



**Individual Autonomy:
An analytical concept to grasp normative
welfare state change and a new ‘Leitbild’
for social policy**

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1. Activation reforms as part of welfare state change
2. How to interpret activation reforms through the social citizenship framework?
3. Reflections on the core of social citizenship regimes:
Autonomy
4. Analytical framework: Operationalisation of autonomy
5. Our findings – with a focus on gender & autonomy
6. Conclusions



...include reforms in 4 policy fields:

- Social Assistances schemes
- Unemployment protection (conditionality, cuts in benefits)
- Labour Law (flexibilisation, deregulation)
- Active Labour Market Policies (more targeted and short term measures)

...following a certain *work ethic*, reforms tend to *tighten the rules of reciprocity* in welfare provision although to different degrees (Dean 2007, other authors on activation types)

... reflect fundamental *normative change* and pave the way for further reforms and cuts, and represent a stepping stone to fundamental normative change



... redefine

- the **objective** of social policy intervention: shift from guaranteeing social security over the life cycle (F.X. Kaufmann) to maintaining employability and making social policy intervention 'efficient'
- the **norms** of state-citizen relationship (reciprocity): citizens become more responsible for their own life situation
- the citizen's **role** within democratic welfare states: clients or more or less productive members of the workforce rather than political citizens.

... create **tensions** with the citizens' needs, expectations, their sense of justice & self-perception as citizens, which may *undermine legitimacy and trust* in welfare state institutions

We may grasp this better if we consider the **citizens' autonomy, as the core of a social citizenship regime**



- The social citizenship debate: emerged in the Nordic and liberal welfare states where the state is responsible for providing tax-based social security schemes
- Social Citizenship denominates – more generally – the *relationship between the citizen and public institutions* in terms of social security provision
- The social citizenship regime – a definition (Jenson 2007)
 - A bundle of *normative ideas* about the citizens' social rights & obligations and the State's responsibility
 - Normative and institutional constructions of *membership* (in individual, social and political terms)
 - Institutional *modes which govern* the substance of State's social security provision and membership

A social citizenship regime has got *two* dimensions



- The instrumental dimension
 - organises **membership** (which according to T.H. Marshall is based on civil, political and social rights). It regulates the citizen's participation
 - defines a degree of **solidarity** between the citizens by defining social statuses
 - may produce a ‚**sense of belonging**‘. It may protect willful social/ political identities.
- The substantial dimension
 - determines the minimum degree of **protection** from the market which citizens may expect from the public
 - shapes the **societal power relations** & degree of freedom between different groups of citizens and citizen/ state
 - defines the form of **reciprocity** (responsibility) between citizens and the State

INDIVIDUAL AUTONOMY represents the core of social citizenship



- Autonomy denotes the substance of (social) citizenship
 - Includes the citizens' membership, but also freedom and well-being (takes account of complexity)
 - It is a relational concept and avoids ascriptions as it addresses the citizen as a social, political and economic societal actor
 - highlights the connection between the individual's identity and its political and social context
- Autonomy helps to characterize state intervention
 - .. as it represents a *normative criterion* for assessing policy outcomes by considering the change to individual autonomy or, increase / decrease of paternalistic intervention
 - ..as it draws the attention to *policy instruments*, using different modes and mechanisms of intervention
- Underlines justice & adequacy as criteria for social policy making

Why we suggest autonomy as an analytical and normative concept



Autonomy is a **relational** concept, referring to the relationship between the individual and its context:

- Individual private sphere
- societal position and status
- citizenship

Autonomy is a **multi-dimensional** concept, combines material with non-material needs (redistribution and recognition)

Autonomy is a **political** concept, considers people as *citizens*

- With rights to information and transparency, collective and individual rights to co-determination



In social philosophical terms..



- ...autonomy basically conceives individuals as ‘reasonable’ (Kant), i.e. able to self-reflection and self-determination
- ...people are *more or less autonomous* and not fully or not autonomous at all..
- ...autonomy addresses three core dimensions:
 - **Individually**, autonomy means having leeway for self-development and self-determined action (unfolding one’s identity)
 - In the **societal** dimension autonomy denominates the citizens’ capacity to accept her/ his own status and role and accept those of others (mutual recognition)
 - **Politically**, autonomy underlines a person’s role as political actor, having rights to participate in political decisions; how citizens feel treated, respected, encouraged (e.g. in activation processes)

Autonomy as the core of a social citizenship regime (J. Jenson)



	Individual Dimension	Social Dimension	Political Dimension
Aspects of a person	Identity	Social Role	Citizenship
Objectives of political intervention	Protection against poverty & suppression (Justice)	Protection against disrespect & unfair treatment (Equality)	Protection against marginalisation & exclusion (Social integration)
Criteria to assess social policies	QUALITY	ACCESS / STATUS	PARTICIPATION
Mechanisms & Instruments (Examples)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generous vs. minimum level benefits • Promoting high vs. low quality of employment • Affirmative action policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing vs. constraining access • Individualised vs. subsidiary benefits • Universal vs. selective access to social security 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enforcement, hierarchical attribution of contracts • Guarantee of transparency, comprehensibility, co-determination • Gender-sensitive modes of interaction

The three criteria to test 'autonomy-protecting' social policies



■ **Quality**

- 'Generous' or poor social security benefits & services?
- Quality of jobs (changes to get an atypical or regular job)?
- Equal opportunity policies tackling inequalities on the LM?

■ **Access / Status**

- Conditionality of access to social security benefits (status or behaviour)?
- Indirect deregulation of employment by strict suitability criteria?
- Protection of once achieved employment status or menace of downward mobility by placement rules and procedures?

■ **Participation:**

- Is there scope for individual choice for 'activated' citizens?
- Does the frontline staffs' discretion allow for gender-stereotypical activation practices?
- Are rules transparent & comprehensible?



Findings: Rising tensions between basic principles of welfare provision



Part I: Intro & Conceptual Framework (Bothfeld/Betzelt)

Part II: Universal Adult Worker Norm: Tensions Equality - Diversity

- **DK:** **Immigrants / women** (Karen Breidahl)
- **UK:** **Lone parents** (Sharon Wright)
- **Gender perspective (comparative chapter)** (Letablier/Eydoux/Betzelt)

Part III: Erosion of Social Status: Tensions Core Workers - Periphery

- **D & F:** **Core worker status** (Betzelt/Bothfeld; Béraud/Eydoux)
- **ES:** **Atypical workers** (Pérez/Laparra)
- **IT:** **Young and female workers** (Paolo Graziano)

Part IV: Governance & Implementation: Tension Standardization - Individualisation

- **NL:** **Social assistance recipients** (Rik van Berkel)
- **N:** **Long-term social assistance recipients** (Kildal/Nilssen)

Part V: Conclusions (comparative chapter) (Betzelt/Bothfeld)

The activation dilemma for women's social citizenship:



Activation policies re-address basic tension between equality and diversity –
it promises to reduce women's dependency, both from the state and the family, but it produces:

Employment dilemma

- Living wages?
- Equal opportunities?

Defamilization dilemma

- Work obligations for family carers?
- Sufficient care infrastructure?

Welfare provision dilemma

- More or less individualised social security / degree of family subsidiarity?

How are these dilemmas tackled in different welfare & gender regimes?



■ **Quality:**

- 'Generous' or poor social security benefits & services?
- High / low quality of labour market integration?
- Equal opportunity policies tackling gender inequalities on the LM?

■ **Access / Status:**

- Welfare benefits provided on an individual basis and allowing women to keep an independent household?
- Same access to labour promotion measures for women/mothers & men?
- Do job placement services counteract or maintain gendered labour market segregation?

■ **Participation:**

- Is there scope for individual choice for 'activated' citizens?
- Does the frontline staffs' discretion allow for gender-stereotypical activation practices? Are rules transparent & comprehensible?

Observations for Germany



negative

**Labour market
regulation**

**Active labour
market policies**

**Unemployment
protection system**

positive

QUALITY

Rise of atypical
and precarious
employment

Cuts of ALMP
Increased use of
work tests

Cuts in benefits

ACCESS /
STATUS

Low wage
employment and
mini-jobs as a trap

Enforced
participation

Status segmentation
(UB I & II)
Stricter family
subsidiarity

Targeting
(young, elderly)

Universal UB II
benefit

PARTICI-
PATION

Redefinition of
acceptable jobs

Client-
segmentation

Lack of transparency
and reliability

What is the impact of activation on women's social citizenship / autonomy:



- **Reduced quality & generosity of benefits** (esp. for women), thereby strengthening family subsidiarity or market dependence
- **Undermining of structures of social relations:**
 - Deteriorating *labour market status*, without enhancing gender equality (women in secondary labour market; eroded employment status)
 - Overstretching *economic dependencies between adult household members*
- **New governance modes according to cost-efficiency logic** tend to *disadvantage vulnerable groups* (e.g. lone mothers, migrants); *neo-paternalist attempt of steering individual behaviour*

Conclusions (1): Autonomy as an analytical concept...



... allows to comprehensively understand the effects of activation policies:

Essential findings from 8 country case studies:

- **Re-commodification:** e.g. increasing low-wage sector & atypical jobs
 - **Erosion of core worker status:** e.g. menace of downward mobility; less status-protection
 - **Constraining citizens' participation:** e.g. lack of co-determination, standardized, not tailor-made activation measures
 - Implications for gender equality not positive either – **old & new social divides**
- ➔ More encroaching upon individual autonomy rather than enhancing it



Conclusions (2): Autonomy as a new 'Leitbild' for social policy...



...is more appropriate than other notions (like self-responsibility, or well-being) to cope with the complexity of social policy objectives in the three dimensions:

Individual dimension:

- Social policy instruments are oriented at diverse individual needs, without being narrowly fixed to gainful employment, „life-first approach“ (Dean 2007)
- Self-help and individual responsibility are promoted, but structural overburdening of individuals is avoided

Social dimension:

- 'socially investive' objectives are reflected: Education, further training, empowerment to upward mobility (Sen's capabilities)
- Benefit eligibility rules combine universal with work-related or status-securing elements
- Quality of the employment system is improved (e.g. minimum wage-standards), labour market segmentation is reduced

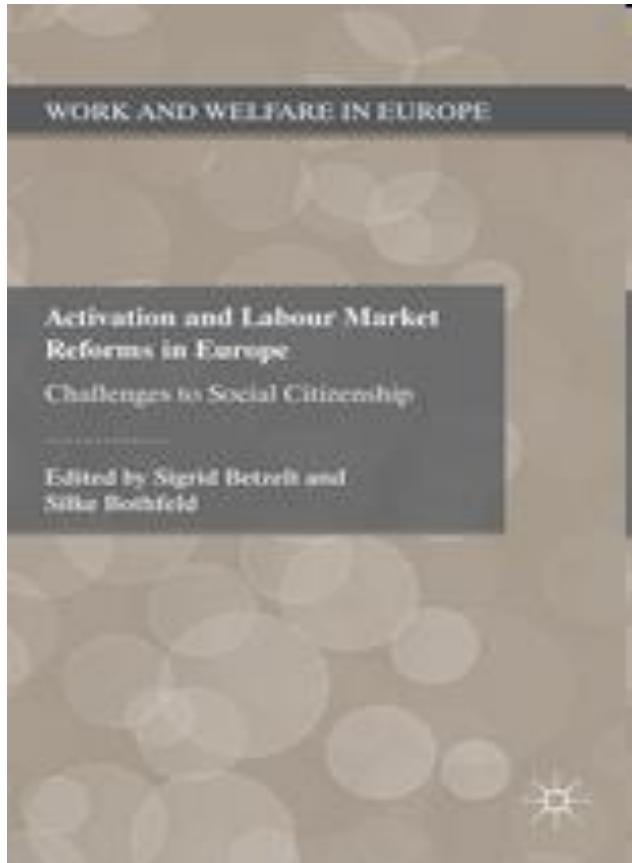
Political dimension:

- Paternalism of state intervention is avoided, individual rights are strengthened, transparency & co-determination of citizens is increased

Thanks for your attention!



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Activation and Labour Market Reforms in Europe Challenges to Social Citizenship

eds. Sigrud Betzelt & Silke Bothfeld

Palgrave, Work & Welfare Series
June 2011

Recently published: **Bothfeld, Silke; Betzelt, Sigrud (2013): How do activation policies affect social citizenship? The issue of autonomy. In: *Social Policy Review* 25, Bristol: Policy Press.**



- Explorative research strategy
- 8 country case studies (different welfare state regimes)
- Authors decided about the specific focus they assessed as most relevant for their country
- Treated issues should be relevant for other countries as well (e.g. policies towards migrants; contractualisation)
- Common analytical framework as elaborated above:
How can changes be interpreted in terms of autonomy?

What dimensions are covered by the concept of individual autonomy?



- **Individual dimension: AFFILIATION**
 - 'felt membership' and the perception of protected identity
 - Based on socio-psychological experience (childhood & youth but also working and living conditions)
- **Social dimension: REFLEXIVITY**
 - Individual's capacity to define her respective status in society, and to tolerate and accept the status and needs of others
 - Depends on social structure, permeability of transitions, distribution of life chances
- **Political dimension: COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATION**
 - Denotes the citizen's role as social and political citizen and as an active participant in 'public affairs'
 - Depends on how citizens feel treated, respected, encouraged (e.g. in activation processes)



1. AFFILIATION

- ‚felt membership‘
- To perceive self-esteem and self-awareness
- Developing a ‚unique‘ **identity** despite potential (psychological or physical) vulnerability
- Depends on socio-psychological context in childhood & youth but also on (economic & cultural) working and life conditions





2. REFLEXIVITY

- Individual's capacity to define her respective role in society, define a social status
- To prescind from her immediate needs and to develop more or less empathetic mutual relationships with co-citizens
- To tolerate and accept the needs of the ,other' – mutual recognition
- Depends on social structure, permeability of transitions, distribution of life chances





3. COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

- Denotes the citizen's role as social and political citizen, as a more or less active participant in 'public affairs' and represents the supreme expression of the citizen's autonomy
- Can take spontaneous or deliberate forms, and be formalised or informal
- active participation depends on the citizen's individual and social autonomy and on specific mechanisms and tools that encourage people to participate





→ **Hypothesis:** Universalised Adult Worker Norm

- affects individual self-determination & respect
- does not recognize diversity of society
- does not result in higher gender-equity in society