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The multidimensional politics of social investment in conservative welfare regimes: family policy reform between social transfers and social investment

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ABSTRACT


While we have many studies on social investment policies and their effects, we still know fairly little about the *politics* of social investment, especially in conservative welfare states, which provide the hardest ground for these reforms. What are the key conflicts in social investment politics? How do they intersect with compensatory welfare state conflict? Which coalition potentials exist? Based on a newly collected dataset, this contribution analyses actor configurations in German family policy reform processes since 1979. It shows that the development of social investment in conservative welfare regimes can only be understood if we conceptualize its politics in a multidimensional space. Income protection and social investment can be, and oftentimes are, two distinct conflict lines. Hence, political exchange and ambiguous agreements were conducive to a hybrid policy development: income support expansion coexists with social investment reforms. The findings show how a social investment turn can happen even in a least likely case.

KEYWORDS Family policy; Germany; multidimensionality; politics; social investment; social policy

1. Introduction

The male breadwinner model of family policy – typical of conservative welfare state regimes – displays a number of characteristics that clash with the social needs and demands of post-industrial societies. Rising female education levels and labour market participation rates foster claims for work–care reconciliation policies; growing family instability and divorce rates raise poverty levels in single-parent households; and the traditional household pattern – i.e., an unpaid or marginally paid female caregiver and a male full-time earner – fundamentally clashes with culturally liberal values of gender equality, individualism and equal opportunities for men and women. All these structural and ideological developments put traditional family policy arrangements in conservative welfare states into question.

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In this context, the idea of a general recalibration of welfare policies has gained ground in most countries, i.e., a reorientation away from policies that compensate income loss by (passive) transfer payments towards social investment policies. Social investment policies centre on human capital development. They can be defined as ‘those policies that aim at creating, mobilizing, or preserving skills’ (Garrizmann *et al.* 2017: 37). In the field of family policy, the reconciliation of paid employment and care responsibilities refers most directly to the mobilizing aspect of social investment, while the expansion of good-quality early childcare addresses the aspect of creating human capital (Jenson 2012). The preservation of skills matters in the definition of parents’ rights in the workplace (e.g., job guarantees, rights to work flexibly or part-time) during the time of parental leaves and after. A growing literature takes stock of the development of social investment policies across Europe (e.g., Morgan 2013; Nikolai 2012). However, while the literature on the extent of policy development grows, we still know fairly little about the *politics* of social investment reforms. Which political actors support or oppose social investment? What is the key conflict line in this area of welfare state change and how does this conflict pattern relate to the traditional configuration of interests in welfare politics? In welfare state research – and in particular in the field of family policy – a broad consensus has emerged that welfare politics is increasingly multidimensional, i.e., policy change is the result of complex configurations of interests in a web of intersecting conflict lines (Bonoli and Natali 2012; Häusermann 2010, 2012). There is ample reason to believe that this holds particularly true when we address the politics of *social investment*, as the very logic of social investment deviates clearly from traditional welfare policies, i.e., it seeks to enhance labour market participation, rather than decommodifying welfare recipients.

In this contribution, I thus argue that to understand social investment policy development, we need to study the politics of reform in a *multidimensional policy space* (Häusermann 2010): the configuration of actors supporting and opposing social investment differs from the configuration of actors supporting and opposing traditional, compensatory social transfers. While this contribution provides evidence of this multidimensionality at the level of collective political actors, the contribution by Garrizmann *et al.* (2018) does so for the individual level. Multidimensionality allows for new actor alliances or actor coalitions – understood here simply as actors supporting a same reform – via two mechanisms: *political exchange* means that different actors defend a policy package because they trade off desirable elements across the multiple dimensions (Häusermann 2010). *Ambiguous agreements* refer to the fact that actors support a same reform for different motivations (Häusermann and Kübler 2010; Palier 2005). These coalitional dynamics are key to understanding policy development. Acknowledging the importance of

multidimensionality also has implications for the kind of empirical research strategy we pursue. Complex multidimensional politics highlight case studies as a key methodological tool, because they allow us to trace coalitional dynamics. Consequently, this contribution focuses on German family policy development over time. It does not adopt an explicit causal design, but traces actor positions, conflict lines and reform coalitions over time. Its aim is not to explain family policy in every detail, but to understand how actor configurations matter for the understanding of social investment reforms in family policy in a least likely case. The characterization of Germany as a least likely (and therefore crucial) case is based on both its conservative legacy, strong Christian democracy, and the high reform and austerity pressure that dominated the agenda from the 1990s onwards (see also Blome [2017] for a similar argument).

2. Theoretical framework: dimensions of family policy development

Family policies in conservative welfare states have traditionally privileged the male breadwinner model, i.e., the support of family households mainly by means of financial transfers that were linked – if at all – to the earnings of the male breadwinner. In conservative welfare states with strong Christian Democratic parties, these transfers tended to be particularly generous. While they were supposed to support families financially, they also had the (side-)effect of stabilizing traditional gender roles, i.e., male breadwinner and female caregiving. Consequently, external care infrastructure, parental leave schemes or maternity insurance have traditionally been less developed in these regimes, compared to social-democratic welfare states (Lewis 1992). Social investment policies introduce a paradigmatic change in these conservative, Christian democratic regimes, because they represent a fundamentally different logic: they focus on strengthening social security via *ex ante* mechanisms, i.e., human capital development, labour market participation and employment rights. Policies such as childcare infrastructure support both human capital investment for children and labour market participation of parents. Parental and maternity leave support may allow parents to keep their job over a time of intense care commitments, thereby contributing to skill preservation (if not too long and coupled with employment rights). Since traditional financial transfers and social investment follow such fundamentally different logics, it is unlikely that they generate identical patterns of political conflict.

How can we conceptualize the key conflict lines in the field of family policy in a post-industrial context? A one-dimensional conceptualization of political conflict may consider social investment policies at one extreme, while the traditional, income-protecting family policy constitutes the other extreme. Such

a perspective, however, obstructs a view on the underlying multidimensional reform dynamics. Rather, in a two-dimensional policy space, four reform directions are possible (Beramendi *et al.* 2015; Häusermann 2010). Figure 1 visualizes such a space for the analysis of family policy change in relation to social investment. The two axes relate to the policy instruments at stake. The vertical dimension reflects positions in favour or against the expansion of social investment policies. The horizontal dimension reflects actor positions regarding policies, which provide additional resources to families via (passive) financial transfers. In the words of Beramendi *et al.* (2015: 15), they follow a ‘consumptive’ logic, as they re-allocate material resources in a way that makes both spending and gains immediate. The positions of actors on the two dimensions capture distinct economic-distributive interests, but they also reflect different values regarding the role and organization of the family in society.¹

Hence, the two dimensions of social investment and income protection stand for the *policy instruments* at stake. Of course, collective actors can hold more or less expansive positions on either of these policy instruments. We can think of the quadrants as *policy goals*, i.e., ideal-typical outcomes of a policy reform strategy. And since collective actors pursue goals (rather than instruments *per se*), two actors may advocate the same policy instrument while pursuing different goals (‘ambiguous agreement’, e.g., Häusermann and Kübler [2010]; Palier [2005]).

In theorizing the goals that actors may pursue (represented schematically by the four quadrants), the literature on different family/social policy models (Fraser 1997) and varieties of familialism (Leitner 2003) is helpful, even though these typologies are based more strongly on the goals actors pursue in terms

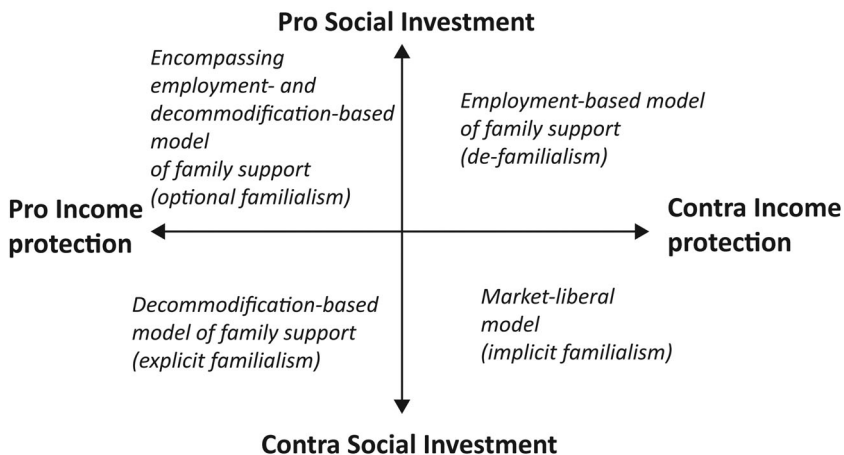


Figure 1. The policy space of post-industrial family politics.

of gender equality than in terms of employment- vs decommodification-oriented social policies, as we theorize here with regard to social investment.

The conservative welfare state has traditionally (*ante*-1980s) been characterized as a model of both low work- and low decommodification-support for families (i.e., a therefore market-liberal model), resulting in a system of breadwinner dependency, in which the (usually female) caregiver depends economically on the main breadwinner. Fraser (1997) – similarly to Sainsbury (1996)– characterizes this model as a male breadwinner approach, but Leitner's (2003: 354) characterization of 'implicit familialism' points more precisely to the resulting effect of a reform strategy that keeps state intervention generally restricted. The resulting familialism (i.e., the production of welfare via care work is relegated to the family) is implicit, rather than an explicit gender policy goal, as childcare can be bought on the market, but is not affordable for middle- and lower-class families.²

Actors whose preferences deviate from this liberal model of policy intervention can pursue different policy goals. If an actor advocates the extension of decommodifying support for families (via transfers), the result is a more 'explicit familialism' (Leitner 2003), which allows (and expects) families to afford the shouldering of care themselves. The gender typologies of welfare describe this model as one that relies on the separation of gender roles for men and women (Sainsbury 1996), or as 'caregiver parity' (Fraser 1997: 55), because it reduces the breadwinner dependency by compensating care work financially. However, actors may also pursue expansive income protection policies for purely de-commodifying (redistributive or status-preserving) reasons.

If actors advocate the expansion of social investment policies only (while adopting restrictive positions regarding passive benefits), they extend the support for families via skill formation, mobilization and preservation – i.e., via support of employment prospects (for either parents or children in the longer run). The goal pursued here is predominantly activation, enhancing the labour market as a source of welfare provision. The extension of childcare infrastructure is the key instrument in this respect, but leave policies that incentivize labour market participation (skill preservation over some time of leave) also count among the policy instruments that support the employment-based model, if they are not accompanied by generous income replacement policies. Such a strategy is most clearly 'defamilializing', as it lifts the care provision from the families. In terms of gender relations, such a policy strategy results in female work biographies aligning on male patterns and in a 'universal breadwinner' (Fraser 1997: 52) model.

Finally, actors who support both active and passive policy instruments in the field of family policy promote reforms in the direction of an 'optional familialism' (Leitner 2003: 354), because families do have a choice in allocating time and resources to either care or employment. Since both men and women

do have a choice in being present in both the workplace and the family, the model has also been labelled ‘individual earner-carer’ model (Sainsbury 1996: 81).

My argument in this contribution is that this combinatory typology is useful not only to characterize policies and regimes, but also to assess political actor positions and coalitions. When locating actors in this space, we can identify coalitional potentials that drive policies towards social investment or away from it.

3. Design, data and methods

3.1. Case selection

In order to study actors’ positions, actual coalition-building and policy development over time, I examine actor configurations since the late 1970s. I include all family policy reform processes at the national level between 1979 and 2013 in our sample. During this time,³ 18 reform processes with 50 reform issues have taken place in Germany. One case is defined as a *reform issue* in a German family policy reform process. Hence, most reforms comprise several policy instruments. I analyse the positions of political actors on all 50 reform issues over time. The detailed content of all reforms is presented in the supplemental material. As to the selection of actors, I adopt an empirical approach: I include *all* organized actors in our sample that have made statements on the reform (either in consultations, hearings, in press statements or in Parliament). The number of actors hence also reflects the saliency of family policy reforms on the political agenda over time.

3.2. Data and methods

In order to analyse the development of family policy, I have retraced the issues and debates of all 18 reforms in detailed chronologies by means of secondary literature and primary sources (in particular governmental reports, parliamentary debates and reports on consultation procedures). In order to ensure that the inventory of reforms was complete and to understand actor motivations in (more recent) reforms, I have also conducted interviews with 12 family policy scholars and representatives of relevant organizations (see supplemental material for details). In order to trace actor positions and coalitional dynamics, I coded actor positions on all 50 reform issues. The unit of analysis is one actor’s position on a specific reform issue. All actors’ positions were coded on three aspects: (1) whether the actor was favourable to state intervention in this specific issue or not; (2) whether the social policy intervention should apply to all citizens (universal coverage) or only to parts of them; (3) whether benefits/services should be high or low, generous or limited. For

each reform issue and for all available actors, these positions have been coded on a scale from 0 to 2: 1 means that the actor agrees to the position of the reform bill proposal; 2 means that an actor advocates a less generous policy (non-intervention, low benefits, low range of insured people); and 0 that the actor favours a more generous solution (universal, tax-financed, high benefit levels). In order to observe the position taken at a point in time when the actors voice their preferences most freely, I have relied on documents from the early stages of the decision-making processes: the records of the parliamentary debates (first reading) and official statements in the public hearings before the parliamentary commissions. The codings on all three aspects of the reform issues are highly correlated (between 0.9 and 0.98 across the three decades). I therefore averaged the positions for each reform element over the three aspects, which provides a single position of each actor on each reform issue.

In order to identify the actor positions and overall conflict configurations on social investment and income protection, I categorized all 50 reform issues in these two categories: 'Income protection policies' (i.e., child allowances and family benefits); and 'Social investment policies' (i.e., reforms expanding universal or means-tested childcare services and parental/maternal leave schemes from the 1990s onwards). Please see the supplemental material for a detailed discussion of these categorizations. For the analysis of results, I have then averaged actor positions per policy dimension (social investment and income replacement), and per decade, which generates an average position of each actor on each dimension per decade.

4. Empirical analysis

The empirical section of this contribution is structured as follows. After a brief discussion of the development of Germany's policy agenda, we show actors' positions and their evolution over time, and we discuss the coalitional dynamics for each time period.

4.1. Family policy development in Germany

German family policy-making has always been heavily influenced by historical legacies. After the Third Reich, state intrusion in the family and natalist policies were a taboo in the political discourse (Gerlach 2004; Naumann 2005). This did not prevent the Christian Democrats from developing a generous system of financial transfers and child allowances, differentiated according to the number of children (it was only under the social-liberal coalition in 1974 that child allowances for the first child were introduced). Until the 1960s, such child allowances remained mainly financed by employers for the working population. From the 1960s onwards, however, these private

financing schemes were replaced by general tax revenues, and allowances granted independently from the labour market status of parents (Gerlach 2004). Other directions of family policy, e.g., maternity insurance, parental leave schemes, etc. have not gained strong relevance until the 1970, as the system centred around a clear legal institutionalization of the male breadwinner model (Blome 2017: 81–4).

However, this changed from the late 1970s onwards: since then, policy reform issues started to diversify beyond income protection. Table 1 contains all propositions concerning family policy discussed in the Bundestag since the 1980s, which have been categorized in social investment or income replacement policies. Maternity and parental leave policies have been prominently discussed under the social-liberal coalition in the late 1970s and to some extent under the government made by the Christian Democrats (CDU–CSU) and Liberals (FDP) (1983–1998), especially in 1985. However, these issues were never framed in a skill-oriented perspective, as their aim was to create disincentives for female labour market protection and to enhance material resources more generally. Hence, I do not count them as social investment (see supplemental material for more details). As a result, there were no social investment reform issues until the end of the 1980s. In the early 1990s, childcare services became more prominent on the agenda (not least in the wake of the ‘abortion compromise’ [see Blome 2017: 152ff]). However, throughout the 1990s, the ‘explicit familialism’ remained the dominant paradigm – supported both in conservative and to a large extent also in social-democratic milieus (Blome 2017). This changed quite radically towards the end of the 1990s, when skill-oriented social investment reforms appeared on the agenda under the Social Democrats (SPD)/Green government (increased tax deductions for external child care expenditures in 2001, incentives to shorten educational leaves in 2000, support of external child care infrastructure in 2004, expansion of educational benefits especially for working women in 2000). However, income protection policies also remained salient on the agenda in the more recent years, with increased child

Table 1. Frequency of social investment vs. income protection issues on Germany’s reform agenda.

	1980s	1990s	2000s
Transfers universal	4	3	5
Tax cuts universal	2	4	2
Means-tested transfers	2		
Means-tested single parent family support	2	1	2
Income protection total	10	8	9
Skill-preserving parental leave			5
Childcare services general		2	9
Childcare services means-tested			
Social investment total	0	2	14

allowances for lone parents in 1999 or increases in child allowances in 1996, 1999, 2001, 2008, 2009 and 2012.

Overall, we therefore observe an increase in reform propositions dealing with social investment policies in the last decade. However, this increase did not come at the expense of income replacement policies, but in addition to these. Therefore, since the beginning of the 2000s, Germany's family policy is heading towards a hybrid model of family policy, which contains a combination of social investment policies with an upgrading of income protection policies. This hybrid development is very much the result of political exchange and ambiguous agreements between the left and business on the one hand, and between the left and Christian Democrats on the other hand. Eventually, the hybrid model brings the policy outcomes closer to an 'optional familialism' model. But it also undermines the goals of the social investment agenda to some extent.

We now turn to tracing actor positions and coalitional dynamics over time. While discussing the different periods, we briefly present important illustrative cases of reforms that show the coalitional dynamics typical of that period.

4.2. Coalitional dynamics in the 1980s

When aggregating all reforms between 1979 and 1990 and plotting average actor positions in Figure 2, we see the alignment of actors in the one-dimensional policy space that results from the absence of explicitly skill-based policy proposals during this period.

Figure 2 contains all actors that have made explicit statements in the respective reform processes. What we see is a rather clear polarization between the new left and family organizations at the expansive end of passive, income replacement policies on the one hand, and employer organizations on the other, with the Christian Democrats taking a middle position



Figure 2. Actor positions in Germany's family policy reforms in the 1980s (1979–1990).

on the level of expansive passive benefits. Both the Social Democrats and the FDP (in coalition government until the early 1980s) demanded more generous income supporting policies than the Christian Democrats, especially when they were in opposition throughout the 1980s. Looking in more detail at the reforms that were discussed in this period (see the full list in the supplemental material) explains this alignment: the main focus of the early 1980s reforms (1981, 1983) was on expansive consumption transfers by the CDU/CSU and FDP government, with reforms of child allowances and family tax relieves. Both the left and the right supported such strong transfers, but differed mostly on the extent to which these should be progressive and whether they should benefit all families or only those with two or more children.

4.3. Coalitional dynamics in the 1990s: polarization over consumption policies

During the 1990s, reforms of income protection transfers continued to dominate the political agenda and preoccupations of the main parties (Blome 2017). They account for the strong polarization on the consumption axis that we see in Figure 3.

The only social investment reform of the conservative CDU/CSU/FDP government (in power until 1998) was in 1992, when reunification put pressure on adapting childcare structures in Western Germany to the more developed

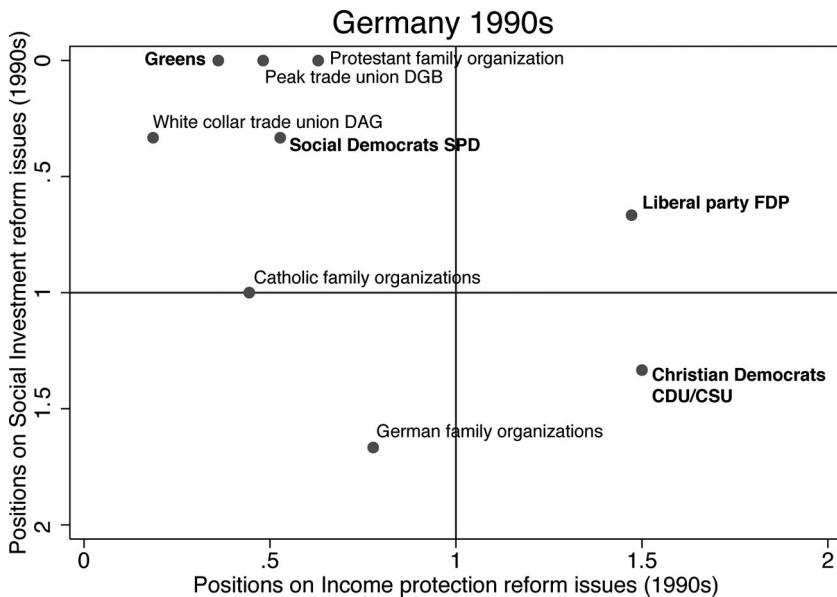


Figure 3. Actor positions in Germany’s family policy reforms in the 1990s (1991–2000).

standards in Eastern Germany. The law basically introduced a legal right to childcare services, which was, however, not directly enforceable. For that reason, parts of the SPD and the Greens criticized the reform heavily. The conservative government enacted only one additional reform, in 1996, extending regressive tax cuts for higher income families and focusing child allowances on the third child. When the left came to power, they reacted in 1999 with a basically symmetrical reform that took these measures back, and also introduced an increase of tax deductions for external childcare costs (first federal law on family support 1999). Both reforms obviously increased polarization between the Left and conservatives strongly. However, the liberal party FDP supported the expansion of childcare services in 1992, thereby adopting an employment-supporting position while at the same time advocating relatively restrictive positions on additional income support. However, it is very telling that no single business organization position could at all be coded for this period: business simply did not take much interest in family policy debates in the 1990s, as hardly any of the reforms had a clear link to the labour market. It was only in the 2000s that both business organizations (mostly for reasons of enhancing female labour market participation) and Christian Democrats (mostly for demographic reasons) started to seriously consider social investment reforms.

4.4. Coalitional dynamics in the 2000s: multidimensional politics

It is only in the 2000s that the policy space became truly multidimensional, meaning that the actor configuration differed clearly between the two dimensions. Consequently, this became the most intense period of reform politics, with what some scholars have even labelled a ‘transformative’ change (Blome 2017: 214; Morgan 2013). Of course, it is also the period in which (in 2005) the grand coalition of SPD and CDU/CSU coalition governments starts, which facilitated broad agreements and political exchange across the reform dimensions, but it is noticeable that the multidimensional reform dynamics had started well before this change.

During the red–green government, the second law on family support in 2001 combined increases in traditional child allowances (income protection) with investments in childcare support for employed (tax reductions for childcare expenses) and to some extent also non-employed parents (flat-rate educational benefit). This package of both consumptive and investive measures allowed for political exchange between all major parties in the parliamentary debate in 2000. A similar dynamic applied to the 2000 reform of the law on educational benefits, which combined leave dispositions that should support labour market attachment with higher income replacement benefits. Similarly, the 2004 law on the support of childcare services (part of the Hartz reform package) was supported by all major parties, unions, employers and

welfare organizations, as well as (through silent consent) by the CDU/CSU and FDP. While these opposition parties consented to the reforms, they did not go further with their demands (and the CDU emphasized its demand for at-home care structures via day mothers); hence, they defended relatively more restrictive positions. The 2004 reform in particular is a good example of an ambiguous agreement in this period, because it extended support for daycare centres and at the same time introduced a right to childcare for children below the age of three. Thereby, it gained approval from employers and the FDP for supporting labour market participation, and from the left for supporting women. More far-reaching reforms by the red–green government in terms of extending parental leave in 2000 and 2004, however, were not supported by the CDU/CSU, which is why it appears with a relatively more restrictive position in Figure 4. Overall, however, the first half of the first decade of the 2000s brought about a rapprochement of the main political parties.

Once the grand coalition took office, another instance of an ambiguous agreement took place: the 2007 law on parental leave and parental allowances introduced incentives for higher-income couples to share parental leave, and it received support from the government parties, but also from the greens, trade unions and employers. While employers were interested in creating labour market incentives for high-skilled women, the Greens and the left stressed the socially progressive dimension of the reform. Finally, from 2008 onwards, the government consistently pursued a hybrid reform

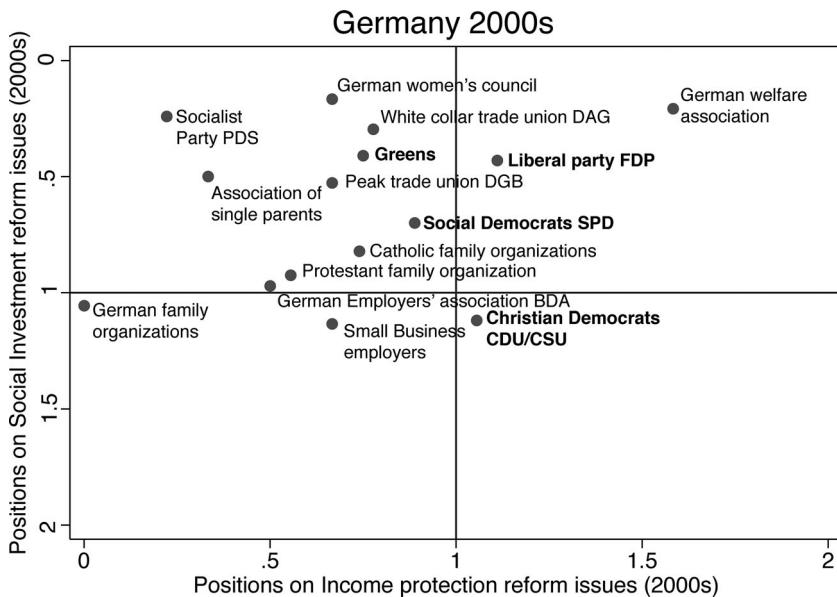


Figure 4. Actor positions in Germany’s family policy reforms in the 2000s (2001–2013).

strategy: while expanding childcare services and support, it also expanded child allowances and special benefits for stay-at-home mothers. When combining both elements in one bill in 2008, the reform coalition spanned from the left to the right. This broad coalition did not, of course, agree on all elements of the reform (the left and employers opposed negative incentives for female labour market participation in 2012, and the FDP together with employers opposed means-tested benefits for low-income families in 2008), but since the overall government agenda was a package deal of expansion both in the direction of employment support and integrated support for employment and decommodification, it allowed for a paradigmatic change in the German family policy towards more social investment elements.

The ambiguity of the skill-approach that is specific of social investment (meaning that it can be read through various lenses as both gender equality policy or productivist labour market policy) has strongly contributed to the success of the social investment agenda, because it allowed to bring parts of the FDP and employers on board. In addition, the need for Christian democracy to reposition itself electorally and to attract more middle class, female votes through a more progressive agenda (Blome 2017; Fleckenstein 2011; Morgan 2013) have helped create this ambiguous support coalition for social investment that we see in Figure 4, but only the multidimensionality itself (combining social investment with transfers) has allowed to forge the broad support-base also among the conservative, Christian-democratic élites. However, not only the conservative and liberal actors have redefined their preferences over time, but also the left. Between the 1980s and the 2000s the SPD and the Greens have moved towards a more pronounced support of the employment-based model.

Hence, analysing the actors' positions over time shows that in Germany, there was no single conflict line that accounted for family policy modernization. Actor positions in Germany's family policy have indeed become more dispersed over time. In the 1980s, there was a clear left-right divide between the left and employers on matters of income protection. From the 1990s onwards, social investment and income protection have appeared on the political reform agenda simultaneously. In the 1990s, the correlation between actor positions on social investment and on income protection was still 0.5, suggesting a certain left-right association that we can also observe in Figure 3. However, these positions have become almost uncorrelated by the 2000s ($r = 0.04$), which means that the policy space has become truly multidimensional. There is no single dimension anymore that can represent family policy positions adequately. At first glance, the relative convergence of actors towards support of social investment in the 2000s may seem to contradict this finding, as it suggests an overall support coalition. But this broad coalition is precisely the result of actors being able to adopt different stances within the general paradigmatic change towards more social investment-oriented policies.

5. Conclusion

This contribution suggests a two-dimensional conceptualization of the dynamics of welfare state modernization in the field of family policy for the post-industrial age. Empirically, it analyses family policy development in the largest conservative welfare state, Germany, from the beginning of the 1980s until 2013. Germany shows – especially in the 2000s – movement towards ‘optional familialism’, a hybrid model of family policy reforms, where new social investment policies, i.e., childcare policies and maternity/parental insurance, are adopted alongside an expansion of traditional income protection policies.

The key argument of the contribution is that in order to understand the hybrid family policy development in Germany, we need to take the multidimensionality of reform politics seriously, and – consequently – adopt a coalitional approach to the study of policy change. Income protection and social investment are two dimensions that at least potentially divide actors in distinct ways and thereby generate possibilities for both political exchange and ambiguous agreements. Accordingly, the modernization of the conservative male breadwinner model does not follow a linear trajectory: it can go in the direction of at least two different types of policy development: optional familialism or defamilialism, depending on how social investment policies are combined with income replacement policies.

In sum, the German case shows that both reform dimensions of family policy have been salient in family policy reform debates since the 1990s, but to different extents. While income replacement dominated the political space in the 1980s and 1990s, actor positions became less linear, and by the 2000s we observed a multidimensional conflict configuration. The analysis shows that both the old and the new left, who have been supportive of social investment policies throughout the decades, are key actors for social investment reforms. But they are in need of allies either from the Christian democrats or the liberal actors (parties or employer organizations) to actually adopt social investment policies successfully. The social investment turn in Germany is mainly the result of two kinds of coalitions: ambiguous agreements between the left and employers on enhancing labour market participation, and political exchange between the left and the Christian Democrats, with the left pushing for social investment and the conservatives accompanying these reforms with parallel expansions of transfers to the traditional family model. The resulting, more converging configuration of actor positions in the 2000s has led to a combination of social investment policies with income protection measures and in consequence allowed for a ‘hybrid modernization’ of family policy in the direction of optional familialism. We conclude that we cannot study the development of either social investment

or income protection policies in isolation. Policy development depends on the interaction of politics across both dimensions.

Notes

1. What today is often – and, from a contemporary perspective, rightfully – depicted as a patriarchal and inegalitarian system oppressing women's independence was then claimed by large parts of the women's movement itself, as Naumann (2005) shows for the German case.
2. However, family policy is made at sub-state levels, too. A study focusing on the development of policy outcomes would, of course, need to include the sub-state level reforms. For the tracing of coalitional dynamics, however, the 18 reforms provide a sufficient empirical basis.
3. This data are based on our investigation of all reform issues since the late 1970s in Germany's family policy (see supplemental material).

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Disclosure statement

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