



# Inside the Global Workfare Project: Where Welfare State Politics Meets Street-Level Practice

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Presentation at the University of Glasgow

February 27, 2014

# On *Work and the Welfare State*

- Investigating how workfare has taken shape on the ground in 6 countries: US, UK, DK, Germany, the Netherlands, and Australia.





# SLOs and the Changing Boundaries of Work & the Welfare State

- How to understand an emerging a global workfare project?
- How to advance the field of street-level research in a changing organizational environment?

# From SLBs to SLOs

- The declining role of *street-level bureaucracies*
- The emergence of *street-level organizations*  
....
- ... operating under new public management.

# The Global Workfare Project

- Workfare: generic label for policies promoting participation in the labor market and reducing cash benefits
- Many labels: welfare-to-work, welfare reform, labor market activation, jobseeker allowance, *revenu minimum d'insertion*.

# Workfare and Welfare “Reform” in the US

- 1996 legislative “reform” promoted as reducing dependency
- 2014: “Success story” or national failure?

# But what is workfare?

- Policy mix: Both “regulatory” v. “enabling” elements
- Barbier: policy labels as a political *référentiel*” or cognitive frame that deploy “fuzzy generalities” to mask “divergent realities”
- The challenge: to investigate ‘divergent realities’ taking shape on the ground

# A Street-Level Approach

- Conceptualizing the study of '*street-level organizations*'
- SLOs as mediators of policy and politics
- Seeing **big** by looking small.

# The Logic of Street-Level Practice

- Adaptive patterns of practice emerge from the “calculus of street-level choice.” (Brodkin, “Policy Work,” *JPART* 2011)
- $C=R:D (i)$ 
  - C = choice
  - R = resources,
  - D = demands
  - i = incentives
- S-I practitioners will prefer choice that has higher “benefits” than “costs”
- Bias is patterned, but invisible and unmeasured in administrative metrics

# The Argument in Brief

- Workfare is now embedded in the policy architecture of advanced market democracies around the world.
- Workfare's expansion accompanied by project of governance and management reform – workfare's “second track” – altering arrangements and conditions under which workfare is delivered.
- Managerial reforms are bearing down on street-level organizations, undermining workfare's potentially “enabling” elements and intensifying its “regulatory” and punitive elements.

# SLOs: At the Nexus of Policy, Politics, and Management

- Theoretical framework
- Examples



# Governance Reform and Labor Politics: The Case of Denmark

- Larsen argument : Dismantling the PES reduced the political and administrative influence of organized labor and social partners; also changes locus of operational responsibilities. (Larsen 2013)

# Governance and Policy Reforms: The US Case

- TANF: Measure and reward caseload reduction and work “participation”
- Contracting, privatization, and performance measurement
- Street-level adaptations: how do they meet the numbers?
- Result? Street-level practices that shortchange the poor and unemployed.

# Celebrating US Welfare Reform: Is the Party Premature?

- In the US case, after nearly 28 years of welfare 'reform,' what does experience show?

# The Global Workfare Project: A Street-Level View

Workfare is a global project that is redrawing the boundaries between work and the welfare state, changing the state's role in buffering the consequences of market-derived inequalities and economic vulnerabilities.

Adopting a street-level approach to the study of the global workfare project make(s) visible otherwise invisible processes -- fueled by governance and mgt reforms – through which this shifts are advancing.



Our studies reveal how the global workfare project is taking shape on the ground, making transparent the complex organizational processes that are pushing back the welfare state's boundaries and enlarging the zone in which market principles prevail.

This project has profound importance, as it is making life ever more precariousness for the unemployed and those living at the economic margins.



As this project continues its advance, it will be crucial to investigate not only what the policies of workfare *say*, but also what they *do*.

# Open for discussion...

For additional comments or questions,  
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