

Stability through Change: The Pervasiveness of Political Ideas

JONAS HINNFORS *Political Science, Göteborg University*

ABSTRACT

For all the day-to-day changes, the parties have actually been surprisingly faithful to their overarching ideologies. However, in no way has this stability precluded change. The main claim made in this article is that, on the contrary, in several instances it appears that the only way of keeping up ideological stability is through policy change. The kind of stability based on an ongoing adaptation and change might be the very triggering cause behind the successful opening up of a policy window. By offering a firm point of reference, ideology analysis could function as a bridge between ‘formative’ approaches – which indicate some degree of actor freedom — and ‘path dependency’ approaches – which stress deterministic structuring by institutions – and provide one of the missing links between institutional and rational choice analyses.

The Puzzle

Thirty-five years ago what was to become the final take off for one of the most extensive public-sector expansions in the world was set in motion by the dramatic shift in Swedish Social Democratic family policy.¹ In a remarkable leap the number of municipal day-care places went from 18,000 in 1965 to 125,000 in 1975. An overwhelming majority of parents began to rely on day care. The ‘two-earner family’ soon became a fact with public policy working to support it. Today more than 550,000 places are available. Before 1970 the Social Democrats had instead contemplated improvements in the economic transfer system to families rather than providing public services on such a massive scale.

The policy change was unique to Sweden in the heavy emphasis on full-time public day care. Most countries did not enter day-care expansion schemes of the scope and magnitude of Sweden until much later, if at all. For example, Britain and Germany have only recently begun

real discussions on public day care. The amount of West German children in day care is between two to five per cent (Kolbe, 1999: 162). In Britain less than 20 percent of preschool children were covered by registered care services in 1980 (Sainsbury, 1996: 97f). Sweden massively increased public expenditure on day care; of all the OECD countries only Denmark shows an increase on a par with Sweden. Concurrently, both Sweden and Denmark more than doubled the share of GDP spent on social policy in 1960 (about 11%) to 1993 (25%). This increase of 14 percentage points was much greater than for other OECD countries, where the average increase in social policy expenditure was from about 8% to about 16% (Castles, 1998: 12).

Literally billions of Swedish *kronor* were ploughed into day-care. This policy shift was launched at the very time when the formerly so successful Swedish economy, including the public sector, began to falter. GDP growth almost disappeared around 1970. The national budget was under great strain with unemployment felt as a real threat for the first time since the 1930's. As the budget-consuming day-care expansion wore on, additional and competing policy instrument proposals were becoming less and less economically viable unless one cut down heavily on the day-care funding (1968, day-care share of public expenditures: 0.29%; 1977: 2.23%). So why did the Social Democrats change policy?

Despite their overall ideological world view – expressed by Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990) as the ‘Social democratic type of welfare state’ – Social democratic sister parties in the rest of Europe were much more hesitant about taking the family-policy steps their Swedish colleagues did (Sainsbury, 1996: 95–103; Bergqvist, 1999). Why would the Swedes differ?

Structurally oriented theories do not offer much help. Along with several other countries Sweden firmly belonged to what Peter Katzenstein (1984; 1985) labels ‘small countries’ with extensive corporative characteristics. These structural similarities were at their apex during the ‘golden age’ of capitalistic welfare states (Esping-Andersen, 1996; Stephens, 1996). Why then was Sweden difficult? On the one hand, a wide literature would picture the Swedish events as the effect of a ‘formative moment’ or a window of opportunity being opened (Kingdon, 1984; Krasner, 1984: 241; Rothstein, 1992), thus allowing the Social Democrats to introduce the new system. But why exactly then? Why move into an extremely costly project at the very time when the public finances began to dip into the red? And why not stick to the well established economic transfers to those in real need which were more redistributive than the general provision of public services? On the other hand, a host of literature would describe the developments as relying on former events making the politicians ‘path dependent’ upon earlier

decisions (Rothstein, 1996). However, if anything, the path treaded before should have led us to expect an expansion of the transfers system since child allowances, health insurance and superannuated pensions had been successfully launched already in 1948, 1955 and 1960 respectively. Moreover the national budget was showing severe signs of stagnation around 1970. So why the sudden plunge into uncharted and extremely costly policy terrain? This latter strand puts into question why a window of opportunity would open at all.

This brings us to the issue of how we actually know when a policy window is opened or when a formative moment is at hand. Can such creatures ever be predicted? They always seem to pop up *ex post* (Rothstein, 1991; Kingdon, 1984: 174–188; Pfeffer, 1992: 187–188). Obviously institutions – however defined – can be shown to work in a truly structuring way in some situations while at other times formative moments make them appear to be more pliable. Sometimes the parties have to react, at other times they seem to be in charge of developments. Nevertheless it is extremely unclear why a formative moment would ever emerge on a certain path. There seems to be a missing analytical link between institutional structuring and adaptation. Lacking such a link we will have to make do with retrospective analysis only (Pierson, 1994: 39–50; Rose, 1993: 143 ff.; Thelen and Steinmo, 1992: 7–10; Braybrooke and Lindblom, 1970; Simon, 1996). Do we stand any change of predicting policy change?

Ideology: The Missing Piece and A Possible Solution

For all the day-to-day changes, the parties have actually been surprisingly faithful to their overarching ideologies. However, in no way has this stability precluded change. The main claim here is that in some instances the only way of keeping up ideological stability is by policy change. The kind of stability based on an ongoing adaptation and change might be the very triggering cause behind the successful opening up of a policy window. By offering a firm point of reference, ideology analysis can function as a bridge between ‘formative’ approaches – which indicate some degree of *ex post* actor freedom – and ‘path dependency’ approaches – which stress the structuring effects of institutions – thus providing one of the missing links between rational choice and institutional analyses. Few policy areas would be more suited than Swedish family policy to analyze this problematic.

By changing to the public-service-day-care sector rather than taking the safe road of economic transfers the Social Democrats did indeed implement a system where more than ever ‘collective choice more

directly shapes the structure of supply and mode of control' (Kohl, quoted from Castles, 1998: 11).

Day care, child allowance and parental insurance, which 'structure the relationship between individuals in various units of the policy and economy' (Hall, 1986: 19), represent different points on a public/private continuum ranging from public services through economic transfers to tax deductions (Lundqvist, 1988; Linder and Peters, 1989). Day care is a more 'direct measure at the command of the state' (Castles, 1998: 11) compared to economic transfers and tax deductions. By changing its standpoints the Social Democrats in fact managed to institutionalise the very essence of their party's ideology. Stability through change ensued.

The stability-through-change conclusion counters common wisdom about policy change as something the parties try to evade in favour of continuity and as occurring only in times of crisis (Sjöblom, 1968; Gourevitch, 1986).

A World to Win or Looking Back on A Lost World?

For all the literature's emphases on the importance of ideas (Krasner, 1984: 228; North, 1996: 23) even dramatic formative changes in ideology or policy seem to appear out of the blue (Hall, 1989: 362, North, 1996: 111). Do we have to satisfy ourselves with this lack of prospective capability? How do we advance? In *Lesson-Drawing in Public Policy*, Richard Rose (1993: 145 ff.) combines two related types of 'governmental' reaction to 'environmental' change. Depending on whether the environmental changes are 'benign' or for the 'worse', policymakers will end up with different combinations.

The government can either ignore the environmental change or alter programmes and goals. The ensuing four combinatorial effects range from 'policy-deterioration' (same goal, same programme), 'adaptation' (same goal, new programme), 'innovation' (new goal, new programme), 'symbolic gesture, passive acceptance' (new goal, same programme). Rose does not provide answers to why some environmental changes would be 'benign' and some 'worse' or why a party would actually change or keep its programmes and goals. If we regard ideology as general conceptions of preferred states of affairs, policy analysis enables us to show whether actual institutional developments either approach or depart from the ideologically desired end. Then we stand a better chance of answering why a certain institution becomes important in the sense that a party wants to change or keep its standpoints.

Let's regard the first kind of these relationships (where actual environmental change appears to approach the ideologically desired end) as

a situation where the party has *a world to win*. The second relationship (depart from desired end) is a situation where the party is *looking back on a lost world*. In the following we will use these different conceptions to discuss whether the parties (or political actors generally) will be more (a world to win) or less (a lost world) eager to change their standpoints in accordance with new environmental conditions. Our hypothesis is that policy windows appear when an actor is able to change its day-to-day standpoint in such a way that the basic ideology is promoted in a new way. Such vantage points will appear when the actor has a world to win.

A Changing World

The 1960 Swedish Government Official Report ('Royal Investigation Commission', Swedish: *Statens offentliga utredningar, SOU* – one of the centrepieces of the extremely future oriented ('anticipatory') and thoroughly planning-oriented Swedish Model (Heclö, 1975; Anton, 1980; Hinnfors, 1997)) on the future of Swedish economic trends, emphasised the importance of finding a solution to feared shortages of labour in the manufacturing industry. The commission projected a 13% increase in the need for manpower over the 1960–1965 period.

Improved efficiency was only possible to a certain extent. To meet labour demand the Commission suggested that women should be encouraged to enter the labour market. Women were pictured as rather hesitant to leave their homes, but through improved and expanded day care facilities and an increasing number of part-time positions, the Commission hoped cultural views would change (SOU 1962, # 10: 40, 97, 147 ff., 175). The same view on the economy and on the importance of women contributing to the manufacturing-industry labour force was expressed by the 1965 Royal Commission on the Swedish economy. Day care was described as 'essential' and the Commission pointed to the fact that now 6,000 children were on waiting lists for day-care places (SOU 1966, # 1: 35, 151; Statistics Sweden, 1971: Tables 248, 253, 396; SOU 1977, # 91:349).

Women did in fact enter the labour market, and did so in astonishing numbers compared to early calculations. In 1965 about one third of women with children below seven were employed. By 1970 more than half of women with small children were in the labour market. Before the end of the 1970s three quarters of all women with small children were employed, a figure way above anything imagined fifteen or even ten years before. The average employment/adult population ratio (all adults: parents + non parents) during the 1980–1990 period was 76% for women and 83.5% for men. The ratio for women was by far the

highest among OECD countries (Siaroff, 1994: 86). The percentage of women with small children (0–6 years) in the labour force grew from 50% in 1970 to 80% in 1995 (and for men, 93% in 1997). The average number of hours worked by Swedish women has increased steadily (Sainsbury, 1976: 107 ff.) but most mothers of small children still work part-time (average number of hours per week, parents with small children, 1970: men 45 hours; women 29 hours; 1995: men 42 hours, women 30 hours) (SOU 1996, # 145, supplement 10: 260, 263).

The day-care waiting list figure of 6,000 children which in 1965 had been described as tantamount to a crisis situation soon proved to be nothing compared to what lay ahead. Waiting lists sky-rocketed early in the 1970s to 100,000 children.

However, contrary to projections the manufacturing industry soon faced a structural crisis instead of a boom. So where did the women go? Almost all of them entered the public sector, which expanded at unprecedented rates (1965–1970, total public labour-force increase: 5.9% annually) and went from 288,000 employed women in 1965 to one million in 1980. The brunt of this increase was taken by the municipalities.

Private-sector manufacturing-industry stagnation and public-sector expansion was true for the entire 1970s. The decade can be described as the final leap to the ‘social democratic welfare state’ (Esping-Andresen, 1990). However, lagging GNP growth and emerging unemployment in conjunction with structural problems in the economy made public sector efforts gradually more difficult to finance. In Sweden, day care costs rose from 30mn *kronor* in 1964 to 9.2bn *kronor* in 1988; as a proportion of GNP this was an 18-fold increase, from 0.15 per cent of GNP to 2.75 percent.

In the extremely investigation-prone Swedish political culture, family policy was the object of several Royal Investigation Commissions, each of them active for about three to five years during the 1962 to 1983 period. Since the Commissions are composed of a mixture of research experts and Members of Parliament from both the governing body and the Opposition, they are key vehicles in the mobilisation of both majority and minority family interests (Elder et al., 1982: 182).²

While the 1967 Royal Commission on child allowances (SOU 1967, # 52: 72 ff.) emphasised growing economic difficulties for large families, the 1972 Commission on family support concluded that all families with small children – including upper middle-class families – were unable to live according to the male breadwinner concept. The Commission stated that ‘In such a difficult financial position economic transfers are hardly the best means of “financial support”. [A better way would be] to create opportunities for the other spouse to contribute to

the family's economy through paid employment which would presuppose the provision of job opportunities and day-care facilities' (SOU 1972, # 34: 217).

As important actors in the corporative Swedish society, the strong Swedish unions willingly supported arguments based on living standard and job opportunities. During this period both the white-collar (TCO) and the blue-collar union (LO) launched their own investigatory commissions which demanded family policy improvements along those lines.

Whichever definition we may use of what would constitute an environmental change, it is safe to claim that profound environmental changes took place in the Swedish society between 1965 and 1975. The combined effect of hundreds of thousands of women entering the labour market, increasing economic difficulties for families living according to the one-earner model, unprecedented public expansion, and emerging signs of deep structural crisis in the manufacturing industry, all contributed to what was no less than a shock to the political system of a magnitude no political actor could ignore.

Indirect Triggers of Change

Apart from the direct effects on family policy the developments had indirect effects through their impact on other policy areas that in their turn had important ramifications for family policy deliberations. The fiercely debated 1970 tax reform led to an important policy decision with far-reaching implications for family policy. As a result of the reform, married tax-payers were now taxed individually rather than jointly with their spouses. In the old system of joint taxation the wife's earnings was added to her husband's and both taxed at the highest possible rate. In many cases the marginal tax effect nearly exceeded the woman's income, putting the two-earner family at an economic disadvantage.

Many industrialists feared the old system contributed to labour shortages. The new system took account of the fact that in spite of the old system's economic disadvantages, many women with small children had entered the labour market all the same. Supporting the reform the Liberals claimed that it would increase equality between the sexes. Initially the Social Democrats were more hesitant on the grounds that joint taxation of spouses was to the advantage of those with lower incomes. When it finally turned out that separate taxation would contribute more to the deteriorating national finances the Social Democrats changed their standpoint. Once implemented, the reform in its turn contributed to the consolidation of two-earner behaviour among

the general public as separate taxation made the step from home-making to paid employment much more financially rewarding (Elvander, 1972: 280–287).

Another policy field with family policy repercussions was housing. As in most Western societies Sweden went through a phase of rapid urbanisation with ensuing housing shortages. In order to alleviate this shortage an ambitious effort was launched in 1964 to build one million new flats over a ten year period. However, leading housing-sector representatives soon realised that many new tenements were too expensive for blue collar workers and their families, leading to problems for municipal housing companies who attracted most of their tenants among those groups. Suddenly housing politicians were manoeuvring to link housing and family policies. By improving the family allowance targeted on overcrowded families, a family-policy instrument could be used to meet what were in essence housing-policy aims (Lundqvist, 1992: 93 ff).

The labour-market, tax, and housing examples indicate the importance to family policy of the indirect effect of societal changes. These areas had no immediate relation to family policy as such but the effects of reformed taxes and so forth certainly changed the premises for parents' decisions about entering the labour market or not (Bacchi, 1996: 101). These developments would prove to have profound effects on the character and extent of the following family-policy implementation.

In 1970 there was a turning point. Unemployment became a problem for the first time since the war and simultaneously, for the first time a majority of women with small children were gainfully employed at the same time as one-earner families faced drastically deteriorating economic circumstances. However, whether these shake-ups were something to fear or support depended on where you stood ideologically.

Ideologies Confronting the Environment

Any study of modern Swedish family policies must heed the profound divide between two competing world views around which the *Riksdag* parties cluster. On a left-right continuum – by far the most salient dimension in Swedish politics (Esaiasson and Holmberg, 1996) – the parties line up as follows. The Left Party, until 1967 Sweden's Communist Party and the Left Party-Communists until 1990, has drifted from Soviet communism via Euro communism to a version of social democracy. The party's voting share has hovered around the 4% *Riksdag* hurdle. With seemingly bedrock stability the Social Democratic Labour Party (referred to here as the Social Democrats) usually receives

around 45% of the vote, and cabinet incumbency 1960–1976, 1982–1990 and 1994–, all but one minority cabinets. Two parties compete in the ideological mid-field: the People's Party – the Liberals (referred to here as the Liberals) is a middle-size and contracting party with a social-liberal middle-class outlook. The Centre Party is a farmers' party with ambitions to catch the urban green vote'. This strategy was extremely successful in the mid-1970s when the party peaked at 25% of the voters, but by 1998 its support fell to 5%. On the right flank the Moderate Party (before 1969: the Right Party; referred to here as the Conservatives) occupies a position between social conservatism and liberalism. Over the years the Conservatives have developed into the major challenger to Social Democratic hegemony (voting share 1960: 16%, 1970 11%, 1998: 23%). In the 1988 election the new Environmental Party – the Greens entered Parliament with 5.5% of the vote to politicise green issues. Founded in 1964, the Christian Democratic Party did not pass the 4% *Riksdag* hurdle until 1991 (7%, 1998: 12%). Originally of a rather sectarian character the party leadership deliberately moved into more middle-of-the-road bourgeois ground in the 1980s. Between 1976–82 and 1991–94 various bourgeois constellations were in cabinet position.

On the one hand the Conservative Party and the Centre Party do not want to propose any policy instrument that will 'force' women into employment. While these parties may today accept the two-earner family as a totally legitimate way of life they still prioritise economic support to those women who want to stay at home with their children. Until about 1970 these parties were outspoken proponents of the one-earner family.

On the other hand, the Liberals, Social Democrats, and the Left Party strongly support the two-earner family concept and are willing to act accordingly. These parties oppose any measure that would 'force' women to stay at home and out of the labour market. Should economic means be available the Liberal Party is willing to introduce some kind of additional child-care allowance to support families financially on top of the existing child allowance.

In the early 1960s the Social Democrats were somewhat hesitant towards the two-earner family norm. First and foremost the party leadership has been eager to secure an adequate standard of living for the working class. Early Social Democrat deliberations on the two-earner family and day-care expansion often concluded that these matters were primarily of concern to a very limited number of middle-class, white-collar women and of minor importance to the working class. The key to the subsequent firm decision to favour day-care construction lies in the fact that the leadership managed to reinterpret the whole family

policy discourse in class terms. True gender rhetoric only began to appear from the party leadership a few years later and gender interpretations were in no way uncontroversial within the party as late as 1980 (see Karlsson, 1996: 16, 334).

In the sphere of party politics the mobilisation of family interests was rendered quite complicated as an effect of the Liberals' 'leap frogging' to the wrong side of the bourgeois-socialist divide. Granted, the Swedish political culture has been depicted as the consensual society par excellence (Anton, 1969; Ruin, 1982; Hinnfors, 1997) which would allow for a cross-bloc consensus. However, the history of Swedish family policy only meets this criterion half way since it has been constantly politicised by the two contending family-policy blocs.

Distinct differences between each party's social-policy ideologies have proved surprisingly stable. These differences can be summarised as follows. The Social Democrats advocate extensive public services as well as government-managed insurance systems against the loss of income. Their overall idea is to provide freedom of choice through support from the governmental sector. According to this view economic progress in society does not render welfare programmes superfluous. New needs constantly arise and equality – itself a political goal – can best be achieved through measures to insure against loss of income rather than means-tested benefits. In its modern version the Left Party is near this overall view.

Certain aspects of the Centre-Party ideology are similar to that of the Conservatives. Both parties favour selective measures for those in real need. However, when it comes to levels of support and defining who is to be considered in real need, significant differences emerge: the Centre Party advocates a more extensive network of support programmes and accepts generous levels of support. This party also advocates relatively high levels of service provision and a system of 'basic security' for all.

No family policy compromise was reached in the 1960s. Instead an across-the-board agreement was achieved in 1975 on a five year plan to build and provide 150,000 new municipal day-care places. The agreement was reached after a voluntary settlement between the government and the municipalities. Responsibility for the construction and maintenance was given to the municipalities in accordance with the overall consensus that the major part of social policy generally should be carried out at the municipal level.³

In spite of repeated subsidy increases construction lagged behind, triggering widespread criticism. The massive expansion effort from 1975 onwards did provide places to a growing number of children, but mounting demand made the waiting lists longer and a matter of much

political dispute. Obviously this was a liability for the Social Democrats since day care expansion has been very popular with the voters, especially women (Oskarson and Wängnerud, 1995: 71). However, most day-care places were available for full eight-hour days which gives additional evidence of support for the two-earner concept. Indeed the provision of full-time places was necessary for the municipalities to receive maximum subsidies from the central government.

In conjunction with the day-care expansion, government-financed parental leave was launched in 1973. This provided six months (later extended to 12 months) of 90% wage replacement (later reduced to 80%) for loss of income for parents staying home from employment after a child's birth.

Even though the Social Democrats had not intended to devote an ever increasing share of government resources to day care, this development appears to have been inevitable given the initial measures taken. By choosing the day care policy instrument the party had indeed 'mortgaged the future' (Hinnfors, 1992: 257, 269; Hinnfors, 1997; see Pierson, 1994: 42 on 'lock-in effects'). Day care costs increased automatically as the number of two-earner families grew at a rate far beyond anything imagined in the 1960s. In part this rapid increase was an effect of the increased availability of day care for women who wanted to enter the labour market.

From Hesitancy to Action

Let's go back to the concepts of worlds won and lost. Even though they share many family policy views, the Liberals and Social Democrats use somewhat different arguments. Gender equality is a common Liberal catchword, while the Social Democrats emphasise the importance of equal benefits for lower and higher income groups. With the Liberal Party relying on white-collar voters with substantial numbers of salaried women, and the Social Democrats depending on blue-collar and lower white-collar strata their respective stances had to be phrased differently but when actual family behaviour changed in the direction of two-earner families, both parties could be described as looking forward to a world to win. The Liberals thought themselves in tune with an emerging new middle-class society.

Hesitant at first, the Social Democrats managed to kill two birds with one stone: first, the expansion of public services provided a solid policy instrument with which the party could prove in action its general tenets about the strong state. Second, the proximity between the Social Democratic and Liberal parties in these matters contributed strongly to the division in the bourgeois camp (Särilvik, 1983: 145 ff.). However,

mounting demand for child care later proved to be a burden for the Social Democrats as the waiting lists grew. For the rest of the period under study, the Social Democrats had to face criticism from the unions as well as from increasingly outspoken pressure groups for not giving the day-care shortage proper priority.

Both the Conservative Party and the Centre Party regarded the new trend towards two-earner families with strong reservations. According to their view, this development was triggered by an erroneous Social-Democratic policy which somehow had to be halted. The new conditions were criticised as harmful to children and to what these parties regarded as the main pillar of society, the family. Both parties can be described as looking back on a lost world. Rather than being in complete conflict with the new family policy system, their major effort since the 1970s has been to find ways to reduce the number of families where mothers with small children have to work outside the home. It is in this light that their recurring transfers proposals aimed at homeworking mothers should be seen.

Had the Right Party shown less opposition to direct economic support in the 1960s, it is likely that all parties would have reached a compromise. Some kind of child-care allowance was seriously contemplated by all major parties, and the subsequent expansion of day care would have had to come on top of an existing and costly transfers system. In that case deteriorating government finances would have made day-care extensions difficult. However, the Social Democrats wanted to investigate the matter thoroughly – via the Royal Commissions – before taking a firm stand on actual measures. Meanwhile the bourgeois camp was deeply split. No compromise was reached.

Standing at the crossroads between the spheres of intimacy and publicness, the family triggers politics and policies which strike at least two fundamental value chords. The ‘state-market’ aspects upon which Esping-Andersen concentrates are highly relevant. Equally important, though, is the divide between the public sphere (the state and civil society) on the one hand, and the private sphere (the family) on the other. The ‘gender-relevant’ policy dimensions elaborated by Diane Sainsbury (1994; 1996) take this latter divide into account. According to Sainsbury, the *male breadwinner model* ‘celebrates marriage and a strict division of labour between husband and wife. The husband is the head of the household, and it is his duty to provide for the members of his family – his wife and children – through full-time employment. The duties of the wife are to make a good home and provide care for her husband and children’ (Sainsbury, 1996: 41–42; see also Sainsbury, 1994: 153). By contrast, the *individual* model does not prescribe any family form, though it does presuppose shared responsibility for house-

hold tasks, with each adult responsible for his or her maintenance and financial support including responsibility for the children (Sainsbury, 1996: 42; Sainsbury, 1994: 153).⁴

Esping-Andersen's and Sainsbury's categories should not be regarded as mutually exclusive. Sainsbury claims that 'mainstream analysis . . . has concentrated on redistribution as it affects classes, occupational groups, generations, or other categories of individuals or households' (Sainsbury, 1996: 39–40). Her categories focus instead on the unit of benefits inside the family, the nature of entitlements and their influence on the actual division of labour within the family (Sainsbury, 1996: 41). Variation between her two models could take place independently of which social-policy ideology was applicable. This double approach is fundamental to understand the family values behind the institutionalisation of Swedish family policy.

Even though many Social Democrats believed that most women were willing to seek paid employment after having brought up their children (Myrdal and Klein, 1956) this view did not come wholly uncontested. Some parts of the women's branch as well as the immediate party leadership felt that child care allowances targeted on housewives would particularly benefit those women who worked at unhealthy blue-collar jobs. That the 'privilege of a housewife' should not be restricted to the salaried classes alone was still a vivid idea among parts of the leadership. Such a view was somewhat supported by one of the major social cleavages in the Swedish society: blue collar versus white collar. Until recently, white-collar have been more eager than blue-collar groups to live according to the two-earner model with the children in day-care centres. The early Social Democratic child-care allowance proposals were deemed to allow women the choice to stay home with their small children. Still, a modest expansion of day-care provision was projected to allow women to work, thus averting the feared shortage of labour in the industrial sector. Moreover, the party leadership was concerned about increasing criticism of insufficient public services. The general problem for the Social Democrats has been that their preferred social-policy ideology is so expensive. The party made substantial efforts to extend day care facilities as well as to extend the length of parental leave. Neither was accomplished satisfactorily until about 1995. Another drawback was that day care proved to be used more by white-collar than blue-collar groups. This political failure weakened the party's electoral support.

According to Sainsbury, the Conservatives and the Centre Party clearly adhered to the male breadwinner model at the beginning of the 1960s. The Social Democratic leadership was also anchored to that model but on the verge of moving to the individual model. The Liberals

have been more or less close to the individual model for the entire period. As from the 1970s onwards, all the parties accepted the individual model but the Conservatives, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats still defend certain male breadwinner elements.

Somewhat surprisingly, we may conclude that the implementation of the new Swedish family policy was initially a rather passive affair. In the 1960s, no active decisions were made to merge the two-earner family concept into official policy. Important elements in the early 1960s were in fact intended to strengthen one-earner families by postponing child-care expansion, by increasing child allowances, and improving family-housing allowances, and were initially hesitant towards changing cultural norms. Few envisaged the later developments, but very soon the changing socio-economic environment put before the politicians a *fait accompli*: they simply had to handle the new situation. Given that the Social Democrats kept their ideological commitments they had to accept the fact that day-care costs peaked in a way unforeseen when the policy was formulated. Later the parties reformulated their goals in accordance with what they regarded as new social realities.

Unintended Effects

Paradoxically, when the new wave of women entered the labour market, it was only by changing day-to-day standpoints that the parties managed to claim that they acted in defence of their stable ideologies. The ideological implications of the family policy debate have been two-fold. While much of the debate can be described as dealing with the public-private divide, it is equally clear that ‘public’ has ‘collectivist’ connotations while ‘private’ easily implies ‘nuclear family’. The parties stood before traditional left/right as well as gender-related decisions. If defined in Esping-Andersen’s state-market specific categories, the social policies have remained remarkably stable, while they have changed dramatically in terms of Sainsbury’s gender-specific categories. Originally these later changes were not particularly intended by the parties. The goals and rhetoric of the individual model were formulated to accommodate rather than to shape actual developments.

In turn, the partially unintended effects had far-ranging consequences for later policies by tying up economic resources and creating a government-financed day-care labour market where almost all of the employees are female. Let us not forget a simple fact about politics. Intended – and outspoken – action will most certainly be challenged. We will never know for sure, but early decisions might have been different had the actual effects been fully grasped by the political

actors, who might then have either hesitated themselves or stimulated the opposition to muster resistance against the policies. As it turned out the decisions had tremendous effects upon later developments.

One of the many paradoxes in Swedish family policy history is that early major decisions behind the individual model of welfare state with its gender-equality implications were in fact made by an almost all-male Social Democratic leadership acting more or less on behalf of working class families. It was not until 1967 that the Social Democratic women's branch changed to a chairperson who was more in tune with the two-earner family concept. Class-based rhetoric lingered on during the early 1970s.

Major steps towards institutionalising the new system were more like the unintended (from the party leadership's point of view) consequences of policy measures aimed at securing the class-based social-democratic welfare state (Esping-Andersen, 1990). The unintended (though not necessarily regretted) effect of the class-based decisions was the de-institutionalisation of the male breadwinner model and the institutionalisation of the individual model. Still some class-based rather than gender-based policies definitely lingers on, indicated by the fact that most women in paid employment only work part-time. Nor has the issue of a shorter working day, preferred by many women, gained the upper hand over increased vacations, preferred by many men (Oskarson and Wängnerud, 1995: 71).

Stability Through Change

While some actors look back on a lost world others have a world to win. It was only after finding a formula to secure living standards of the low-income families that the Social Democrats realised there was a world to win by changing family policy standpoints. Initially the party leaders felt that if day-care expansion was to be given its final go-ahead the costs loomed high. No real changes were implemented and institutionalised until profound changes in family values and a desire to improve one's standard of living among the general public had led to a rush of housewives into the labour market at the end of the 1960s.

Slowly the leadership realized that day care provided a powerful means of finally institutionalising a welfare state in keeping with the party's overarching ideology of providing higher living standards to the whole population. Moreover, through the subsequent firm decision to favour day-care, the leadership managed to reinterpret its family policy in class terms. The party's overarching ideology rested on the belief that working-class people were entitled to a stable economic foundation. Until the 1960s that goal had seemed possible to reach with one

(male) breadwinner per family. Towards the end of the 1960s the party leadership came to the conclusion that the working-class standard-of-living could only be secured through two incomes per family. Day care proved to be the only realistic means to make the two-income family possible in families with small children. Consequently the dramatic change in the Social Democrats' family policy was the only means to keeping the party's main ideological goal stable.

This policy shift managed simultaneously to accommodate and shape preferences. By accommodating to public demand for a new family policy, the Social Democrats succeeded in shaping the public's preferences into broad support for extensive public services generally. Contrary to earlier research (Dunleavy, 1991: 130) we may conclude that ideology is equally prominent in both 'accommodating' and 'shaping' strategies.

At face value the main bourgeois opponents (Conservatives and Centre) stood empty-handed around 1970, unable at first to react to changing social customs and behaviour by formulating policies on rules and procedures in accordance with their immediately preferred overarching ideologies. Had they followed their ideologically preferred standpoints, the chasms between those backward-looking standpoints and actual social behaviour among the general public would have remained unbridged.

However, and quite surprisingly, we could depict the Conservatives as being able to preserve their ideology by actively changing their standpoint pulling a window opening handle. When they swallowed the bitter standpoint of public transfers they actually achieved two important things. First, the party found a new formula to support its long commitment towards a less-than-totally collectivised society without denying women the right to enter the labour market. Second, the party finally managed to consolidate the three bourgeois parties into a viable bloc challenging the Social Democrats. No longer were the Conservatives automatically stigmatised as the unreliable 'laissez-fare-ghost-of-the-Right'. Instead, this shift of standpoints made possible the party's subsequent leading role within the bourgeois bloc.

When the Conservative leadership realised that literally hundreds of thousands of children would lack proper day care, the party modified its policy so as to reduce demand for day care instead of denouncing it altogether. Thereby the overarching goal could remain stable. The party leadership hoped that by accepting what they at first regarded as a very doubtful public-transfer policy instrument, namely child-care allowances, a much worse outcome where every family would have to rely on collectivised day care could perhaps be halted. The political craftsmanship behind these decisions is a telling example of stability through change.

Policy continuity does not appear to be an end in itself. When a certain new policy standpoint seems to make ideological continuity possible, a party is capable of drastic policy changes. The Social Democrats changed their family policy when they found a new way of framing it in well-trodden class-politics terms. The Conservatives entered unfathomed transfers-policy-instrument waters when such a change vis-à-vis the party's traditional policy ground enabled the party leadership to open up the policy window which in turn led to the consolidation of the bourgeois bloc as a viable challenger to Social Democratic hegemony.

The key to establishing a formative moment or a window of opportunity lies in the possibility to change in a way that can be reconciled with actual social customs and habits as well as with the party's over-arching ideology. Changing social patterns will affect politicians' actions. But only when an issue is placed within an organisational and ideological context will the politician be able to decide on window-opening opportunities.

In an alleged world of catch-all parties, ideology is still to be counted on as the parties' measuring rod. By combining ideological world views with societal ('environmental') change we are able to conclude whether the changing world is actually distancing itself or approaching the ideologically preferred society (see Elster, 1986: 20 on a 'feasible set' of alternatives). Parties with a world to win will have an easier job to change their concrete standpoints whereas those parties who look back upon a lost world will have a more exacting task.

In spite of tremendous environmental changes some parts of the parties' social-policy ideologies have remained fairly stable. Admittedly some ideological changes have taken place in conjunction with new social trends but the character of these changes prove the importance of politics. Over the years, party ideologies have tended to change in a way like moving planets in parallel orbits, their relative distances remaining constant. Thus we have room for underlining two facets of what is in essence a paradox of stability through change. First we may claim that in order to keep stable *relative* ideological distances, a party sometimes has to change its position. Second, the fact that parties often change standpoints in no way prevents them from preserving their ideology. On the contrary, change is often the very precondition for keeping the ideology stable in a changing world.

NOTES

1. Extensive empirical evidence for this article is found in Hinnfors (1992). The major part of the empirical underpinning is taken from general party programmes and specific policy pro-

- grammes where family policy is usually discussed as a special item under a specified heading.
2. The status of the commission system is a peculiarity unique to Sweden. Traditionally, Swedish Cabinet Departments are extremely small, typically employing about 100 career bureaucrats, compared to the ordinary European ministry. One reason for this smallness is the system of temporary Investigatory Commissions. Commissions are set up with a specified research task and operate only for a limited time period (about one to five years) after which an extensive written report is issued and the commission dissolves. Hierarchically every commission is tied to a relevant Cabinet Department but even though the department is headed by a Cabinet minister, the commissions are free to carry out their work as they see fit. Commission members, which consist of a mixture of research experts and Members of Parliament, are appointed by the Cabinet. However, in praxis many commissions include members from all major parties and opposing views do have a platform via the commissions even though consensus in the final written report – which often comprises several hundred pages – is preferred. In the end, and although a Commission is free to draw any conclusion, the cabinet tends to get things its way but minority members are entitled to express their dissenting views in separate statements at the end of the report should they so decide. Quite often they do. In the 1990s the Commission system has lost some of its earlier importance (Johansson, 1992: 223, 242).
 3. Whereas politicisation characterises the private/public continuum this is true to a much lesser extent for the local-central continuum. There is general agreement among the parties that the lion's share of the welfare state should be carried out locally while centrally regulated and financially supported. Sweden is divided into 289 municipalities, each with extensive constitutionally-based freedoms, including sovereign taxing authority. In the Swedish context municipalities are regarded as the main providers of the welfare state, though in many cases this provision is financially supported by the central government. The day-care construction agreement was voluntary in the respect that no legal enforcement could force the municipalities to heed the agreement, but as long as the municipalities met certain rather precise requirements, such as regarding the number of children per day-care teacher, they were entitled to generous financial aid from the central government. This earmarking proved extremely structuring as regards material standards, teacher density, opening hours etc. of the day-care centres. The requirements were backed up by research carried out by several Royal Commissions during the 1970s and early 1980s (see for instance SOU 1981, # 25).
 4. Sainsbury's models (male breadwinner model (MBM), individual model (IM) are organised along the following ten dimensions: Familial ideology: MBM: husband = earner, wife = carer; IM: both parents = earner/carer. Entitlement: MBM: differentiated among spouses; IM: uniform. Basis of entitlement: MBM: breadwinner; IM: citizenship or residence. Recipient of benefits: MBM: head of household; IM: individual. Unit of benefit: MBM: household or family; IM: individual. Unit of contributions: MBM: household; IM: individual. Taxation: MBM: joint taxation, deductions for dependants; IM: separate taxation, equal tax relief. Employment and wage policies: MBM: priority to men; IM: aimed at both sexes. Sphere of care: MBM: primarily private; IM: strong state involvement. Caring work: MBM: unpaid; IM: paid component. (Sainsbury, 1996: 42).

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DR. JONAS HINNFORS

Department of Political Science

Göteborg University, Box 711

SE 405 30 Göteborg, SWEDEN

Phone: +46 (0) 31 773 46 72; Fax: +46 (0) 31 773 45 99

e-mail: Jonas.Hinnfors@pol.gu.se