

Abstract for “The potentials and limits of Nordic equality politics in times of globalisation and change”, Helsinki, Finland, 12-14 December 2013

Linda Hart and Hanna-Kaisa Hopponia, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Helsinki

New care and family ideologies? Recent policies and politics of care, family relations and gender in Finland

Wide-scale restructuring of social policy has taken place in Finland during the past two decades due to a financial and demographic sustainability deficit and economic pressures. Often discussed in terms of increasing marketisation and structural reforms, this change of direction might also be characterised as an ideological turn toward neoliberalism. In terms of social welfare and gender equality, care and family policies in particular are of significance here, and intense media debates tend to arise around these issues. For example, the quality and availability of care for the elderly, cash-for-child care policies and the prospect of same-sex marriage have gained significant attention and publicity. What is actually going on? This paper presents a plan for a joint post doc research project with the aim to empirically examine how these developments are shaped in policy strategies and documents. Three main areas of study are taken up here: 1) An examination of the implementation of elder and child care services through an analysis of municipal service strategies. What does it mean that care is almost exclusively understood in terms of services? 2) Analysing family policy documents published by e.g. political parties, NGOs and municipalities as well as relevant parliamentary debates, to see what contemporary Finnish family ideology might look like; 3) Analysing the inter-relatedness and the practical and political implications of care, family relations and gender in Finland in the early 21st century e.g. from the viewpoint of equality.

Linda Hart

PhD Candidate

Department of Social Research

University of Helsinki

linda.hart@helsinki.fi

Hanna-Kaisa Hopponia

PhD Candidate

Department of Political and Economic Studies

University of Helsinki

hanna-kaisa.hopponia@helsinki.fi