# DISSERTATION

***Understanding family policy change: A multi-conceptual approach***

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# Understanding family policy change: A multi-conceptual approach

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# Abstract

It is argued that family policy is influenced by the politics of expansion. However, we have yet to fully understand the evolution of family policy. At the same time, we have yet to understand the striking differences between welfare states in their commitment to family policy reform. This dissertation raises the question of how to explain the evolution of family policy and the underlying reasons for the significant differences between countries. This dissertation examines two welfare states that lie outside mainstream welfare state research and have not yet been compared: the Czech Republic and South Korea.

To obtain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of political change, a multi-conceptual approach is applied. The analyses discussed and analyzed the following concepts: welfare regime, policy feedback, policy dismantling, policy transfer, public policy preferences, electoral competition, crises and intergenerational solidarity. By filling the research gaps identified in the previous literature on each of these concepts, this dissertation aims to enrich our understanding of these concepts and the broader landscape of (family) policy change.

Applying these concepts, seven empirical studies address the following research questions: (1) To what extent is the development of Korean family policy attributable to productivism and Confucianism? (2) To what extent is the development of childcare policy determined by the combination of the effects of self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback? (3) To what extent is policy development determined by multiple dimensions of tension: tensions between pre-existing policies and novel policy approaches, tensions between competing policies, and within (self-reinforcing versus self-undermining policy feedback) them? (4) Which theoretical pathways unfold policy termination and which challenges do political decision-makers have to overcome in this process? (5) To what extent are cross-national differences in family policy reform the result of differences in willingness to policy transfer and resistance to family policy transfer? (6) What are the reasons for the significant differences between countries in reforming father leave policies? (7) How and in how far the introduction of welfare policies went along changing patterns of intergenerational solidarity in a traditional society such as South Korea?

The analysis is based on three types of empirical data: expert interviews, public documents and aggregated data from datasets. The interview data includes sets of interviews with ministry officials and academics. Official policy documents contain various sources, such as strategic policy documents, meeting minutes of expert commissions, stenographic protocols, reports and media coverage of reforms, showing policy changes from 2000 to 2022. Aggregated data comes from the Korean Longitudinal Study on Aging, the Korean General Social Survey and Korean Social Survey from 2002 to 2018.

The findings show that the Czech Republic lags significantly behind other developed welfare states in family policy reforms, despite increasing public demand and institutional efforts for change in areas such as childcare and parental leave. Resistance/negative feedback from inherent, haunted and competing policy legacies to reform efforts and the impact of recent crises like the Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly hampered progress. In contrast, South Korea has undergone a profound and rapid transformation in family policy, challenging the traditional minimal state intervention rooted in its Confucian heritage. First, South Korea's productivist welfare state, which subordinates social policy to economic goals, recognized the economic benefits of increasing female labour market participation and responded to the fertility crisis. This economic focus led to significant policy changes. Second, family policy has been a significant topic in electoral competition, with political parties vying to win voter support through family policy promises. And third, South Korea has been willing to import and adapt family policies from abroad, such as father leave policies, to address its unique challenges. The Czech Republic has been more resistant to policy transfer and innovation. Overall, South Korea's strategic, economically-driven, and electorally-motivated approach, supported by academic advocacy and policy adaptation, contrasts with the Czech Republic's struggle with entrenched legacies and resistance, making South Korea more successful in reforming family policies.

This text contributes to the theoretical discussions on welfare state and family policy change by highlighting the concept of policy dismantling. It underscores the significance of understanding how and why certain social policies, such as childcare services, are terminated and the consequences of such actions. The example of the Czech Republic's post-communist era decision to dismantle childcare services illustrates the long-term difficulties and slow progress in re-establishing these services. This case study demonstrates that policy dismantling can have profound and lasting effects on gender equality and the ability of parents to balance work and family life. In relation to the previous, this text also highlights the role of self-undermining policy feedback in shaping family policy evolution. Traditionally, family policy scholarship has focused on self-reinforcing feedbacks as barriers to necessary reforms. However, the text introduces self-undermining feedbacks as a crucial, yet

underexplored, factor influencing policy changes. Findings suggest that self-undermining policy feedbacks are more prevalent and influential than often recognized in family policy scholarship.

Lastly, as the changes in social policies have indeed been profound in South Korea, this dissertation has also examined the relationship between changing welfare state and private generational contract. Contrary to the hypothesis that public support would replace private family resources, this dissertation found that older adults in South Korea continue to rely on financial support from their children, though this support has become more occasional, suggesting a specialization hypothesis. Unlike European countries where financial transfers typically flow downwards, South Korea maintains traditional upward patterns of intergenerational support. Additionally, there has been no crowding-out effect on practical support, with adult children, particularly daughters, increasingly providing care. Despite changes in the gendered organization of support and a decline in intergenerational cohabitation, traditional patterns of filial piety persist. However, there is a profound shift towards a collective understanding of elder care responsibilities shared among family, the welfare state, and society.

# List of original papers

Paper I Gurín, M. (2023) Forgotten concepts of Korea's welfare state: productivist welfare capitalism and Confucianism revisited in family policy change. *Social Politics*, *30*(4), 1211-1237.

Paper II Gurín, M. Understanding path-departing changes in childcare policy: The influence of self-undermining policy feedbacks. *Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (Major revision)*.

Paper III Gurín, M. & Kim, J. The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions. *Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (Under Review).*

Paper IV Gurín, M. Policy development after termination: The case of re-defamilialization. *Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (Under Review).*

Paper V Gurín, M. (2024) Exploring resistance in family policy transfer: A comparative analysis of the Czech Republic and South Korea. *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, *44*(7/8), 776–791.

Paper VI Gurín, M. & Gornick, J. Comparing the different paths of reforming father leave policies between the Czech Republic and South Korea: The role of public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises. *Submitted to a peer-reviewed journal (Special Issue, Under Review).*

Paper VII Gurín, M. & Brandt, M. (2024) Intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state: the case of South Korea. *International Journal of Social Welfare*. Online First.

# 1 Introduction

Welfare states have undergone significant changes in recent decades. One of the most notable trends has been the cutting of social welfare programs by many governments around the world (Pierson, 1994). This retrenchment was driven by various factors, including economic pressures and ideological shifts toward neoliberalism (Clayton & Pontusson, 1998). Welfare state retrenchment has manifested itself in a variety of ways, including cuts to social assistance programs, stricter eligibility criteria, and the privatization of certain welfare services. Many governments have implemented austerity measures, cut social benefits and reduced the overall generosity of social safety nets. There is also a push towards greater reliance on market mechanisms and individual responsibility, with policy emphasizing the importance of personal savings, private insurance and labour force participation as alternatives to state welfare (Gilbert, 2002; Vis, 2007).

While other areas of social welfare are experiencing various forms of cuts and austerity measures, family policy is argued to stand out as an exception, characterized by the politics of expansion (Ferragina & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015). In fact, governments have taken measures aimed at strengthening families, promoting child well-being, and supporting parents through various means such as increased childcare subsidies and parental leave provisions. The expansion of family policy can be understood as a reaction to emerging social risks and changing family dynamics (Fleckenstein & Lee, 2014; Mätzke & Ostner, 2010). In recent decades, societies have undergone profound transformations characterized by changes in family structures, employment patterns and demographic trends (Bonoli, 2005; Taylor-Gooby, 2004). These changes have led to new social risks and challenges that traditional welfare systems were not adequately equipped to address, such as balancing work and care responsibilities. In response, governments have expanded their family policy initiatives to mitigate these risks and provide support tailored to the evolving needs of families.

However, there is a striking disparity between welfare states when it comes to their commitment to reforming family policies. While some countries such as, for instance, Sweden show high levels of activity in reforming family policies (‘achievers’), others appear less active or stagnating in their approach to policy change (‘laggards’). Italy, for example, has been criticized for its limited efforts to modernize family policies in response to changing societal needs. The country’s family-oriented initiatives are

characterized by a lack of comprehensive support for working parents, limited access to affordable childcare, and outdated parental leave policies. As a result, many families find it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities, leading to low birth rates and concerns about population ageing (Naldini & Saraceno, 2008).

These developments raise relevant questions: *How to explain the evolution of family policies and the underlying reasons for the significant differences between countries?* The dissertation seeks answers to these questions through an analysis of family policy change in two welfare states that represent opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of policy change over the last 15 years: the Czech Republic and South Korea. Fifteen years ago, South Korea and the Czech Republic were in similar situations. However, their subsequent development has been markedly different, with South Korea advancing rapidly and the Czech Republic falling behind.

Investigating different trajectories of family policy change between countries, particularly those that are frontrunners and laggards, is crucial for understanding the dynamics of social policy development. Analyzing the frontrunners (in our case South Korea) – countries that have profoundly reformed their family policies – offers valuable insights into key factors that facilitate successful policy change. Conversely, examining the trajectories of major laggards (in our case the Czech Republic) – countries that have been slow or resistant to changing their family policies – reveals barriers and challenges that hinder progress. Examining the extreme cases is therefore a fitting strategy for an exploratory analysis of the phenomenon (Seawright & Gerring, 2008).

## 1.1 Family policy change as the economic imperative

The motivations for expanding family policies are diverse and include social, economic, demographic and gender considerations (Saraceno, 2016). At their core, family policy reforms are often driven by a commitment to promoting the well-being of families and individuals within society. A primary motivation is the pursuit of social justice and inclusion to ensure that all families, regardless of socio-economic status, have access to essential support services and resources. Demographic considerations such as population growth and population ageing are another important motivation for expanding family policy (Ferragina, 2019; Gauthier, 2007; Henninger *et al.*, 2008). In societies facing declining birth rates or an ageing population, policymakers often take measures to promote fertility and help families raise children. In addition, the pursuit of gender equality and the empowerment of women is a key driver for the expansion of family policy. By removing barriers to women's full participation in the labour market and society, policymakers aim to promote gender equality and empower women.

However, others argue that family policy reforms and the creeping policy innovations that accompany them (e.g. measures to active men as fathers) are closely linked to economic needs. It may be true that increased family well-being and father involvement are good things in themselves, but that does not necessarily mean that they are the policy motivation, even if they are legitimized in this way. A large body of literature argues that states develop various forms of motivations (e.g. feminist) that are economic in nature: they need higher GDP and economic stability, so more people need to be 'counted' in the formal labour market (Elias, 2013; Roberts, 2015).

While the European welfare states are becoming more productivist, productivism – i.e. the subordination of social policy to the economy, has been the original foundation, the social order of the East Asian welfare states (Holliday, 2000). In this 'East Asian welfare model', the primary goal of state intervention was to sustain and increase economic performance, with social welfare measures often seen as a means to that end rather than an end in themselves (Goodman *et al.*, 1998). One manifestation of this subordination was the prioritization of policies aimed at maintaining labour market flexibility and competitiveness. In productivist welfare capitalism, social benefits are often linked to employment, creating incentives for individuals to participate in the labour force. Furthermore, social spending in productivist welfare states is subject to budgetary constraints resulting from economic considerations. The scope and generosity of social benefits are limited, and politicians are reluctant to burden the economy with excessive social spending (Holliday, 2000). Traditionally, productivist welfare capitalism emphasized intergenerational support within families. The welfare state promoted filial obligations, aligning with traditional Confucian values prevalent in East Asian societies. The productivist welfare state thus underscored the importance of family networks for the provision of welfare and care and reduced reliance on state welfare systems (Kwon, 1997).

However, recent literature on East Asian welfare states argues that shifts in policy paradigms and ideological orientations signal a departure from productivist welfare capitalism (Choi, 2012). It is argued that East Asian welfare states introduce alternative policy frameworks that prioritize human development, social investment and inclusive growth over narrow measures of economic performance. The expansion of unemployment, healthcare and pension policies signals a departure from the productivist ethos towards other social orders that characterize European welfare regimes. This dissertation (Paper I) tests this hypothesis through an analysis of family policy changes in South Korea in recent decades. The results show that productivist welfare capitalism remains at the heart of family policy. It shows that policy change does not necessarily mean a change in welfare regimes, as social orders can adjust to changing circumstances and environments. In family policy, this manifested itself in a reassessment of activity, departing from a minimal (default) intervention towards

active intervention, as minimal state intervention was perceived as a threat to the (future) economy.

## 1.2 Policy change as the result of self-undermining policy feedback

The hallmark of the discourse about family policy changes is the recognition of self-reinforcing policy feedback. These are mechanisms within policy frameworks that maintain and reinforce the status quo or existing policies and often hinder the adoption of novel policy approaches (Pierson, 1994, 2004, see subsection 3.2.3 for more information on self-reinforcing policy feedback). Research highlights deep and enduring continuities within the policy landscape (Daly, 2010), with entrenched interests limiting reform efforts (León, 2007), and leaving imprints of old policy legacies (Morel, 2007).

However, family policy measures have been significantly reformed in various welfare states in recent decades (see also Section 2), which calls into question the notion that self-reinforcing policy feedback effects dominate, in other words that the effects of path dependence are so strong, that policy changes are, at best, incremental and path-dependent. As Weaver (2010) and Jacobs and Weaver (2015) would argue, there must be self-*undermining* policy feedback that advocates change – whether in the form of policy reorientation or policy rollback/dismantling, often driven by adverse socio-economic consequences that arise from existing policies. The dynamics of family policy are then driven by the combined effects of self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback mechanisms that determine the evolution of family policy regimes.

This dissertation aims to demonstrate that self-reinforcing policy feedback is only one aspect of the story in family policy, with self-undermining policy feedback being more widespread than family policy scholars typically assume. Examining childcare policy change in South Korea (Paper II) serves as a compelling example and highlights significant departures from previous paths, due to the influence of self-undermining policy feedback. This dissertation (Paper III) argues that the development of (family) policies is determined not only by the interplay between novel policy approaches and self-reinforcing policy feedback, but also by the inherent tensions within policies – the tensions between self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback, as well as tensions arising from competition *between* policies.

## 1.3 When the change is policy dismantling

As mentioned above, self-undermining policy feedback can lead to policy rollback, also known as policy retrenchment or dismantling. Policy dismantling refers to the deliberate and systematic process of reducing or eliminating existing policies (Bauer & Knill, 2014; Geva-May, 2004). One aspect of policy dismantling involves the repeal or abolition of specific laws or regulations that govern certain policy areas. This could result in the complete repeal of legal provisions requiring government action or intervention in areas such as childcare. Another form of policy dismantling involves the reduction or elimination of funding for government programs or initiatives (Bauer & Knill, 2012). This can happen through budget cuts, reallocation of resources or the termination of funding programs. As a result, the ability of government agencies or organizations to implement certain policies or provide services may be significantly limited. For instance, funding cuts to social assistance programs may result in reductions in benefits or eligibility criteria, impacting the availability and accessibility of support services for vulnerable populations (Knotz, 2018).

Although we understand the factors that lead to policy termination, the aftermath of termination is yet to be explored. This dissertation (Paper IV) presents three theoretical paths that can unfold after the policy is terminated: no measures are implemented, the terminated policy is reintroduced, or it is replaced. The dissertation offers groundbreaking empirical insights, illustrated by the case study of the re-defamilialization of childcare in the Czech Republic.

## 1.4 Different paths of reforming family policies

Over the last two decades, differences in family policies have emerged from country to country, highlighting the complex interplay of cultural, economic and political factors. While some countries have implemented major reforms to support families through parental leave, childcare subsidies and flexible work arrangements, others have lagged behind. However, despite efforts to analyze and compare these policies, a comprehensive understanding of the underlying reasons for these discrepancies remains elusive.

When examining family policy changes, several countries and welfare regimes are often compared. Among them, the Nordic countries, including Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland, are often highlighted for their comprehensive welfare systems and progressive family policies. Their policies are often used as a benchmark for evaluating family policy reforms in other countries. Additionally, the Anglo-Saxon welfare regime, represented by countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, is often compared to other regimes due to its market-oriented

approach and relatively limited state intervention in family affairs. Countries belonging to distinct welfare regimes such as the Czech Republic (post-communist welfare regime) and South Korea (East Asian productivist/Confucian welfare regime), have often been compared to the above countries/regimes (e.g. Fleckenstein & Lee, 2014; Horák & Horáková, 2017). Interestingly, though, the East Asian welfare states and the post-communist welfare states of Central Europe have never been contrasted.

However, these two welfare regimes and in particular the two case studies selected within them are intriguing examples for examining cross-country differences in changing family policy. The Czech Republic has developed a family policy since the late 19th century, with parental (maternity) leave arrangements and child-related benefits and services that were expanded during the communist regime. After the collapse of communism, governments decided to dismantle childcare services while extending parental leave arrangements (though maintaining the system gendered) in order to familiarize the welfare regime (Saxonberg & Sirovátka, 2008). In contrast, Korea has maintained minimal family policy activity since the 1960s, offering limited benefits and services only to those most in need, such as single parents (Lee D, 2018). At the beginning of the 2000s, both countries were in a similar 'starting position', both with minimal state activity in childcare and gendered parental leave arrangements. However, both countries have experienced significant differences in family policy development since the mid-2000s, with South Korea being one of the forerunners of family policy change and the Czech Republic being the major laggard. How can this difference be explained?

### 1.4.1 Policy transfer versus resistance to policy transfer?

Welfare states introduce new policies and update existing ones, and they often do so with inspiration from reforms implemented abroad (Dolowitz & Marsh, 1996; Rose, 1993). When policymakers are confronted with specific problems, they draw lessons from reforms in 'close' welfare states, in states that are in close proximity and/or have similar institutional arrangements (Knill & Lenschow, 1998) or cultural ties (Strang & Meyer, 1993), or they look for the most successful states that do not necessarily share these characteristics (Dolowitz & Marsh 1996). At the same time, however, the decision to transfer policies often involves determining which countries will be avoided in the eventual transfer because their solutions are deemed inappropriate or ineffective (Dolowitz & Marsh 1996; Stone, 2017). Actors differ in their openness to considering policy measures from abroad (Dolowitz & Medearis, 2009), and they may even resist traveling policy paradigms and their associated instruments (Bache &

Olsson, 2001; Pal, 2019) because they perceive them, for example as a threat to existing institutions (Pal, 2019).

Family policy is one of the areas where policy transfer has recently received a lot of attention. This appears to be partly due to the desire to understand, on the one hand, the expansion of this policy area, and, on the other hand, the notable differences between countries in the mix of policy instruments introduced (Lewis *et al*., 2008; Mahon *et al*., 2012). The expansion of family policy, motivated by the desire to incentivize fertility, improve the quality, affordability and take-up of existing instruments or address criticisms such as the lack of freedom of choice for parents (Kim & Lundqvist, 2023; Lewis & West, 2018; Windwehr *et al*., 2022), is then done by following the example of so-called 'role models' (Blum, 2014), which vary by country and policy. In the case of leave policy, for example, it is primarily the example of the Nordic countries from which countries draw lessons, as they are seen as 'best practice' models in which high female employment rates and birth rates are achieved (Blum, 2014; Kim & Lundqvist, 2023; Windwehr *et al*., 2022). This 'Scandinavization' is also strongly supported by international organizations (such as the OECD and the EU) through their soft and/or hard regulatory instruments (Lewis *et al*., 2008; Mahon *et al*., 2012), which are claimed to have a steering effect on the expansion of leave, but also childcare policies in countries (Blum, 2014; Mahon *et al*., 2012), at least in times of political and economic need (Windwehr & Fischer, 2021). Other countries could instead draw lessons from countries considered 'most compatible', i.e. from countries that are institutionally and/or culturally best suited. This logic has been applied, for example, to family policy reforms in Austria that were inspired by previous reforms in neighboring Germany (Blum, 2014), or to childcare reforms in the United Kingdom that aimed to import successful Dutch solutions (Lewis & West, 2017). Interestingly, countries seem to stick to the same models in the long term, even when it comes to adopting ambiguous policies (Windwehr & Fischer, 2021).

While positive lessons are drawn and *non*-transfer is perceived as a threat in this particular policy field, this appears to be only one side of the coin. The other is resistance to the new legislation – in other words, policy transfer is strongly perceived as a threat (Pal, 2019) and involves institutional and cultural prejudices that lead to profound selectivity (Stone, 2017). Political and social actors consciously ignore solutions or recommendations from abroad, postpone them (permanently) or reject them completely because they conflict with their norms and interests (Windwehr & Fischer, 2021; Windwehr *et al*., 2022).

However, despite these initial findings, these theoretical mechanisms of policy transfer appear to be largely unexplored in this policy area, and this is particularly true for resistance. This is interesting because family policy ideas, and those that are subject to policy transfer, are no exception, are likely to face resistance as they entail a paradigm shift (Lewis *et al*., 2008; Pal, 2019). Family policy can therefore offer a fruitful

starting point for analyzing resistance. This dissertation (Paper V) aims to fill this research gap examining both family policy transfer and resistance to family policy transfer in the Czech Republic and South Korea, leveraging the potential of both mechanisms to understand differences in family policy change.

### 1.4.2 Between public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises

How policy changes develop depends closely on public opinion, namely the level of support for various policy measures. Public opinion shapes the political landscape and influences the behavior of political parties and politicians (Huber & Stephens, 2001; Soroka, 2002; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). In democratic systems, politicians often rely on public support to gain and retain power, making them attentive to the prevailing attitudes and preferences of their voters. Therefore, politicians can adjust their policy stance and agenda to respond to changes in public opinion, particularly on contentious issues of significant public interest. By aligning their policy proposals and reform efforts with public policy preferences, politicians attempt to gain voter support and legitimacy, highlighting the symbiotic relationship between public opinion and political decision-making in policy formulation (Brooks & Manza, 2006b; Eriksson *et al*., 2002).

Electoral competition serves as a driving force behind profound policy reforms within democratic systems (Green-Pedersen, 2007). In a competitive electoral environment, political parties and candidates often vie for voter support by either offering different policy platforms and agendas aimed at solving pressing societal problems or by outbidding each other with bolder promises (ibid.). Therefore, the prospect of electoral success provides an incentive for politicians to propose bold and transformative policy reforms that resonate with voters and differentiate them from their opponents. This competition fosters a dynamic political landscape in which parties are motivated to innovate and adapt their policy agendas to attract voters' attention and support, ultimately leading to the implementation of substantive reforms that reflect voters' changing needs and preferences (Fleckenstein, 2011; Fleckenstein & Lee, 2014; Lee, 2018; Morgan, 2013).

However, negative feedback can significantly hinder policy introduction or reform by creating obstacles and resistance within the policy landscape (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002). Negative feedback can undermine the political will and momentum needed to implement reforms when policies face widespread criticism or resistance from various stakeholders, including interest groups and/or political opponents. Negative feedback can also increase the influence of special interests and pressure groups

seeking to protect their privileged positions or resist changes that could threaten the status quo, thereby undermining the prospects for meaningful policy reform. In such circumstances, policymakers may choose to maintain the status quo or make incremental adjustments rather than embark on ambitious reforms (Hacker, 2004; Pierson, 2004).

Crises have the potential to reduce negative feedback to the introduction or reform of policies in three ways (Capoccia, 2016; Pierson, 2004). First, crises often create a sense of urgency and need for immediate action. In the face of a crisis, such as an economic downturn or a pandemic, the imperative to address pressing challenges takes precedence over political gridlock and cooperation between political parties and stakeholders in implementing necessary reforms. The urgency could serve to mobilize support for policy measures that may have previously been contentious (Béland *et al*., 2021). Second, crises can shift public perceptions and attitudes, leading to increased receptiveness to government intervention and policy reforms. Crises can thus provide a window of opportunity for policymakers to enact reforms that may have previously met with resistance, as the urgency and severity of the crisis creates a favorable environment for overcoming resistance and garnering support for necessary policy actions (Vis *et al*., 2011). Finally, crises can redefine policy priorities and reshape the policy agenda, shifting the focus to addressing immediate challenges and vulnerabilities exposed by the crisis (Richardson, 2010). As policymakers and the public grapple with the reality of the crisis, there is often a reassessment of existing policies and practices with greater openness to exploring innovative policies and structural reforms. Crises can therefore serve as catalysts for the reassessment of entrenched beliefs and interests (Béland & Cox, 2010).

Recently, the importance of these theoretical mechanisms for understanding the development of family policy frameworks has been increasingly emphasized. Nevertheless, their application in analyzing changes within father leave policies has been relatively rare. This dissertation (Paper VI) attempts to fill this research gap by applying these theoretical drivers of change to clarify the different reform paths in father leave policy, with a comparative analysis between the Czech Republic and South Korea.

## 1.5 Outlining the research landscape

The focus of this dissertation is on conducting policy-oriented research (Becker, 2004), particularly social policy context-oriented research. Social policy-oriented research refers to academic or applied research that focuses on the study, analysis and evaluation of social policies and their effects on society (Blakemore & Warwick-Booth, 2013). Policy research has different focal points. The classic distinction in types of

policy analysis lies between research *of* policy and research *for* policy (Gordon *et al*., 1977). This dissertation focuses on the former.

As part of social policy-oriented research, this dissertation builds on an extensive literature dedicated to the analysis and understanding of *policy change*. The aim of analyzing policy change is diverse and includes a range of objectives aimed at understanding, explaining and facilitating transformations in social policies. A key goal is to elucidate the factors that drive policy change (Capano & Howlett, 2009). Scholars seek to identify the diverse influences—such as political, economic, social, and institutional factors—that contribute to changes in the policy agenda, priorities, welfare state outputs, and outcomes. By examining patterns of change in different family policy areas and contexts, this dissertation also aims to uncover the underlying dynamics and mechanisms that shape the evolution of family policy over time.

When analyzing policy changes, researchers often choose to conduct an in-depth analysis of a single concept. This strategic approach is beneficial because it allows for deeper exploration and closer examination of the selected concept. By focusing on a specific concept of change, scholars can delve deeply into the intricacies of that concept and uncover nuanced patterns, mechanisms, and causal relationships. However, while a single-concept approach offers numerous advantages, the value of a multi-conceptual approach in policy change analysis is also recognized. No single concept is able to capture the complexity that policy change brings with it. By integrating insights from multiple theoretical frameworks and perspectives, scholars can develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of policy dynamics and examine how different factors interact and intersect to shape welfare state outputs. This holistic approach enables a more informed analysis of policy changes and takes into account the diverse influences and contexts that characterize real-world policymaking. This dissertation combines both approaches and exploits the depth of empirical insights gained from several prominent concepts to provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of policy change (see Section 6 for the synthesis). This dissertation not only exploits their potential for understanding policy change, but also seeks to fill research gaps identified in the previous literature on each of these concepts. For example, it addresses oversight regarding self-undermining policy feedback (Weaver, 2010) and resistance to policy transfer (Pal, 2019). The aim of this dissertation is therefore to enrich our understanding of these concepts and the broader landscape of (family) policy change.

## 1.6 Research aim and questions

The aim of this dissertation is to analyze the development of family policy in two welfare states, each of which is characterized by divergent paths in reforming its

family policy. Particular attention is paid to various concepts that may be useful for understanding the evolution of family policies and cross-national differences by conducting six empirical studies on: (1) welfare regime in the context of productivism and the East Asian welfare model (Paper I), (2) policy feedback with particular emphasis on self-undermining policy feedback (Paper II and III), (3) policy dismantling with a focus on policy termination (Paper IV), policy transfer and resistance to policy transfer (Paper V), public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises (Paper VI). Table 1.1 below provides an overview of six empirical studies.

The following research questions guide the analysis:

1. To what extent is the development of Korean family policy attributable to productivism and Confucianism? (Paper I)
2. To what extent is the development of childcare policy determined by the combination of the effects of self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback? (Paper II)
3. To what extent is policy development determined by multiple dimensions of tension: tensions between pre-existing policies and novel policy approaches, tensions between competing policies, and within (self-reinforcing versus self-undermining policy feedback) them? (Paper III)
4. Which theoretical pathways unfold policy termination and which challenges do political decision-makers have to overcome in this process? (Paper IV)
5. To what extent are cross-national differences in family policy reform the result of differences in willingness to policy transfer and resistance to family policy transfer? (Paper V)
6. What are the reasons for the significant differences between countries in reforming father leave policies? (Paper VI)

**Table 1** Overview of the seven empirical studies

| Paper Title | Research Aim(s) | Research Question(s) | Research Subject |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paper I<br><br>*Forgotten concepts of Korea's welfare state: productivist welfare capitalism and Confucianism revisited in family policy change* | This study aims to understand the evolution of the Korean welfare state, and to challenge the thesis that the original foundations of social order are theoretically useless for understanding the development and current nature of the Korean welfare state. | To what extent is the development of Korean family policy attributable to productivism and Confucianism? | Extensive literature review.<br><br>Document analysis: strategic policy documents, reports, media coverage. |
| Paper II<br><br>*Understanding path-departing changes in childcare policy: The influence of self-undermining policy feedbacks* | This study aims to investigate the explanatory potential of the concept of self-undermining policy feedback concerning the issue of childcare policy change in South Korea. | To what extent is the development of childcare policy determined by the combination of the effects of self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback? | Expert interviews with two Korean academics specializing in childcare policy developments.<br><br>Document analysis: strategic policy documents, reports, media coverage.<br><br>Literature review. |
| Paper III<br><br>*The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions* | This study aims to extend the two-dimensional perspective on understanding childcare policy change with a multidimensional perspective that allows a more nuanced portrayal of policy change in this field. | To what extent is policy development determined by multiple dimensions of tension: tensions between pre-existing policies and novel policy approaches, tensions between competing policies, and within (self-reinforcing versus self-undermining policy feedback) them? | Expert interviews with two Korean academics specializing in childcare policy developments.<br><br>Document analysis: strategic policy documents, reports, media coverage.<br><br>Literature review. |
| Paper IV<br><br>*Policy development* | This study aims to identify theoretical pathways that may | Which theoretical pathways unfold policy termination | Semi-structured expert interviews |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *after termination: The case of re-defamilialization* | unfold following policy termination. The aim is to understand the complicated development of childcare policy in the Czech Republic and the process of re-defamilialization. | and which challenges do political decision-makers have to overcome in this process? | Document analysis: strategic policy documents, minutes of meetings of expert commissions, stenographic protocols, government reports, media coverage. |
| Paper V<br><br>*Exploring resistance in family policy transfer: A comparative analysis of the Czech Republic and South Korea* | This study aims to explore the willingness and resistance to policy transfer in Czech and Korean childcare and leave policies. | To what extent are cross-national differences in family policy reform the result of differences in willingness to policy transfer and resistance to family policy transfer? | Document analysis: strategic policy documents, minutes of meetings of expert commissions, government newsletter and reports, stenographic protocols, media coverage.<br><br>Expert interviews: two ministry officials (Czech case), two academics specializing in childcare policy developments and an expert from the Korea Labor Institute (Korean case). |
| Paper VI<br><br>*Comparing different paths of reforming father leave policies between the Czech Republic and South Korea: The role of public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback, and crises* | The evolution of father leave policies remains a neglected strand of research. While there exists extensive knowledge regarding the global developments of such policies, we are yet to comprehend the evolution of these policies and the underlying reasons for significant cross-country differences. This study aims to close this knowledge gap. | What are the reasons for the significant differences between countries in reforming father leave policies? | Document analysis: strategic policy documents, minutes of meetings of expert commissions, stenographic protocols, government reports, media coverage.<br><br>Expert interviews: two ministry officials, an expert from LOM (Czech case), expert from the Korea Labor Institute (Korean case). |

# 2 Laying the groundwork

## 2.1 Family policy: definition and objectives

Family policy encompasses a variety of government interventions and programs that aim to address the needs of families in various areas, including childcare, parental leave, healthcare, education, housing, and income support (Saraceno, 2011a). The existing literature divides family policies into two main categories: explicit and implicit family policies (Kaufmann, 2002). *Explicit* family policies are overt and deliberate government interventions specifically aimed at solving family-related problems. These policies include initiatives such as parental leave provisions, subsidized childcare programs, family income support schemes, and family counseling services, all specifically tailored to improve family well-being and address various issues families face.

*Implicit* family policies, on the other hand, are less overt and may not be explicitly framed as family-oriented initiatives. Instead, they consist of broader social and economic policies that indirectly impact families and influence their well-being (ibid.). Implicit family policies can manifest themselves in different ways, such as through housing policies that affect family living conditions, healthcare policies that affect family members' access to medical services, and education policies that shape opportunities for children and parents. Although these measures are not specifically aimed at families, they can have a significant impact on family life and well-being. This dissertation focuses primarily on the analysis of explicit family policies, with particular emphasis on childcare (Paper I, II, III, IV, V) and leave policies (Paper I, V, VI).

Family policy is a complex area of social policy that addresses the needs, challenges and dynamics of families within society. These policies are intended to create a supportive environment that promotes positive parent-child relationships, encourages healthy lifestyles, and improves overall family functioning (Thévenon & Luci, 2012). In addition, family-friendly measures aim to help parents to balance their work and family obligations. This includes offering parental leave policies, flexible working arrangements, and affordable childcare options. By facilitating better work-life balance, these measures contribute to higher parental satisfaction, lower stress levels, and a conducive environment for higher birth rates (Saraceno, 2016).

Furthermore, family policy makes a significant contribution to combating poverty and socioeconomic inequalities within families. Various policies, including income support programs, tax credits, and housing subsidies, aim to alleviate financial hardship and promote the economic stability of vulnerable families (Van Lancker *et al*., 2015). By combating poverty and inequality, family policies play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and improving intergenerational mobility.

### *Family policy and gender (in)equality*

In addition to the aforementioned points, family policies play a crucial role in shaping gender inequality by influencing the distribution of care responsibilities, economic opportunities and social norms within households and in society at large (Daly, 2020). Depending on their design and implementation, these measures either reinforce existing gender disparities or contribute to greater gender equality (Leitner, 2003; Saraceno & Keck, 2010).

Family policies influence gender inequality, among other things, by affecting care responsibilities (O'connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993). Traditional family policies that emphasize male breadwinners and female caregivers (can) perpetuate entrenched gender roles, with women disproportionately taking on caregiving responsibilities. This division of labour limits women's participation in the labour market, hinders their career advancement, and contributes to economic dependence on their male partners, thereby reinforcing gender inequality (Leitner, 2003).

Conversely, family policies that promote gender-neutral care arrangements, such as, for example, parental leave policies that encourage fathers to take an active role in childcare help challenge traditional gender norms and promote greater gender equality (Almqvist & Duvander, 2014). By encouraging men to share caring responsibilities more equally with women, these policies promote women's labour force participation, strengthen their economic autonomy and reduce gender gaps in employment and earnings.

Furthermore, family policies influence gender inequality by affecting access to childcare and other support services (Leitner, 2003). Affordable and high-quality childcare services enable parents, especially women, to better reconcile work and family responsibilities and thus make it easier for them to participate in the labour market (Bonoli, 2013). Policies that invest in childcare infrastructure and provide subsidies for childcare costs help reduce the burden of caregiving on women, promote their economic empowerment, and thereby contribute to greater gender equality.

## 2.2 Post-industrial welfare state: The era of new social risks

As welfare states transition to post-industrial societies, they face *new social risks*, particularly those related to the family (Taylor-Gooby, 2004; Bonoli, 2005). While old social risks focus on traditional problems such as poverty, unemployment and illness, new social risks arise from changes in family structures, dynamics and roles. While 'old' problems persist, new social risks increase complexity and require innovative policy responses, challenging traditional welfare state provisions (Huber & Stephens, 2007).

First, demographic change, including declining birth rates and ageing populations, poses challenges for welfare states in caring for young and older people (Taylor-Gooby, 2004). This demographic shift is straining traditional family care networks and requires alternative forms of support. Second, the rise of non-traditional family forms such as single-parent households, cohabitating relationships, and same-sex partnerships has changed the landscape of family-related risks. These include increased financial vulnerability, social exclusion and inadequate support with caregiving tasks (Chzhen & Bradshaw, 2012). The changing composition of families requires a reassessment of existing social policies to address the diverse needs and challenges faced by these non-traditional family structures. Finally, changing gender roles and labour market participation patterns have led to increased pressure on families, particularly in relation to work-life balance, childcare and parental leave policies (Orloff, 2009).

Welfare states have responded to these family-related new social risks through policy adjustments and reforms. First, many welfare states have recognized the need for comprehensive family support and have expanded their social welfare programs to include childcare services, parental leave policies, and eldercare services (Ferragina & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015). These measures aim to ease the burden on families and promote gender equality by facilitating work-life balance and improving care support. For instance, countries such as Sweden and Norway have introduced comprehensive parental leave policies and subsidized childcare to support working parents (Duvander *et al*., 2010), which are considered as exemplary models for other welfare states (see also Paper V).

Second, welfare states have introduced targeted interventions to address specific vulnerabilities within non-traditional family structures. Policies targeting single-parent households, for example, may include income support programs, educational opportunities, and employment assistance to mitigate financial insecurity and promote social inclusion (e.g., Van Lancker *et al*., 2015). Similarly, recognizing the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ families, some welfare states have enacted anti-discrimination laws and expanded access to family benefits (Evertsson *et al*., 2020).

Finally, welfare states have attempted to integrate family-related considerations into broader social policy frameworks, emphasizing the linkage of family well-being to other areas such as employment, education and healthcare. This holistic approach recognizes the complexity of social risks and emphasizes the importance of coordinated policy responses. For instance, in addition to investing in education and training, countries such as Germany have also introduced family-friendly workplace policies to support working parents and improve children's well-being (Fleckenstein, 2011; Seeleib-Kaiser & Fleckenstein, 2009).

In recent decades, many countries have experienced a retrenchment of their social systems in response to old social risks, characterized by austerity, privatization and cuts in social spending (Starke, 2006; Pierson, 1994). In contrast, family policy was influenced by politics of expansion.

### 2.2.1 Childcare policy change

Childcare policies have evolved significantly since the mid-20th century, reflecting changing social norms and economic structures. Early childcare initiatives focused primarily on welfare-oriented approaches and targeted low-income families and disadvantaged children (Land, 1980). However, as more women entered the workforce and dual-earner households became the norm, demand for affordable and quality childcare services surged, prompting governments to rethink their childcare policies.

One of the most notable trends of the last few decades has been the expansion of childcare *coverage* in European welfare states to allow for better work-family reconciliation. Governments have invested in expanding the availability of childcare services, including daycare centers, preschools, and afterschool programs, to meet the growing demand of working parents (Bonoli, 2013; Plantenga & Remery, 2017). Many European countries have moved towards *universalization* of childcare services, with the aim of ensuring all children have access to quality early childhood education and care, regardless of family income or employment status (Blomqvist & Palme, 2020; An & Peng, 2016). Universal provision is seen as a means of reducing social inequalities, improving social mobility and promoting equal opportunities from an early age.

In addition to expansion and universalization efforts, there is an increasing focus on improving the *quality* of childcare services (Plantenga *et al.*, 2009a). European welfare states have invested in professionalizing the childcare workforce, improving the training and qualifications for educators and introducing quality assurance mechanisms to ensure that childcare facilities meet high standards of safety, hygiene and educational provision.

Given the diverse needs and preferences of families, European childcare policies increasingly emphasize *flexibility* and *accessibility* in service delivery that allow both parents to balance work and family responsibilities. Governments have introduced measures such as extended opening hours, part-time options and flexible working hours to accommodate parents' diverse work schedules and childcare needs, accessible to marginalized and underserved communities, including rural areas and immigrant groups, through outreach programs and targeted subsidies (Letablier, 2008).

Changes in childcare policy are increasingly motivated by the recognition that today's children are tomorrow's workforce. Governments and policymakers understand that early childhood education and care are critical in laying the foundation for a skilled, capable, and competitive workforce. By investing in high-quality childcare, societies aim ensure that children develop the cognitive, social, and emotional skills necessary for future success. This includes not only basic literacy and numeracy but also problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration skills that are vital in the modern economy. As such, policies (should) focus on improving the accessibility, affordability, and quality of childcare services, aiming to give every child a strong start in life and an equal opportunity to thrive (Esping-Andersen, 2002).

Moreover, these policy changes are driven by the economic imperative of maximizing the potential of the future labour market. In an increasingly knowledge-based and technologically advanced global economy, the demand for a highly skilled workforce is paramount. Early social investment in children's development is seen as a strategic move to ensure that future generations can meet these demands and contribute meaningfully to economic growth and innovation (Hemerijck, 2015). By prioritizing early childhood education in policy frameworks, governments aim to reduce long-term social costs associated with poor educational outcomes, such as unemployment and welfare dependency, thus promoting a more sustainable and prosperous economic future. It is argued that the concept of *social investment* has had a transformative impact on the development of childcare policy in Europe (Himmelweit & Lee, 2021; Morgan, 2011).

### 2.2.2 Leave policy change

In recent years, European countries have also made significant changes to their parental leave policies, reflecting evolving societal norms, demographic shifts and policy objectives. Parental leave policies and childcare policies are closely linked parts of a comprehensive family policy framework aimed at supporting parents, promoting children's well-being and facilitating work-life balance. While parental leave policies

focus on providing parents with time off work following the birth (or adoption) of a child, childcare policies take into account the need for ongoing care and early childhood education for children beyond the initial parental leave. These two policy areas are complementary and interconnected. In the past, parental leave was often limited in duration and scope, with primary emphasis placed on maternity leave for mothers (Son, 2024). However, as women's labour force participation increased and gender equality became a priority, there was increasing recognition of the need to reform parental leave policies to better meet the diverse needs of modern families.

A notable trend in recent years has been the extension of the length of parental leave in many European countries. Governments have recognized the importance of giving parents sufficient time to bond with their newborns or newly adopted children and support their early development. Therefore, parental leave entitlements have been expanded, allowing parents to take longer periods of time to care for their children without jeopardizing their employment status or financial security (Son & Böger, 2021). In addition to initiatives aimed at extending parental leave, there have also been policy initiatives that shortened the duration of parental leave, such as the parental leave reform in Germany in 2007, which shortened the duration of parental leave but became more flexible and generous (Schober, 2014). The aim of this reform was to encourage fathers to be more actively involved in childcare by providing financial incentives for taking parental leave and to encourage early labour market re-entry of parents (respectively mothers).

European countries have also introduced measures to improve the flexibility and accessibility of parental leave arrangements (Ray *et al*., 2010). This includes providing flexible leave options, such as part-time or intermittent leave, which allow parents to tailor their leave arrangements to their individual needs and preferences. Additionally, efforts have been made to make parental leave more accessible to different family structures, including same-sex couples, single parents and adoptive families, by broadening eligibility criteria and recognizing different care arrangements.

### *Father-specific leave policies*

However, it became clear that women's labour market participation faces major challenges without greater father involvement in childcare. Traditional gender norms and societal expectations often place primary responsibility for childcare on women. As a result, women face pressure to prioritize caring responsibilities over their careers, leading to interruptions or limitations in their labour force participation (Jaumotte, 2004). Without adequate support from fathers in sharing childcare responsibilities, women often find it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. At the same

time, fathers' lack of involvement in childcare exacerbates the gender pay gap and perpetuates income inequality between men and women. When women are primarily responsible for childcare, they are forced to reduce their working hours, turn down promotions, or forego career opportunities to accommodate their caregiving responsibilities. This leads to lower earnings and lower financial security for women (Cukrowska-Torzewska & Matysiak, 2020).

At the same time, there is a growing interest among fathers in childcare, driven by the desire to build a bond with their children. Fathers today are more actively seeking opportunities to be involved in their children's lives, whether through practical caregiving tasks, attending parent-teacher meetings, or participating in family activities (Dermott, 2003). This interest in childcare is driven by a desire to break away from traditional gender norms and stereotypes that have long limited fathers to the role of breadwinner and left childcare primarily to mothers. Instead, fathers embrace (or are willing to do so) their role as caring caregivers and seek opportunities to be more present and involved in their children's everyday lives.

However, in the past, parental leave policies focused primarily on providing leave for mothers and reflected traditional gender roles and assumptions about caring responsibilities. In contrast, fathers were often excluded from formal leave entitlements or offered minimal leave options (Engeman & Burman, 2023). However, due to the above-mentioned developments, it has been increasingly recognised that fathers need to be more involved in childcare.

An important development in recent decades has been the emergence of paternity leave entitlements under parental leave regulations. Many welfare states have introduced special leave policies for fathers, allowing them to take time off from work to bond with their newborn (or newly adopted) child and participate in the care of their newborn (or newly adopted) child (ibid.). These paternity leave entitlements are often non-transferable and encourage fathers to take leave and share caring responsibilities with mothers. Many welfare states have introduced individual, non-transferable parental leave provisions, which allocate part of parental leave exclusively to fathers. These provisions are intended to promote greater gender equality in caregiving responsibilities by encouraging fathers to take a more active role in childcare. These provisions have been found to be more successful in encouraging fathers to take leave compared to shared entitlements (Brandth & Kvande, 2019). Finally, governments have introduced various incentives and support mechanisms to encourage fathers to take parental leave. These include financial incentives such as high wage replacement/benefit caps or bonuses, as well as awareness campaigns, educational programs and workplace policies that promote a supportive and inclusive fatherhood culture (Moss & Deven, 2015).

### 2.2.3 Cross-country differences

One of the most fascinating and at the same time most critical aspects of the change in family policy is the variability of its course in different welfare states. It can be observed that these changes appeared earlier in certain countries than in others, distinguishing between 'early birds' and 'latecomers' (Armingeon & Bonoli, 2006). Some nations have shown greater activity in care, earning them the designation of 'forerunners', while others have made more moderate adjustments, and still others show significant hesitation and are referred to as 'laggards' (Ferragina & Seeleib-Kaiser, 2015; Oliver & Mätzke, 2014). As a result, differences are emerging in the speed and extent of family policy updates. Looking at this from a slightly different perspective, discrepancies emerge in the smooth flow of change, with certain countries experiencing particularly problematic transitions characterized by twists and turns, extensive debates about policy solutions, or incomplete reforms (Szelewa & Polakowski, 2020). Finally, it is noteworthy that different mixes of family policy instruments persist (Daly, 2011; Morel, 2007).

These differences can be seen between the early birds and latecomers, but also within the individual categories themselves (for early birds, see, for example, Duvander & Ellingsæter, 2016; Ellingsæter & Guldbrandsen, 2007). For instance, South Korea stands out among the forerunners for its significant turnaround in family policy paradigms (Fleckenstein & Lee, 2017), whereas countries such as Czech Republic have yet to successfully embark on the path toward proactive and effective reconciliation and social investment policy. This lack of progress can be attributed to limited financial resources, institutional capacity, and competing policy priorities and legacies (Saxonberg & Sirovátka, 2008).

# 3 Theoretical framework and literature review

## 3.1 Welfare regime as the foundation stone

Exploring the welfare regime of the particular welfare state is vital for gaining insights into social order and policy changes. The welfare state literature defines a welfare regime as a specific set of social policies, programs, and institutions that operate within a particular country or region, aimed at providing social protection and support to its citizens (Seeleib-Kaiser & Sowula, 2020). Welfare regimes are frequently characterized by their institutional arrangements, the type of welfare benefits they offer, and the underlying principles guiding social policy, such as social justice, solidarity, and individual responsibility.

In the welfare state literature, scholars use various typologies and frameworks to classify and analyze welfare regimes along various dimensions, such as the degree of decommodification (the extent to which welfare services protect individuals from market forces), stratification (the extent of inequality in welfare benefits across different social groups), and the role of the state in relation to other actors such as the family or the market. One of the most influential typologies is that proposed by Gøsta Esping-Andersen in his book *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism* (1990), which divides welfare regimes into liberal, conservative and social democratic based on their approaches to decommodification and social stratification. *Liberal* welfare regimes, for example, prioritize market-based mechanisms and have relatively low levels of decommodification and high levels of social inequality. *Conservative* regimes, on the other hand, tend to emphasize family-based welfare provision and exhibit moderate levels of decommodification and stratification. *Social democratic* regimes strive for high levels of decommodification and low levels of stratification, with strong state intervention to provide universal welfare benefits.

In addition to the liberal, conservative, and social democratic welfare regimes, scholars have identified additional welfare regime types to capture the diversity of welfare systems around the world, such as the Mediterranean, East Asian, or post-communist welfare regime types. The *Mediterranean* or *Southern European* welfare regime type is characterized by a relatively low level of welfare provision and a high reliance on family-based support systems (Ferrera, 1996). Welfare states in southern European countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal have historically

exhibited features of this regime, often combining limited public benefits with strong family networks. Welfare systems in East Asian countries such as Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have also been classified as forming a distinct regime type, often referred to as the *East Asian welfare model*, characterized by a strong emphasis on economic development, limited social insurance, and a reliance on family and community-based support networks (Goodman *et al*., 1998). This regime is often associated with Confucian values that emphasize family responsibility and social harmony (Jones, 1993). Countries in Central and Eastern Europe have made the transition from communism to a market economy have developed welfare systems with different characteristics that reflect the legacies of their socialist past and the challenges of economic transformation (Cerami, 2005).

### 3.1.1 Gender critique of Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism

Esping-Andersen's framework for understanding welfare regimes has been closely examined and debated by researchers. Feminist scholars, for example, have repeatedly criticized Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare regimes, focusing primarily on how it overlooks or inadequately considers gender inequalities and the gendered nature of welfare state provision. Feminist scholars argue that Esping-Andersen's typology does not adequately consider the ways in which welfare regimes are structured by gender inequalities and how they contribute to the reproduction of gender hierarchies (Fraser, 1994; O'Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993). The typology tends to focus on the relationship between state, market and family without explicitly considering how gender intersects with these dynamics.

Feminist scholars emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing unpaid care work, predominantly carried out by women, within welfare regimes. Esping-Andersen's typology tends to overlook the significant contribution of unpaid care work to social reproduction and well-being, leading to an incomplete understanding of welfare provision and its impact on gender equality (Knijn & Kremer, 1997). In addition, feminist critics argue that Esping-Andersen's typology perpetuates a male breadwinner model of welfare provision, which assumes that men are the primary breadwinners and women are primarily responsible for unpaid care work (Orloff, 1993; Sainsbury, 1996).

From a different perspective, feminist scholars have enriched the literature on the welfare state through their engagement with the concept of *defamilialization*. This concept refers to the process by which the state and/or the market assume(s) a greater role in the provision of welfare benefits and services that have traditionally been provided by families, thereby reducing the dependence on family support networks for individual well-being (Leitner, 2003; Lister, 1994; McLaughlin & Glendinning,

1994). Countries such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland and Iceland are often considered to have high levels of defamilialization. Nordic welfare states emphasize universal welfare benefits and services, such as publicly-funded childcare and elderly care that reduce dependence on family support networks. Countries in continental Europe, including Germany and the Netherlands, exhibit varying levels of defamilialization. Although government intervention in family matters is significant, family support networks still play a role in the provision of welfare and services, particularly in areas such as childcare and eldercare. Defamilialization is lowest in southern European welfare states, because they rely heavily on intergenerational and family contracts.

### *Family policy typologies*

Family policy typologies reflect feminist critique of Esping-Andersen's welfare state regimes by addressing the limitations in his original framework concerning gender and family dynamics. Esping-Andersen's typology, as noted above, has been criticized for its insufficient attention to gender roles and the differential impact of welfare policies on men and women, largely ignoring the role of social reproduction and care work, which are disproportionately shouldered by women. Consequently, this critique have led to the development of more nuanced family policy typologies that explicitly incorporate gender dimensions and the distribution of care responsibilities.

The concept of *gender regimes*, introduced by Orloff (1993), examines how policies enable women to pursue paid work and balance this with family life, thereby achieving financial independence from men. Lewis (1992) classified policies based on their support (for) or challenge to the male breadwinner model, while Korpi (2000) proposed *models* of gender policy by contrasting public care services and income transfers. In addition, Daly (2010) identified family policy *profiles* based on the motivations and national philosophical orientations that shape unique relationships between family, market, and state. She categorized countries into: a) countries with a pro-natalist and pro-family orientation (note: currently the case of South Korea); b) those for whom minimal state intervention in family autonomy is preferred (note: currently the Czech case); c) those who seek gender and child egalitarianism, minimize the economic role of the family and support individual autonomy through the state; and d) countries where policies focus on alleviating poverty rather than supporting families.

Work–family reconciliation issues form the basis of specific typologies. Gornick and Meyers (2004), for instance, classified countries based on their support for the employment of mothers with young children. Bahle (2008) created a typology of 25

EU countries based on state support for the family-work relationship and family income. This typology includes five clusters, from the most to the least generous and universal.

Finally, Leitner (2003) suggested categorizing policies according to whether they relieve family members of financial and caregiving responsibilities or support them by providing money and/or time. She distinguishes between: a) *implicit familialism*, where minimal or no support exists; b) *explicit familialism*, where policies financially aid specific family members in fulfilling their duties; c) *de-familialization*, where policies reduce family responsibilities, shifting them partially to the public and/or market sphere; and d) *optional familialism*, where individuals and families have the choice of whether to use formal services or rely on family care arrangements. According to this widely accepted typology, South Korea embodies a mix of explicit familialism (through its parental leave policies) and optional familialism (reflected in its approach to childcare), with childcare services predominantly provided through the market alongside cash-for-care allowances (see Paper I). In contrast, the Czech Republic shows a mix of explicit familialism (evident in its parental leave policies) and implicit familialism (due to deficiencies in the provision of childcare services), while at the same time showing signs of re-defamilialization (as outlined in Paper IV).

### 3.1.2 Welfare regime change: departure or adjustment?

Over time, these regimes have undergone significant changes influenced by various factors such as economic conditions, political ideologies, demographic shifts, and globalization. For example, Germany has witnessed significant changes in its family policy landscape over the last three decades, marked by efforts to promote defamilialization. Historically, family policy in Germany has been characterized by a strong emphasis on traditional family structures, with support aimed primarily at married couples and stay-at-home mothers (Pfau-Effinger, 2004). However, demographic shifts, including declining birth rates and increasing female labour force participation, have required a reassessment of family policy priorities to address emerging social and economic challenges. One of the central developments in German family policy is the expansion of childcare services, which aims to facilitate women's participation in the labour market and promote gender equality. From the 1990s onwards, successive governments have invested in expanding childcare facilities and providing affordable and accessible early childhood education and care (ECEC) services (Fleckenstein, 2011). At the same time, though, there are some European welfare states that have shown a tendency towards limited changes in their family policies over the last three decades (Oliver & Mätzke, 2014).

The development of welfare regimes has been the subject of intense debate among scholars. While some argue that welfare regimes undergo fundamental changes due to ideological shifts or economic imperatives, others argue that welfare states *adjust* primarily and only to changing environments and circumstances, without a radical restructuring or a clear departure from their original foundation(s) (Morel, 2007). Furthermore, many scholars argue that welfare states face significant obstacles in departing from entrenched policies, particularly those rooted in familialism (Daly, 2011).

## 3.2 Understanding stability and change

Policy change is a dynamic and complex process shaped by a variety of factors, including institutional structures, political dynamics, social norms, and historical contingencies. Various theoretical frameworks have been developed to clarify the mechanisms through which policies evolve over time and to provide insights into the drivers, patterns and implications of these changes, including the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), Multiple Streams Framework (MSF), Punctuated Equilibrium Theory (PET) and historical institutionalism. The dissertation's analysis of policy developments using concepts such as policy feedback, policy transfer, welfare regimes, crisis, public policy preferences, electoral competition and policy dismantling can be situated within these general theories of policy change, each of which offers unique insights into the dynamics of policy development and transformation in public and social policy, offering a comprehensive understanding of how family policy evolves.

The Advocacy Coalition Framework assumes that policy change occurs through the interaction of advocacy coalitions, which are groups of actors from various sectors that share common beliefs and coordinate actions over time (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith, 1993). The dissertation's focus on electoral competition and public policy preferences can be located within the ACF as these factors influence and are influenced by advocacy coalitions. By analyzing how diverse coalitions—comprising of policymakers, interest groups, and activists—mobilize support, support policy dismantling, and push for reform, the dissertation illuminates the power dynamics and ideological battles that shape family policies. Therefore, this dissertation contributes to explaining the persistence or change of policies based on the strength and strategies of competing coalitions.

The Multiple Streams Framework, developed by John Kingdon (1984), posits that policy changes occur when three streams—problems, policies, and politics—converge at critical moments known as "policy windows." The dissertation's examination of crises aligns with the problems stream, where external shocks or focal events highlight

issues that need to be addressed. Policy transfer and policy feedback relate to the policies stream and examine how solutions are developed, shared, and adapted across contexts. The politics stream encompasses public policy preferences and electoral competition and describes how political conditions and public sentiment influence political decisions. By analyzing cases in which these streams converge, the dissertation identifies key moments in which significant family policy changes — whether in the form of expansion or dismantling — become possible.

Punctuated Equilibrium Theory assumes that policy changes occur in significant bursts after long periods of stability (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993), provides a useful lens for understanding how crises trigger major shifts in family policies. The dissertation follows on PET in examining how economic downturns, demographic shifts or political upheavals disrupt existing policy equilibria and create opportunities for substantial family policy reforms or policy dismantling. By identifying patterns of stability and change, the dissertation illuminates the conditions under which family policies undergo significant transformations and the role of critical junctures in shaping long-term policy developments.

While I incorporate key insights from ACF and other theoretical frameworks mentioned above, my research is also anchored in historical institutionalism, which is used to analyze how the legacy of past family policies constrains or facilitates current policy changes. Historical institutionalism is a theoretical approach that emphasizes the role of institutions in shaping political behavior and outcomes over time. This theory posits that institutions—defined as formal and informal rules, procedures, norms and conventions embedded in the organizational structure of the polity or political economy—have a significant and lasting influence on policy development. Scholars such as Paul Pierson (2000) and Kathleen Thelen (2004) have been instrumental in advancing this framework, arguing that institutions create path dependence that influences future policy decisions and developments. This path dependence suggests that certain institutional arrangements, once established, become self-reinforcing and make significant change difficult without significant external shocks or crises.

Historical institutionalism emphasizes the importance of temporal sequences and the timing of political events in shaping institutional development. The concept of *critical junctures*, as discussed by Giovanni Capoccia and R. Daniel Kelemen (2007), refers to periods of significant change that set institutions on different paths, which are then followed by long periods of institutional stability. These critical junctures can lead to divergent developmental trajectories even among similar entities. The theory also illuminates the mechanisms of *increasing returns*, whereby initial policy choices generate positive feedback loops that further entrench particular institutional patterns and make deviations costly and complex. This is particularly evident in the work of

Pierson (2000, 2004), who shows how social security policy and welfare state regulations have developed in a path-dependent manner in different countries.

*How should stability and change in welfare states be understood?*

It is often argued that public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping the development of welfare states and influences the introduction, expansion and reform of social policies by reflecting societal preferences for addressing social needs (Soroka, 2002; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). When a significant portion of the population expresses support for certain policy initiatives, policymakers are more likely to prioritize these issues and take action to resolve them (Brooks & Manza, 2006a; Pierson, 1996).

Dissatisfaction with specific policies can also lead to shifts in policy priorities as governments respond to public demands for change. When policies fail to achieve their intended goals or exacerbate social problems, policymakers reallocate resources, adjust funding priorities, or introduce new initiatives to address pressing problems (Jacobs & Weaver, 2015; Weaver, 2010). If dissatisfaction with existing policies reaches a critical threshold, policymakers may be forced to reverse course or reform the policy in question. Public outcry, protests and advocacy campaigns put pressure on governments to address perceived deficiencies or failures in policy implementation (Pierson, 1996). In response, policymakers make revisions, modifications, or even complete overhauls of existing policies to address the concerns of dissatisfied stakeholders.

At the same time, however, other feedbacks, referred to in the literature as 'self-reinforcing' or 'negative', can also exacerbate political inertia by reinforcing existing power structures and resource distributions within political systems (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002; Pierson, 1994, 2004). When policies favor certain vested interests or privileged groups, these can influence to maintain the status quo and resist attempts at reform. The concentration of power and resources between entrenched interests can create barriers to change as policymakers face resistance from influential actors who benefit from the existing policy regime (Pierson, 1994). As a result, self-reinforcing/negative feedback can lead to policy stagnation and difficulty in addressing pressing social issues or responding to (changing) societal needs.

### 3.2.1 Public policy preferences and policy responsiveness

Public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping the development of social policy and influences the priorities and design of welfare programs and services (Huber & Stephens, 2001; Soroka, 2002; Soroka & Wlezien, 2010). Because public opinion reflects

citizens' attitudes, beliefs, and preferences toward social issues, policymakers often take public policy preferences into account when formulating social policies (Brooks & Manza, 2006b; Eriksson *et al*., 2002). One way in which public opinion influences the development of social policy is through its influence on political agendas and priorities. Public opinion surveys and polls provide insights into the issues that are most salient and urgent to citizens and guide policymakers in identifying policy areas that require attention and resources (Beyer & Hänni, 2018; Soroka, 2002). For example, public concern about child poverty and increasing gender inequality may lead policymakers to prioritize these issues on the policy agenda, leading to the introduction of new welfare programs or reforms that target the needs of families and women.

Furthermore, public opinion can influence the design and formulation of social policies by shaping the policy preferences and priorities of policymakers. Studies have found that policymakers respond to public opinion, with public support or opposition to particular policy proposals influencing policymakers' decisions and policy choices (Brooks & Manza, 2006b; Eriksson *et al*., 2002). When policymakers perceive strong public support for certain policies, they may be more inclined to adopt and integrate these policies into their policy agendas (Pierson, 1996). Conversely, public opposition to certain policy proposals may lead policymakers to reconsider or modify their proposals in response to public concerns (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002).

Still, why do politicians and political parties take public opinion into consideration? Politicians are motivated by self-interest and the desire to retain power and influence. They recognize that ignoring public policy preferences can have political consequences, such as loss of voter support, reduced credibility, or even electoral defeat (Brooks & Manza, 2006b; Pierson, 1996). To ensure their political survival, politicians pay attention to public opinion and try to avoid policies that are widely unpopular or controversial. By responding to public policy preferences, politicians reduce the risk of voter backlash and public unrest (Pierson, 1996).

Differences in social policy development between countries may then be the result of different levels of public policy preferences (Fleckenstein & Lee, 2017) or their nature, as each constituency may desire a different configuration of social policy. Despite the same or similar level and nature of public policy preferences, welfare state outputs may differ from country to country, including due to differences in responsiveness.

### *Electoral competition*

As mentioned above, electoral competition between political parties and politicians has a significant impact on the development of social policy. In competitive political

environments, parties attempt to differentiate themselves from their competitors and win voter support by offering distinct policy platforms and agendas (Green-Pedersen, 2007). Social policies, including those related to gender and family, often play an important role in election campaigns as parties vie for the support of key constituencies that have previously been neglected, such as caregivers and working parents (ibid.). Therefore, parties can prioritize developing and promoting work-family balance policies as part of their election manifestos to gain voter support and differentiate themselves from their competitors.

At the same time, the literature shows that competition between parties before an election leads to bolder promises and more profound social policy reforms (Fleckenstein, 2011; Fleckenstein & Lee, 2014; Lee, 2018; Morgan, 2013). To gain a competitive advantage, parties make bolder promises and propose more ambitious policy plans, including significant social policy reforms. This is because bold promises can capture public attention, generate enthusiasm among supporters, and stand out parties in the crowded electoral landscape, thereby improving their electoral prospects.

### 3.2.2 Policy expansion and the role of self-undermining policy feedback

Self-undermining policy feedback refers to a phenomenon in which the implementation of a policy aimed at achieving a specific goal inadvertently undermines the achievement of that goal or has unintended consequences that hinder its success. Negative feedback, arising from dysfunctioning policies, requires alternative policy approaches or even the dismantling of ineffective policies (Daugbjerg & Kay, 2020; Jacobs & Weaver, 2015; Weaver, 2010). This may be due to various factors such as: poor design, unforeseen interactions with existing systems, or unintended behavioral responses from individuals or organizations affected by the policy (Mettler, 2016; Skogstad, 2017).

One of the main causes of self-undermining policy feedback is inadequate consideration of the complex and interconnected nature of socio-economic systems (Oberlander & Weaver, 2015). Policies often operate in dynamic environments where multiple variables interact in unpredictable ways. Failure to anticipate these interactions may lead to unintended outcomes that are contrary to the intended objectives of the policy. Another cause is related to dissatisfaction with social policies caused by negative socio-economic consequences resulting from poor policy design (Mettler, 2016; Weaver, 2010).

In the realm of family policy, numerous poor policy designs have the potential to engender adverse socio-economic consequences, necessitating an adjustment of policy

orientations, policy reorientation, or even policy rollback. For example, the lack of affordable childcare can lead to calls for policy reform or dismantling due to its significant socio-economic consequences (as argued in Paper II). On the one hand, the high cost of childcare places a significant financial burden on families, particularly low- and middle-income households. Because childcare costs consume a significant portion of household budgets, it can be difficult for parents to afford quality care for their children while meeting other basic needs such as housing (Immervoll & Barber, 2006; Saraceno, 2011b). This financial burden can hinder labour force participation, exacerbate income inequality, and hinder socioeconomic mobility, prompting appeals for policy reform to reduce the economic burden on families. On the other hand, the unavailability of affordable childcare contributes to gender inequalities in the labour market by disproportionately affecting women's employment opportunities and career advancement (Saraceno, 2011b). Due to the lack of accessible and affordable childcare options, women are often forced to compromise between their career ambitions and their caring responsibilities. As a result, gender inequalities in wages, career trajectories and financial security persist, highlighting the urgency of policy reforms to address structural barriers to women's full participation in the labour market.

### 3.2.3 Factors working against policy change

Even with significant levels of public support for new policies (or expansion of existing policies), or high levels of dissatisfaction with existing policies, translating these demands into policy changes can prove difficult. Pierson (1994, 2004) argues that once policies are adopted, they tend to create their own constituencies, interests and power structures, making them difficult to alter or dismantle. This phenomenon, known as *self-reinforcing* policy feedback, occurs when policies shape the distribution of resources, influence the behavior of individuals and organizations, and become deeply embedded in societal institutions. As a result, attempts to change policies face resistance from those who benefit from existing arrangements, leading to the tendency for policies to persist long after they have become ineffective or outdated (Hacker *et al.*, 2015).

Furthermore, Pierson (1994, and others Skocpol, 1992; Weir *et al.*, 1988) argue that entrenched interests and power asymmetries within political systems serve to maintain the status quo and hinder reform efforts. They illustrate that certain groups, such as corporations, wealthy elites or well-organized lobbies, exert a disproportionate influence on political decision-making processes and often use their resources to resist changes that could threaten their interests (Pierson, 1994). This asymmetry of political power presents formidable obstacles to policy change, as

established elites have both the incentive and the means to block reforms that challenge their privileged position.

Additionally, this strand of literature emphasizes the role of institutional inertia and path dependence in shaping policy outcomes (Pierson & Skocpol, 2002; Mahoney, 2000). For example, bureaucratic structures and procedures in large organizations and government agencies create resistance to change. Established protocols, hierarchies and routines make implementing new policies or initiatives difficult as they require navigating complex bureaucratic channels and overcoming entrenched interests. Moreover, institutions are influenced by their historical developments and past decisions, a phenomenon known as path dependence. Once certain decisions are made or institutional structures established, they create dynamics that reinforce existing patterns and make it difficult to deviate from established paths, even when alternative policy options may be more desirable or necessary in response to changing circumstances (Mahoney, 2000).

### 3.2.4 Negative feedback against policy change

Similar to Pierson's self-reinforcing policy feedbacks, Baumgartner and Jones (2002) conceptualize *negative* feedback as a mechanism that serves to maintain the status quo, prevent policy change, or offset reform efforts when they disproportionately lean in one direction. Negative feedback occurs when forces within the political system work to counteract or dampen attempts to change existing policies or agenda priorities. A key aspect of negative feedback, according to Baumgartner and Jones (ibid.), is the presence of countervailing pressures or interests that resist change. These pressures can come from a variety of sources, including organized interest groups, institutional norms, or partisan politics. For example, interest groups representing industries affected by proposed social policies often lobby against policy changes that threaten their economic interests, thereby creating negative feedbacks that hinder reform efforts (Windwehr *et al*., 2022; see also Paper II, V and VI).

Another element of negative feedback is the presence of institutional barriers or veto points within the policy-making process. These are points at which proposed policy changes must overcome significant resistance or gain consensus to be implemented (Baumgartner & Jones, 2002). Examples of veto points include legislative committees, executive veto powers, or judicial review procedures. When policy proposals encounter opposition at these points, they face negative feedback that can halt or block their progress.

### 3.2.5 Critical junctures

The presence of self-reinforcing/negative feedback creates a lock-in effect that makes it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to enact substantial policy changes. Nevertheless, there is potential for significant policy reforms at *critical junctures* (Capoccia, 2016). These refer to critical moments characterized by significant shifts in political, social or economic conditions, creating a window of opportunity for policy change. In response to crises such as economic downturns, natural disasters or social unrest, critical junctures often arise to disrupt the status quo and create pressure for reform. According to Capoccia (2016), critical junctures represent periods of instability and uncertainty in which established patterns of policymaking are called into question and new pathways for policy development can emerge. In other words, critical junctures can serve as catalysts for transforming social policy.

One way critical junctures create a window of opportunity for policy change is by disrupting existing routines and patterns of policymaking. As Paul Pierson (2004) argues, these moments of disruption weaken the influence of path-dependent processes and open up space for considering alternative policy approaches. Moreover, critical junctures often generate a sense of urgency and political momentum for policy reform (Béland *et al*., 2021). In the punctuated equilibrium theory, Baumgartner *et al*. (2018) highlight how crises and external shocks can trigger a burst of policymaking activity, as policymakers strive to address pressing problems. This increased attention to policy issues can create favorable conditions for mobilizing political support and enacting substantive policy changes. In addition, critical junctures can trigger changes in public opinion and societal preferences, further increasing the pressure for policy change (Béland *et al*., 2021). During critical junctures, public discourse often focuses on finding solutions to pressing problems, providing policymakers with an opportunity to advance policy agendas that are consistent with popular concerns.

#### *Crisis and policy dismantling*

Beyond the realm of policy expansion, crises can influence policy changes characterized by the dismantling or retrenchment of existing policies. These refer to the deliberate process of unraveling existing government policies, regulations, or institutions (Bauer & Knill, 2012, 2014; Jordan *et al*., 2013). One mechanism through which crises lead to retrenchment is fiscal pressure. Economic downturns such as recessions or financial crises often result in budget deficits and increased public debt, prompting governments to implement austerity measures to restore financial

sustainability. Financial crises create a sense of urgency among policymakers to reduce government spending and scale back social welfare programs (Richardson, 2010). Consequently, austerity policies can lead to cuts to social assistance, healthcare, education, and social services, exacerbating social inequalities and undermining the welfare state's ability to protect vulnerable populations.

Furthermore, crises can fuel ideological shifts and political narratives that favor smaller government and deregulation (Bresser-Pereira, 2010). In times of crisis, policymakers may perceive austerity measures as necessary to promote economic growth, increase efficiency and reduce dependency on the state (ibid.). This neoliberal discourse emphasizes individual responsibility, market-based solutions and limited government intervention in the economy and social affairs. Furthermore, crises can exacerbate political polarization and gridlock, making it difficult to maintain support for expansive welfare state policies. In divided political environments, it can be difficult for policymakers to reach consensus on how to address fiscal challenges and social inequalities, leading to policy gridlock and inertia (Pierson, 1994).

However, it is important to note that policy dismantling may not only be the result of a crisis. The negative socio-economic consequences of the policy, as explained above, can also create considerable pressure for dismantling (see also paper IV). For instance, when policy measures fail to achieve their intended goals or inadvertently exacerbate social inequalities, they are often subject to increased scrutiny and criticism from various actors (Daugbjerg & Kay, 2020; Jacobs & Weaver, 2015; Weaver, 2010). For example, when government policies aimed at alleviating poverty end up perpetuating dependency or disincentivizing work, particularly among immigrant groups, policymakers often face public backlash and calls for reform (De Koster *et al.*, 2013).

## 3.3 Policy transfer

One strategy used by policymakers to manage crises and combat adverse policy effects is to import policies from abroad. In fact, policy transfer and lesson drawing are essential processes in the realm of public policy. Policy transfer, "a process by which knowledge of policies, administrative arrangements, institutions, and ideas in one political system is used in the development of similar features in another" (Dolowitz, 2000), involves the adoption, or emulation of policies, practices, and ideas from one country to another. Lesson drawing, on the other hand, is about gaining insights and learning from the experiences of other countries in order to incorporate them into political decision-making and implementation processes (Rose, 1993). Taken together, these processes enable policymakers to capitalize on the successes and failures of other countries.

At the same time, policymakers transfer policies from international organizations that develop their own policies and paradigms and actively disseminate them (McBride & Williams, 2000; Peck & Theodore, 2010). Through their networks, resources and expertise, international organizations generate policy ideas, develop policies, and promote best practices in diverse policy domains ranging from economic development and trade to health, the environment, and human rights. One way international organizations, such as OECD, create and disseminate policy is through research, analysis and knowledge production ('soft power'). They conduct studies, collect data and commission reports on pressing global challenges, emerging trends and policy solutions (Pal, 2014). These findings are widely disseminated through publications, conferences and online platforms, reaching policymakers, practitioners, academics and the general public worldwide. The other way, though, is through a 'forced' (coercive) policy transfer (Marsh & Sharman, 2009). Coercive policy transfer is the process by which governments and/or international organizations mandate the implementation of policies or regulations, often through legal mechanisms or agreements. In the context of the European Union (EU), directives serve as effective instruments for forced policy transfer between member states (Bulmer & Padgett, 2005).

However, successful policy transfer and lesson drawing require careful consideration of contextual factors. Simply replicating a policy without considering differences in political, economic, social and cultural contexts can lead to ineffective results or unintended consequences (Minkman *et al*., 2019). Therefore, indigenization is often required to adopt transferred policies to the specific needs and realities of the recipient context.

As Stone (2017) argues, policy transfer is a 'messy' process. This means that, far from being a simple mechanism for borrowing successful policies from one context and applying them in another, policy transfer is a far more nuanced reality. A central factor is the role of the actors and networks involved in the transfer process. Policymakers, experts, international organizations and various interest groups all play a role in shaping policy transfer. These actors often have different interests, intentions, and interpretations of what constitutes a successful policy, leading to conflict and tension throughout the transfer process.

### *Resistance to policy transfer*

Building on our earlier discussion of negative feedback, it is important to recognize that policies imported from overseas also encounter what is referred to in the policy transfer literature as *resistance* (Pal, 2019). Cultural differences play an important role in shaping resistance to policy transfer. Norms, values, traditions and social

expectations vary greatly between different regions and influence the reception and acceptance of external policies (De Jong, 2009; Dermott & Miller, 2015). Policies that contradict or clash with local cultural norms may face strong resistance because they are perceived as foreign or incompatible with the prevailing way of life. In such cases, attempts to impose a foreign policy may face resistance not only from individuals but also from institutions and community structures that act as guardians of cultural identity. Consequently, paradigms and policies that are embedded in the paradigmatic DNA are likely to face resistance (Pal, 2019).

Enforcing policies through coercion is another factor that can generate resistance (Marsh & Sharman, 2009). First, coercion inherently disregards recipients' consent and autonomy, leading to feelings of resentment and defiance. When policies are enforced through threats or punitive measures (e.g. sanctions in EU directives) rather than through genuine engagement and cooperation, a sense of injustice and oppression arises, which breeds resistance as individuals and communities attempt to assert their rights and autonomy (Bulmer & Padgett, 2005). And second, coercive policy transfer often fails to address the underlying causes or structural barriers that could hinder successful policy implementation. Rather than addressing the systemic issues that may be contributing to the challenges faced by the recipient context, coercion attempts to impose external solutions without addressing the underlying complexities. As a result, resistance may arise from the perception that coercive measures are superficial and do not address the deeper structural inequalities or deficiencies within the system (Pal, 2019).

# 4 Methodology

This dissertation includes six empirical studies which apply a qualitative methodology based on the analysis of in-depth semi-structured interviews and/or official documents. In this chapter I first explain my position within this research and the reasons for choosing a qualitative methodology. This is followed by an overview of the empirical data and a chronology of the research process. Finally, I share my reflections on the limitations of the empirical data, followed by an ethical consideration.

## 4.1 Research methods and data

Throughout conducting six empirical studies, I coherently applied a qualitative research methodology. The decision was made in consideration of my overall research interest, which was to understand how family policies develop in the Czech Republic and South Korea. For that purpose, it was essential to explore the historical background of policies; political structures and institutions involved in policy-making; the role of interest groups, lobbyists and advocacy organizations in shaping policy agendas and influencing decision-makers; the nature of public opinion and media narratives; the economic context (e.g. fiscal constraints and economic trends) surrounding policy issues; the procedural aspects of policy-making; and finally the power relationships within and between political actors.

A qualitative research method was accordingly most suitable to apply for this dissertation largely for five aspects: First, policy changes often involve complex socio-political dynamics. Qualitative methods allow researchers to delve deeply into the nuances of these changes, providing a rich understanding of the context, motivations, and implications behind them. Second, qualitative research allows researchers to examine policy documents, reports, and other relevant materials to understand the historical context, policy evolution, and implementation challenges (Cardno, 2018). This contextual insight is crucial for understanding the broader landscape within which policy changes occur. Third, qualitative research methodology (such as expert interviews) enables researchers to gather insights from individuals with specialized knowledge and experience in the policy area under study (Bogner *et al.*, 2009). These

experts can provide valuable perspectives, for example, on the rationale behind policy changes and the interests involved. Fourth, qualitative methods offer flexibility in data collection and analysis, allowing researchers to adapt their approach based on emerging themes, unexpected findings, or shifts in the research focus (Holloway & Todres, 2003). This flexibility is particularly valuable when studying dynamic phenomena like policy change. Finally, by conducting qualitative research, researchers can gain a holistic understanding of policy change processes. They can triangulate findings from multiple sources, validate interpretations, and develop comprehensive insights that capture the complexity of the phenomenon under study. In summary, qualitative research methodologies are appropriate for analyzing policy change because they provide a nuanced, contextually rich, and comprehensive understanding of the dynamics, motivations, and implications behind policy changes.

This dissertation utilized two types of data: expert interviews and public documents. The empirical data contains official documents from various sources, such as strategic policy documents and government reports. Tables 2 and 3 display an overview of the empirical data and methods.

**Table 2** Overview of the empirical data (Korean case)

| **Method** | **Data information** | | **Paper No.** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Type* | *Name(s)* | |
| Semi-structured interview | Expert | Academia | P2<br>P3<br>P5 |
| | Expert | Korea Labor Institute | P5<br>P6 |
| Information inquiry | Questionnaire (per email) | Academia | P2<br>P3 |
| Document analysis | Strategic policy documents | 19 strategic policy documents, for example *The First Basic Plan for Low Fertility and Aged Society*. | P1<br>P2<br>P3<br>P5<br>P6 |
| Document analysis | Reports | 76 reports from government and research organizations or institutes, for example: *Evaluation of work-family balance support policy and policy tasks* | P1<br>P2<br>P3<br>P5<br>P6 |
| Document analysis | Media coverage | 59 newspaper articles | P1<br>P2<br>P3<br>P5<br>P6 |

**Table 3** Overview of the empirical data (Czech case)

| Method | Data information | | Paper No. |
|---|---|---|---|
| | *Type* | *Name(s)* | |
| Semi-structured interview | Expert | Ministry officials (Family policy section, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor) | P4<br>P5<br>P6 |
| | Expert | NGO (Liga otevřených mužů) | P6 |
| Document analysis | Strategic policy documents | 12 strategic policy documents, for example: *Vládní strategie pro rovnost žen a mužů v ČR 2014-2020*. | P4<br>P5<br>P6 |
| | Minutes of meetings of expert commissions | 10 Minutes of meetings (e.g. *Expert Commission for Family Policy - Odborná komise pro rodinnou politiku*) | P4<br>P5<br>P6 |
| | Stenographic protocols | 20 Stenographic protocols (*Chamber of Deputies*) | P4<br>P5 |
| | Government reports | 25 government reports | P4<br>P5<br>P6 |
| | Government newsletter | 35 government newsletters (*Práce a sociální politika*) | P5 |
| | Media coverage | 45 newspaper articles | P4<br>P5<br>P6 |

### 4.1.1 Systematic literature review

Systematic literature review is the primary research method in Paper I, a study that examined the development of Korean family policy for the past three decades. As Fink (2005) notes, the literature review – a comprehensive survey of previous inquiries – offers a synthesis of the most recent scholarly literature on a specific subject, advocates for the need to expand research efforts, assesses the rigor of previous research, and elucidates key research findings. Furthermore, the literature review contributes to a deeper comprehension of the subject matter by elucidating persistent conflicts and debates, and contextualizing the work within its historical milieu (Bearflied & Eller, 2008). In the course of my research, I have consistently used systematic literature

review to unravel the developmental trajectory of (various) family policies, along with their drivers and the ensuing challenges they present.

### 4.1.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is the research method applied in Papers II ~ VI, studies that examined the development of childcare and parental leave policies in the Czech Republic and South Korea. Document analysis serves well to uncover the underlying rationales and motivations driving policy change. This includes identifying the problem definitions, goals, and values embedded within policy texts, as well as understanding the political, economic, and social factors influencing policy decision-making (Cardno, 2018). The added value of document analysis for my research focus is that it helps in identifying the actors involved in the policy process and their respective roles and influence. A comprehensive document analysis of various sources of materials (such as stenographic protocols and newspaper articles) allows researchers to gain insights into the power dynamics shaping policy change, including the interests, preferences, and agendas of key actors such as government officials, advocacy groups, industry representatives, and civil society organizations (Himmelweit and Lee, 2024). As seen in Tables 2 and 3, the types of documents used in this study vary from media coverage of reforms to strategic policy documents. Throughout my research, I used document analysis to explore the historical background of childcare and parental leave policies, the economic context surrounding policy issues and the drivers and constraints of policy change processes.

### 4.1.3 Expert interviews

Expert interviewing is a research method applied in Papers II, III, IV, V, VI and a supplementary method to systematic literature review analysis in Paper I. Expert interviews allow researchers to gain in-depth insights into the complexities of policy change and decision-making within specific fields. Experts can provide firsthand knowledge, experiences, and perspectives that may not be readily available through other sources (Bogner *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, experts can offer contextual understanding of the historical development, key actors, institutional dynamics, and external influences shaping policy change within their respective fields. This contextual knowledge is essential for social policy researchers to grasp the underlying factors driving policy decisions. Finally, experts can help researchers map out the policy processes within specific fields, including agenda setting, formulation, adoption and implementation (Bishop & Lexchin, 2013). By understanding these

processes, researchers can identify bottlenecks, leverage points, and opportunities for intervention. Interviews were therefore the most appropriate research method for this dissertation, as the core of my research object was to understand the institutional contexts of the development of Czech and Korean family policies.

With this research interest, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Czech ministerial officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (Paper IV, Paper V, Paper VI) and a representative of an organization promoting active fatherhood in the Czech Republic (Paper VI), two Korean university researchers (Paper I, II, III, V, VI) and the Korean Labor Institute (Paper III, V, VI). In interviews, I paid particular attention to the discussions, arguments and conflicts between political and social actors around childcare and parental leave reform, which were not clearly spelled out in official documents. I created the interview questions accordingly, asking, for instance: "One of the milestones of the LMB administration was the introduction of universal access to child care. How can we explain that the Conservative government supported this idea? Making the system universal and affordable to everyone inevitably entails high costs. Have large corporations/employers expressed concerns about this policy – which had a concrete impact on the design of the policy?"; "The LMB government introduced a home care allowance in 2009. This policy contradicts the previous direction of Korean child care policy (towards defamilialization). How did the LMB government argue for this policy? Have there been serious attempts to abolish this policy? If so: from whom and what were their arguments?"; "Recently, the Moon government expanded benefits to 80% replacement for the entire period of parental leave. However, the benefit still remained relatively modest (1,500,000 KRW). Why have previous governments been unwilling to expand benefits for carers – even though terrible birth trends have not been reversed?"

**Table 4** Interview topics and examples of questions

| **Paper II and III** | **Paper IV** | **Paper V** | **Paper VI** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Childcare policy in South Korea | Childcare policy in the Czech Republic | Childcare/parental leave policy in South Korea and the Czech Republic | Father leave policies in South Korea and the Czech Republic |
| *Moon's government decided to make child care a public responsibility. Did this step go smoothly? Was Moon's plan even more ambitious - and the result was some kind of compromise?* | *Which actors have been against guarantees in public kindergartens, and for which reasons?* | *Which countries served as role models for parental leave reform, and which models were deliberately avoided, and why?* | *The expert commission preparing the new Family Policy Plan has suggested a model transferring Scandinavian use-it-or-lose-it variation. However, the final version is closer to a German model. How to explain this?* |

## 4.2 Research process

The data collection for this dissertation was carried out in a different order than the data presentation. The process started with Paper VII, followed by the collection for the remaining papers. This section provides a chronological summary of the research process, beginning with Paper VII.

This doctoral research began in 2019 with the aim of examining intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state using South Korea as an example. The initial focus was on functional solidarity, prompting a search for databases that could provide representative data. The primary data source was the Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging (KLoSA), a comprehensive research project designed to collect data on the ageing process in the Korean population. KLoSA aims to understand various aspects of ageing and the social, economic and health-related issues faced by older adults in South Korea. KLoSA proved useful for the research objectives of Paper VII as it enabled the investigation of resource flows in both upward (child to parent) and downward (parent to child) directions, the intensity of these flows (whether the financial support is regular or occasional), and the differences in solidarity between coresiding and non-coresiding dyads. These dimensions have been identified in the literature as crucial. Although KLoSA provided valuable insights into functional financial solidarity, its data on practical solidarity (i.e., the provision of help or care) were not representative. Consequently, I looked for an alternative data source that could provide such information, despite anticipating difficulties in comparing it with

KLoSA data. For this aspect of intergenerational solidarity, the Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) proved suitable. When my co-author Martina Brandt and I submitted our manuscript to journals, we modified it to meet revision requirements. These changes enriched the manuscript with discussions of normative solidarity, using data from the Korean Social Survey, and the gendered organization of solidarity. While Paper VII was the starting point for my doctoral research, it fell outside the central scope of my dissertation that formed later in time. Given that it is an add-on, it is featured in the appendix of this summary.

Since April 2020, I have been employed as a research assistant in a research project at the University of Kassel. This project focused on policies rather than their effects, which led to a restructuring of my doctoral project along similar lines. My interest was in the evolution of family policy and understanding the significant differences in its development between different countries. During my research for Paper VII, I observed the expanding nature of family policy in South Korea. In contrast, the Czech Republic, my home country, has had difficulty updating its family policies. Consequently, I decided to examine in detail the development of family policy in these two welfare states. This decision was also pragmatic, as my knowledge of Czech, English, and Korean allowed me to access the necessary data from existing academic literature, official documents and people involved in or knowledgeable about family policy(making).

I began with a literature review of over 80 articles written in Czech, English and Korean about family policy in South Korea and the Czech Republic. Between January 2021 and June 2021, I created two documents, one for each country, detailing the historical developments of their family policies, which I wanted to analyze further. During this time, I chose a multi-conceptual approach rather than a single-conceptual approach, as the latter seemed to have less exploratory potential for understanding the differences between the two countries. My initial focus was on the study of welfare regime, policy transfer and policy legacy.

Next, I moved on to the second phase of my dissertation, which focused on the concept of the *welfare regime* (Paper I). As I reviewed the literature on welfare regimes in East Asian democracies, I noticed that family policy was often left out of these discussions. Furthermore, historical accounts of Korean family policy that I collected were inconsistent with the assumptions of the dominant literature. In order to understand the changes in South Korea's welfare regime, I collected a large number of strategic policy documents, media reports on reforms, and publications from government agencies and research institutes from 2000 to 2022, starting in July 2021. The analysis of these documents helped reflect the perspectives of Korean scholars.

From December 2021, I gradually began working on the third phase of my dissertation, which dealt with *policy transfer* (Paper V). In this phase, I included both

the Czech Republic and South Korea and collected all the necessary official documents to identify cases of policy transfer, focusing in particular on the willingness to adopt policies from abroad, motivations and sources of inspiration. For the Czech Republic, I collected official strategic documents, minutes of expert committee meetings and stenographic protocols of parliamentary debates. For South Korea, I gathered strategic policy documents and reports issued by government agencies and research institutes involved in family policy making. By collecting over 100 documents, I was able to search for references to international organizations or countries and analyze whether these examples were considered models to be followed (transferred) or avoided, as well as motivations behind these decisions.

Investigating policy transfer presents a particular challenge by using documents alone. Consequently, I decided to conduct expert interviews to verify and supplement the knowledge gained from the documents. In April 2022, I conducted a two-hour in-depth interview with a ministerial official in the Czech Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour. This interview inspired me to expand my analysis to include resistance to policy transfer, which appeared to significantly influence the evolution of family policy in the Czech Republic and differed markedly from the situation in South Korea. This was confirmed in October 2022 when I interviewed Korean experts and received additional information via email upon request. Throughout 2023, I have collected additional official documents related to childcare and father leave policies, focusing particularly on South Korea, to further map the landscape of policy transfer. For the Czech Republic, I conducted a second expert interview via Zoom with another ministry official to gain further insight into the willingness and process of policy transfer in the country.

Since March 2022, I had been planning a research stay in South Korea, which finally took place in October and November 2022 and was hosted by Yonsei University. During this stay, I initially planned to research policy legacies. I took this opportunity to collect more official documents and, together with a postdoctoral fellow from Yonsei University, planned three expert interviews that took place online. I prepared a series of thematic questions in advance and shared them (in a translated form) with the experts in advance. One expert, a renowned professor specializing in childcare policy, was unable to participate in an interview, but answered the questions I had prepared and which Dr. Kim translated into Korean. Together, we interviewed two scholars about the role of policy legacies, focusing on Korean childcare policy, and one government researcher focusing on parental leave policy. To ensure diverse perspectives on childcare policy change, we selected two scholars with different understandings of childcare policy change, both recommended by Professor Young Jun Choi. He also recommended that we avoid contacting ministerial officials, as in the Czech case, since ministerial officials in South Korea tend to rotate between ministries and departments within those ministries and therefore lack information

about historical developments of specific policies. All three interviews were conducted in Korean and later transcribed verbatim by Dr. Kim.

The paper-writing process showed that combining both countries in a single paper was extremely difficult due to their contrasting development trajectories. For this reason, we decided to focus exclusively on the Korean case, which later formed the basis for the current Paper III. This paper builds on my concept of multiple dimensions of tension. Dr. Kim's contributions to this paper included managing the interviews in Korean and performing the initial literature review and drafting of the Korean case. I then handled the in-depth literature review and finalized the empirical part using the conceptual framework.

One dimension that caught my attention was the tensions within policies, specifically the tensions between self-reinforcing and *self-undermining* policy feedback. I have decided to focus on this in the following texts because the discussion and analysis of self-undermining policy feedback was missing in the family policy literature. Since January 2023, I have been writing Paper II, which examines the role of self-undermining policy feedback in childcare policy changes in South Korea. To support this work, I searched for additional literature on the presence of self-undermining (negative) policy feedback.

While in South Korea these feedbacks prompted policy reorientation, in the Czech Republic, they resulted in *policy dismantling*. Family policy scholarship has thus far paid limited attention to this phenomenon. Additionally, there is scarce knowledge regarding policy developments following policy termination. The Czech childcare policy stands as one of the few examples of policy termination, providing an opportunity to empirically investigate this phenomenon (Paper IV). In this case as well, I collected additional official documents, particularly stenographic protocols and newspaper articles, to shed light on childcare policy reforms following policy termination.

I have maintained an ongoing interest in the development of father leave policies, which, akin to childcare policy, demonstrate significant disparities between the two countries. In October 2022, I reached out to Prof. Janet C. Gornick (CUNY), a renowned scholar on parental leave policy, and in April 2023, we met in New York to discuss collaboration on this paper (Paper VI). Originally, the paper focused on culture as a driving force, but upon further examination of the two cases it became apparent that shifting the focus to public policy preferences (public opinion), electoral competition, negative feedback (in a different sense than self-undermining policy feedback, see section 3.2.4), and crises offered a more comprehensive explanation for the evolution of father leave policies in both countries, as well as the differences between them. In all previous Czech expert interviews, father leave policies were discussed, yet some questions remained unanswered. Specifically, I wanted to

understand why the reform process is so difficult despite high levels of public policy preferences (as identified through document analysis) and external pressure from organizations such as the OECD and the EU (Paper V). To answer these inquiries, I conducted an interview in January 2024 with an expert from one of the interest groups (named LOM) working to promote father leave policies. The contribution of Prof. Gornick to the paper was centered on selecting and discussing the driving forces of policy change and connecting our research to other strands of leave policy literature.

## 4.3 Methodological limitations and implications

This dissertation, of course, comes with methodological limitations. Document analysis, despite its usefulness in qualitative research, has several methodological limitations. One major issue is bias in document selection, where researchers might choose documents that align with their hypotheses or are simply more accessible, leading to an incomplete or skewed perspective (Mackieson *et al.*, 2019). The authenticity and credibility of documents can also be problematic, as it is crucial to ensure they are genuine and not manipulated. Additionally, understanding the historical and cultural context of documents is essential, but can be challenging, potentially leading to misinterpretations. Furthermore, documents often present fragmented information and limited perspectives, which may not capture the full scope of the topic under study.

To overcome the methodological limitations of document analysis, I implemented a strategy that involved collecting a large set of documents from diverse sources and conducting expert interviews (cf. Bowen, 2009). By gathering documents from a wide range of origins, including academic publications, strategic policy documents and government reports, and media articles, I aimed to minimize selection bias and ensure a more comprehensive representation of perspectives. This approach helped in mitigating the risk of relying solely on accessible or potentially biased documents, thereby enhancing the authenticity and credibility of the data.

Furthermore, conducting expert interviews provided an additional layer of validation and context to the document analysis. These interviews allowed me to cross-verify the information found in documents, gain deeper insights into the historical and cultural contexts, and address any ambiguities or gaps in the data. Experts offered nuanced interpretations and highlighted overlooked aspects, ensuring a more robust and reliable analysis. Combining these methods not only enriched the dataset but also improved the validity and reliability of the findings by triangulating multiple sources of information.

Despite a large set of documents and expert interviews, however, I was unable to identify whether policy transfer indeed took place and how (e.g. whether through a process of indigenization). Also for this reason the final manuscript (Paper V) focused primarily on the willingness and resistance to policy transfer as these theoretical mechanisms of policy transfer could be detected by documents and expert interviews.

Unfortunately, the data regarding public opinion about father leave policies in the Czech Republic and South Korea are largely missing. While those existing provided me with information about the level of public policy preferences in South Korea and even the nature of such preferences in the Czech Republic, longitudinal data on public policy preferences have been missing in both countries.

## 4.4 Ethical and methodological considerations

Data collection included methods that were not physically or psychologically harmful to the participating experts, and no sensitive personal data was processed during the interviews. Before designing the interview guides and conducting the research, I informed myself about the ethical responsibilities and codes of conduct set out in the research ethics of the University of Kassel.

More specifically, before the interviews, I informed the participating experts about the purpose of the study and interviews (or subsequent information inquiries). In an effort to minimize any potential misunderstandings about the research's intent and to address participants' concerns about the sensitivity of the interview questions, a brief overview of the interview guide was offered. All respondents were assured of anonymity and assured that the data would remain confidential and would only be used for scientific purposes of this doctoral project. Participation was entirely voluntary, and interviews were recorded solely after explicit consent was obtained from the participating experts.

# 5 Results

## 5.1 Paper I

**Forgotten concepts of Korea's welfare state: productivist welfare capitalism and Confucianism revisited in family policy change**

*Martin Gurín*

It is argued that South Korea, as well as other welfare states that belong to the so-called East Asian welfare model, have their origins in two foundations of the social order: productivist welfare capitalism and Confucianism. Although these concepts have been understood by some as competing concepts that compete with each other as to which of them takes precedence in understanding the welfare regime in South Korea, others recognize that the welfare state was originally based on both ingredients and in a complementary relationship. As the welfare state in South Korea began to change more profoundly in the mid-2000s, welfare state scholars began to question both concepts, arguing that the policy change process could not be explained by either concept and that perhaps, the current welfare state does not adhere to neither of them and is instead based on other, European foundations – albeit without a clear consensus, which led Powell and Kim (2014) to characterize the South Korean welfare state as a chameleon. However, while research has focused on the de-productivisation process of the Korean welfare state, how the Korean welfare state moved away from its cultural Confucian foundations had yet to be examined. And surprisingly, family policy was left out of this debate – perhaps because more profound changes in family policy came later. The aim of this paper was therefore to test the assumption that both original foundations are theoretically useless for understanding the welfare state and its development. In considering family policy developments in other developed democracies, the paper assumed that both foundations would lie at the heart of family policy reforms over the past two decades, perhaps prioritizing productivism over Confucianism.

Two types of data were used for the analysis: (1) expert interviews and (2) extensive literature review, official documents from a variety of sources, newspaper articles,

Bills, Acts, Master Plans, state-commissioned reports. The specific questions that guided the analysis were as follows:

1. *To what extent is the development of Korean family policy attributable to productivism and Confucianism?*
2. *How has the relationship between the two concepts changed: Do both concepts still support and complement each other or do reforms in family policies involve only one of them to the detriment of the other?*
3. *To what extent does the current welfare state adhere to these foundations?*

The findings show that Korean family policy has undergone significant changes since the early 2000s and 2010s, moving from purely private consideration of family matters to actively providing child-related services and benefits. While this shift appears to diverge from the original productivist ideology, it is primarily driven by concerns about the persistently low fertility rate and its perceived threat to future economic stability. The convergence of social reproduction and economic concerns has led the Korean welfare state to expand family policies as a political and economic necessity. However, traces and traits of traditional welfarism persist, as the state remains reluctant to fully assume primary responsibility for childcare and often offers families only limited financial support. The analysis shows that the perceived threat of low fertility rate has opened avenues for new policy objectives to emerge, such as addressing family needs and promoting gender equality. Yet these objectives often take a back seat to the overarching goals of social reproduction and economic stability.

This shift can be understood as a *repositioning* of productivism, in which family policy is no longer seen as an obstacle to economic growth, but rather as a catalyst for it – a similar trend to European welfare states (Bothfeld & Rouault, 2015; Jenson, 2008; Mätzke & Ostner, 2010). However, this dualistic character of productivism in family policy raises concerns about the possible marginalization of family welfare needs in favor of economic interests once they again view them as 'unproductive'.

The analysis shows that this fertility- and economy-driven expansion of family policy has occurred at the expense of Confucian values – i.e. the other original foundation of the Korean welfare state, particularly through initiatives promoting women's employment and encouraging men's involvement in childcare responsibilities. The reason for this is that the Confucian order was portrayed and identified as counterproductive to social reproduction and economic development. In essence, the repositioning of productivism consciously targeted the Confucianist cultural order and aimed at its explicit *de-confucianization* at both the welfare state and societal levels.

However, historical evidence from other welfare states also suggests (Daly, 2011) that welfare states tend to retain elements of familialism, a cornerstone of the Confucian cultural order. Therefore, new policies such as cash-for-care allowance were introduced and further expanded, despite criticism from feminist circles, who

consistently speak out against this policy because it perpetuates gender inequality. The analysis thus questions the idea of a complete departure from Confucianism.

As South Korea stands at a crossroads marked by political transitions and ongoing debates over welfare state priorities, the evolution of its family policies remains uncertain. While institutional reforms signaled a shift toward gender-egalitarianism and a focus on idiosyncratic family goals, concerns about budgetary constraints and the continued emphasis on rising birth rates underscore the resilience of productivist welfare capitalism. It remains to be seen whether the Korean welfare state will continue on its current path. Nevertheless, the Korean experience offers valuable insights into the challenges and complexities of welfare state transformation and serves as an important reference point for policymakers grappling with similar dilemmas worldwide.

## 5.2 Paper II

**Understanding path-departing changes in childcare policy: The influence of self-undermining policy feedbacks**

*Martin Gurín*

While Paper I aimed to understand profound childcare policy changes in South Korea through the prism of the welfare regime, Paper II sought to understand this phenomenon through another important lens fundamental to historical institutionalist thought: policy feedback. This text illuminates a critical research gap in childcare policy analysis: the oversight of self-undermining policy feedbacks and its potential in explaining institutional change. Although research in various policy areas has already examined the impact of such feedback, researchers in the area of childcare policy have yet to examine or acknowledge its influence. To date, the scientific focus in this area has predominantly centered on self-reinforcing feedback mechanisms. Paper II argues, first, that this discrepancy obscures a comprehensive understanding of policy dynamics and, second, that the claim that self-reinforcing feedbacks govern the realm of childcare policy appears empirically difficult to sustain given the significant changes in childcare policy across welfare states. By examining both self-undermining and self-reinforcing policy feedback, particularly through a detailed examination of childcare policy change in South Korea, Paper II aims to demonstrate the susceptibility of childcare policies to both types of feedback.

Two types of data were used for the analysis: (1) expert interviews with two Korean academics specializing in childcare policy developments and (2) extensive literature

review, official documents from a variety of sources, newspaper articles, Bills, Acts, Master Plans, state-commissioned reports. The research question that guided the analysis was:

1. *To what extent is the development of childcare policy determined by the combination of the effects of self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback?*

The historical accounts of South Korea's childcare policy provide a compelling case study that demonstrates the interplay between self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedback in shaping policy development. Initially, reliance on market mechanisms to expand childcare without adequate government oversight resulted in the provision of costly and substandard services. This failure to ensure affordability and quality eroded parental trust and satisfaction and sparked calls for alternative solutions. Attempts by the Roh Moo-hyun government to address these shortcomings, however, encountered strong resistance from entrenched interests, resulting in existing arrangements being maintained despite widespread discontent.

The persistence of self-reinforcing feedbacks, in which existing policies and power structures reinforce each other, hindered the implementation of desired reforms. As predicted by scholars such as Pierson (1994, 2004) and Hacker (2004), the government defaulted to supporting the status quo, in which non-users of private childcare services were left without welfare state support. This situation eventually sparked vocal criticism and significant policy change with the introduction of cash-for-care in 2009, a notable policy effect of self-undermining policy feedback. This unexpected policy adjustment, driven by parental demand and dissatisfaction, highlighted the potential for policy change even in highly path-dependent systems.

The subsequent expansion of cash-for-care further weakened the position of market-based childcare and highlighted the cumulative effect of self-undermining feedback on policy outcomes. Furthermore, when center-left political forces returned to power, they seized the opportunity to deal with negative feedback more successfully, contradicting the notion that policy change becomes increasingly difficult over time. This shows the importance of recognizing and exploiting both self-reinforcing and self-undermining feedback mechanisms to understand policy dynamics.

The implications of this analysis underscore the importance of incorporating both types of feedback into policy analysis and decision-making processes. Neglecting any of these aspects can lead to an incomplete understanding of the forces driving policy development and the potential for missed opportunities for reform. By recognizing the potential for feedback to both reinforce and undermine existing policies, policymakers can better anticipate challenges and opportunities for change, leading to more effective and responsive governance. Policies must be continually evaluated and adjusted to address emerging challenges and meet evolving societal needs. When

governments are open to feedback and willing to adapt, they can increase public confidence in their ability to address pressing issues and ultimately contribute to more inclusive and effective policy outcomes.

## 5.3 Paper III

**The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions**

*Martin Gurín and Jihyun Kim*

The research gap identified in Paper III is related to the prevailing focus on conflicts and negotiation processes between pre-existing childcare policy arrangements and new policy approaches such as work-family balance or social investment. While this perspective offers valuable insights into the dynamics of policy change, it overlooks other critical dimensions, namely the tensions between competing policies and tensions within the policies themselves, and therefore provides only part of the story of policy change. The former involves clashes arising from different policies that coexist and compete in the policy domain (e.g. publicly-funded childcare services, private childcare services and cash-for-care), for instance in terms of resource allocation, influencing the direction of policy development. The latter dimension, often neglected in childcare policy research (as emphasized in Paper II), highlights the complex interplay between self-reinforcing and self-undermining policy feedbacks that also shapes the stability and change of policy areas. The research aim of Paper III is to fill this gap by conducting an empirical investigation of all three dimensions and their interactions in the context of South Korea's childcare policy.

Two types of data were used for the analysis: (1) expert interviews with two Korean academics specializing in childcare policy developments and (2) extensive literature review, official documents from a variety of sources, newspaper articles, Bills, Acts, Master Plans, state-commissioned reports. The research question that guided the analysis was:

1. *To what extent is policy development determined by multiple dimensions of tension: tensions between pre-existing policies and novel policy approaches, tensions between competing policies, and within (self-reinforcing versus self-undermining policy feedback) them?*

Researchers have shown particular interest in examining the conflicts and negotiations between established policy frameworks and innovative, albeit

challenging, policy paradigms such as work-family reconciliation and social investment (Fleckenstein & Lee, 2014; Jenson, 2017; Lewis *et al*., 2008; Morgan, 2013). Despite the significant influence of these policy approaches on childcare policy across welfare states, leading to noticeable changes in the provision, accessibility and quality of childcare services, the existing literature highlights strong, self-reinforcing mechanisms that hinder the adoption of new policy paradigms and allow reforms that, however, retain traits/imprints of old policy legacies (Morel, 2007). Our empirical investigation also found that the policy arrangements of the old childcare policy regime were constantly being challenged by novel policy approaches, including concepts of work-family balance, social responsibility and universalism.

However, we argue that tensions arise not only between pre-existing policies and novel policy approaches. Given the complexity of policy areas, there are also tensions and negotiations between competing policies, which too influence the evolution of policy areas (Sabatier & Weible, 2014). For example, significant tensions arise between conflicting legacies regarding the role of the state in childcare provision, which have historically been shaped by differing perspectives on the appropriate level of state intervention (Leibowitz, 1996). In our study case, tensions between networks advocating for cash-for-care, private childcare services, and public childcare services have profoundly shaped the development of childcare policy in South Korea.

Furthermore, tensions can arise within policies themselves and also these dynamics influence the stability and evolution of policy areas (Weaver, 2010). For instance, policy design can create pressures to maintain policies (self-reinforcing policy feedback) and against them (self-undermining policy feedback) (Jacobs & Weaver, 2015; Pierson, 2004; Weaver, 2010). As Mettler (2016) argues, policies often evolve unpredictably over time because of the dynamics they create, including unintended consequences and lateral effects. These dynamics can lead to dissatisfaction with policy performance and prompt calls for policy reorientation or dismantling of existing arrangements. As we show in this paper and in Paper III, this has also been the case in South Korea, where there is a tension between proponents and opponents of private childcare, on the one hand, and proponents and opponents (mostly feminist groups) of cash-for-care allowance on the other.

In this paper we have argued that policy change resulting from conflict and negotiation processes in one dimension often creates tensions in other dimensions. For example, government efforts to reconcile work and family life through childcare provision within the loosely regulated private market inadvertently created conflict between supporters (private childcare associations) and opponents (dissatisfied parents) of the continuation of private childcare. The government's failure to address these initiatives, which advocated an expansion of public childcare services, as well as the state's traditional reluctance to provide cash benefits to families ultimately led to the introduction of cash-for-care. Networks that newly advocated for cash-for-care

later found themselves competing with those advocating for expanding public childcare and with advocates of private childcare. Thus, these dimensions are interconnected and all three must be taken into account to better understand policy changes.

We suggest that examining the above-mentioned dimensions is needed to improve our understanding of (childcare) policy changes. Our study of childcare policy change in South Korea shows that incorporating these dimensions into analyses of policy development can provide a more nuanced portrayal of changes in welfare states, perhaps even beyond childcare policy.

## 5.4 Paper IV

**Policy development after termination: The case of re-defamilialization**

*Martin Gurín*

The research gap identified in Paper IV relates to the lack of theoretical and empirical research on the processes of policy termination. Despite the importance of policy dismantling and termination as critical components of social policy dynamics, the existing literature focuses primarily on policy adoption and implementation rather than on policy termination. Consequently, there is a need for comprehensive theoretical frameworks and empirical investigations to elucidate the factors, mechanisms, and consequences associated with policy termination and subsequent policy developments. Understanding these processes is critical for policymakers and scholars to effectively manage policy transitions, address governance inefficiencies, and adopt policy goals to evolving societal needs. The research aim of Paper IV is to fill this research gap by offering a theoretical model that explains potential, albeit theory-based, policy developments following the termination of a policy. The aim of the study is to contribute to the scholarly understanding of policy dynamics related to policy termination by examining a case study in which policy termination was identified: the Czech Republic and its childcare policy. By analyzing the termination of childcare services in response to dissatisfaction with poorly designed services, the study aims to provide empirical insights into the subsequent policy responses and challenges. Specifically, the study wants to investigate how the termination of a policy triggered alternative policy approaches, what complexity the subsequent reintroduction of a policy entails, and what influence *haunted* policy legacies of the terminated policy, competing policy legacies (here kindergartens), and finally policy legacies of the replaced legacy have to the reintroduction process. Through this

empirical investigation, the study aims to improve understanding of the complexity of policy termination and its impact on policy development and governance.

Two types of data were used for the analysis: (1) expert interviews with two Ministry officials and (2) extensive literature review, official documents from a variety of sources, newspaper articles, Bills, Acts, Master Plans, state-commissioned reports. The research question that guided the analysis was:

1. *Which theoretical pathways unfold policy termination and which challenges do political decision-makers have to overcome in this process?*

The text discusses the aftermath of policy termination and proposes and explores possible scenarios and challenges that governments may face in the subsequent policy development process. Following termination, it is likely that *no immediate policy initiatives* will emerge as resources previously allocated to the terminated policy could be redirected elsewhere, creating limitations in the development of new policies. Additionally, policymakers may become risk-averse and fear that bold or innovative policies will be similarly terminated in the future.

However, terminating the policy does not necessarily mean the end of government intervention in a particular area. Instead, it can lead to the *reintroduction* of policies that draw lessons from past mistakes to better align them with the needs and goals of society. Alternatively, terminated policies could be *replaced* with alternative options that adapt to changing circumstances and ensure relevance and responsiveness to evolving challenges.

However, both the reintroduction and replacement of terminated policies present challenges, particularly with regard to what this manuscript coins as *haunted* policy legacies, i.e. legacies associated with the terminated policy, and *competing* policy legacies. Haunted policy legacies can lead to public skepticism or opposition and complicate the reintroduction process. Additionally, challenges arise from competing policy legacies, as tensions can arise when reintroduced or replaced policies threaten the interests of other pre-existing policies, leading to resistance from actors invested in maintaining the status quo.

In addition, reintroduction of terminated policies after the replacement of the terminated policy, may encounter obstacles arising from the legacy of the replaced policy. In addition to competing policy legacies and haunted policy legacies, these legacies can also resist change, perpetuate inertia, and impede innovation. Path dependencies created by replacement policies can limit possible policy options and make it difficult to enact reintroduction reforms without disrupting existing arrangements. Furthermore, replacement legacies can influence public perceptions and norms and impact the feasibility and acceptability of reintroduction reforms. For

example, (replaced) entrenched beliefs about the role of the state in social care may hinder support for defamiliarizing measures.

This contribution also provides groundbreaking empirical insights, exemplified by a case study of changing childcare policy in the Czech Republic. Here, support for childcare facilities gradually declined after the collapse of state socialism due to widespread dissatisfaction with these services and their objectives (Saxonberg & Sirovátka, 2008). The immediate response was to replace services and transfer childcare responsibilities to the family domain, primarily to mothers. However, as women began demanding these services in the 2000s to facilitate their participation in the labour market, governments had to redefine childcare once again. However, this process is anything but easy. Proponents of the replaced (familiarising) legacy denounce reforms as inappropriate and hinder the actual uptake of services through restrictions in parental leave policy. Furthermore, aversion to state paternalism in childcare (a form of a haunted policy legacy) leads to slow, limited expansion, and kindergartens, as a competing legacy, resist reforms as they jeopardize their interests.

Research on policy change focuses primarily on the impact and significance of inherent policy legacies. My study shows and argues that haunted policy legacies, i.e. legacies associated with terminated policies, can also significantly influence the future course of policy developments. Furthermore, policy dismantling remains an under-researched area in the field of family policy research (e.g., Bianculli *et al*., 2012; Valiente, 1996). While the literature often emphasizes the expansion of family policies, I argue that the dismantling of such policies is more widespread than commonly assumed and therefore deserves greater attention from researchers. This is because policy dismantling can have a profound impact on vulnerable families who rely on family-related income support and services.

## 5.5 Paper V

**Exploring resistance in family policy transfer: A comparative analysis of the Czech Republic and South Korea**

*Martin Gurín*

Unlike previous papers, which were single case studies, Paper V is a comparative paper that aims to understand both policy change and differences in policy change across countries. The starting point of this study is the neglect of the effects and manifestations of resistance to family policy transfer. Despite the growing interest in

policy transfer and the documented strategies of policy transfer in family policy in various countries, there is a significant neglect in the literature of examining resistance to such transfers, another important theoretical mechanism of policy transfer. Paper V argues and shows that integrating the concept of resistance into analyses of policy transfer is crucial to more accurately understand policy transfer, policy change and cross-national differences in family policy change. The research aim of Paper V is therefore to examine the influence and manifestations of resistance through a comparative analysis of family policy change in two countries: the Czech Republic and South Korea. These countries were chosen because they represent different trajectories of family policy change, with South Korea as a frontrunner and the Czech Republic as a major laggard. The aim of the study is to carry out an exploratory analysis of the phenomenon of resistance to family policy transfer by selecting extreme cases. Therefore, the study attempts to fill the gap in the literature by examining the extent to which these countries differ in both their willingness to engage in policy transfer and their resistance to it.

Two types of data were used for the analysis: (1) literature review: strategic policy documents, reform commissions, media coverage, policy statements, government reports and (2) expert interviews: two ministry officials (Czech case), two academics specializing in childcare policy developments and an expert from the Korea Labor Institute (Korean case). The research question that guided the analysis was:

1. *To what extent are cross-national differences in family policy reform the result of differences in willingness to policy transfer and resistance to family policy transfer?*

The findings of Paper V shows that resistance to family policy transfer arises when transferred policies question established cultural norms, power dynamics or financial interests. This resistance has various policy effects, from implementing watered-down versions of transferred policies to outright prevention. Coercion plays a role in fostering resistance, as seen in the Czech case. However, resistance is not only directed against involuntary transfers, but can also arise against voluntary transfers and solutions from countries that are considered role models. The study confirms that paradigmatic changes are met with resistance, especially in the Czech Republic, where resistance to any transfer object that involves a paradigm shift is strong (see Pal, 2019). In contrast, South Korea shows comparatively less resistance to paradigmatic changes as actors see them as essential for societal and economic survival.

When it comes to policy transfer, policymakers in both countries tend to transfer policies from countries with similar institutions and cultures to minimize political and institutional costs. However, lessons are also drawn from best achievers in the field, such as France and the Nordic countries. Different sub-areas of family policy can have different model countries, as South Korea's reference to liberal countries in childcare policy and Nordic countries in parental leave policy reforms shows. Furthermore, the

analysis shows that despite the transfer of policies from the same model country and based on the same paradigm, this does not always lead to the same trajectory of change as observed in both South Korea (re-familialization) and the Czech Republic (de-familialization)'s implementation of reforms that support parental choice. Finally, the article reveals the tendency of policymakers to avoid certain nations whose solutions are considered too idealistic, inappropriate or ineffective. This aspect has also not been examined in family policy research and this article therefore provides the first innovative insights into this mechanism of policy transfer.

In conclusion, the text highlights the importance of understanding both the willingness to transfer family policy and the resistance to such transfer in order to fully grasp the dynamics of policy transfer. While previous research has extensively examined the former aspect, the latter, resistance, has often been overlooked. By focusing on two extreme cases, South Korea and the Czech Republic, this article convincingly argues that both mechanisms are important for understanding stability and change in family policy. South Korea's position as a forerunner of policy change is the result of active engagement in policy transfer, while the Czech Republic showed more resistance in family policy transfer, resulting in only moderate adjustments.

## 5.6 Paper VI

**Comparing the different paths of reforming father leave policies between the Czech Republic and South Korea: The role of public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises**

*Martin Gurín and Janet C. Gornick*

Similar to the previous paper, Paper VI is a comparative paper that addresses the limited understanding of the evolution of father leave policies and the reasons for significant cross-country differences in these policies. Previous research has focused primarily on describing policy changes or take up, without addressing the driving forces behind these changes. This research aims to examine four driving forces of change – public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises (financial, fertility, and pandemic) – and their impact on the development of father leave policies. All of these drivers of change have previously been identified as crucial to understanding change in family policy, although they have not been applied to father leave policy. The aim of Paper VI is to exploit their explanatory potential and illustrate how these determinants influence policy changes in the area of father leave policy The importance of integrating them into further analyses is emphasized.

Two types of data were used for the analysis: (1) literature review: strategic policy documents, reform commissions, media coverage, policy statements, government reports and (2) expert interviews: two ministry officials, an expert from LOM (Czech case), expert from the Korea Labor Institute (Korean case). The research question that guided the analysis was:

1. *What are the reasons for the significant differences between countries in reforming father leave policies?*

Since the 2000s, both the Czech Republic and South Korea have recorded strong public support for father leave policies, albeit with differences in nature. This support has placed father leave policies at the center of discussions about welfare state development in both countries. However, the governments' attempts to meet public preferences by introducing and expanding father-sensitive leave policies were repeatedly met with negative feedback. In South Korea, efforts to maintain minimal parental and father-specific leaves, largely driven by business circles, were aimed at preventing widespread uptake. Conversely, in the Czech Republic, persistent opposition to father-specific leave policies, such as non-transferable entitlements in parental leave, has hindered parental leave reform due to concerns about the impact on freedom of choice.

What then are the reasons for the profound differences in the reform of father leave policies in the two countries? I argue that the disparity in the timing, pace and extent of changes in father leave policies between the two countries is due to crises. In the Czech Republic, the outbreak of the 2007/08 Global Financial Crisis caused the government to postpone planned policy developments related to involved fatherhood. In other words, the crisis has effectively closed the window of opportunity in which both the government and the opposition supported the introduction of paternity leave. After the crisis, the political right changed its attitude towards paternity leave and father leave policies and expressed its opposition towards father leave policies. Their negative feedback, supported by resistance from business circles, could only be overcome by pressure from the European Union and its 2019 Work-family Balance directive, which provided for the introduction of paternity leave. However, requirements for the introduction of individual, non-transferable parental leave entitlements have still not been implemented.

In South Korea, too, the financial crisis delayed the introduction of father-specific leave policies, resulting in only a symbolic change associated with the introduction of a 3-day unpaid paternity leave in 2008. However, the ongoing national fertility crisis forced the government to take measures to increase the birth rate (see Paper I) while recognizing the importance of father leave policies. As the fertility crisis continued without signs of improvement, negative feedback weakened, allowing father-specific leave policies such as paternity leave and daddy months to be expanded.

In addition, the differences in the extent of father leave policy reforms can be attributed in large part also to electoral competition (cf. Lee, 2018). Politicians in South Korea have actively sought issues that could resonate with a broad range of votes, which has led to increasingly bold commitments on father leave policies given both its popularity among voters and the urgency of addressing the fertility crisis. However, in the Czech Republic, politicians and political parties continue to view father leave policies as potentially risky for their re-election prospects and therefore tend to downplay its importance, despite public support for its introduction.

Even though the public opinion is often regarded as a crucial driving force behind policy changes and welfare reforms in democracies (Erikson *et al.*, 2002), my analysis shows that it may not necessarily be the case of father leave policies. While the public policy preferences for father leave policies turned these policies into the new point of reference for discussion on welfare state development, they exerted only a minor or partial influence on welfare state output in this policy field. Both countries showed that other forces – be it a demographic crisis or coercion from the international organization – were needed to overpower resistance and thus make change of father leave policies a reality.

# 6 Concluding discussion

The central focus of this dissertation was the investigation of family policy change and its resulting implications. The traditional approach to studying and understanding the evolution of family policy typically involves an examination of trends in Western welfare states. However, there is a risk that important lessons will be missed by failing to explore alternative factors contributing to changes in family policy. The Czech Republic and South Korea were singled out as case study countries because I believed that they held promise for providing valuable insights into family policy changes, on the one hand, and the theoretical concepts frequently employed to analyze policy changes, on the other. The following text provides key (missed) lessons and proposes avenues for further research.

## 6.1 The influence of self-undermining policy feedback

As reiterated throughout this summary, family policy scholarship has predominantly focused on the impact of self-reinforcing policy feedbacks. It is crucial to acknowledge that this emphasis often carries a critical tone, as these feedback mechanisms, authors argue, have impeded necessary reforms. Our study countries, encompassing South Korea in Papers I, II and III, and the Czech Republic in Paper IV, underscores the significant influence of self-reinforcing policy feedbacks, which have acted as constraints on the development of family policy. However, this perspective presents only one facet of the issue. These papers compellingly demonstrate that self-undermining policy feedbacks – sometimes referred to as 'negative' (Busemeyer *et al*., 2021), also play a pivotal role in shaping the evolution of family policy.

What these papers reveal is that in both countries, governments have been rather *un*responsive to these forms of feedback, at least for a significant time period. In South Korea the immediate reaction was oriented towards pre-existing policies (i.e. market-based childcare), as Pierson (2004) and Hacker (2004) would anticipate. In the Czech Republic, we observed a gradual reorientation towards re-familiarization of childcare. In both cases, policy decisions did *not* align with mass policy preferences.

It is therefore unsurprising that such political decisions contributed to substantial departures from previous paths when different political regimes or political parties gained power (cf. Daugbjerg & Kay, 2020). In South Korea, this resulted in what Jacobs and Weaver (2015) would term as policy reorientation. This was evidenced by the introduction of cash-for-care, driven by the dissatisfaction of non-users of private childcare who were left out without any financial support, as previous governments had not introduced any child-related benefits while primarily focusing on service provision to encourage women's labour force participation. In the Czech Republic, the self-undermining policy feedback – negative feedback regarding the woefully low quality of childcare services – eventually led to their termination. We will later demonstrate that this proved to be a hasty decision.

While I do not assert that these findings are generalizable to all welfare states and/or family policy sub-fields, I strongly believe that self-undermining policy feedbacks are more widespread than typically assumed by family policy scholars. Centering analysis on this concept has the potential to enhance our understanding of policy changes, extending beyond the scope of childcare policies investigated in this dissertation. Perhaps the profound changes observed in family policy across various welfare states, or at least debates surrounding them, can be attributed to the influence of self-undermining policy feedbacks.

And why is it important to pay more attention to studying self-undermining policy feedbacks? Neglecting self-undermining feedbacks appears to risk policy failure. Policies that inadvertently exacerbate problems or create new challenges undermine public trust (in family policy), waste resources, and perpetuate social harms – such as cycles of poverty and disadvantage. The impact of family policy extends far beyond immediate outcomes and can influence the course of an individual's life and intergenerational dynamics. Failing to take self-undermining feedback into account in family policy can have long-term consequences for families, such as the deteriorating well-being of their members. By ignoring self-undermining feedbacks, policymakers also miss valuable opportunities to improve policy design and implementation. For example, when policymakers understand how policies can inadvertently undermine their goals, they can identify vulnerabilities and make necessary adjustments to increase effectiveness and efficiency.

To address these shortcomings, future research should focus on case studies and empirical research that provide insights into the mechanisms and effects of self-undermining policy feedbacks. By examining real-world examples, researchers should identify patterns, drivers, and possible interventions to mitigate self-undermining dynamics that occur in this policy field.

## 6.2 Let's not forget about policy dismantling

Retrenchment has attracted great scholarly interest in the literature on the welfare state literature in recent decades. In short, the term welfare state retrenchment refers to the process of reducing or cutting the social welfare programs and benefits provided by the government (Starke, 2006). This can include various measures such a reduction in spending on social programs, a tightening of eligibility criteria for social benefits, an increase in the retirement age, a reduction in the level of benefits, or the privatization of certain welfare services. It is often a contentious issue as it is said to have a significant impact on the most vulnerable members of society who rely on support from social assistance programs (Alm et al., 2020). Critics argue that austerity measures exacerbate social inequality and poverty, while supporters argue that reforms are necessary to ensure the long-term sustainability of social systems.

This topic resurfaced in the literature, which scholars call policy *dismantling*. Likewise, it refers to the deliberate process of dismantling or repealing/terminating existing policies, regulations, or programs issued by a government. This process typically involves the systematic *de*construction of policies that are considered ineffective, outdated, or no longer aligned with the current goals or ideologies of society or government (Bauer & Knill, 2012, 2014). Though, while the mechanisms and motivators behind policy dismantling are well-documented, the implications of it, especially on future policy trajectories, remain to be fully understood. What is also yet to be examined is how policy dismantling manifests itself in the area of family policy and with what consequences.

Paper IV, providing an example of family policy dismantling – or more specifically family policy termination, fills both research gaps. As already mentioned, the critical juncture in the form of the collapse of communism opened the door for reforms due to the poor quality of childcare services (the so-called crèches) during the communist regime, which led to great dissatisfaction with these services. Post-communist governments decided to continue the refamiliarization trend (that began during the communist era) and thereby decided to end support for crèches. In the new order, women started to be seen as full-time carers again and crèches, a communist invention, were seen as redundant. Consequently, there were only a few of them in the early 2000s (see Saxonberg & Sirovátka, 2008) and in 2013 they no longer existed by law.

However, as mentioned above, this turned out to be a hasty decision. As in other European countries, Czech women increasingly wanted to increase their participation in the labour market, and childcare services proved crucial in this regard. The attempts to reintroduce childcare services – a process which I term *re-defamilialization*, apparently in some corrected way, however, proved extremely difficult and lengthy.

In my research, I have identified up to three forces that counteracted the reforms and that governments had to navigate carefully: (1) feedback from competing policies – in this case kindergartens, as the reforms threatened their interests, (2) legacies of the terminated policy which I termed as *haunted* policy legacies, which have manifested themselves, for example, in increased attention to the quality-related design of services and, unfortunately, also in an aversion to state involvement in childcare, which has in large led to slow development of services, and finally (3) legacies of replacement – i.e. supporters of familialism who rejected any reforms as inappropriate and unnecessary and limited the use of these services by introducing restrictions within the statutory parental leave.

The decision to dismantle/terminate childcare services instead of solving the causes of negative feedback – perhaps already in the 1960s/1970s, not only contributed to a very moderate reform of childcare policy in the last two decades, but above all to difficulties for both mothers and fathers in reconciling work and family and ongoing gender inequality.

I argue that research should pay more attention to policy dismantling in the area of family policy, as I again expect it to be more widespread than assumed and to have significant consequences for individuals and families. Researchers should pay attention to investigating these questions, for example, what political, economic, and social factors drive the decision-making process behind the dismantling of family policies? What role do ideologies, values, and beliefs play in shaping attitudes towards family policy and its dismantling? How does the process of policy dismantling in family policy differ across countries? And does the dismantling of family policies affect different demographic groups, such as single-parent households? Exploring these research questions will provide valuable insights informing future policy debates and interventions.

## 6.3 Why is the Czech Republic a family policy change laggard?

One could reasonably claim that the Czech Republic is one of the biggest laggards in family policy reforms among developed welfare states. This assertion holds true not only in the context of childcare policy, as previously discussed, but also in other sub-domains of family policy such as (general) parental leave and father leave policies, which were explored in more detail in Papers V and VI. In the introduction, I argued that a multi-conceptual approach might offer a more nuanced comprehension of policy changes compared to the often-utilized single-conceptual approaches prevalent in family policy scholarship. The single-conceptual approaches are more adept at comprehending and scrutinizing the concepts themselves. So, what do we learn about the Czech Republic and its status as a laggard from a multi-conceptual perspective?

Perhaps we might expect that in the Czech Republic, there is either no demand or very little demand for policy changes, public opinion showing low levels of public policy preferences towards novel policy approaches, coupled with the absence or weakness of forces advocating for changes in family policies. This, however, does not seem to be the case. We observe an increasing demand for childcare services (Paper IV) and father leave policies (Paper VI), indicating a desire among families for more substantial policy changes. Officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour desire policy change and utilize various channels to do so, including leveraging the soft power of international organizations (Paper V). These international organizations themselves, notably the European Union, are exerting pressure on the Czech government to undertake more ambitious policy reforms, often substituting the unwilling government by providing support, such as funding for the development of childcare infrastructure (Paper V). Furthermore, there have been instances of Social Affairs and Labour ministers, such as Minister Marksová-Tominová, known for her feminist background, actively promoting profound changes in family policy (Papers V and VI, cf. Saxonberg *et al*., 2023). Various strands of literature, including theories on public opinion and policy responsiveness, would anticipate a high likelihood of policy change in such circumstances. However, the question remains: why has this *not* been the case?

The results of my research show that the Czech Republic and its family policy appear to be *trapped* by multiple policy legacies. As mentioned above in the previous chapter (and analyzed in Paper IV), there are different forces, be they from competing policies (here networks that support the policy status quo regarding kindergartens), from those supporting familiarisation of the family policy regime as established in the 1990s, as well as enduring legacy of terminated policy, mobilize and work in one way or another, independently or simultaneously, against family policy reforms, using different strategies. Paper V, for example, convincingly shows how these forces resisted policy transfer from abroad – be it a voluntary transfer initiated by the government (e.g. Tagesmutter), or initiated and/or enforced by the European Union (e.g. the recent Work-Family Balance Directive). Alternatively, Paper VI shows how often negative feedback (in the sense of Baumgartner & Jones, 2002) occurs against father leave policies and how easily political parties that have previously supported such policies can make a U-turn in their position as a result of such negative feedback. This is because this negative feedback tends to be extremely vocal and successfully penetrates the positions in which decisions are made. Here they block and slow down discussions and decisions (cf. Saxonberg *et al*., 2023). Perhaps this is why politicians and governments are reluctant to make (bolder) policy decisions that may be highly controversial, and they consciously ignore the policy preferences of the masses (Paper VI).

The fact that the Czech Republic experienced two major crises – the 2007/08 Global Financial Crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic – and is currently recovering from the energy crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine also unfortunately contributed to a very moderate and, above all, delayed changes in family policy. It is often repeated in the literature on critical junctures/crises that crises represent the window of opportunity for (substantial) policy changes. This did not materialize in the case of the Czech Republic, where the window was already opened before the crisis, as both the government and the opposition supported the necessary reforms and the Global Financial Crisis effectively closed it, so that first important reforms did not take place until the mid-2010s. Due to the pandemic and the energy crisis, family policy reforms are no longer a political priority, with family policy reforms only being referred to in the period before the elections but not being implemented after them.

The previous discussion highlights the enormous challenges facing Czech family policy. These challenges include addressing entrenched policy legacies, overcoming resistance to policy transfer, dealing with negative feedback, using moments of crisis for structural reforms, and depoliticizing family policy issues. Each of these steps is essential to ensure the success of policy changes in the area of family policy in the Czech Republic.

## 6.4 Why is South Korea a family policy change forerunner?

It may come as a surprise to many welfare state scholars how profoundly family policy in South Korea has changed, both in extent and speed. Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser (2015) characterized changes in family policy as revolutionary, and South Korea certainly fits this characterization. This claim is supported by South Korea's position as a culturally strong society, heavily influenced by the teachings of Confucianism, and in which the social order traditionally revolves around family responsibilities and the concept of the male breadwinner. Therefore, it is not surprising that, in contrast to the Czech Republic and many other Western welfare states, state intervention in family affairs remained minimal for almost half a century. What then was the trigger for this remarkable transformation?

The primary driver behind the expansion of family policies in South Korea has undeniably been the productivist nature of its welfare state, in which social policy, including family policy, is subordinated to economic imperatives. Within the East Asian welfare model, this translates to state support for policies perceived as beneficial to, rather than detrimental to, the economy. Historically, minimal state intervention in family policy persisted for an extended period due to concerns that investment in such policies could potentially impede economic growth. However, since the 1990s, the productivist ethos of the Korean welfare state began to reconsider

this notion, recognizing the positive economic outcomes associated with increased female labour market participation. The emergence of a fertility crisis in the mid-2000s, threatening to severely impact the economy, compelled the Korean welfare state to reposit its focus towards family policy (Paper I). Due to persistent fertility challenges—in fact, as of 2024, South Korea maintains the lowest fertility rate among OECD countries—the welfare state has been compelled to reform existing policies and introduce new ones, such as father leave policies (as discussed in Paper VI), actively importing policies from abroad (as explored in Paper V). The subordination of social policy to the economy was so strong that it even did not shy away from questioning and changing the cultural foundation of the Korean welfare state: Confucianism (Paper I).

Another factor that differs significantly between the Czech Republic and South Korea and that helps us explain the differences between the two countries is the fact that family policy has been the subject of electoral competition in South Korea (Paper VI). Political parties outbid each other on family policy campaign promises in order to gain voter support and thus increase their chances of winning the election. Since the 2000s, political parties have placed great emphasis on work-family balance policies in their election manifestos to win the support of female voters (Lee, 2018), and in the 2010s they even expanded this to include father leave policies (Paper VI). However, it must be said that these election promises are not always kept (see below for reasons).

The influence of 'old productivism', characterized by a reluctance to allocate public resources, significantly impacted many initial decisions, resulting in various challenges (see Paper II). For instance, delegating the construction of childcare services to the market without substantial state oversight inevitably led to issues concerning affordability, accessibility, and quality. This not only gradually increased dissatisfaction among service users but also prompted many to opt out of utilizing such services. Consequently, the policy failed to achieve its original objectives. The welfare state already trapped in entrenched interest caused by the original decision found itself in a difficult position. The government's reluctance to increase the provision of public childcare services, despite their high demand from families, sparked public outcry and the call for an alternative solution. This ultimately led to the introduction of a cash-for-care allowance, therefore driven by self-undermining policy feedback (Paper II and Paper III). While this solution partially aligned with the productivist framework (aiming at increasing fertility and implementing cheap policies), it significantly deviated from the defamilialization trajectory established in the 1990s. Consequently, it faced fierce criticism from feminist circles, who rightly anticipated that universalizing and enhancing the cash-for-care allowance would substantially incentivize its uptake and maintain gender inequality.

Therefore, despite its expansion, the evolution of family policy is not without its challenges. Similarly to the Czech Republic, family policy reforms in South Korea

continue to be contentious, and negative feedback frequently arises to resist policy transfer (see Paper V), even though in comparison to the Czech Republic with much less success. Negative feedback blocks necessary reforms, leading to incomplete reforms. And it took more than 15 years to eventually introduce direct child benefits (see Paper I and Paper III).

However, family policy in South Korea has undergone a significant transformation, largely attributed to the academic community in the country. Over the past 25 years, research organizations and universities have actively contributed to the development of family policy, achieving notable success in the process. It is evident from my own observations that the majority of the academic community has adeptly navigated the landscape of productivist welfare capitalism by initially making modest demands and progressively advocating for more substantial reforms over time. This strategy often involved the introduction of benefits that imposed minimal or no financial burdens, such as unpaid or low-paid entitlements. For instance, the introduction of paternity leave benefits in 2008 initially offered a mere three-day unpaid entitlement. While such reforms were not expected to directly address major issues like fertility rates, they were strategically designed to encounter minimal resistance. By integrating these benefits into the existing welfare state framework, researchers positioned themselves to advocate for further expansions. I believe that this incremental approach to policy expansion is a possible solution to countries facing challenges in implementing policy changes, such as the Czech Republic.

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# Appendix: Paper VII

Paper VII

**Intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state: the case of South Korea**

*Martin Gurín and Martina Brandt*

The expansion and dismantling of social policies can serve as catalysts for fundamental social change. For example, the expansion and dismantling of social policies can have profound effects on gender equality, influencing opportunities, power dynamics and societal perceptions of gender roles (Saraceno & Keck, 2011). When social policy is expanded to include measures such as paid parental leave and affordable childcare, it contributes to greater gender equality by reducing barriers to women's participation in the labour market and promoting work-life balance. This enables women to develop professionally and become economically independent, reduce the gender pay gap and challenge traditional gender stereotypes (O'Connor, 1993; Orloff, 1993). In addition, family policies that promote shared caregiving tasks help to challenge deeply rooted ideas about gender roles and promote more equal relationships within families. Encouraging and supporting fathers to take an active role in childcare and household responsibilities, it not only benefits women by alleviating the burden of unpaid domestic labour, but also promotes stronger bonds between fathers and children (Almqvist & Duvander, 2014). This involvement not only contributes to the holistic development of children, but also promotes a culture of equality and mutual respect within families, which can have far-reaching effects on societal norms and attitudes towards gender.

Conversely, dismantling social policies exacerbates gender inequalities by undermining women's access to essential services and support systems. Cuts in social policy have a disproportionate impact on women, who often bear the brunt of family care responsibilities. This can perpetuate economic dependence and limit women's ability to achieve financial autonomy and decision-making power, reinforcing traditional gender roles and inequalities.

In addition to focusing on gender equality, it is important to recognize how the expansion and dismantling of social policies impact intergenerational solidarity — a topic that my dissertation project initially explored (see chapter 4.2). While previous papers of this cumulative dissertation focused on understanding policy change, Paper VII therefore goes a step further and contributes to the literature that examines the link between policy change and societal outcomes. It contributes to a rich literature that focuses on intergenerational solidarity within families and, in particular, on its two forms: functional solidarity – the degree of mutual help and exchange of financial and time resources – and normative solidarity, which focuses on expectations regarding filial obligations.

*Theoretical part: Crowding-in, crowding-out, or specialization? The interplay between welfare state change and intergenerational solidarity*

Demographic change, characterized by declining fertility rates and ageing of societies, poses significant public challenges in both developed and developing countries. Countries are grappling with the task of finding an appropriate balance between public and private resources to address this to meet the increasing need for support of the ageing population. In recent decades, a large body of literature in sociology has sought to examine this issue by examining patterns of intergenerational solidarity between family members in various forms of support (e.g., Albertini & Kohli, 2013). Elderly parents rely heavily on a variety of support systems, including intensive caregiving to financial assistance from family members.

In traditional European societies, intergenerational relations have historically played a central role, with large families and support from adult children serving as fundamental sources of social and economic security for older parents (Aassve *et al*., 2013). However, as societies underwent economic development and faced demographic challenges, welfare policies were introduced to institutionalize various forms of solidarity to address these problems. These welfare state policies, which develop differently across European countries, have influenced and structured intergenerational relations within families, shaping what is often referred to as the *private generational contract* (Reher, 1998). This influence extends beyond assumptions about family welfare and caregiving responsibilities to concrete arrangements that facilitate or enforce intergenerational support (Dykstra & Hagestad, 2016; Saraceno, 2008).

Welfare state arrangements play an important role in maintaining or changing existing welfare and care arrangements within families (Szydlik, 2008). The impact of welfare states on intergenerational solidarity is still up for debate. Some argue that strong welfare states reduce the willingness of family members to provide financial

and care support to older parents, suggesting that public services *crowd out* family solidarity (Glazer, 1988). Others argue that welfare states *crowd in* family solidarity by redirecting financial resources without displacing family support (Künemund & Rein, 1999). For instance, if the government implements policies that support flexible work arrangements or provide financial incentives for caring for family members (so-called care allowances), it can strengthen intergenerational solidarity by enabling family members to better balance work and care responsibilities. Alternatively, the *complementarity* thesis suggests that welfare states and families could *specialize* in different aspects of solidarity provision (Motel-Klingebiel *et al*., 2005; Brandt, 2013). This includes recognizing that both the state and the family have unique strengths and abilities to contribute to the well-being of individuals and families throughout the life course. With specialization, the state assumes primary responsibility for providing certain essential services and support systems that benefit individuals and families across generations. These services may include eldercare services, which are time consuming and require professionalization. Finally, the welfare state can influence solidarity between generations within families not only through its expanding involvement, but also through its own reduction. Recent research by Ulmanen and Szebehely (2015) convincingly illustrates this point, showing that the decline in residential care services, without adequate replacement by alternative formal arrangements, is leading to a resurgence of family-based care.

Despite the influence of welfare state policies, intergenerational solidarity in the form of mutual support between family generations remains widespread across Europe (Albertini *et al*., 2007; Deindl & Brandt, 2011). Norms of filial and parental responsibility further guide family behavior, reflecting shared societal expectations regarding the responsibility of adult children to older parents and the division of responsibility between the welfare state and the family (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003; Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). These norms persist despite welfare state interventions, which can change the distribution of responsibilities over time (Haberkern & Szydlik, 2010). In addition, welfare state policies have been examined for their impact on the gendered organization of intergenerational support, with specific arrangements potentially reducing or increasing gendered inequalities in care provision (Plantenga *et al*., 2009b; Schmid *et al*., 2012).

### *Research gap*

The link between social policy and intergenerational solidarity continues to be the subject of ongoing debate. While mainstream research has predominantly focused on developed welfare states, the study of how social policy changes in developing welfare states affect intergenerational solidarity has been neglected. The aim of this dissertation (Paper VII) is to fill this research gap by examining the link between the

developing welfare state and intergenerational solidarity in South Korea. It uses the case of South Korea and assumes that the interaction between the welfare state and intergenerational private contracts may be different compared to developed welfare states, in part because South Korea is a highly culturally-based society with strong familial and filial contracts. The added value of this type of analysis is that it provides us with insights into the relationship between intergenerational solidarity and the welfare state at early stages of development – something that we previously knew little about due to data limitations. The research question that guided the analysis was:

1. *How and in how far the introduction of welfare policies went along changing patterns of intergenerational solidarity in a traditional society such as South Korea?*

| **Paper Title** | **Research Aim(s)** | **Research Question(s)** | **Research Subject** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Paper VII<br><br>*Intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state: the case of South Korea* | This study aims to examine the changing character of intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state. | How and in how far the introduction of welfare policies went along changing patterns of intergenerational solidarity in a traditional society such as South Korea? | Aggregated data from the Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging, the Korean General Social Survey, and the Korean Social Survey. |

*Methodology*

Quantitative analysis is instrumental in understanding the impacts of social policies on society as it provides robust and measurable evidence on the effectiveness and efficiency of these policies. By employing statistical methods, researchers can analyze data collected from large populations to assess changes in key indicators such as employment rates, health outcomes, educational attainment and exchanges of solidarity between and within generations following the implementation of specific policies. Furthermore, quantitative analysis helps identify the relationship between social policy and societal outcomes by enabling the detection of correlations and causal links. Quantitative research methodology was therefore the most appropriate research method for the Paper VII, as the core research object of this paper was to investigate the link between changing welfare state (social policies) and intergenerational (functional and normative) solidarity within families.

We used three datasets – the Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging (functional financial solidarity), the Korean General Social Survey (functional practical solidarity), and the Korean Social Survey (normative solidarity) to examine solidarity alongside the

changing welfare state in South Korea from 2002 to 2018. To examine the relationship (note: not a causal relationship, see qualification section below for reasons) between the welfare state and intergenerational solidarity, we conducted a correlation analysis between the welfare state (social spending per capita) and transfers at the macro level (cf. Brandt, 2013).

*Findings*

Over the past two decades, South Korea has experienced significant advances in its welfare state, marked by expansions of income support, old-age pensions, social assistance systems, and the introduction of long-term care insurance (for an overview of other explicit family policy changes, see Paper I). This development has stimulated scholarly interest in understanding the impact of these changes on intergenerational solidarity, many of which assume a crowding-out effect in relation to financial transfers (Glazer, 1988).

However, our study challenges the hypothesis that public institutionalized forms of support mentioned above replace private resources from children and instead suggests that Korean older adults continue to rely on family (children) support networks. Despite the profound development of the welfare state, parents remain net receivers of monetary support from their adult children. Although financial support has not decreased, it has become more occasional, which suggests a specialization hypothesis (cf. Brandt, 2013). Interestingly, South Korea's experience differs from previous findings in European countries, where comparative research suggested *inter vivos* financial transfers flowing downwards, indicating a reversal in the traditional direction of intergenerational support (Albertini & Kohli, 2013). In contrast, South Korea's practices of intergenerational solidarity continue to reflect traditional patterns, with limited evidence of Westernization despite adopting welfare policies similar to those of developed European states. However, this may be because South Korea is still at an early stage in the development of the welfare state and profound changes can be expected at a later date

Furthermore, no crowding out effect was found for the second aspect of functional solidarity, as a large proportion of adult children in South Korea continue to provide practical support to their elderly parents. However, we observe changes in the gendered organization of practical support, with daughters becoming more involved in providing practical support.

However, it is important to note that traditional patterns of intergenerational solidarity are subject to change. Previous studies have already pointed to a decline in the level of intergenerational cohabitation (Ku & Kim, 2020). Our study provides

evidence of partial changes in the gendered structure of intergenerational solidarity, with differences in perceived obligations decreasing between sons and daughters. On the one hand, daughters increasingly provide practical support, while the opposite is true for daughters-in-law. Furthermore, our research points to changes in financial assistance between cohabiting child-parent dyads. However, this process is not entirely one-sided, as traditional patterns of solidarity based on strict norms of filial piety, including practical and monetary exchanges and the role of sons, persist, if not strengthen. Despite deviations from traditional filial piety practices such as multigeneration cohabitation, our results suggest that these can be partially offset by alternative forms of solidarity.

Surprisingly, though, there was a significant shift in intergenerational norms. The traditional concept of filial piety and family obligations has largely given way to a collective understanding in which the well-being and care of parents is seen as a shared responsibility between family members (particularly children), the welfare state and society at large. This shift away from the traditional notion that elder care is a private matter and solely the responsibility of the oldest sons and their wives appears to be heavily influenced by the increasing involvement of the South Korean welfare state. Since these attitudes tend to de-emphasize family ties and obligations, future research should delve deeper into this phenomenon and, in particular, examine its implications for maintaining intergenerational solidarity as welfare state systems evolve.

*Limitations*

The methodological limitations of Paper VII include the inaccessibility of microdata from the Korean Social Survey, which restricts detailed analysis. Additionally, there is a lack of comparability between the Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) and the Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging (KLoSA). These limitations hinder the ability to conduct more sophisticated statistical analyses to investigate intergenerational solidarity. Furthermore, the literature suggests that such analyses are inherently challenging due to the numerous factors influencing intergenerational solidarity, a complexity that large datasets typically fail to address.

# PUBLICATIONS

# Paper I

The following is based on Gurín (2023):

Gurín, M. (2023). Forgotten Concepts of Korea's Welfare State: Productivist Welfare Capitalism and Confucianism Revisited in Family Policy Change. *Social Politics, 30*(4), 1211-1237.

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# Paper III

The following is based on Gurín, M. & Kim, J. The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions.

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*The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions*

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*The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions*

*The multidimensionality of childcare policy change: Novel policy approaches, competing policies, and feedback tensions*

# Paper IV

The following is based on Gurín, M. Policy development after termination: The case of re-defamilialization

# Paper V

The following is based on Gurín (2024):

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# Paper VI

The following is based on Gurín, M. & Gornick, J. C. Comparing the different paths of reforming father leave policies between the Czech Republic and South Korea: The role of public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises.

*Comparing the different paths of reforming father leave policies between the Czech Republic and South Korea: The role of public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises.*

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*Comparing the different paths of reforming father leave policies between the Czech Republic and South Korea: The role of public policy preferences, electoral competition, negative feedback and crises.*

# Paper VII

## Intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state: the case of South Korea

*Martin Gurín and Martina Brandt*

*Gurín, M. & Brandt, M. (2024). Intergenerational solidarity in a developing welfare state: the case of South Korea. International Journal of Social Welfare. Online First.*

**Abstract**

With our analysis of the Korean society we intend to make an innovative contribution to research on intergenerational solidarity by examining how the introduction of welfare policies has changed patterns of intergenerational solidarity. Using aggregated data from the Korean Longitudinal Study of Ageing (KLoSA), the Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) and the Korean Social Survey (KSS), we examine the changing character of intergenerational solidarity by focusing on national trends in both societal practice and intergenerational norms from 2002 to 2018. Our findings show that patterns of Korean intergenerational solidarity have modified in various respects. The normative dimension of the familial/filial contract has profoundly changed along with the developing welfare state, shifting from a dominantly filial piety-centric character to more complementarity contract-based norms in which children, welfare state and society are all assigned responsibility for the well-being of parents. Intergenerational 'functional' solidarity, however, in terms of the exchange of money and practical support has not de-filialized.

**KEYWORDS**

intergenerational solidarity, population ageing, societal change, South Korea, welfare state

## INTRODUCTION

Demographic changes propelled by declining fertility and increasing numbers of older people are major public concerns in developed and developing societies as countries are challenged to determine an adequate mix of public and private resources to meet the growing support needs of ageing societies. In recent decades a significant body of sociological and gerontological literature has attempted to address this

concern by analyzing patterns of intergenerational solidarity between family members across various types of support (e.g. Albertini & Kohli, 2013; Isengard et al., 2018). Older parents are strongly dependent on multifaceted support varying from financial and non-financial support from private resources, as well as occasional help with household chores, to often time-demanding physical nursing and care delivered by family members.

Recent developments in social welfare systems, alongside transformations in family size and structure, are calling the current societal organization of support into question. Rapid changes in social support systems are especially relevant to rapidly ageing countries with newly developing welfare states such as South Korea, which face the immense task of meeting the future needs of their older citizens. South Korea, the focus of the current study, has in recent decades introduced a variety of welfare policies to provide care (instrumental and medical), and income security to older people (Kim & Cook, 2011; Kim & Choi 2013; Shin & Do, 2015). Although public forms of solidarity aim to ease the burden of families by taking over a certain amount of responsibility, this support is often inadequate (Gao et al., 2011; Kim & Choi, 2011; Chon, 2014; Shin & Do, 2015) therefore leaving the reliance on familial support intact. Yet, it remains unclear how the introduction of public support to older adults affects culturally based familial and filial contracts and intergenerational dependencies within families. Particular focus then is on adult children who are both culturally (in the form of filial piety) and institutionally (through taxes and social insurance contributions) obliged to support their older parents. Thus, the following question guides the present study: *(how and in how far) does the introduction of welfare policies go along with changed patterns of intergenerational solidarity in a traditional society?* We address this question by drawing on data from seven waves of KLoSA and KSS, and two waves of the KGSS, which collected information on transfers of help and money between adult children and their parents in both directions, as well as on South Koreans' perceptions of filial norms.

This article is structured as follows: In the next section, we present the state of research on the links between intergenerational solidarity and welfare states. Then we present an overview of the state of research on the evolving South Korean welfare state and intergenerational solidarity. The third part of the article presents the methodology of our analysis, which is followed by our empirical results. The article closes with a discussion of our findings and we conclude with an outlook on future research.

## INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY AND THE WELFARE STATE

For the past four decades, intergenerational relationships have been an important focus of sociological analysis. With the ongoing crisis of the so-called "modern *nuclear* family", researchers have moved their focus towards analysis of multigenerational

bonds as the crucial pillar of family systems. The initial catalyst for this development was undoubtedly the work of Bengtson and colleagues, and in particular the *intergenerational solidarity model*, in which solidarity is defined as a multidimensional concept (Bengtson, 2001). A large share of studies utilize this framework to examine the redistribution of income and services within families, with their focus on *functional* solidarity – the degree of mutual help and exchanges of financial and time resources (Saraceno, 2008). Other strands of literature focus on the normative dimension of intergenerational solidarity in the family, for example by measuring cross-national differences in expectations regarding filial obligations, and the development of those over time (Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006). Although they are frequently studied independently, the three closely-related elements of intergenerational solidarity are essential components for understanding the microsocial architecture of intergenerational contracts (Bengtson, 2001, p. 857).

Traditionally, intergenerational relations have played a central role in traditional European societies, where large families and support from adult children have represented a fundamental source of social and economic insurance for the older parents (Aassve et al., 2013). With economic development and associated structural (demographic) challenges, societies began to introduce welfare policies and institutionalize various forms of solidarity in order to address them. Welfare state policies, which have developed to different degrees and in distinctive ways in European welfare states, have influenced and framed intergenerational relations within families, i.e. the 'private generational contract' (Reher, 1998). This is not only reflected in assumptions about the family's welfare and care responsibilities but also by concrete regulations through which intergenerational support is enabled and/or enforced (Dykstra & Hagestad, 2016; Saraceno, 2008).

Although welfare state regulations form only one of the factors in the 'cultural-contextual structures' that affect intergenerational relations (Szydlik, 2008), they play a pivotal role in sustaining or altering existing welfare and care arrangements in families. By what means and with what consequences welfare states influence societal practice, i.e. intergenerational solidarity within families, is an ongoing subject of debate. In the 'critical phase', authors argued that strong welfare states reduce the willingness of family members to provide financial and care support to their aged parents. Thus they posited that an increased availability of public services for older adults 'crowds out' family obligations and weakens intergenerational family ties. In other words, welfare systems substitute for family responsibilities (Kreps, 1977; Glazer, 1988). In conformity with this thesis, the more recent work of van der Broek and Dykstra (2017) argues that adult children are less likely to provide care in countries with extensive residential care settings. This is because the opportunity to 'rely on residential care undermines adult children's sense of urgency to step in and provide care to their parents' (ibid. p. 1624). In strong contrast to that, however, Künemund and Rein (1999) provide evidence that welfare states do not pose a 'moral

risk', but increase rather than undermine family solidarity. For instance, the introduction of pension systems did not crowd out family support, but changed the *direction* of financial resources that flow in the opposite direction to societal transfers (Kohli, 1993) – the 'double circuit of transmissions' (Attias-Donfut, 1995). Alternatively, the 'complementarity thesis' (Motel-Klingebiel et al., 2005) provides insights suggesting that the development of solidarity does not have to lead/or affect solidarity in one direction only (by increasing or decreasing), but that welfare state and family can take on different roles in solidarity provision, and maybe even 'specialize' in different tasks (Brandt, 2013). Here, the healthcare and social services directed to people in need of such assistance potentially 'crowd out' the technically or medically demanding and time consuming support provided by children, but they 'crowd in' other forms of support, such as sporadic help (Brandt, 2013). Lastly, the welfare state may affect the family intergenerational solidarity not only by means of its increasing intervention, but also by its own retrenchment. This has been recently powerfully demonstrated in the work of Ulmanen and Szebehely (2015), who provide evidence that the decline in the provision of residential care services, without full substitution by other forms of formal arrangements, leads to a re-familization of family care.

Research shows that intergenerational solidarity in the form of mutual support between family generations remains a prevailing component of European societies (e.g. Albertini et al., 2007; Deindl & Brandt, 2011). While welfare states have changed certain aspects of intergenerational solidarity in the form of directionality (pensions) or intensity (care arrangements), they have not fundamentally changed their traditional character. Thus it is observed that Northern and Southern European countries still highly differ in the actual societal practice of intergenerational solidarity (Deindl & Brandt, 2011).

And the picture of solidarity behavior would not be complete without an understanding of the norms of filial and parental responsibility that provide guidelines for family behavior (Finch & Mason, 1990). Specifically, solidarity behavior is guided by socially shared expectations regarding adult children's responsibilities toward their older parents, as well as opinions about how responsibilities should be divided between the welfare state and adult children (or the family in general) (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003; Dykstra & Fokkema, 2007). Research shows that the norm of *shared* responsibility between the welfare state and the family is most prevalent in European societies, although there is considerable variation across countries in how responsibility should be shared: In some countries there is an expectation of equal responsibility between the state and the family, in others the family is seen as primarily responsible and the welfare state is assumed a supportive role, and in others it is the other way around (Floridi et al., 2022; Daatland & Herlofson, 2003; Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006; Marckmann, 2017).

Historical accounts show that norms and perceived obligations are resistant to change and persist despite welfare state intervention (Daatland & Herlofson, 2003). Welfare state interventions, however, can potentially affect the share of responsibilities, for example, causing them to shift from one to the other (Haberkern & Szydlik, 2010). As Daatland and Herlofson (2003, p. 538) argue, "we need to know more about what people would prefer if they had more choice". This will require longitudinal observations, particularly those that cover periods when welfare state provisions have changed significantly.

Parallel to these debates, researchers have focused also on the association between welfare state policies and the gendered organization of intergenerational support to older parents. The patterns of support from adult children in Western societies have traditionally been (and still strongly are) gendered, where daughters take on different tasks than sons and are involved in the provision of welfare and care more often and at a higher intensity (Pinquart & Sörensen, 2006). This gender inequality in intergenerational support may be reduced or preserved by specific welfare policy arrangements (Plantenga et al., 2009). On the one hand, the legal obligations to provide or co-finance the care of parents and cash-for-care payments were shown to result in a more unequal distribution of involvement in intensive support at the expense of daughters (Schmid et al., 2012); social services on the other hand are accompanied by less involvement of daughters in intensive support (Haberkern et al., 2015). In none of these cases do welfare state regulations affect the likelihood of sons providing either sporadic or intensive support (Floridi et al., 2022; Haberkern et al., 2015; Herlofson & Brandt, 2020; Schimd et al., 2012).

Whereas most current research around the present issue focuses on the interplay of social behavior and welfare states in Western countries that are in later stages of development, a systematic investigation of how the *introduction* of institutionalized forms of solidarity influence family solidarity in welfare states' early stages is lacking. This is highly relevant since both stages of development are connected with different assumptions. On the one hand, the longer functioning welfare states may generate social trust and greater confidence by substituting the family's security and care with the support found in the wider community (Aassve et al., 2013). Societies, where the welfare state is just in the process of institutionalization and its support is still potentially inadequate, could be less confident about shifting the responsibilities away from the family. Consequently, we expect the functional and normative solidarity here to change tardily and towards form of shared solidarity in which the family is primarily responsible and the welfare state supporting instead of its potentially prompting substitutive change. Additionally, little is known about the interplay on traditional and highly culturally-based societies with strong familial and filial contracts that are currently developing their welfare states, and which are *de facto* ideologically affected by those who already underwent this transition (but see Knodel, 2014, for the case of Thailand; Floridi, 2020, for the comparison of Italy and South

Korea). Such constellation may alter the assumption mentioned above, with more profound changes in both normative and functional intergenerational solidarity to be expected. The question whether the introduction of the welfare state into societies with strong intergenerational filial contracts lead to substantial modifications of their solidarity patterns, or, leave the traditional direction and form of intergenerational solidarity rather intact, is still unclear. This paper will address this knowledge gap by examining *how and in how far the introduction of welfare policies went along changing patterns of intergenerational solidarity in a traditional society such as South Korea*.

## THE SPECIAL CASE OF SOUTH KOREA: TRADITIONAL SOCIETY AND DEVELOPING WELFARE STATE

South Korea is a country with a new but rapidly and profoundly developing welfare state. It has until recently been a traditional society with a unique cultural background based on Confucianism, the key factor differentiating East-Asian welfare states from Western societies (Jones, 1993). This places the family at the pivotal cornerstone of social organization, characterized by mutual obligations and support within the family, in which the duties of children towards their parents (*filial piety*) are of particular importance (Yeo, 2000). Filial piety, with its strong adherence to the principle that the family is responsible for care of elderly parents, is a moral imperative in South Korea (Chan et al., 2011). Lin and Yi (2013) argue that the norm of filial piety not only constitutes the core element of intergenerational solidarity, it is also a *standard* of behavior for intergenerational interaction. Strongly prescriptive intergenerational norms explain the traditional upward directionality of solidarity: support to older people in the traditional definition involves the *uni-dimensional* dependency of aged parents on adult children (ibid). Care for elder parents is considered the duty and unquestioned responsibility of their adult children. Thus, filial piety can be understood as the crucial engine of solidarity, the provision of protection and insurance against hardship, and as a cultural mechanism for the redistribution of resources and services.

In traditional Korean society, filial piety was often realized in co-residence with older parents in three-generation households (Kim, 2016). In the patrilineal/patriarchal family system, the oldest children and particularly sons traditionally had the primary responsibility to support frail parents (Skinner, 1997). Therefore the oldest children were more obliged and expected to support the parents as if there was intergenerational coresidence and functional exchanges, particularly involving the oldest sons (Lin & Yi, 2013). Spouses of these sons, who traditionally become part of the husband's family, have been mostly responsible for the provision of care and practical assistance to parents-in-law (Kim et al., 2015). Indeed, data from the beginning of the 21st century support the prevalence of this traditional and gender-based pattern of intergenerational contract as more than one third of those who

provided personal care in the activities of daily living and one-fifth of those giving practical help in the instrumental activities of daily living were daughters-in-law (KIHASA, 2001).

Traditional forms of intergenerational solidarity have historically been a strong pillar of the Korean family-centric regime (Peng & Wong, 2010; Lee, 2018). Old-age oriented social policies are, however, today the subject of intensive reforms and among the fastest-growing areas of social expenditure in South Korea. To address rising levels of old-age poverty and following the example of Western societies, the evolving welfare state began taking partial responsibility for the welfare of older citizens by redistributing resources towards older people with the introduction of a National Pension Scheme in 1988, followed by the financial support of low-income individuals, first in 2008 with the Old-Age Pension Scheme that was later transformed in 2014 into a more generous Basic Pension Scheme. The previous conservative government had doubled the level of benefits of this age-related allowance and, notwithstanding the fact that the total coverage was still relatively low (Lee et al., 2019), there was a steady increase in beneficiaries since its introduction (from 2.9 million recipients in 2008 to 5.1 in 2018). A similar trend can be observed also for the national old-age pension which increased from 1.8 to approximately 3.2 million recipients in the same period.

Additionally, with the aim to allocate special financial benefits to low-income individuals and families, the Korean welfare state revised the basic social safety net, enacting in 1999 the National Basic Livelihood Security Act. This non-contributory transfer in the form of cash and in-kind benefits targets the older population living in poverty; however, access to this is highly conditioned by the family support obligation rule (Gao et al., 2011). This regulation was reformed in 2015 and 2020 to eliminate welfare blind spots and more effectively reduce poverty (Nam & Park, 2020). The welfare state, in taking partial responsibility for the well-being of its older citizens, has thus been steadily departing from the policy path of a traditionally 'developmental' character (Gough, 2004) or 'productivist welfare capitalism' (Kwon & Holliday, 2007), as can also be observed in the continuously growing welfare state expenditures which have more than doubled since 2000 (see Fig. 1).

< Insert Figure 1 around here >

Moreover, demographic challenges have led to explicit family policy reforms also in the provision of care (e.g. Kim & Cook, 2011; Kim & Kwon, 2021). The progressive government in 2006 proposed a Basic Plan for the Low-Fertility and Ageing Society and developed social care policies accordingly. As a result of a rapid demographic transition, and with the aim to relieve the care burden on family members, South Korea introduced long-term care insurance in 2008 to cover in-home services, institutional services as well as cash benefits (however very restricted). This 'socialization of care' has gained momentum with the rapid increase in for-profit providers (Baek et al., 2011; Choi, 2012). In parallel with the expansion of long-term

care services offered by the market, there has been a steady increase in the number of older people receiving long-term care services, rising from 38,000 in June 2008 to 520,043 (7,5 % of older people) in December 2016 (Chon, 2019). However, it is important to note that a significant number of older people are also receiving other state and community-provided social services outside long-term care. In conclusion, with the aim to reduce intergenerational dependencies, policies introduced by the South Korean welfare state have not only started to regulate intergenerational obligations, but also to radically develop a new context in which intergenerational support and solidarity are embedded.

With the establishment of a welfare regime and the introduction of old-age social policies, there has been ongoing debate over the erosion of cultural norms of filial piety as the traditional intergenerational contract has started to 'westernize' (Choi & Jang, 2010) – most dramatically in regard to levels of coresidence: while in 1980 only around 20 per cent of older Koreans lived independently of their adult children, this number gradually increased to almost 37 per cent by 1995 and reached almost 60 per cent by 2015 (Kim & Cook, 2011; Ku & Kim, 2020). The establishment and further development of public income support for older people makes older adults less reliant on the private incomes of adult children. At the beginning of the 1990s children represented the most important source of income for older Koreans (Choi, 1996) – 72 per cent of the total income of older parents. By 2003 income from children accounted for only one-third of older adults' total income (Moon et al., 2006). Indeed, more recent data (Jung et al., 2016; Kang & Sawada, 2009; Ku & Kim, 2020; Lee, 2022) confirm the gradual substitution of children's sources of income by social transfers, which increased from five per cent (in 1996) to 35 per cent (2014). This has been not only the case of coresiding families, but in particular for those non-coresiding, which have traditionally been highly dependent on private sources of income. This literature hypothesizes that the welfare state has been crowding out intergenerational solidarity.

The newly institutionalized forms of solidarity therefore began to substantially affect the need-opportunity structures of Korean families. So far however there has been no systematic analysis of what link this has to the redistribution of income and services within families and to intergenerational norms. In the next sections a conceptual framework will be introduced, followed by an analysis of patterns of functional solidarity and intergenerational norms in modern Korea. With this analysis we aim to contribute to the discussion of the establishment of a welfare state and its supposed effects on private intergenerational solidarity.

## DATA AND METHODS

Starting point of our analysis is the analytical framework of intergenerational solidarity (Bengtson & Roberts, 1991; Bengtson, 2001) focusing on two of its core

elements - normative and functional solidarity. In order to measure the intergenerational redistribution of both resources and services, we decomposed functional solidarity into two main forms of assistance: financial and practical help. To grasp potential modifications of intergenerational solidarity in systematic way, we additionally differentiated three dimensions (see also Albertini et al., 2007): *directionality* – refers to the direction of the solidarity transfer, which can take two forms: to parents (upward) or from parents (downward); *likelihood* (or prevalence) – indicates whether financial transfers were given/received or not; and lastly, *intensity* – which examines the extent of transfers provided, i.e., whether regular or occasional, or in what amount. These are relevant in alternative perspectives on the extent to which intergenerational interdependencies have altered with the introduction of welfare policies in South Korea.

## Data

In the absence of a comprehensive data set that would capture all three elements of intergenerational solidarity simultanously, we decided to use three separate data sets to examine these elements separately. With regard to *normative* solidarity, we used the biannual Korean Social Survey (KSS) (KNSO 2008, 2012, 2018), which collects data from approximately 20,000 households, to identify intergenerational norms and detect changes in them over time. Aggregated data, which cover the years 2002 to 2018, were used for this purpose[1]. To measure *functional financial* solidarity instead, we used the seven waves of the Korean Longitudinal Study of Aging (KLoSA), which covers the years 2006 to 2018 and its baseline sample (2006) consisted of 10,248 respondents aged 45 years of older. To keep the sample representative of the older population, a refreshment sample of 920 individuals born between 1962 and 1963 was added in wave 5 (2014). While this data set provides a highly nuanced account of financial transfers and fits our conceptual model (directionality, prevalence, intensity), it lacks information on *functional practical* solidarity. For this purpose, we used the Korean General Social Survey (KGSS) and its two waves from 2006 and 2016, numbering 1,052 respondents. This time frame provided the opportunity to analyze patterns of intergenerational solidarity within families before and immediately after the introduction of welfare policies (2008 for the introduction of long-term care insurance and the Basic Pension Scheme). This allowed us to examine modifications in the degree and directions of parallel institutionalization of different forms of solidarity in their early stages.

## Measures

*Intergenerational norms*. In traditional Confucian culture the provision of functional support is regarded as solely the responsibility of the family. This study

operationalizes intergenerational norms as the societal perception of the obligation to support elderly (parents). There are two levels which are relevant in this regard (Daatland, 2009). First, regarding the *family*, we are interested by which family member or generation solidarity is expected. On the societal level we ask whether the state and society should contribute to the redistribution of resources and care from the respondents` view. The following question was used to measure intergenerational norms: *Who do you think should be held responsible for the support of elderly parents?*[2] The family norm was measured on a five-item scale. The choices were, that the responsibility for the aged parent lies with: the oldest child (daughter-in-law), the son (daughter-in-law), the daughter (son-in-law), joint responsibility of all children, or the responsibility of the able-bodied child. The societal norm was measured on a four-item scale. The choices were, that the responsibility for the aged parent lies with: the individual (elderly parent); the family (defined as one's own children and spouses of those children); jointly the responsibility of the family, government and society; or the government and society.

*Functional financial solidarity.* The empirical analyses of prevalence, directionality, and intensity of financial transfers are based on seven waves of KLoSA which provide information about the living conditions of the older population (persons at least 45 years of age). We used all those respondents aged 45 and older with at least one adult child (of at least age 18) either living within or outside the parental home at the time of the interview. Respondents without children (alive) were excluded. Since traditionally the eldest (first) child has the primary responsibility to support aged parents, our analyses focus on the first child only.[3] To measure financial resources, we analyzed data from the following questions. In ascending direction for non-co-residing dyads:'*In the last calendar year (...), while living separately, did you and your spouse receive from (child) any regular financial support/occasional financial support?* ; in descending direction for non-co-residing dyads: '*In the last calendar year (...) while living separately did you and your spouse give to (child) any regular financial support/occasional financial support?*'. In case of co-residing dyads, we analyzed data from these questions from wave 2 (2008) to wave 7 (2018): '*In the last calendar year (...) did you and your spouse receive any financial support/give any financial support from/to (child) while living together?*'. For all these monetary exchanges, we also measured total amounts and average amounts that child-parents dyads mutually provided.

*Functional practical solidarity*. We additionally used data from KGSS as a complementary tool to measure transfers of practical support. KGSS enabled us to measure practical support between parents and their first adult children[4] (children with the 'closest contact') aged 18 years and older. In the KGSS, practical support was defined as the provision of practical help or personal care based on the following questions: '*How frequently did adult child provide practical support to you for the last 12 months? /How frequently did you provide practical support to this adult child for the last 12 months?*'. As in the previous case, we included respondents aged 45 and older. As the

relationship between parents-in-law and daughters/sons-in-law is of keen importance in the provision of practical support in Confucian South Korea, we additionally measured these support exchanges. For this purpose, we used these questions: '*(If currently married) How frequently did you do each of the following things to your parent(s)-in-law for the last 12 months?/(If currently married) How frequently did your parent(s)-in-law do each of the following things to you for the last 12 months?*'. Here we included respondents aged 18 to 50 (the upper limit due to the lower response rate compared to adult child-parent dyads). Finally, to investigate the gendered organization of practical support, we used these questions: '*How frequently did you do provide practical support to your own parent(s) for the last 12 months?/How frequently did your own parent(s) provide practical support to you for the last 12 months?*', with respondents between 18 and 50 years old. For all six questions, respondents rated the provision of practical support on a five-point Likert-type scale with the choices: very often, often, sometimes, seldom and never. Accordingly, we were able to measure the prevalence and intensity of support provided where the values 'very often' an 'often' where defined as regularly provided support and 'sometimes' and 'seldom' as occasionally provided support. Unfortunately, restrictions related to the specific research design and sample size, prevented us from carrying out similar decomposition of categories as for transfers of practical support, which would have directly mirrored financial transfers (e.g. for dyads coresiding or not). Notwithstanding this limitation, we decided to use KGSS in this format as it provides a valuable information that is hardly reported by other surveys.

**Analysis**

Previous sociological literature has argued that it has been difficult, if not impossible, to draw 'With the data available, we were also unable to do so. Our ambition was thus to merely investigate the *link* between the two and this we do by testing the correlations between the welfare state and transfers on a macro level (see also Brandt, 2013). We employed a broad measure of the generosity of social welfare: Welfare state was measured here as social expenditure (in USD) per capita, consisting of both pension-based cash benefits and in-kind benefits. In Table 1, which summarizes the trend of social expenditures, we also included number of beds in residential long-term care facilities – a frequently used indicator linked to informal (intergenerational) care, and one of the only internationally comparable ones (Wagner & Brandt, 2017). Because for all the aforementioned indicators we observe an increasing tendency, we decided to include in the following figures and analyses data on social expenditures only to ensure readability.

< Insert Table 1 around here >

## RESULTS

In this section we present a descriptive overview of trends in intergenerational norms and functional solidarity in South Korea to show if and how they have changed alongside the introduction of social policies developing the role of the state in the support of older adults in South Korea. We present the results in the following order: first the patterns of intergenerational norms; financial transfers between non-co-residing adult child-parent dyads and between those co-residing; practical transfers between adult parents and both their own children and children-in-law, and lastly the gendered organization of these forms of support.

### Normative solidarity

Figure 2 is an overview of solidarity norms in South Korea between 2002 and 2018, based on the percentage distribution of individuals' perceived source of responsibility to care for older Koreans. Overall, solidarity norms have changed fundamentally alongside the expansion of the welfare state. In 2002, 70 % of individuals assigned the primary responsibility for assuring older adults' welfare to the family (especially to the children). In contrast, 18 % viewed the combination of family, state and society as responsible for the well-being of parents, and merely 10 % said this was the sole responsibility of parents themselves. To the welfare state (government) as the sole actor was attributed almost no responsibility. Since 2006, however, this 'family-centric' pattern of solidarity norms has changed considerably.

< Insert Figure 2 around here >

From 2006 to 2018 there was a sharp decline in the perceived primary responsibility of children for the welfare and care of the parents more than two-fold. In fact, in 2018, fewer than 27 % of respondents designated the family (children) as those primarily responsible for their parents' welfare. It is worth noting that the decline was most prominent between 2006 and 2008 (long-term care insurance and the Old-Age Pension Scheme were introduced in 2008), but has been gradual since then. The more the welfare state becomes involved, the more the prevailing norm of *pure* filial piety seems to be replaced by the norm of shared responsibility in which children, government and society should be involved. Indeed, such a redefined perception of responsibility has almost doubled between 2006 and 2018. On the one hand, the perception of the welfare state's role as the sole primary actor has increased, but remains at a low level. On the other hand, attitudes toward individual responsibility have increased considerably. Changes in social norms might also have practical implications for exchanges of support within families. In the next section, we present our findings on the development of family support patterns over a similar time span.

**Functional solidarity: financial and practical support**

Figures 3 and 4 show trends in upward and downward flows of money and practical support, respectively, between parents and adult children at the dyadic level over the period 2006-08 to 2016-18. We also examine how trends in support exchanges reflect the availability of public welfare benefits to older adults.

***Prevalence of financial support***

First, in examining the situation before the introduction of major policies, the data show that the transfer of financial resources between child-parent dyads not living in the same household reflected to a large extent the traditional 'filial piety' pattern of intergenerational solidarity. This is because nearly half of the non-coresiding adult children transferred money in the upward direction, while only about 14 % of older parents did so in the opposite direction. However, financial transfers between coresiding dyads were quite different. Coresiding parents were more likely to provide financial support to adult children and 40 % of them reported doing so. In contrast, less than a quarter of coresiding children provided financial support to their parents.

< Insert figure 3 around here >

Looking at the role of social expenditure on older adults, we find mostly a negative ('crowding out') relation between social expenditure and mutual financial support between children and parents (see Figure 3). Generally, increasing social expenditure went along a decreasing share of parents who supported their offspring financially. This link seems to be more prominent among co-residing rather than non-co-residing dyads. Financial support from adult children to co-residing parents also decreased, suggesting a crowding out of private upward transfers. This decline in upward financial transfers was, however, less steep than declines in downward financial support. By this metric, adult children became in 2018 net providers of financial transfers, reinforcing the traditional 'filial piety' character of intergenerational solidarity in South Korea. Filial piety was maintained in the case of non-coresiding dyads where the greater the public support, the more non-coresiding parents aged 45 and older were financially supported by their offspring ('crowding in'). In summary, the link between the developing welfare state in South Korea and actual societal behavior does not reveal a clear trend toward the erosion of intergenerational solidarity in South Korea, even though social expenditures on pension-based cash benefits has increased four-fold (Table 1). As to upward financial transfers, intergenerational support may have strengthened rather than *de-filialized*. Nevertheless, reports of financial support are just one assessment of societal behavior. The intensity of support exchange provides an alternative perspective on how much intergenerational interdependencies have altered with the introduction of welfare policies in South Korea.

*Intensity of financial support*

The intensity (average amounts) of financial support has also modified over the course of 2006 to 2018. Despite a declining trend in the prevalence of intergenerational financial support, both generations reported a higher intensity of exchange when such support was previously provided. In particular, among non-coresident children, the average amount of occasional upward (from children to parents) flows of financial support increased from 522,000 to 756,000 Korean Won (KRW) ($r^2$ = 0,46, sig. = 0.091). This indicates increasing complementarity between public sources of income provided to older people and private exchange of financial resources with adult children. Among coresident dyads, the intensity of upward financial transfers also increased from 2,918,000 to 3,638,000 KRW ($r^2$ = 0,68, sig. = 0,007). These findings point to the need for a multi-dimensional approach to the study of intergenerational solidarity that accounts for both the intensity and direction, as well as the living arrangements that structure support exchanges, because various facets of intergenerational solidarity may exhibit opposite developments, just as the complementarity and specialization hypotheses would predict (e.g. Brandt, 2013).

*Practical support*

Figure 4 shows the prevalence of practical support exchanges based on support provided/received for help and personal care. As for time support before the introduction of welfare state policies (2006), parents were more likely to receive help from their children than they were to provide help to them. In about 80 per cent of the child-parent dyads, children supported their parents with help and care (upward). Practical support in the opposite direction, however, did not lag behind, as about 74 % of parents provided such support to their adult children. Additionally, daughters-in-law were largely responsible for providing practical support to their in-laws. As our data show, nearly 87 % of children-in-law provided such support, while only 65 % of parents-in-law did so in the opposite direction, indicating a much higher uni-directionality of support compared to child-parent dyads. Only minor modifications were found in the provision of practical support, but these were still consistent with the traditional filial contract. Specifically, we observe a relatively small decrease in the likelihood of upward transfers of practical support to both own parents and parents-in-law, while an increase is observed in the opposite direction. Despite that, however, adult children remained the net providers of practical support, even though in the case of adult child-parent dyads, this has been substantially narrowed.

The intensity of practical support, however, presents a different picture, both in terms of the character of the transfer and the intensity of the change (Figure 4). Similar to the pattern of financial transfers, there was high frequency of intergenerational exchange of practical support. Inversely to the likelihood, however, the intensity of practical

support tended to be markedly higher in the downward direction. Considering the provision of practical support in 2016, changes have occurred in the intensity of practical support. Regularly provided practical support decreased for both dyads and in both directions, and particularly so from parents to their offspring. In other words, the introduction of social policies altered the provision of practical support which became more occasional.

< Insert figure 4 around here >

**Gendered organization of intergenerational solidarity**

Considerable changes occurred in the gendered organization of intergenerational support with the introduction of welfare state policies. The data indicate a further decline in perceived filial piety obligations of the (oldest) sons towards their elderly parents, moving the responsibility towards all children instead (see Figure 5). We should thus expect, first, greater gender-equal distribution of welfare and care between sons and daughters and therefore a lesser role of first sons in its provision. And secondly, we should assume the provision of care to be on the decline among daughters-in-law.

< Insert Figure 5 around here >

The data on the receipt of regular and occasional financial support between the non-coresiding dyads confirms the first hypothesis only partially (see Table 2). Thus we see that the gap between the sons and daughters in the provision of occasional financial support to parents has been closing, but in the opposite direction towards intergenerational norms, with first sons increasing their likelihood of providing support. Similarly, the differences have diminished for regular support provided; it has remained however primarily in the realm of sons. The flow of financial solidarity in the opposite direction has continued to follow the traditional Confucian principles. Indeed, the sons were more likely to be offered financial support from parents in our study period.

Coresidence continues to be gendered in line with Confucianism, with the higher prevalence of sons coresiding with their parents. Indeed, one-third of all first sons coresided with their older parents in 2008, while only one-fourth of first daughters did so. The prevalence of coresidence decreased in 2018 for both sons and daughters, yet the sons were still more likely to coreside with their parents than were daughters. Interestingly, a higher number of daughters was financially supported by coresiding parents than was the case for sons in 2008. This situation, however, appears to have reversed by 2018. The sons continued to financially support their parents more than did the daughters, yet the difference decreased over the 10-year period.

Finally, regarding practical support, we find that daughters-in-law were more likely to provide practical support to their parents-in-law than sons-in-law, and this did not change over the 10 years. Similarly, daughters-in-law provided this support more regularly than sons-in-law (33 % compared to only 9 %). However, we observe a decline in the intensity of practical support provided by daughters-in-law, a development that seems consistent with changing norms. Interestingly, although sons-in-law were less likely than daughters-in-law to support their in-laws and with lower intensity, the data show that they were supported by their in-laws more often and with higher intensity than was the case for daughters-in-law. A different pictures emerges for adult child-parent dyads. The likelihood of support toward own parents remained similar for sons and daughters, although support in the opposite direction increased for daughters and decreased for sons. Intensity remained constant among sons between 2006 and 2016 (around 30 %), but increased among daughters – i.e., daughters provided practical support to their own parents more regularly in 2016 (40 % in 2016 vs. 29 % in 2006). Regular downward support also increased for daughters and sons, but more so for daughters.

< Insert Table 2 around here >

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this paper is to investigate patterns of intergenerational solidarity in a newly developing welfare state. To do this we analyzed levels of functional solidarity and intergenerational norms in South Korea, a country traditionally based on strong familial and filial norms but which has been rapidly introducing social welfare policies in recent years. We considered both financial and practical support exchanges in degrees of directionality, prevalence and intensity using KLoSA and KGSS, and data on intergenerational norms from the KSS.

In the last 20 years, South Korea has been profoundly developing its welfare state and done so not only by extensions in the income support by means of old-age pensions and social assistance schemes but also by the introduction of long-term care insurance (Choi, 2012; Lee et al., 2019). How the socialization of welfare and care of older people affect intergenerational solidarity has instantly come to the forefront of academic research. Previous research has argued that public sources of income have continuously replaced the private resources of children, which have traditionally been a major source of income for Korean older people (Jung et al., 2016; Kang & Sawada, 2009; Ku & Kim, 2020; Lee, 2022). They have thus hypothesized a crowding out effect regarding financial transfers.

One might have expected that with such a profoundly developing welfare state, the traditional direction of intergenerational support would be gradually reversing (Caldwell, 1982). Our study, with its restricted time frame and available data, does not

confirm this hypothesis. Parents are still net receivers of both monetary and practical support transfers, and the traditional pattern of the filial/familial contract has been instead intensified as indicated by monetary transfers in both co-residing and non-co-residing adult child-parent dyads. Our research shows that intergenerational solidarity in the form of financial support (and not considering changes in co-residence patterns) has not been *de-filialized* as there has been no substantial reduction in filial financial support. On the contrary, the data show an increase of upwards financial support, particularly as transfers provided occasionally, which indicates a complementarity of financial transfers from the state and children. This may be related to the fact that more than 50 percent of all elderly citizens age 65 and older still do not receive an old-age pension (Lee, 2022), nor do all those who do, receive adequate resources. However, it is likely that the number of adult children providing financial support is higher than indicated in KLoSA. This potential underreporting of intergenerational solidarity could be motivated by fears of losing social assistance entitlements, which were strictly conditioned by the absence of financial support from the family obligator - and that included the adult children. Children, whose position in the exchange pattern is largely unchanged, therefore remain a central source of security against social risks and a cornerstone of solidarity in Korean society. The South Korean pattern of intergenerational support contrasts with earlier findings of comparative European research, which postulate that *inter vivos* financial transfers flow downwards (Albertini et al., 2007; Kim & Choi, 2011).

As the KGSS data show, a large proportion of adult children continue to provide practical support to their elderly parents. This may be related both to the lack of providers in more remote areas (e.g., rural and fisher communities), and to the lower quality of care services provided, resulting from weak gatekeeping and insufficient training of health professionals for care of the older population (Chon, 2019; Theobald & Chon, 2020).

Nevertheless, the Korean intergenerational solidarity contract is undergoing a *modification* of its traditional patterns. As indicated by previous research, changes in solidarity patterns are observed with declining intergenerational co-residence (Park et al., 2005). The gendered organization of intergenerational solidarity seems to be partially altered, too, with narrowing differences between sons and daughters in terms of perceived obligations, on the one hand, but on the other, increasing intensity of practical support provided by daughters, while the opposite is true for daughters-in-law. Our findings also hint at changes in financial support based on mutual co-residence and, particularly, in normative solidarity as indicated by a shift away from the norms of a traditionally filial piety-centric character to one of shared responsibility among society, family and the state. Yet, this process is not uni-directional as traditional patterns of solidarity based on strong filial piety norms, such as practical and monetary exchanges, and the role of sons have been sustained if not reinforced. Despite some departures from traditional forms of filial piety such as multi-generation

households, our findings suggest this may be partially compensated for by other forms of solidarity.

Although South Korea has adopted welfare policies following the example of already developed European welfare states, societal practice of modified intergenerational solidarity still to a high degree reflects traditional Korean patterns and there has been no clear 'westernization'. Our analysis of functional solidarity shows a strong path-dependency of solidary behavior in a traditional society. This may partially reflect the intention behind the introduction of welfare policies, which were introduced to address the structural challenges of the ageing population while still latently relying on informal support networks based on filial piety, thereby maintaining cultural norms of intergenerational solidarity (Park, 2015).

Taken together, while the societal practice of intergenerational 'functional' solidarity does not show any evidence of de-filialization in welfare state's early stages, but rather only modest modifications, intergenerational norms have been undergoing a substantial change. The traditionally defined filial and family contract has been to a high degree replaced by the shared contract in which family (children), government and society are now viewed as primarily responsible for the welfare and care of parents. This departure from the traditional understanding of the well-being of elderly parents as a private issue and as the sole responsibility of the children, seems to have been highly fostered by the increasing involvement of the South Korean welfare state. Since these attitudes are strongly shifting in the direction of de-familization and de-filialization, future research should pay more attention to this issue, and particularly to the consequences of this change for the assurance of maintenance of intergenerational solidarity within families in later stages of welfare state development.

The present research has important theoretical and practical implications. It shows that intergenerational contracts within families – not only in South Korea, but also globally – may stand at an important turning point because normative intergenerational solidarity may be more prone than expected to undergo substantial changes during the introduction of welfare state policies, and to experience increasing social trust in the institutions of the welfare state and thus expect more from them. Thus the continuously more generous involvement of the welfare state is crucial, for example, by facilitating the reconciliation of individual and familial resources in an ageing society. On the other hand, a continuously insufficient level of support of welfare state institutions or even its retrenchment may be detrimental to the well-being of vulnerable family members and cause potential tensions and conflicts between the generations. Therefore, welfare states should adopt policies that are responsive to the (care) preferences of their citizens.

## LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even if this study provides new evidence, it serves as just a start to closing a research gap, having several limitations. First, as our focus has been on the analysis of changing forms of intergenerational solidarity during the introduction and in the early stages of welfare state development, we were restricted to the study of a short period of time and were unable to observe and analyze further modifications or fundamental path-departures from traditional patterns of intergenerational solidarity which may still lie in the future. Second, although the KLoSA data provide us with detailed information on various facets of financial transfers between ageing Koreans and their adult children, information on exchanges of practical support is lacking. For this reason, we used another source (KGSS) to examine this element of intergenerational solidarity. While both data sets give a more comprehensive picture of solidarity exchanges in South Korea, we are aware of issues with regard to data comparability. The KLoSA survey also does not distinguish the type of financial support provided, thus disabling its potential to track possible substitution effects. Lastly, data constraints allowed us to examine only aggregated measures on the micro level and connected them with rough welfare state indicators over time. As intergenerational solidarity within families is conditioned by many factors on different levels (see Szydlik, 2008), our analysis would need considerable extensions in order to disentangle any *causal* relationships of intergenerational solidarity with the developing welfare state policies – if that were even empirically possible given the complexity and the role of other links, such as individual behaviors, political history, and global trends such as individualization, or culture (cf. van Oorschot et al., 2008). Our analysis thus can only provide first insights into the association between the (introduction of) welfare state (policies) and intergenerational solidarity in a non-European/Western context. Still, the link between the introduction of welfare state measures and forms of intergenerational solidarity seems quite clear: the increasing involvement of the welfare state goes hand-in-hand with changes in normative intergenerational solidarity. Simultaneously, actual societal practice in terms of functional exchanges seems to be more inert, and we find no trend towards an actual de-familization of the traditional Korean society.

We thus believe that our unique explorative analysis delivers first insights into the empirical association between the welfare state and intergenerational support in East Asia which may serve as a starting point for many fruitful research ideas and hypotheses. The theoretical and empirical foundations of our study thus invite further studies to focus on more in-depth investigations of mechanisms and predictive changes related to the role of welfare state and normative/functional intergenerational solidarity. Such studies could shed light on the association between social policies and intergenerational transfers such as with the occurrence of age-related changes in parent's needs (e.g. with disability). One of the most interesting questions is whether the erosion of intergenerational solidarity can prompt the

introduction of welfare policies to meet people's needs. Such a question promises to be consequential for social policy, so that further investigation of the mutual influence of (developing) welfare states and (traditional) intergenerational family relations will be highly relevant.

## NOTES

1. The microdata could not be used in the present analysis, as access to microdata is restricted to Korean residents only. We included also the data from the years 2002 and 2006, as these are also available in the Korean Social Survey (2008).
2. Translation by the authors. The word '부양' (buyang) means provision of support in general, i.e. provision of both financial as well as practical (care and help) support.
3. The obligation to look after the welfare of older parents has lain traditionally on the shoulders of the eldest sons. However, since the eldest daughters likewise represent an important source of welfare for their parents (and it may be the case that they are the only source of such support), we decided to include them in the analyses.
4. We call them the 'first child', as most of these children are the oldest, i.e. the oldest son or oldest daughter.

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## TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1. Social policy indicators (years 2005-2018)

| *Year* | *Social expenditure (US $ per capita)* | *Pension-based cash benefits (Mill. KRW)* | *In-kind benefits (Mill. KRW)* | *Beds in residential LTC facilities* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2005 | 1 644 | 8 912 620 | 904 791 | 29 963 |
| 2006 | 1 961 | 9 944 643 | 1 150 608 | 40 589 |
| 2007 | 2 090 | 11 218 829 | 1 496 287 | 51 310 |
| 2008[1] | 2 289 | 15 058 990 | 1 380 501 | 70 215 |
| 2009 | 2 550 | 17 783 121 | 1 389 149 | 90 775 |
| 2010 | 2 639 | 19 755 803 | 1 257 200 | 118 867 |
| 2011 | 2 700 | 21 367 532 | 1 261 270 | 125 305 |
| 2012 | 2 931 | 24 051 817 | 1 550 843 | 133 629 |
| 2013 | 3 190 | 25 797 461 | 1 593 564 | 139 939 |
| 2014[2] | 3 407 | 29 650 242 | 1 635 420 | 151 200 |
| 2015[3] | 3 653 | 34 968 090 | 1 572 189 | 160 115 |
| 2016 | 3 836 | 37 498 586 | 1 901 581 | 167 899 |
| 2017 | 4 041 | 40 607 625 | 2 385 418 | 170 926 |
| 2018 | 4 427 | 44 336 224 | 2 707 332 | 177 318 |

Note: 1 Introduction of Old-Age Pension Scheme and Long-Term Care Insurance. 2 Introduction of Basic Pension Scheme. 3 Reform of National Basic Livelihood Security System.

*Source*: OECD (2021)

Table 2. Gendered organization of intergenerational solidarity (values in %)

| | | *Financial support* Frequency | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2008 | | 2018 | | | |
| | | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Difference[1] (2018-2008) | t-value[2] |
| Coresidence levels | | 40.6 | 32.8 | 26.7 | 18.9 | -13.9 | -12,400** |
| Non-coresiding | Regularly offered to parents | 12.2 | 6.3 | 11.0 | 7.0 | -1.2 | -0,760 |
| | Occasionally offered to parents | 39.9 | 48.4 | 48.3 | 52.5 | 8.4 | 6,704** |
| | Regularly received from parents | 6.5 | 5.0 | 2.0 | 0.4 | -4.5 | -6,217** |
| | Occasionally received from parents | 7.2 | 5.3 | 5.5 | 3.8 | -1.7 | -3,781** |
| Coresiding | Offered to parents | 21.2 | 20.3 | 20.5 | 17.6 | -0.7 | -1,847 |
| | Received from parents | 44.5 | 45.1 | 16.2 | 13.5 | -28.3 | -12,422** |
| | | *Practical support* | | | | | |
| | | 2006 | | 2016 | | | |
| | | Sons | Daughters | Sons | Daughters | Difference | t-value |
| Children to own parents | Provision of support | 90.5 | 90.1 | 92.9 | 90.1 | 2.4 | 1,206* |
| | Regularly[3] | 29.4 | 28.8 | 29.8 | 39.5 | 0.4 | 0,074 |
| | Occasionally | 70.6 | 71.2 | 70.2 | 60.5 | - | - |
| Children to parents-in-law | Provision of support | 82.8 | 90.6 | 78.5 | 91.1 | -4.3 | -1,048* |
| | Regularly[3] | 8,9 | 33.2 | 7.5 | 20.4 | -1.4 | -0,441 |
| | Occasionally | 91.1 | 66.8 | 92.5 | 79.6 | - | - |

Notes: 1 Measured as the difference in the respective solidarity transfer between 2018 and 2008 (financial transfers) or in 2016 and 2006 (practical support transfers) from the perspective of sons. 2 Difference in outcomes for sons across 2008 and 2018 is tested. 3 Regularly: calculated from all respondents that provided support and provide such support 'very often' or 'often'.

*Source*: KloSA, wave 2 and 7, KGSS (2006, 2016).

*Significance level*: * p<0.05, ** p<0.001, t-test for mean differences, two-tailed.

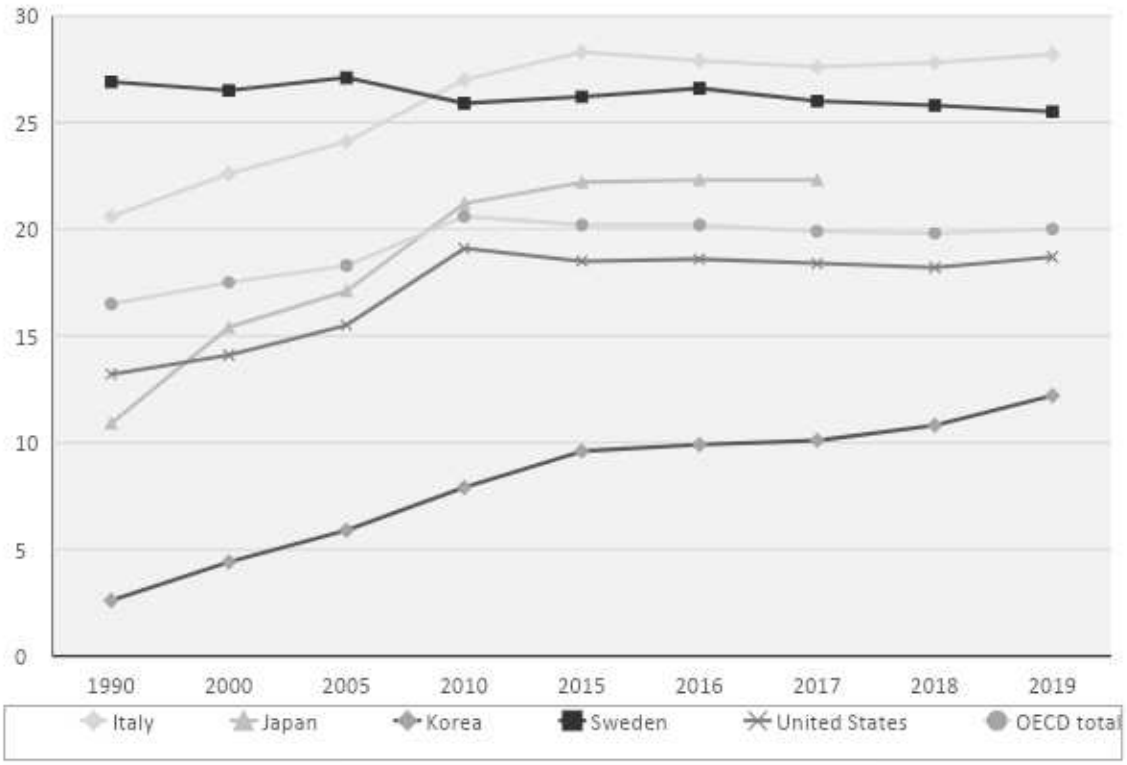



Figure 1. Development of public social expenditures in percentages of GDP (years 1980-2019)
*Source*: OECD (2021)

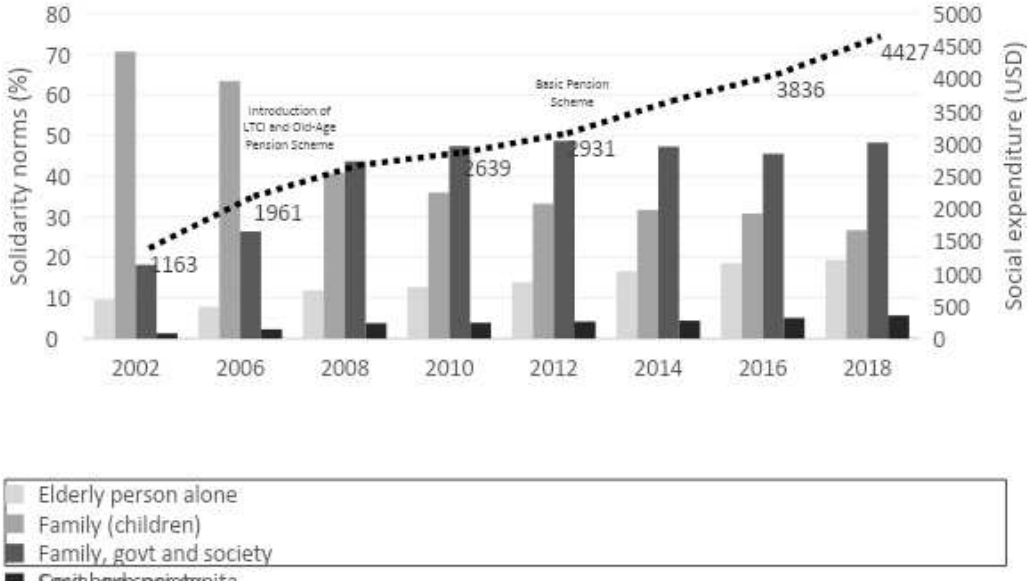



Figure 2. Intergenerational norms.
*Source*: Social Survey (KNSO 2008, 2018), OECD (2021).

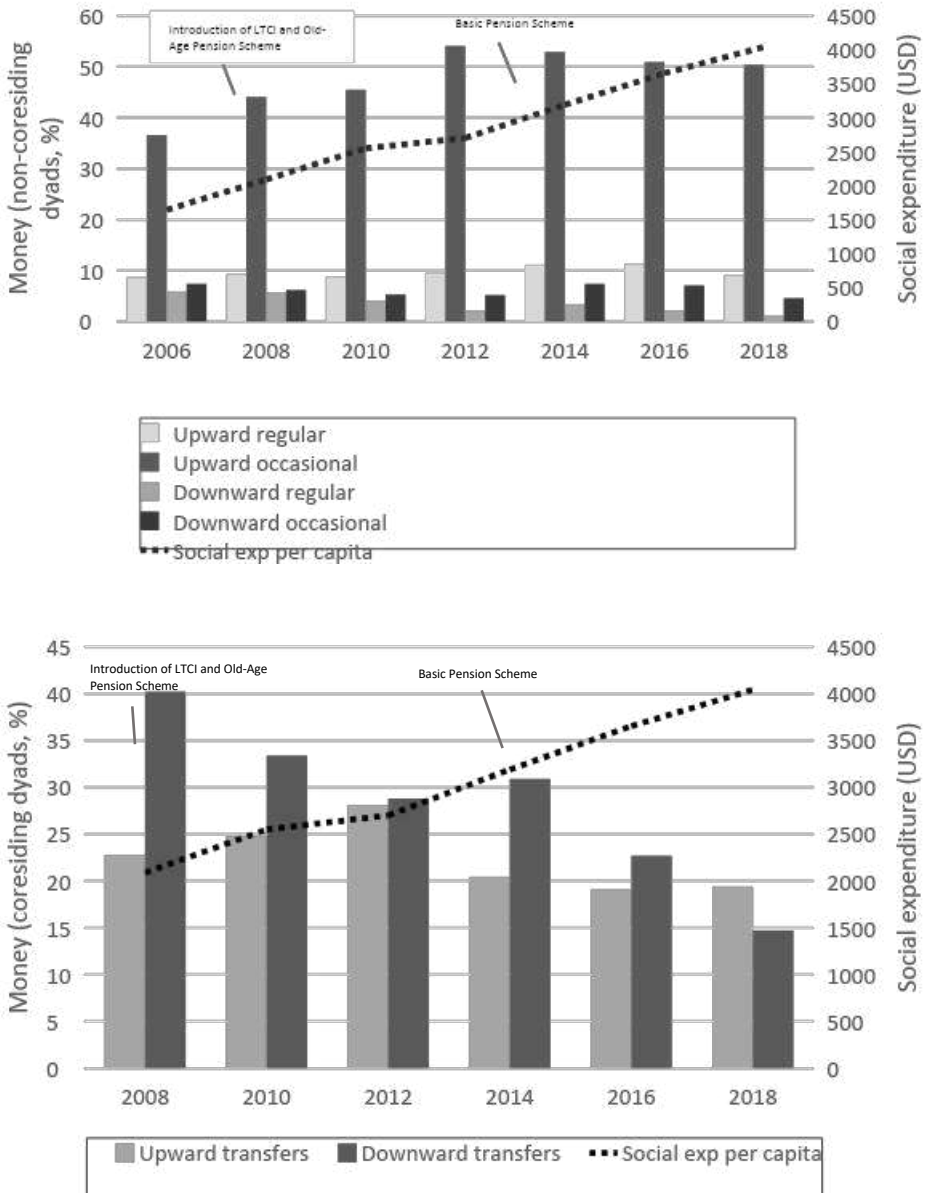
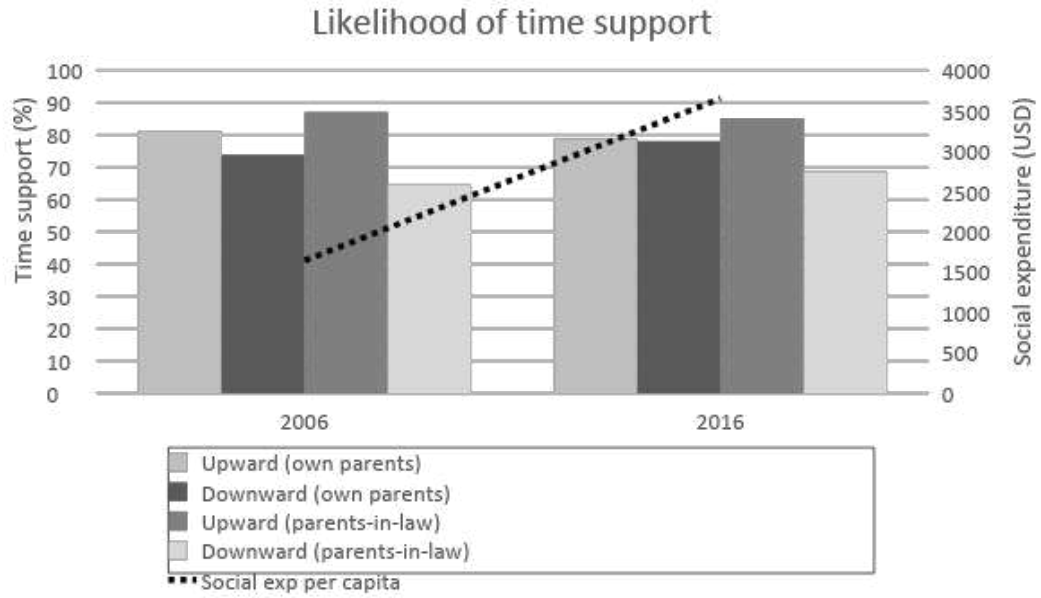



Figure 3. Transfers of money from and to children (percentage of dyads).

*Source*: KloSA, wave 1-7, OECD (2021) own calculations, weighted.

Correlation results between social expenditure and outcomes (solidarity behaviour): Non-coresiding: $r^2$ = 0,38 (regular, upward), $r^2$ = -0,47$^+$ (occasional, upward), $r^2$ = -0,73* (regular, downward), $r^2$ = -0,28 (occasional, downward); coresiding: $r^2$ = 0,33 (upward), $r^2$ = -0,87** (downward)

*Significance level*: $^+$ p<0.1 * p<0.05, ** p<0.01



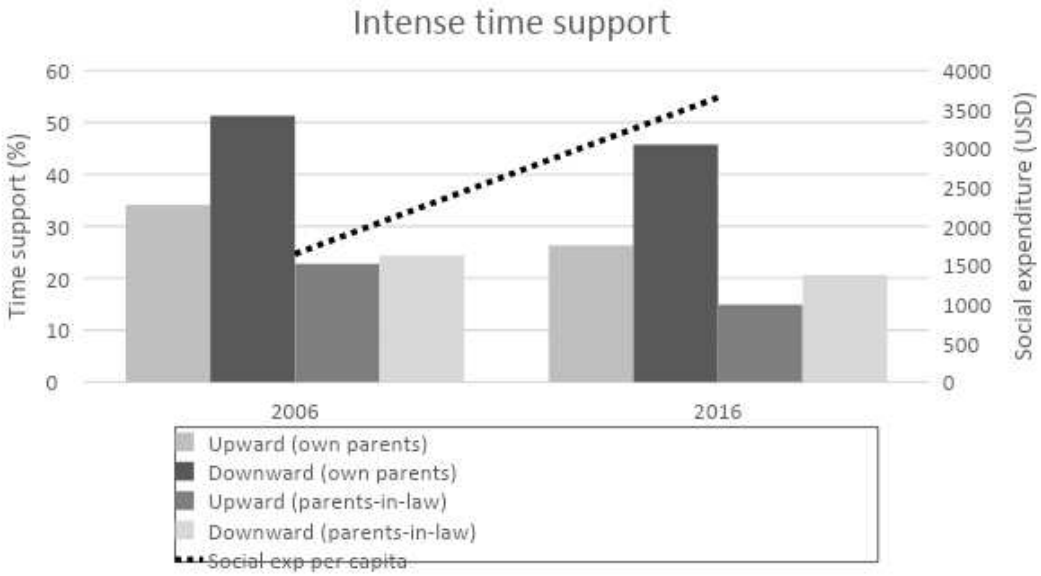




Figure 4. Practical support from and to children.

Note: Intense practical support is measured as a share of provided practical support (help and care) very often or often. Transfers of practical support between child-parent dyads are for first children only. Both married and unmarried children are considered here.

*Source*: KGSS (2006, 2016), weighted.

T-test for mean differences between 2006 and 2016 (t-values, two-tailed) *likelihood*: -0.97 (upward, own children), 1.63* (downward, own children), -0,74 (upward, in-law), -1,19* (downward, in-law); *intense*: -2.49** (upward, own children), 1.57 (downward, own children), -2.68** (upward, in-law), -1.02* (downward, in-law)

*Significance level*: * p<0.05, ** p<0.001.

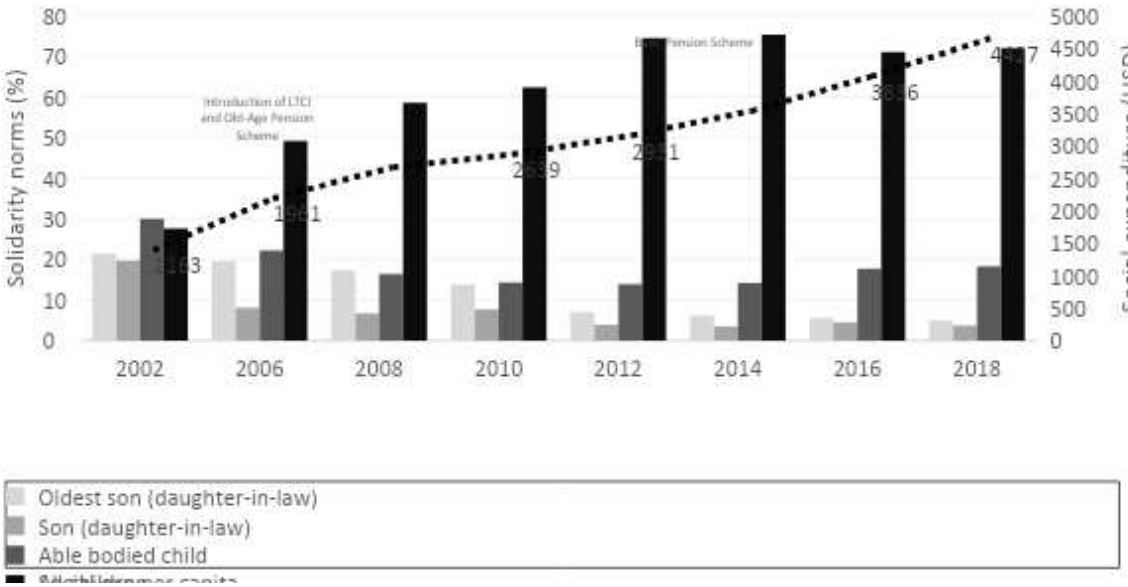



Figure 5. Changes in solidarity norms (responsibility assigned to children).
*Source*: Korean Social Survey (2008, 2012, 2018)

# Zusammenfassung

In den aktuellen Debatten der Sozialpolitikforschung ist unstrittig, dass die Familienpolitik von der Expansionspolitik beeinflusst wird. Jedoch fehlt uns bislang ein umfassendes Verständnis der Entwicklung der Familienpolitik. Ebenso wenig haben wir die auffallenden Unterschiede zwischen den Wohlfahrtsstaaten in ihrem Engagement für Reformen der Familienpolitik hinreichend erfasst. Diese Dissertation zielt darauf ab, zu erklären, wie sich die Familienpolitik entwickelt und welche Gründe den deutlichen Unterschieden zwischen den Ländern zugrunde liegen. Im Fokus stehen dabei zwei Wohlfahrtsstaaten, die bisher außerhalb der Mainstream-Forschung zu Wohlfahrtsstaaten lagen und noch nicht vergleichend untersucht wurden: Tschechien und Südkorea.

Um ein umfassendes und nuanciertes Verständnis des politischen Wandels zu erhalten, wird ein multikonzeptioneller Ansatz angewendet. Die Analysen berücksichtigen die folgenden Konzepte: Wohlfahrtsregime, Policy-Feedback, Policy dismantling, PolicyTransfer, öffentliche Policypräferenzen, Wahlwettbewerb, Krisen und intergenerationelle Solidarität. Durch die Schließung der Forschungslücken, die in der bisherigen Literatur zu jedem dieser Konzepte identifiziert wurden, zielt diese Dissertation darauf ab, das Verständnis dieser Konzepte und des breiteren Kontexts des (Familien-)Politikwandels zu bereichern.

Unter Anwendung der genannten Konzepte adressieren sieben empirische Studien die folgenden Forschungsfragen: (1) Inwieweit ist die Entwicklung der koreanischen Familienpolitik dem Produktivismus und Konfuzianismus zuzuschreiben? (2) Inwieweit wird die Entwicklung der Kinderbetreuungspolitik durch die Kombination der Effekte von selbstverstärkendem und selbstuntergrabendem Policy-Feedback bestimmt? (3) Inwieweit wird die Politikentwicklung durch mehrere Dimensionen der Spannung bestimmt: Spannungen zwischen bestehenden Politiken und neuen Politikkonzepten, Spannungen zwischen konkurrierenden Politiken und innerhalb (selbstverstärkendes vs. selbstuntergrabendes Politik-Feedback) dieser? (4) Welche theoretischen Wege entfalten die Beendigung von Politiken und welche Herausforderungen müssen politische Entscheidungsträger in diesem Prozess überwinden? (5) Inwieweit sind länderübergreifende Unterschiede in der Reform der Familienpolitik das Ergebnis von Unterschieden in der Bereitschaft zum Policy-Transfer und dem Widerstand gegen den PolicyTransfer? (6) Was sind die Gründe für die deutlichen Unterschiede zwischen den Ländern bei der Reform der Vaterschaftsurlaubsregelungen? (7) Wie und in welchem Ausmaß ging die Einführung

von Wohlfahrtspolitiken mit sich ändernden Mustern der intergenerationellen Solidarität in einer traditionellen Gesellschaft wie Südkorea einher?

Die Analyse basiert auf drei Arten von empirischen Daten: Experteninterviews, öffentlichen Dokumenten und aggregierten Daten aus repräsentativen Bevölkerungsbefragungen. Die Interviewdaten umfassen Sets von Interviews mit Ministeriumsbeamt*innen und Akademiker*innen. Die verwendeten offiziellen politischen Dokumente setzen sich aus verschiedenen Quellen zusammen, wie strategische Politikdokumente, Sitzungsprotokolle von Expertenkommissionen, stenographische Protokolle, Berichte und Medienberichterstattung über Reformen, die politische Veränderungen von 2000 bis 2022 aufzeigen. Aggregierte Daten stammen aus der Korean Longitudinal Study on Aging, der Korean General Social Survey und der Korean Social Survey von 2002 bis 2018.

Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Tschechische Republik trotz zunehmender öffentlicher Nachfrage und institutioneller Bemühungen um Veränderungen in Bereichen wie Kinderbetreuung und Elternzeit erheblich hinter anderen entwickelten Wohlfahrtsstaaten bei Reformen der Familienpolitik zurückbleibt. Widerstand/negatives Feedback von inhärenten, belasteten und konkurrierenden *Policy legacies* sowie die Auswirkungen jüngster Krisen wie der globalen Finanzkrise und der COVID-19-Pandemie haben den Fortschritt erheblich behindert. Im Gegensatz dazu hat Südkorea eine tiefgreifende und rasche Transformation der Familienpolitik durchlaufen, die die traditionelle minimale staatliche Intervention, die in ihrem konfuzianischen Erbe verwurzelt ist, in Frage stellt. Erstens erkannte der produktivistische Wohlfahrtsstaat Südkoreas, der die Sozialpolitik den wirtschaftlichen Zielen unterordnet, die wirtschaftlichen Vorteile einer erhöhten weiblichen Arbeitsmarktteilnahme und reagierte auf die Reproduktionskrise. Dieser wirtschaftliche Fokus führte zu erheblichen Veränderungen der Familienpolitik. Zweitens war die Familienpolitik ein bedeutendes Thema im Wahlwettbewerb, bei dem politische Parteien um Wählerunterstützung durch Versprechen in der Familienpolitik wetteiferten. Und drittens war Südkorea bereit, Familienpolitiken aus dem Ausland zu importieren und anzupassen, wie z. B. Vaterschaftsurlaubsregelungen, um seine einzigartigen Herausforderungen zu bewältigen. Tschechien hingegen zeigte sich gegenüber Politiktransfers und Innovationen deutlich weniger offen. Insgesamt steht Südkoreas strategischer, wirtschaftlich motivierter und wahlkampfgetriebener Ansatz, der durch akademische Befürwortung und Politikadaption unterstützt wird, im Kontrast zum Kampf Tschechiens mit ausgeprägten Pfadabhängigkeiten und Widerständen gegen Anpassungen. Das macht Südkorea im Vergleich erfolgreicher in der Reform der Familienpolitik.

Die vorliegende Arbeit trägt zu den theoretischen Diskussionen über den Wohlfahrtsstaat und den Wandel der Familienpolitik bei, indem er das Konzept des

*Policy dismantling* hervorhebt. Er unterstreicht die Bedeutung des Verständnisses, wie und warum bestimmte Sozialpolitiken, wie Kinderbetreuungsdienste, beendet werden und welche Folgen solche Maßnahmen haben. Das Beispiel der Entscheidung Tschechiens, Kinderbetreuungsdienste nach der kommunistischen Ära abzubauen, verdeutlicht die langfristigen Schwierigkeiten und langsamen Fortschritte beim Wiederaufbau dieser Angebote. Diese Fallstudie zeigt, dass Policy dismantling tiefgreifende und nachhaltige Auswirkungen auf die Gleichstellung der Geschlechter und die Fähigkeit der Eltern zur Work-Family-Balance haben kann. In Bezug auf das Vorangegangene hebt dieser Text auch die Rolle von selbstuntergrabendem Policy-Feedback bei der Gestaltung der Entwicklung der Familienpolitik hervor. Traditionell hat sich die Forschung zur Familienpolitik auf selbstverstärkende Feedbacks als Barrieren für notwendige Reformen konzentriert. Der Text führt jedoch selbstuntergrabende Feedbacks als einen entscheidenden, aber wenig erforschten Faktor ein, der Politikveränderungen beeinflusst. Die Ergebnisse legen nahe, dass selbstuntergrabende Policy-Feedbacks häufiger und einflussreicher sind, als in der Forschung zur Familienpolitik oft anerkannt wird.

Da die Veränderungen in den Sozialpolitiken in Südkorea in der Tat tiefgreifend waren, hat diese Dissertation auch die Beziehung zwischen dem sich wandelnden Wohlfahrtsstaat und dem privaten Generationenvertrag untersucht. Entgegen der Hypothese, dass öffentliche Unterstützung private Familienressourcen ersetzen, fand diese Dissertation heraus, dass ältere Eltern in Südkorea weiterhin – wenn auch seltener – auf finanzielle Unterstützung ihrer Kinder angewiesen sind, was auf eine Spezialisierungshypothese hindeutet. Im Gegensatz zu europäischen Ländern, in denen finanzielle Transfers typischerweise von älteren Eltern zu ihren Kindern fließen, behält Südkorea traditionelle, aufwärts gerichtete Muster der intergenerationellen Unterstützung bei. Darüber hinaus gab es keine Verdrängung praktischer Unterstützung, wobei erwachsene Kinder, insbesondere Töchter, zunehmend Pflege leisten. Trotz Veränderungen in der geschlechtsspezifischen Organisation der Unterstützung und eines Rückgangs des intergenerationellen Zusammenwohnens, bleiben traditionelle Muster von Vorstellungen über Familie bestehen. Es gibt jedoch eine tiefgreifende Verschiebung hin zu einem kollektiven Verständnis von Pflegeverantwortlichkeiten, die zwischen Familie, Wohlfahrtsstaat und Gesellschaft geteilt werden.

# Eidesstattliche Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich an Eides statt gemäß § 11 PromO vom 05.11.2020,

1. dass die Dissertation in der gegenwärtigen oder in einer anderen Fassung oder in Teilen weder an der TU Dortmund noch an einer anderen Hochschule in Zusammenhang mit einer staatlichen oder akademischen Prüfung bereits vorgelegt wurde;

2. dass ich die Dissertation selbstständig verfasst und alle in Anspruch genommenen Quellen und Hilfen in der Dissertation vermerkt habe. Die den herangezogenen Werken wörtlich oder sinngemäß entnommenen Stellen sind als solche gekennzeichnet;

3. dass mir der „Ratgeber zur Verhinderung von Plagiaten“ und die „Regeln guter wissenschaftlicher Praxis der Technischen Universität Dortmund“ bekannt und von mir in der vorgelegten Dissertation befolgt worden sind.

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Ort, Datum Unterschrift