sen University, is based on a symposium with a same topic. It discusses how to realize work-life balance and put it as an important policy-orientation in a post-industrial society where the social risk of work-life (family) imbalance is becoming increasingly prominent. As the subtitle *Theoretical Implications and Chinese Reality* shows, nowadays the conflict between employment stress and family life is becoming more acute in China. This book offers a useful reference, for it draws on the experience of Nordic and European countries, and can help us to understand and reflect on the good coordination between livelihood welfare and employment of Chinese families.



Actually, work and life are naturally 'balanced'. When it comes to personal time allocation, work and family life are complementary and support each other. That is to say, the reproduction of labor force of family life supports the labor market, and the labor income also supports the consumption and development ability of the family. As to choosing a job, the household labor force would first consider optimizing the family life, while family decision also supports work patterns and maximizing the work income. Work and family models are attributed to such factors as social customs, market mechanism (business capital strength) and state institution, and also have specific and rich differences because of different families and individual diversity. Therefore, no matter whether it is the male-breadwinner pattern in the traditional society, or in contemporary society where female employment rates increase continuously; no matter whether it is the seasonal and irregular labor working in the farmland in agricultural society, or the post-industrial modernized society with standardized working time and work allocation, or the more flexible employment and life model in the post-modern society, a work-life model is the rational arrangement between laborers and family members and choice to employment and family life. No matter what kind of arrangement is made, it is 'balanced'.

On the other hand, different population groups' understanding towards "work-life balance" is also very different during different periods; employers and laborers' consideration toward work-life balance may be different, and the young workforce, especially the population of the new generation's consideration, is also different from that of their elder generation. For instance, those young laborers who receive higher education and have more consciousness of self-realization have their own attitude and preference towards work and life, as well as their own attitude toward money and success, and all these are very different from those of their parents. A more extreme example is that the working time of the floating population in the factory is more than 60 hours per week, and their family life is all broken up because they live in two separate places with their family, however, they might have a more happy and satisfactory attitude to their work and life.

Therefore, work-life balance is a value judgment and a psychological feeling, and it doesn't have an absolute standard. So, the real problem is not how to realize work-life balance, but how to achieve the traditional work-life model adjusting and transforming to a new work-life model during the transformation of economic production and social life, and under which new social problems and risks are appearing; furthermore, how to avoid causing harm and well-being loss of families and different social groups during the transformation, so as to allow laborers and families to realize the maximization of their own well-being and increase their well-being continuously; as well as how to better coordinate and support the (re)construction of new work-life model when China is undergoing social transformation nowadays. All these problems are the point of studying how to reshape work-life relationship and the relevant system construction.

This book includes 17 research papers. Two articles in Chapter one illustrate that work-life imbalance is the new social risk of modern society; four articles in Chapter two introduce the experience of European and Nordic countries to cope with work-life imbalance, which include attaching importance to the investment to family policy and the public policy of gender equalization, and strengthening the welfare system of family policy; Four articles in Chapter three come up with the idea that the work-life imbalance is mainly the problem of females, for it has a greater influence over females, divorced females and professional females, so the further propel of gender equality and strengthening the welfare policy for females is very necessary; Four articles in Chapter four propose how to measure and manage work-life balance. Managing the working time of laborers to avoid work overtime and arranging retirement in one's life are important to the endowment insurance system and also influence work-life relationship. Three articles in Chapter five introduce the work-life survey in Hong Kong to show how to promote corporate culture and system arrangement with good work-life balance. We can draw inspiration from these articles, for they teach us how to learn from European and Nordic experience, so as to promote and realize the balance between work and family life in our social transformation, and improve the welfare of laborers, especially those of female workers.

One prominent characteristic is that some articles in this book analyze work-life balance from the perspective of women. We should notice that it is the increase of female employment and participation in the labor market that changes the traditional work-life model and the problem of work-life balance becomes prominent. Females face more stress on this problem. Only after improving the system arrangement of gender equality and promoting the gender mainstreaming of welfare system can the interests of females be guaranteed and gender-life balance be better realized. However, when it comes to China's development in the present day, the problem of work-life balance is not just about increasing female employment, actually female participation in the labor market has decreased, and this decrease to some degree is a strategy of family arrangement to work-life balance.

Nowadays, the problem of work-life balance in China is mainly the problem of social transformation. The collapse of the *danwei* system and the increasing pressure of market-driven competition have deteriorated work-life balance. Under such circumstances, different from European countries where the main purpose of work-life balance is to strengthen the protection of female rights and interests and the policy of gender equality is used as the tool to promote work-life balance, China may take more emphasis on seeking solutions from the management of working time in business, strengthening social welfare, social supporting system and other system construction in the transforming society, so as to cope with work-life balance. The core of work-life balance lies in coordinating the relationship between employment and family life. One such social policy orientation is paying attention to family, and trying hard to carry out 'employment-friendly family policies', which includes strengthening the support for family and promoting the system construction for education, child care and old age security so as to promote female participation in labor market. On the other hand, it is also important to attach importance to the adjustment of working mode, that is to say, the 'family-friendly employment policies' should to be carried out. For example, in some work units, child care and nursing service are combined together and affiliated with the working offices, flexible commuting time is offered and family employment is developed, holiday and paid leave is strengthened, etc. All these measures can also offer positive support to coordinating work-life relationship. It is helpful to develop dualistic welfare and social policies reforms to provide institutional supports for a happy family life and the increase of the welfare of laborers.

## 2014 SNoW Conference

The SNoW Conference on «**Between Universality and Conditionality: Migration, Mobility and Welfare Rights**» will take place at the Nordic Centre, Fudan University, Shanghai, 28-29 November 2014.

**Keynote speakers are:** Romana Careja (University of Southern Denmark); Zhang Wenhong (shanghai University); Pauli Kettunen (University of Helsinki), and Daniel Béland (University of Saskatchewan).

17 papers have been accepted for the conference, and these will be presented and discussed in two parallel sessions. Attendance without a paper, and at own cost, is possible: please contact Regina Wang at the Nordic Centre, Fudan University, before 15 November 2014: [regina@nordiccentre.net](mailto:regina@nordiccentre.net)