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## **A View from the Inside**

Recognition and Redistribution in the Nordic Welfare State from a Gender Perspective

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**Hanne Marlene Dahl (Roskilde University, Denmark):**

**A View from the Inside: Recognition and Redistribution  
in the Nordic Welfare State from a Gender Perspective**

*Abstract:* Often the Nordic model is seen as having succeeded in gaining recognition for caregiving work and as embodying a potentially women friendly state model due to the availability of publicly provided care for elderly and pre-school children. This simple story neglects one particular group of women, the publicly employed home helpers and the valorization of their caregiving work. Applying Nancy Fraser's dual theory of justice gives us a normative and analytical tool to analyse this groups situation in relation to recognition and redistribution. Some advances concerning pay and the professionalisation of home helpers work have taken place. These advances hide less flattering developments such as a general egalitarianism (on pay) insensitive to gendered valorisations, an androcentric perception of work and work related accidents formerly at play, and a New Public Management inspired elite discourse that struggles to reduce home-helpers work to simple, manual tasks in a discourse of de-professionalization. The imbrications of struggles about redistribution and recognition show that the positive changes identified are merely superficial, since a basic change of the socio-cultural framework has not taken place, that provides an impetus for future struggles.

*Key words:* recognition, redistribution, justice, caregiving work, home helper, professionalisation, discourse, Nordic welfare state

## **Introduction**

Feminists have often pointed to the Nordic welfare state as being *potentially women friendly* compared to those of other countries (Hernes, 1987), most notably the more liberal type of regime. This assessment is often based on the availability of publicly

provided services for pre-school children and the elderly that enable women to combine paid work and mother- and daughterhood, and thereby provide a fairer situation between women and men. However, the providers of elderly care, who are often women, encounter a reality that cannot be described as women friendly. Their situation provides impetus for struggles concerning the recognition of care giving work (1).

I will argue that there is a chance for struggles about recognition within the Danish public sector concerning the conditions and character of good elderly care. This chance is due to old dichotomies that are still at play and new forms of regulation introduced such as those inspired by New Public Management (NPM). These struggles concern being seen, acknowledged and equally counted as providers of care, and can generally be understood to encompass more socio-cultural struggles in a new grammar of political claim making. Such a grammar can be identified in a Norwegian context, where some home-helpers have resisted NPM strategies in their day to day activities (Vabö, 2001), and similar struggles might also be generated in a Danish context.

An analysis of recognition can be made drawing on the insights of the American feminist political philosopher Nancy Fraser (1997; 2003) and her dual theory of justice where recognition and redistribution are theorized as imbricated. The home-helpers and their carework provide a convincing case that tentatively illustrates the applicability of her normative/critical framework to a concrete case revealing the hidden connections between the socio-cultural and socio-economic aspects of injustice. I base most of the empirically related discussion upon my previous work (Dahl, 2000; 2002), but I have also undertaken new research which is also presented here.

I will begin this article by outlining Fraser's dualism and its key concepts (I), I will then go on to describe briefly my application and revision of her normative, critical framework (II). Thirdly, the results from the application of her dual theory of justice are presented these concern socio-economic aspects: goods (III) and burdens (IV), as well as the more socio-cultural aspects as seen in the discourses prevalent in this field (V). Finally, I will summarize the results thereby providing input to an evaluation of the applicability of Fraser's approach and then reach a conclusion (VI).

### **Perspectival Dualism**

For more than a decade Fraser has contributed to key issues in the development of feminist theory and more recently to theories of justice. Her thinking is located at the intersection of critical theory, Marxism, post-structuralism and feminism where she develops a normative theory of justice relevant to capitalist society (2003) that in more general terms supports a feminist meta-theoretical argument for a more contextual theory on justice (Flax, 1992).

Fraser is critical of contemporary Western theories of justice such as they have been advocated by the liberal philosopher John Rawls (2) (1972) and the feminist philosopher Iris Marion Young (1990). Both paradigms of justice are insufficient in her view, since they either focus upon socio-economic aspects (Rawls) or socio-cultural aspects (Young) thereby evading the relationship between redistribution and recognition in their respective focuses (Fraser, 1997: 13-14). However, like Rawls, she sees justice to be the primary virtue of social institutions.

From Fraser's position, *recognition* is a normative concept referring to continuous struggles for respect and social status traversing the social fields characterized by a post-socialist and post-Fordist condition. These struggles derive from the tension between egalitarian norms (as related to ideals of democracy, the free marketplace and a liberal norm of equality) and a hierarchy of status due to several status signifiers (Fraser, 2003). The struggles represent a new grammar of political claims making (2000), where recognition is at the forefront and typically suppresses related claims to redistribution.

The best way to explain her understanding of *recognition* (Fraser, 1997) is perhaps through the absence of recognition such as present in *cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect* is. Later she introduces the Weberian notion of *status* into her theory, making recognition a systematic feature of a social system (Fraser, 2000; 2003), and she redirects the analytical focus from group specific struggles to institutionalized patterns of cultural value and their imbrications with socio-economic differentiations (Fraser, 2001; 2003)(3) . The lack of recognition, i.e. misrecognition, is, in her view, a systemic status subordination that constitutes a form of oppression.

The assignment or deferral of recognition belongs in her view to the sphere of justice, since its structural character makes it a question of justice rather than a question of 'the good life' seen as an individual matter (Fraser, 2001). Given this perspective she sharply disagrees with the German sociologist Axel Honneth's (1994) idea of misrecognition as being exclusively a question of injured self-esteem and a matter of ethics ('the good life') (Fraser, 2001).

Her normative concept of *distribution* relates to goods and burdens. She defines goods as income, property, access to paid work, education, health care and leisure time,

and the burdens are described as ‘rates of morbidity and mortality’ such as caused by low caloric intake or exposure to environmental toxicity (Fraser, 1997: 11). The need for redistribution is defined adversely through the lack of socio-economic justice such as can be identified in exploitation, economic marginalization and deprivation (Fraser, 1997).

Struggles concerning recognition and redistribution are empirically interimbricated, since they reinforce each other dialectically either in vicious or in positive circles (Fraser, 1997: 15). More specifically they can be perceived as being two different sides of the same coin:

‘Even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with signification and norms.

Conversely, even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension; they are underpinned by material support’ (Fraser, 1997: 15)

Fraser later specifies her position as a *perspectival dualism* as ‘treating every practice as simultaneously economic and cultural’, i.e. each practice is analysed from the two different perspectives (2003: 63) (4). She strongly rejects a dichotomous interpretation of her framework, since her feminist and post-structuralist aim (in the long run) is to question these dichotomies and ultimately to defeat them (Fraser, 2003).

### **Applying Perspectival Dualism: the View of a Critical Insider**

Acknowledging the contextual character of knowledge, the case and the discussions are presented from the view of a critical, feminist insider who lives in a Nordic welfare state

(5) I study both some of the goods and burdens carried by the collectivity of home-helpers and the institutionalized value patterns in the elite discourse.

The concept of *home-helper* was introduced into Danish national legislation in 1958 (6). It was a response to policies enacted by municipalities that were employing women who were experienced housewives, but did not have any formal training in relation to the provision of care for elderly people in their own homes. From the 1960's and onwards, the home-helpers have gradually been inscribed into a discourse of professionalisation, but not without temporarily set-backs. The discourse of professionalisation has stressed that the work done by home-helpers is complex having a distinctive scientific, knowledge base, and has continuously tried to gain recognition for other types of knowledge as well. Training for home-helpers has been obligatory since 1974, and they are now required to participate in one or two years of training in particular social and health schools. 97 % of the home-helpers are women and primarily between 25-59 years (7). They are predominantly employed by the municipalities, although some municipalities have sub-contracted care for the elderly to private firms.

Here, it is useful to introduce Young's concept of *seriality* for understanding the Danish case, and view the creation of a group as based upon a process of culturalization. Young understands seriality as a social collective that does not yet constitute a group and as a kind of anonymous *Fakticität* (Young, 1995). To become a group, the seriality needs to become mutually aware and to recognize each other through a mobilisation of the home helpers. Usually such struggles are fought by a social movement, but in this particular case the struggle is fought by a union (The Trade Union of Public Employees) that can best be characterized as a seriality increasingly becoming a group.



I study the general value pattern(s) through the cultural dichotomies at play, since paid caregiving work is inscribed within a division of labour signifying femininity and masculinity and corresponding differences in status including pay. Other dichotomies such as public vs. private, production vs. reproduction, clean vs. unclean, treatment vs. care, and professional vs. non professional have been at play together with hierarchies of more or less valuable activities. Home help has usually been assigned a status in the ‘wrong’ end of these dichotomous hierarchies, and traditionally suffered from both an association to the domestic/private sphere (Tronto, 1993) and an association to elderly people/old age (Kirk, 1995), both signifying low status.

I have made the redistributive aspect operational by using the central variables of *wage* as an indicator of goods, and *work-related accidents* as an indicator of burdens (8). The results are primarily based upon my previous work (Dahl, 2002). Statistics on home helper’s salaries are available for the period 1970-95, whereas material for the work-related accidents is only available for 1997 and 1998 (9).

The aspects of recognition are systematically examined through a discourse analysis of some verdicts passed by the Board of Industrial Injury on accidents (1999-2002), labour union discourses on wage policy (1960-86), and the elite discourse in the *politico-administrative* discourse such as used by experts, politicians, civil servants and representatives from interest organizations (1980-95). I apply the term *discourse* as inspired by the French historian Mich  l Foucault (1972; 1993) and more specifically seen to refer to a horizon of meaning (Norval, 1996) delineating what is possible, what can be said and done, and the identities available (Dahl, 2000).

The politico-administrative discourse is an expert discourse that delimits a privileged site of intense struggles for power that I suppose represents the more general societal discourse (and its institutionalized value patterns). The discourse is investigated from a top-down perspective that identifies the way the discourse constructs social and political reality, the problems and solutions identified as well as the various voices that compete to define *the* social reality. This discourse can, among others, be identified and analyzed in commission reports, memorandums, reports, legislation and internal reviews (10). The discursive struggle concerns, among other things, the construction of care giving work for elderly people including what counts as necessary qualifications (11). Having outlined the methods applied by the two perspectives of justice, I will now consider home-helpers from a perspective of re-distribution.

In Fraser's perspectival dualism, each chosen indicator is simultaneously an expression of the socio-economic and the socio-cultural aspects of justice. An indicator of a socio-economic aspect cannot be analyzed independently of the institutionalised patterns of recognition and disrespect. This is due to the ontological and methodological dualism which prompts the researcher to consider potentially hidden connections between them. I now turn to one aspect of distribution, namely goods.

### **Goods (wages) from a Perspectival Dualism**

In Denmark wages are generally higher in the private sector than in the public one, as there are high and low income sections in the labour market (Pedersen & Deding, 2000: 14; Videnscenter for ligestilling, 2001: 7). This entails, other things being equal, that home help as a profession is placed in a low income section (the public sector), as it is

viewed politically as being a state responsibility handled by the local authorities namely the municipalities.

The relationship between income and gender is usually examined by comparing groups of women and men, possibly divided according to sectors (Pedersen & Deding, 2000; Ibsen & Christensen, 2001; Videnscenter for ligestilling, 2001). Ideally I would have liked to compare the developments in income within the municipal sector, examining a predominately female profession, namely the home help, and a predominately male profession, e.g., the road worker. These two groups would have approximately the same level of education. However, it has not been possible to obtain such data; instead I have compared figures from different professional groups with diverse educational backgrounds. I have thus examined the development from starting salary for three groups within the municipal labour market: home helpers, workmen, and lawyers (12). The lawyers are included in order to have an elite profession of high status as a standard of comparison. Table 1 shows the development in the starting salary of the three groups from 1970-95, where 1970 is indexed to 100:

Table1: Starting Salary from 1970 – 1995 for three selected groups (index 1970=100)

	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995
Home Helper	100	225	339	502	611	659
Workmen	100	188	269	388	457	500
Lawyer	100	179	255	371	444	483

Source: KTO (Notat, 1995)

Surprisingly it shows, percentage-wise, that home helpers have attained the most significant increase in income compared to both a male profession and an academic profession. While the wages of home helpers have increased by a factor of approximately seven, the wages of workmen have merely increased by a factor of approximately five. This redistribution in favour of home helpers could be due to the wage policy stressing solidarity with low-paid workers imposed by unions from the 1970's and early 1980's (Ibsen & Christensen, 2001: 302). There is thus increased redistributive justice concerning goods in terms of wages.

However, investigating this positive development from a perspective of recognition, the results are not so edifying. A discourse analysis of the annual reports of The National Federation of Trade Unions analysed from the period 1960-86 shows that the positive effects upon home helper's wages are not the result of a gender sensitive egalitarianism that attempts to (re)valorise paid care giving work, but instead a result of *general egalitarianism*. In these annual reports, the discourse on the wage policy of solidarism is couched in gender neutral terms and mostly delimited by equal opportunity policies in line with ILO's recommendation of 'equal pay for the same work'. These recommendations being rather limited in their gender perspective since the existence of different kinds of work and their varying valorisations are not discussed.

Despite the positive developments in wages, the home-helpers still suffer from being placed in a low-income area and the redistribution should not be over emphasised.

It is an unintended effect of general egalitarianism, and not an intended effect of a more gender sensitive egalitarianism questioning the basic systemic bias towards care giving work or the androcentric dichotomies at work.

### **Perspectival Dualism and Burdens (Work Related Accidents)**

One of the burdens home helpers face is work-related accidents and their consequences in the form of sick leave and possible early retirement. Compared to other professions, the picture looks a lot less bright when examining the distribution in regards to this dimension. Notice that the figures below are for the entire care sector, which includes several other professions besides home helpers.

The care sector has been ranked among the ‘ten particularly most dangerous jobs’ (Arbejdstilsynet, 1999). This impression is backed by statistics where the group ‘home-care and residential institutions for adults’ were placed above average in regards to the number of reports per 1000 employees for the period 1997-2000 (Arbejdstilsynet, 2001: table 2.5). This group is thus overrepresented statistically when it comes to reported accidents. How does it look when comparing the group’s *share* (in percentage) of reported accidents with the share of compensated accidents and the share of rejected accidents? Table 2 shows the shares summed up for the years 1997 and 1998, as these are the only years that have been fully processed. The table exposes the imbrications of the socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of burdens, since the category of ‘acknowledged accidents’ refers to a pattern of recognition (13).

Table 2: A comparison of reported, acknowledged, compensated and rejected work related accidents in home-care and residential homes etc. *related to the total number for each category. In percentage.*

1997 + 1998			
Reported	Acknowledged	Compensated	Rejected
10%	7%	9%	13%

Source: (Arbejdstilsynet, 2001: calculated from the tables 2.4, 2.6, 2.7, and 2.8)

While the group constitutes 10 percent of the reported accidents, they constitute 9 percent of the compensated work-related accidents, 7 percent of the acknowledged work-related accidents, and finally the group makes up 12-13 percent of the rejected accidents. Home helpers and others from within this group are thus significantly underrepresented when it comes to acknowledged accidents and significantly overrepresented in regards to rejected accidents.

In contrast a *hypothetically fair distribution* would show identical figures in each column, i.e. where the percentage of acknowledged accidents in these occupations compared to the sum of the other occupations would be 10 % showing that these occupations (home-care and residential homes) have the same chance of getting their reported work related accidents recognized as industrial workers in a slaughterhouse. Obviously, there are problems with the distribution of burdens and the recognition of

them. A systematic bias is identified since the Board of Industrial Injury seems to be more geared towards other modes of production such as industrial work in factories.

In particular the overrepresentation among the rejected reports is striking when considering that figures from the Danish Employers' Association show that employees within the social and health care sectors, on average, have the longest sick leave after work-related accidents (DA, 2000: 52). At the same time, figures show that the social and health care sectors have the fewest final certificates of fitness for work in continuation of reported work-related accidents, that is, 76 percent compared to the 94 percent of the production sector, which is known for its many work-related accidents (DA, 2000: 53). A further subdivision of the social and health care sectors demonstrates that accidents within eldercare and in day-care centres etc. can provide an explanation of this pattern. While 73 percent of employees reported sick within eldercare etc. return to work, a total of 8 percent are awarded early retirement. This is the highest of all professions, which means that there is a relatively high risk of not returning to the labour market after a work-related accident in the eldercare sector compared to other professions where only 1-2 percent of the reported accidents lead to early retirement (DA, 2000).

This account of the distribution of burdens represented by the relative distribution of accidents and the relative risk of early retirement cannot be characterised as fair. We have, however, no figures to illustrate the historical development of the distribution of burdens. But we know that employees in the home care system and other such institution are relatively overrepresented when it comes to work-related accidents and are relatively underrepresented in regards to the acknowledgement of these accidents by the Board of Industrial Injury compared to the success rate of other groups. This under representation

cannot be accounted for in terms of accidents being less serious, since employees in the social and health care sectors have the highest risk of early retirement after work-related accidents.

This systemic bias needs to be analysed from a perspective of recognition. In an analysis of six verdicts concerning home helpers from the Board of Industrial Injury covering the period 1999-2002, the legal terminology accepting an event as an accident is defined in a way that makes it virtually impossible for care giving work to gain recognition for work-related accidents (14). All of these verdicts were refusals where the accident was not recognized as work related. The analysis shows that the term ‘accident’ is discursively related to work as Fordist, industrial work. In such repetitive work it makes sense to describe something as predictable versus the unpredictable, and in line with this an accident refers to a sudden external impact upon otherwise atomized individuals. The Board of Industrial Injury articulates the recipient of care in care giving work as not external to the home helper. An example from one of the six verdicts is useful. Two home-helpers were moving an elderly man from the toilet to a chair, his legs hurt and one of the home-helpers tried to save him from falling. In this attempt she hurt her back, but the accident was not acknowledged as a work-related accident, since the Board of Industrial Injury doesn’t consider the aching (and failing) legs of the recipient as a sudden and externally generated impact upon the home-helper.

Only that which fits a particular definition of an accident can be recognized as a work related accident. This points to an institutional value pattern that functions along a logic of identity rather than difference in which care giving work is either understood as identical to work on an assembly line or not understood as work at all by the Board of



Industrial Injury. This is because the delimitation of work related accidents creates a systemic bias towards the recognition of work related accidents in publicly regulated and produced care giving work where home helpers exist and work in relations with elderly people. In this sense, the socio-economic burdens and socio-cultural aspects form a vicious circle for the home-helpers. It must, however, be noted that new legislation has been passed in the Danish parliament (Lov om arbejdsskadeforsikring af 27. May 2003 (Law number 216)), introducing a new legal and broader understanding of an accident. In this sense their claims for a compensation for work related accidents have been successful.

The image of distributive justice seems at first sight to be muddled. While the distribution of goods paints an ambiguous picture if the socio-cultural subtext is taken into consideration, the distribution of burdens paints a bleak, threatening picture since it exposes a deep andocentric understanding of work and work related accidents. This understanding might be transformed as a result of the new legislation which is a product of successful struggles about recognition. The analysis based upon perspectival dualism shows a clearer picture of the existing maldistribution and misrecognition compared to an analysis exclusively couched in terms of socio-economic subtext. I will turn from specific discourses to more overarching aspects of recognition such as those visible in the politico-administrative discourse: the institutionalized value patterns.

### **Recognition and the Politico-administrative Discourse on Home Helpers' Work**

A politico-administrative discourse governs the horizons of understanding used by experts, politicians, civil servants and representatives from interest organisations. This

discourse represents the institutionalized value patterns and some of the struggles over the recognition of care giving work. This discourse has been colonised by New Public Management (NPM) that has become dominant in the public sectors of the Western world within the last twenty years. NPM can generally be characterised as a rising body of managerial thought and as a change in culture, ideologies and practices which underpin an 'emergent political settlement' (Clarke and Newman, 1997: ix). NPM has among other things been spread through the OECD (Marcussen, 2002). NPM became dominant in Denmark after co-opting other voices that competed to define the social and political reality, and has had effects upon the field of elderly care (Dahl, 2000).

In Denmark NPM has been combined with strategies of de-centralization and democratization (Sehested, 2002) and it has not been as radical as the NPM discourse governing the transformation of the public sector in Britain (Ashburner et.al., 1996). NPM in the Danish version can be labelled *NPM light*, since there has been less stress upon contracting-out and marketization than in its British counterpart. In my view, NPM light consists of two elements which form an alliance, namely a neo-liberal economic discourse primarily concerned with efficiency ('more value for money') and a Human Resource Management (HRM) discourse concerned with 'development' and 'leadership'. The two logics have different implications for the field of home helpers, the understanding of their qualifications and the recognition of care giving work. The logics co-exist in a tension filled relationship, only tied together by the hegemonic notion of 'change'.

The drive for efficiency/productivity results in a new vocabulary in the politico-administrative discourse on elderly care. Words like *efficiency*, *planning*, *de-composition*,

*give priority to, specialization, a process of visitation, acknowledgement of expenditures, resources, services, functions and optimization of resources* (Socialstyrelsen, 1981, 1983, 1985; Socialministeriet, 1995; Finansministeriet et.al., 1995) are frequently used in the documents analysed. In this vein, care giving work becomes spoken of in a particular way, namely as ‘functions’ instead of needs that can be divided, counted and exercised by different caregivers. One way to interpret this logic is to see it as similar to a process of Taylorization (15). Taylorization here implies a *de-qualification* of the work, since it is based upon written instructions specifying the tasks to be accomplished as well as their means. The care giving work of home helpers is re-interpreted from complex work to simple, timed procedures where no (professional) judgement is needed, since all tasks are specified and timed in advance. The field of elderly care is colonized with a foreign, Fordist production oriented logic, where reproductive work is made speakable in the public sphere without changing the discursive field or the traditional dichotomies at play such as production/work versus reproduction/non work. This reveals a pattern of disrespect for the particular features of this form of care giving work.

In contrast, the logic of HRM and the idea of ‘development’ change the discursive field of the way care giving work is made speakable in the public sphere. This second logic of NPM supports the already existing societal, credentialist drive to formalize caring qualifications that in turn require that caring qualifications become ‘speakable’. Caring qualifications turn from abilities considered natural and feminine into speakable, visible and seemingly de-gendered caring qualifications. Frequently used words in the documents become: *communication, co-operation, development and leadership* (Socialstyrelsen, 1986a; Undervisningsministeriet, 1989). One way to interpret the effects

of this logic is through the lens of the creation of a discourse of professionalism. The development can be interpreted as the recognition of caring values and qualifications in the politico-administrative discourse in line with Fraser's politics of recognition (1997).

The discourse of professionalism signifies an increasing recognition of the needs met and the work of home helpers, since it extends the identification of care giving qualifications and articulates the home helper as a professional. The care giving qualifications are extended and re-defined, since that which is signified becomes *independence, self-knowledge, self-reflection* and *self-development* (Socialstyrelsen, 1980; Socialstyrelsen, 1986b, Undervisningsministeriet, 1989)(16). The cognitive element of the work as well as the home helpers flexibility and adaptation to the needs and history of the elderly person in question is stressed - much in contrast to the economic logic that reduces care giving work to practical, simple tasks. The increased focus upon development redirects her/his attention from the needs of the elderly person to the home-helpers cognitive and personal learning processes through introspection.

The home-helper is increasingly understood as a professional with holistic oriented tasks. It embodies a new kind of professional identity where home helpers have an independent and broad basis of knowledge and are distinguished from the traditional, elitist understanding of the professional of a narrow basis of knowledge. The professional (17) in turn is re-defined as a *specialised generalist* where the two figures of the specialist (the traditional professional) and the generalist (traditionally the non-professional) have merged (Dahl, 2000; 2002) (18). Through this bridging in the politico-administrative discourse of traditional dichotomies the field and its valorisations are changed. The professional in the classical sense as a narrow specialist is no longer at the

top of the hierarchy, since the more flexible specialised generalist is valorised indicating an important change in the patterns of valorisation.

The valorisation implicit in HRM and credentialism, however, also contains a bias relevant in a context of justice, since it valorises the speakable and the qualifications that can be easily formalized. Qualifications that traditionally have been associated with the 'feminine' and which refer to being present, listening, becoming aware of the Others' needs and the experiences achieved through a life-course (of a home helper). These qualifications do not so easily lend themselves to being formalized, counted, used as a socio-technical part of governmentality and/or taught in a system of scientific knowledge. Qualifications such as an orientation towards the Other often stressed by feminist researchers (Christensen, 1999) tend to become invisible and consequently not recognised in HRM focussing upon development.

Generally speaking, there is a struggle between the two logics, since they struggle about the power to define political reality, i.e. either to define the political problem as that of insufficient efficiency or as insufficient development. At the level of municipalities, both logics as part of a NPM discourse have been applied. One of the most visible effects of the neo-liberal logic is the use of manuals for home helpers in many municipalities, these contain detailed descriptions of the tasks to be accomplished, the level of care and the time allotted for each task. Such manuals are part of a new tool specifying four different levels of services, namely that of *Mutual language* ('Fælles sprog') (Højlund, 2001; Petersen and Schmidt, 2003). The implementation of the politico-administrative discourse in the concrete care giving work results in a de-qualification of the home helpers which is in a contrast to the image of the work and the profession transmitted at

the regional social- and health schools where home helpers are trained. This creates a tension between socio-technological means of governance and the view propounded in the schools of the professional work. Such a tension is bound to create frustrations and could function as a basis for mobilization for a struggle for recognition of care giving work. Effects might also be more subtle forms of resistance in the daily practices of home-helpers.

Other indicators that point towards potential struggles are visible within the trade union. It has gradually re-oriented itself from an exclusive focus upon issues of distribution (pay and pensions) to a broader complex of issues including recognition such as issues of the image of the care work in the public eye ('work with people'), including recognition of its complex and professional character (FOA Bladet, 2003). This could be interpreted as a resistance to the neo-liberal logic which reduces care giving work to simple functions. At the same time several of the top leaders have been replaced as a result of dissatisfaction with the former leadership and its policies.

Whereas the neo-liberal discourse is unequivocally embedded in a gender biased way of thinking and speaking about care giving work, HRM is more ambiguous. It redefines the discursive field by challenging its traditional dichotomies and redefines a home help as a particular kind of professional redirecting the attention from the person in need towards her own personal and professional development. Simultaneously, NPM lends itself more easily to more practical and visible tasks thereby silencing and non-recognizing important aspects of care giving work such as attentiveness often stressed by feminist researchers as necessary in good care.

## **Conclusion(s)**

From a comparative perspective, the Nordic welfare state with its pre-school and elderly care is often seen as a heaven for most feminists due to its fairer distribution of resources between men and women. But from the position of a feminist, critical insider, the Nordic welfare state model cannot support this idealized picture, since Hernes' old warning might have become true, namely that advances for some women take place at the expense of an increased differentiation between groups of women (1987:15) – at least in a Danish context.

As the investigation shows, there have been some advances for the group of home helpers concerning pay and the professionalisation of their work. These advances hide less flattering developments if analyzed from a perspectival dualism such as a general egalitarianism (on pay) insensitive to gendered valorisations, an androcentric perception of work and work related accidents formerly at play, and a neo-liberal discourse that struggles to reduce home-helpers work to simple, manual tasks in a discourse of de-professionalization. The imbrications of struggles about redistribution and recognition show that the positive changes identified are merely superficial, since a change of the socio-cultural framework has not taken place, and this continues to generate problems of recognition of their work.

Whereas there has been recognition of state's responsibility for care giving work for the elderly through an institutionalization of a social right to receive care in Denmark (19), there hasn't been a similar recognition of the work provided by home-helpers. Old patterns of valorisation are reproduced through dichotomies such as production vs.

reproduction and complex vs. simple functions and simultaneously new patterns are created such as due to the neo-liberal element in NPM.

The results force us to reflect upon the meaning of the concept of potentially women-friendly state. Is the concept only applicable to questions of material resources? Or can it be remodelled into a methodological tool for measuring advances or set-backs in relation to questions of status and recognition as I have done? And/or does the Nordic welfare state contain a systemic bias against issues of recognition, since it seems more geared to tackling issues of redistribution compared to other kinds of welfare states as has been argued by Jessica Lindvert (2002)?

In my view there are several major advantages with Fraser's framework. Firstly, her framework bridges traditional dichotomies between the socio-economic and the socio-cultural aspects of justice that too often have been analyzed independently, also within the feminist research traditions of radical feminism(s) and Marxist feminism(s). Another advantage concerns the understanding of recognition as status where the implications are far reaching. Recognition becomes a question of institutionalized value patterns and politics rather than an individual, ethical question. Finally, new (and old questions) have been raised that relate to the goals of various feminisms. The perspectival dualism redirects our analytical attention to less obvious forms of suppression such as disrespect and cultural domination that have been relatively neglected within the agenda of Danish feminism that can be characterized as equality and state-centered in its focus upon achieving rights as opposed to a concern with social status and the valorization for feminine signified values. Fraser's framework presents a powerful analytical tool for such a redirection without losing the insights of former struggles and of previous research.



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## **Notes**

1. Care giving work is a concept coined by the Norwegian sociologist Kari Wærness and defined as '...caring for dependents, involving people who take on active caring on a consistent and reliable basis' (Wærness, 1987: 211).
2. Rawls argues for a just distribution of primary goods existing mostly of resources in the classical material sense, but refers to one good that is more socio-existential in nature, namely 'bases of self-respect' (Rawls, 1972: 62)
3. Recently Fraser incorporates questions of representation into her dual system framework that would instead make it a triple framework with the three R's: Recognition, Redistribution and Representation (Dahl, Stoltz and Willig, 2004). See also criticisms of Frasers perspectival dualism by Ferree and Gamson (2003) and Hobson (2003) developed in relation to empirical analyses of feminist struggles about redistribution and recognition in Germany, Ireland, Sweden and the USA.

4. Young has interpreted Fraser perspectival dualism as a dangerous dualism that reproduces patriarchal hierarchies through its supposedly assignment of distribution and recognition to two different societal spheres (Young, 1997).
5. Fraser would probably disagree with me on this issue due to her stronger realism such as seen in her 'politics of need interpretation' where she theorizes an 'outside' to any discourse.
6. With the law: 'Lov om ændring i lov om folkeforsikring'.
7. Statistics provided courteously by FOA.
8. Often in theories of justice only lip service is paid to the distribution of burdens. I have, however, attempted to bring it into the study through the work related accidents and their interrelation with the struggle for recognition of the injuries.
9. Statistics are a prime example of how science and the creation of scientific data are traversed by relations of power. Prior to 1997 and 1998 there was a silence concerning more precise data on work-related accidents for home helpers.
10. A listing of the material used for the entire analysis can be found in my earlier work (Dahl, 2000; 2002).
11. My focus is upon discourse, which is not to be conflated with policy. Policy and this politico-administrative discourse are related, and their relationship can theoretically be described as the discourse framing the elaboration of policies.
12. These three professional groups have been chosen among 16 possible.
13. There is to my knowledge no available data prior to these two years that has been accessible.

14. These anonymous refusals were courteously provided by the Trade Union of Public Employees (In Danish: 'FOA') upon request.

15. Taylorization originated as a concept from the American sociologist Frederick W. Taylor (1947) who devised a theory of scientific management believing that there was one best way of performing any work task and thereby to maximize productivity .

16. I define 'signified' as the concept, i.e. the picture of the thing, and not the thing-in-itself (Saussure, 1990:67; Dahl, 2000:132).

17. The professional (and as a concept) has so far historically been based upon an exclusion of the home and of the activities that take place in the home. The achievement of professional status has implied a deferral of the activity to places outside the home such as schools and hospitals (Hänsel, 1992). Such exclusion has so far been based upon an ever-increasing division of labour where the generalist has been deemed inferior to the specialist and where the specialised, scientific knowledge has been constructed as superior to other knowledge bases.

18. The terminology 'figure' refers to the methodological term of an abstract figure that I have applied elsewhere as a condensation of meaning, i.e. a condensation of signification into superior structures of meaning that can be related to concrete, historical figures (Dahl, 2000; Søndergaard, 1994).

19. Elderly people have a social citizen right to receive home help based upon their particular needs. The right to receive home help is politically decided at the national policy level and the municipalities administrate this legislation.

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