

The child perspective in welfare states and family policies



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Shifting the focus to children and their best interests

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- Since 1989: **Best interest of the child** (UN Convention on the rights of the child)
 - right of children to have their best interests assessed and taken into account as a primary consideration in all public actions or decisions that affect them.
- Child perspective largely overlooked in family policy and welfare regime research
- Our proposal: Shift the focus from adults citizens/workers' right to give and receive care, to children and their best interests, as a way to **address the inequalities that children face in their access to their own right to be cared for, including by their 'parents'**.

Inequalities between children become more complex to analyse

- Context = diversification of family forms + stratified citizenship;
- « Modernization » of family law (cf social parenting) but family policy?

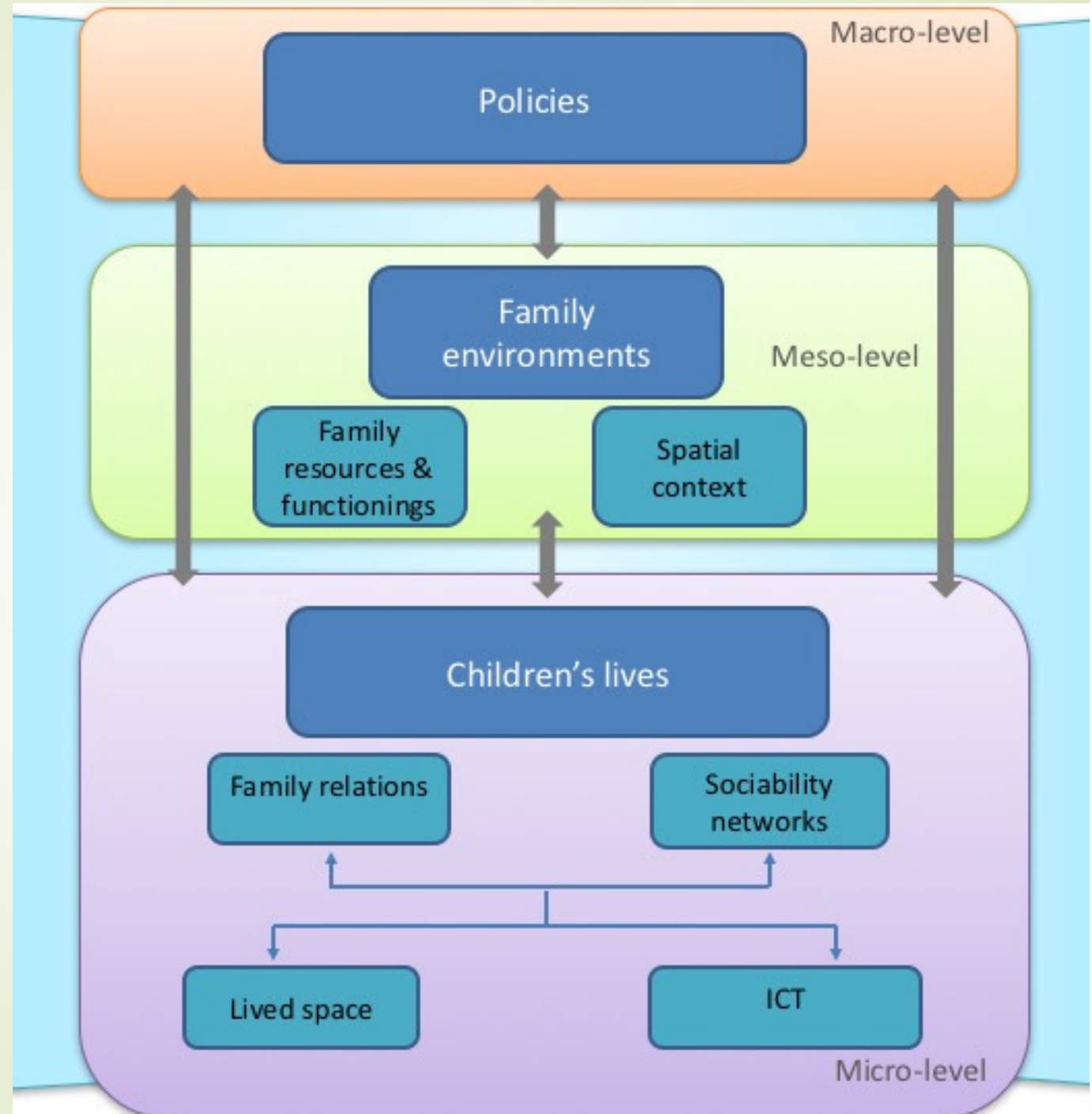
Some key issues:

- Inequalities in access/eligibility to care-related schemes due to **non-standard family models** (ex: step-parents?) or **non-standard status of parents** (ex: temporary residents?);
- Inequalities in access/eligibility and generosity of care-related schemes according to **birth order**;
- The role of **grandparents** in childcare and their access to childcare-related schemes ;
- **Reconsidering welfare regime and family policy typologies** in view of new criteria formulated within the BIC perspective
- **Major challenge: combining the child perspective with gender equality**

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ERC Starting Grant Project « MobileKids »

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Social investment ideas in social policy and family policy reforms

- Family policy reforms in three small 'hybrid' welfare states (Blum, Formánková, Dobrotic 2014)
- Eurofound project: 'Families in the economic crisis: Changes in policy measures in the EU' (Blum, Daly, Nygard, Rakar, Wall forthcoming)
 - Role of different ideas in family policy reforms
 - = causal beliefs that provide a framework and guide actions of people (cf. Béland & Cox 2010)
 - For example: Has the social investment focus 'survived' retrenchment/austerity phases started in some countries since 2008?

	(Re-)Familialisation	De-familialisation/ Re-commodification
Retrenchment	e.g. retrenchment of childcare services	e.g. abolishment of coinsurance/derived benefits
Expansion	e.g. cash-for-care benefits	e.g. creation of childcare services

Social investment ideas and policies



Investing social policies ascribed with positive economic role, “to increase employability and employment levels; to support labour market fluidity (...); to prepare for the ‘knowledge-based economy’” (Morel et al. 2012, p. 12); fight ‘new social risks’ (e.g. child poverty)

- ‘Social Investment Package’, Recommendation on ‘Investing in children: Breaking the cycle of disadvantage’ (European Commission 2013) through social investments:
 - A child perspective in social policies?
 - Yes, but: Within the social-investment perspective, the focus is often on mothers/fathers rather than children (labour market integration etc.), and the focus is only on a limited number of policies (such as early childhood education and care, work-family balance), and not on children from diverse family forms

Reconceptualization of the (de)familialization perspective

- ▶ Kurowska (2017), (De)familialization and (De)genderization – Competing or Complementary Perspectives in Comparative Policy Analysis, *Social Policy & Administration* (forthcoming):
 - ▶ **Mainstream research** from (de)familialization perspective focuses on **WOMEN** - opportunities, rights, ability to commodify & gender equality BUT:
 - ▶ Defamilialism: ‘the degree to which **INDIVIDUALS** can uphold a socially acceptable standard of living independently of family relationships’ (Lister 1994: 37; see also e.g. Esping-Andersen 1999; Leitner 2003) can be also referred to **CHILDREN**
 - ▶ Example of RQ: Whether and how the state financially supports child’s welfare within and/or outside the family? To what extent are different child’s welfare related (social) rights individualized? Are all children equally treated by the law?

Parental leave architectures as opportunity structures for children to be cared for by both parents

Javornik, Kurowska, Parental leave as real opportunity structure for families and the source of gender and class inequalities, ESPAnet 2016 conference paper

- Comparing parental leave architectures (parental leave schemes set in a socio-economic context) in the extent to which they provide real **opportunity structures for the CHILD being cared for by BOTH PARENTS**
- We combine the postulates of **gender equality** and the **best interest of the child**

Working group proposal

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Set a working group of researchers working on family policy analysis (i.a. parental leave policies) on particular countries as well as in comparative perspective who are already involved or are interested in pursuing the research **from a child's perspective**

➤ We aim at:

➤ Organizing a **session** on this topic at:

➤ ANNUAL LPR NETWORK SEMINAR

➤ ESPAnet Annual conference

➤ Other conferences?

➤ Publishing a **special Issue or collective volume** on this topic