

Varieties of Universalism

Anneli Anttonen & Jorma Sipilä

*Professor of Social Policy at the University of Tampere, Finland &
Professor emeritus at the University of Tampere, Finland*

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UNRISD, Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

Tel: +41 (0)22 9173020
Fax: +41 (0)22 9170650
info@unrisd.org
www.unrisd.org

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Introduction

Universalism is a polysemic, context-bound and multidimensional concept (Stefánsson 2012, 45). As a socio-political idea and logic, it is an object for multiple struggles and redefinitions. In social policy context universalism refers to principles or logics, practices, normative assumptions and ideals over the modes, functions and objectives of social policy. Our aim is to clarify, what universalism is about, what makes a cash benefit or service universal, what kind of social conditions promote universalism and what are the problems of universalism.

We speak of *varieties of universalism* rather than treating it as a single coherent idea and principle. Varieties refer to time and timing (break-through), modes and mechanisms adopted, justifications and assumptions connected to universal social policies. There are different historical moments and preconditions for universalism to evolve and strengthen. From time to time, it turns as a leading rationale to develop entire social policy systems or regimes like in the Nordic countries between 1940s and 1980s (Anttonen & Sipilä 2012). In post-war Britain universal flat-rate benefits (e.g. pensions) and services (e.g. health care) designed to entire population marked a new era in the history of social policy. One of the most important drivers of motivation in Britain was to leave behind the legacy of humiliating Poor Law. But that time universalism also was a compromise between socialism and liberalism, and a new way to foster social rights of citizens. The grand idea of universal welfare state in the Northern European countries was set as a major goal to promote class, gender and regional equality among citizens. There was a longer history for welfare stateism, most particularly in Sweden, due to the people's home thinking that was brought into public debate in the 1920s by young social democrats. During the last decade some developing countries have adopted universal social policy programmes to smoothen poverty-related problems (Willmore 2007). We can identify different moments in history that bring universalism in the forefront of social policy reforming. The other side of the coin is de-universalisation: universalism might weaken or vanish.

In this paper we discuss universalism mainly as an idea or principle, and we approach universalism as a policy solution to some identified problems (Mehta 2011). Ideas are important and they travel from one country to another. There always are different solutions at hands to theoretically or politically identified problems like poverty. Policy ideas provide some means for solving problems. Of course all this depends on actors, institutional frames, philosophies and mentalities that influence these decisions. This

also explains why there are many ways to speak of universalism in social policy. Ideas of course need to be implemented; universal social policy systems must be institutionalised for universalism to become a principle that brings new order in social policy world.

The idea of universalism has been strong in (socio) political history, collecting both friends and enemies. There is not one narrative to be told. Universalism has many roots and many faces. We start by describing briefly what universalism is and what it is not about. We also discuss what has brought into being universalist solutions and what kind of problems are related to universalism.

What makes a benefit universal?

Even today scientists do not agree, whether certain social policies or benefits should be called universal or not. Chiefly, this is a consequence of the fact that the word “universal” has been used in different frames of reference, in different times, and for different purposes (Kildal & Kuhnle 2005). It is however important to specify our speech of universal benefits. Despite of a variety of definitions and practices universalism retains an essential core. It always refers to something that is common to ‘all people’. It is not only an abstract idea used to underline that all citizens are treated with ‘equal concern and respect’ (Rothstein 1998, 4). Universalism carries some idea of wholeness, unity, totality and sameness (Stefánsson 2012).

What are the criteria for the universality of a benefit? When should a particular benefit (cash or service in kind) be called universal? There are two particular steps in the process of redistribution that must be in accord with the principle of universalism. The first step concerns the inclusion of citizens and the second one the principle of allocation. Universal inclusion means ‘membership for all citizens’ (Kildal & Kuhnle 2005) so that no one is excluded. Universal allocation means that the benefit is distributed evenly and that it is available for all but also used by a majority of citizens. Goul Andersen (2012) has proposed that different notions of universalism can be arranged in a hierarchy including the following dimensions:

1. eligibility and entitlements are clearly defined *rights*, not a matter of discretion
2. rules apply to *all* citizens/residents who could be relevant beneficiaries
3. benefits are financed by general taxes, very seldom by contributions

4. benefits are almost the same for all citizens – at least, nobody is excluded by means-testing
5. benefits are adequate.

It is obvious that universalism has to refer to social rights of citizens or residents. Most commonly universalism implies that those who are eligible enjoy the same entitlements but in many cases there are also some income test in use. The latter case has to do with positive discrimination. Universal benefits are either flat-rate benefits, when same amount of money is given to all those who fulfil the criteria used (child benefit, basic pension), or those who need more, also get more (income test might be used). Financing of benefits bases nearly always on tax funding, and nobody is excluded by means testing. This is the main marker of universalism. There is also a criterion that benefits should be ‘adequate’ but this is not always the case. (Goul Andersen 2012, 164-171)

In addition, universalism means different things in connection to different social protection systems: universalism in social service provision differs from universalism in monetary benefits (Anttonen, Häikiö & Stefánsson 2012). Very often universalism is discussed only in relation to cash benefits like pensions, child benefits or basic income programmes. But services are at least as important mechanisms to promote equality, participation and social rights of citizens in a society (Sen 1995).

Anttonen and Sipilä (2012) mention primary education and health care as two main service categories most often extended to all. Beyond these two service forms there is much less unity in the world when it comes to service universalism. Universalism in service makes a difference. Sometimes even very little money might have a radical influence on people’s well-being and capabilities to take care of their nearest persons. The same is however true with services: good health care matters a lot in all countries if there is free access to services. However, sometimes universal services cannot be benefited because parents do not have money to pay for children’s school transportation or school suits. In some other cases universal services are heavily criticised for being paternalistic and not taking into account the diversity of needs and life situations. There are many problems attached to service universalism, but they will not be dealt with in this paper.

Universalism, selectivism, residualism and subsidiarity

Universalism might turn into a comprehensive social policy rationale. It does not necessarily characterize all social policy fields and mechanisms but a large or crucial part of them. There is no full universalism in any country: in most countries different social policy rationales co-exist. Everywhere social support is given, also informally, although some kind of formalized systems certainly develop in the course of time. Well-organized or high-status groups usually start to arrange selective social protection for their members – the most common examples are the civil servants, the clergy, the entrepreneurs and the professionals. Social insurance for industrial workers may be seen as an enlargement of this phenomenon.

Residual benefits are targeted for the poor but the selective benefits may be targeted for any social groups. Selectivism means restricted membership. The history of social policy is riddled with selective programs; e.g. there have been separate pension systems for sailors, farmers, industrial workers, and employees in short-term jobs. Selectivism and residualism differ from universalism while they do not allow the inclusion of all. Residualism means that social policy institutions should come into play only when other standard institutions of supply, the family and the market or selective social policy, do not fulfil the need. Residual benefits are granted after individual or familial means testing whereas truly universal benefits are allocated independent of both income and spending. The desire to weaken residualism in social policy has been the main historical impetus for introducing universalism in social policies.

The distinction between residual (or marginal) and institutional model had been a dominant classification since 1950s (Wilensky and Lebeaux 1958, 138). Interestingly, roughly 30 years later Esping-Andersen and Korpi (1987, 40-41) in their definition of the Nordic welfare model still took marginalism as the main contrast. Universalistic measures are always directed towards large sections of population, while selective policies are directed toward subgroups of the population with specific needs. They also wrote that “the marginal model is premised on a commitment to market sovereignty”, and the state plays “only a minor role in the distribution of welfare”. The state steps in when “the normal channels of distribution fail” (Esping-Andersen & Korpi 1987, 40-41). Normal channels refer to those of family and market.

According to Korpi “in areas where universal programmes exist, institutional social policy decreases inequality by making it possible for lower socio-economic strata to enjoy roughly the same standard as other groups” (Korpi 1983, 190-2). *Universal or institutional welfare model* promotes the principle that all citizens should be equally entitled to a decent standard of living, and that full social citizenship rights and status should be guaranteed unconditionally. Esping-Andersen developed further the distinction between marginal and residual model and arrived at his famous regime theory. He renamed the institutional model as social democratic regime alongside liberal and conservative regimes. According to his definition the social-democratic regime-type is solidaristic, universalistic and de-commodifying (Esping-Andersen 1990, 28). Gradually universalism became a label for entire welfare state system. Accordingly, ‘institutional’, ‘universal’ and ‘social democratic’ are nearly synonymous concepts even if the notion of institutional has nearly vanished from welfare state literature. Nordic scholars often use the labels of ‘universal’, ‘social democratic’, and ‘Scandinavian’ welfare state to describe roughly the same thing (e.g. Bergh 2004).

Finally, there is also the principle of subsidiarity meaning that social action should always take place at the lowest practical level, typically the level of the individual or the family. In the event that the near-by levels are not able to cope, the responsibility passes from them to the level immediately above them. Subsidiarity meets social needs on the basis of feelings of solidarity among people who know each other, and among local communities and congregations (Spicker 1992, 212–213). A crude way to describe the difference between universalism and subsidiarity is that in the former the solidarity functions top-down but in the latter down-up. Subsidiarity states a clear preference for private enterprise over public action. It does not guarantee the citizens’ equal access to social benefits but it may strengthen selective inclusion.

Universalism and diversity

In contrast with the three social policy principles mentioned here, universalism is an idea that emphasizes that all people may be in need of social benefits (cash or services), all should have access to support (in case of risks) and that a large majority also uses them (high take-up rates). Of course, universalism does not mean that all people can use the same social benefits or welfare services irrespective of their needs. Therborn (1995, 97) says that universal rights “entitle all citizens or residents to social services and

income security, specified mainly by their position in the human life-cycle only.” Actually, residence or citizenship is always another criterion.

Diversity in turn has a different rationale shaping and framing social policy ideas and solutions. Since the 1970s, it has been construed as a major challenge to universalism. The rise of universal social policies was closely connected to cross-class solidarity and alleviation of class conflict (Marshall 1950). It seems plausible that universalism as policy logic started to lose its importance when other tensions than the class conflict got more political space and public attention. In the early 1990s Fiona Williams wrote that “the fragmentation of class politics and the development of identity politics implies that demands upon welfare provision will be about meeting the specific needs of particular groups, rather than about pressing for universal provision to cover the need of all” (Williams, 1992, p. 206). She also used the term of ‘false universalism’ to point out that the post-war welfare state in Britain was based primarily on the interests of male workers. The post-war ideas and modes of universalism were embedded in masculine notions of social protection and rights.

Feminism is not the only position that has been critical towards universalism. An increasingly popular view is that greater social diversity presents a challenge for the sustainability and legitimacy of the welfare state in contemporary societies. The critique is framed from two vantage points. On the one hand, critics pose that universalism cannot deal with the increasingly diversified societies. Social heterogeneity, especially if created by a rapid increase in the numbers of immigrants, affects the basis for large-scale redistribution that has characterized Nordic welfare states (Banting and Kymlicka 2006). An ethnically heterogeneous population is thought to undermine perceived similarity, mutual identification and trust, thus undermining the conditions for establishing or sustaining collective risk protection through tax-based redistribution and universal allocation (Alesina and Glaser 2004; Sachs 2008). On the other hand, critics doubt if principles of universalism truly promote universal practices (Taylor 1998). Universalism as a policy logic has unintended consequences. Difference-blind rules and institutions may disadvantage minority groups (Kymlicka 2002).

The growth of middle class influenced and increased cultural diversity, in particular, weakened social policy discourses based on universalism but strengthened ideals such as diversity, participation and freedom of choice. The weakening of the idea of universal social citizenship undermines universal social policies. For example, the

emergence of the political idea of the active citizen – emphasising individualized needs and private responsibilities - raises questions about whether universal allocation of social services can promote adequate social policy solutions for citizens with different needs, capacities, life styles and values, and whether social services should be more customized.

The emphasis on diversity and difference in allocating social policy measures may, however, strengthen universal inclusion as in the late 20th century governments have developed parallel social policy systems that basically serve the same function but the users have to choose and join only one of them. A good example is the option for Finnish parents to make a choice between three basic alternatives: 1) public day care for their children, 2) private day care for their children, or 3) the child home care allowance. Whatever they choose the government supports their childcare expenses. As the systems are closely related to each other, jointly creating a kind of totality, these kinds of arrangements could be described by a term of ‘differentiated universalism’ (Lister 1998).

Public goods and the interest of the state

The concept of public good is closely related to universalism. In early 20th century, universalism had a rather different meaning in the early European tradition of social policy. It meant benefits justified by the interest of the state, not by needs of citizens as today (Nieminen 1955), and the state, in turn, concentrated its investment in public goods to protect its citizens and properties and to guarantee modernisation to advance.

Every state arranges public goods and some public services to maintain the continuity and the capability of itself. The state has a particular responsibility to provide goods that many people need but do not consume alone. Public goods are not made for individual consumption as other individuals can consume the same good. Normally public goods are not for sale in the market. Standard examples of such goods are water pipes, drains, judiciary, police, vaccination, hospitals, roads, railways, lighthouses, food supervision, traffic regulations etc. Also information, literacy and numeracy can be seen as public goods (Tuomala 2009). Traditionally, the social development approach has much emphasized the role of public goods for social policy and social infrastructure.

An interesting topic is that what should we think about the first services that, even before the existence of modern social policy, were targeted to all citizens? This means

education, the core area of the modern universal welfare state. Compulsory education was first enacted in Prussia (1763) and then in Denmark (1814), Sweden (1842), Norway (1848) and the United States (1852). We may interpret systems of basic education as public goods, because their aim was largely to relieve national risks by increasing discipline and sense of responsibility of citizens, as evinced by a well-known phrase on the essence of the German education system: 'education to the State, education for the State, education by the State'. The idea of public good to protect the state can also be connected to another example of 'proto-universalism' that Kildal and Kuhnle (2005, p. 18) recognize in the early public health legislation in northern Europe. Thus, public goods represent one important root of universalism. Through public goods societies were modernized, citizens made healthy and disciplinary. All this was certainly much based on what we can call state or public paternalism but later on the emphasis changed because of the development of democracy and citizens' rights.

Public goods make the infrastructure for human well-being: if drains do not function and cholera spreads, health care will be overstrained. Actually, good infrastructure can still be seen as a condition for universal social policies to function smoothly: If the decision on income assistance takes six weeks or the distance to hospital exceeds 500 kilometres, can we say that the service is accessible for all? The provision of public goods should be seen as an indispensable precondition for making universal social policies. Universal social benefits need to be accessible for everybody; if access is restricted the grand idea of universalism does not work. This means that public goods are deeply rooted in the well-functioning infrastructure of every society.

In contemporary thinking universalism in social policy does not mean the provision of public goods but the provision of benefits (cash and services) for individuals. Such benefits include at least social security, education, and health and social care, but the list is often continued with housing etc. Although these are services for individuals they also benefit others. It is also false to think that individual benefits are only individually consumed: they are not. According to Willmore (1987) some countries (e.g. Nepal) have taken a universal pension system into use to motivate intergenerational responsibilities to strengthen.

At the time being, it is worth to ask, what happens to universalism if public goods are increasingly seen as commodities that can be produced by market providers (e.g. education) leaning on market mechanisms and values (like competitive tendering and

service vouchers). Even in the Nordic welfare states publicly funded services are increasingly produced by for-profit instead of public and non-profit providers. This is most clearly the case in Finland and Sweden, less so in Denmark and Norway (Szebehely & Meagher, 2013). If universalism is no more the leading idea and ideal in Finland and Sweden, we have to ask, what happens to the Nordic model? Is it still different from other welfare models? Is there a major convergence process taking place in Europe? These interesting issues however go beyond the scope of our analysis.

Conditions for universalism

The roots of universalism are deeply located in the development of modernisation and democracy of industrial societies. Before any kind of citizenship-based universalism is possible every person must be legally recognized as a subject with human and political rights. This means that universalism can only be provided by the state, access for all cannot be guaranteed without (national/federal) legislation. There is no voluntary road to universalism passing the state: universal benefits are under public regulation and publicly financed. Another evident condition is democracy: it is highly improbable that there would be universalism in social policy, if all the adults cannot take part in the exercise of political power. Social policy is not an autonomous administrative area, independent of the political culture and power structure.

In his famous sequence of civil, political and social rights T.H. Marshall (1950) introduced the grand idea of social citizenship. His definition constructs the citizen as a member of a community. One of the main ideas in Marshall's theory is that after obtaining political rights workers were able to establish social rights through the exercise of political power. Esping-Andersen, among others, developed the classic formulation of social citizenship towards the idea of universalism, in the Nordic context. His conclusion is that the Nordic countries have carried the social citizenship practices further than other countries (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 27). The idea of universal social citizenship extends social rights beyond workers and to all citizens.

Universalism, however, is not only a doctrine for democratic states. Also totalitarian governments love to speak of “all people” or “the nation” favouring universal declarations and acclaiming universalism as a principle of governance (Rimlinger 1971). Of course, pretentious rhetoric does not create universalism in practice. The

problem with 'totalitarian' or 'authoritarian' universalism has been its factual selectivity: benefits have not been equal but tended to be selective according to the political status, sometimes even open discrimination towards some minorities has been included. It's also not rare that corruption distorts the principle of universalism.

Thus, good ideas and principles are not enough; social policies consist of institutions, which must be established and reproduced. To be founded any governmental social policy institution must fulfil four conditions: need, resources, driver, and governance.

Universalism presumes that there is a common opinion that the state should take some responsibility for taking care of some important *social needs*. This does not exclude other actors, such as the family to carry partial or even full responsibility. Such a common opinion on the importance of the state may be more likely constituted if social change is fast and the families and other welfare institutions (e.g. churches) have difficulties in covering increasing or totally new risks. However, social needs are not necessarily addressed to the state (and national parliaments) if people do not trust it.

Because the coverage of universal benefits is large, introduction of such a benefit requires the state to find a large amount of *financial resources* for immediate use. Thus, in poor societies the threshold for universal benefits is quite high. A window of opportunity opens, for instance, when the amount of collected taxes rises fast, e.g. when people leave informal economy and join the formal one (due to rapid industrialisation and urbanisation). As universal benefits require substantial tax financing, a rather high level of social trust, provided of democracy, may be a necessity for public financing of benefits. A particular problem connected to universal benefits is the fact that employers (and employees) rather pay contributions for the employees' than the population as a whole. Because of this, selective benefits for the employees have an advantage in funding.

No statutory reform is realized without *political drivers*. In principle it looks easy to find the political drivers for universalism, because low-income people make the majority of each society. In democracies universalism is often driven by large political coalitions which organise themselves to demand improvements in benefits important to large constituencies. The enthusiasm, however, varies among the constituency of low-income receivers: women in many countries support strongly universal benefits because

they increase women's choices and freedom, while labour unions are less interested to use their power to gain benefits for people outside the labour force.

Socio-political institutions and regulation of them require remarkable administrative systems, which also must gain legitimacy in society and among people. If people do not believe in *good state governance* i.e. in the competence and fairness of state administration and the availability of reliable databases, they hardly give political support to social policy systems (Rothstein 1998). One of the strengths of universalism, however, is exactly the efficiency of governance supported by the clear criteria for benefits, whereas the admission of residual benefits always faces serious administrative problems (Sen 1995).

Our brief glance at the conditions of universalism underlines one important condition: democracy and democratic governance, in particular, promote universalism. Strength of democracy seems to be a *sine qua non* of citizenship-based universalism.

Different routes and diverse futures

Universalism is an idea and politics that changes over time. This explains why there seem to be so many different routes to universalism. It is obvious that political visions of universal social policy are perforce obliged in some way to address the question of a community that embraces everyone. But it is just here where political visions differ: there is an unsettled tension between emphasizing community and individualism. To some extent universalism, or more precisely universal service provision, suffers from the collapse of collectivism. Ideologies that stress unity, uniformity and similarity have lost much of their popularity since early 1990s.

The overall liberalisation has shaped and framed the big institutional structures of societies leading to privatisation and commercialisation of public 'goods' in a large number of countries (Streeck 2012). Yet, there is the other side of the story: in some social policy fields or countries universalism has also become a stronger idea and logic, i.e. in childcare in Europe during the last 15 years. To sum up, there is no one-dimensional social policy development or change taken place in Europe (Hemerijck 2013). The same applies to history: there are different routes to be identified what it comes to universalism's breakthrough and institutionalisation (Mkandawire, 2005; Willmore 2007; Kildal & Kuhnle 2008).

In Global West and North, leading social policy ideas of our time stress individuals' choices, their families responsibilities and rights to personalised or tailored services. The time and popularity of one-size-fit-all-solutions have met its limits most particularly in service provision. People want diversified services instead uniform ones, and often prefer money instead of services-in-kind (e.g. service vouchers, individual budgets, and tax rebates). The big picture is slightly different when monetary benefits are taken under scrutiny. For instance, in Finland, the basic income protection system with different residual elements along with some universal ones has turned so complex and expensive (different benefits for very different purposes with high transaction costs) that commentators from both Left and far Right give support to universal basic income. It is thought that basic income system could create some order to the messy situation that humiliates people pending for instance between unemployment, sickness and maternity benefits with long waiting times and very different discretion practices. Through the discourse of basic income universalism has become reinvented as an important policy solution to guarantee decent income for all citizens without stigma.

Vabø's and Szebehely's (2012, 122-3) analysis is interesting in the context of services and the future of universalism . They bring affordability and attractiveness into the discussion concerning *service universalism*. "Besides being formally accessible to people in need, true universalism requires that services are affordable to all social groups. Services within the labour-intensive and costly care sector are not necessarily free of charge. Rather, they are publicly subsidized to enable citizens to access and benefit from them. Hence (in line with Titmuss 1958) we hold that positive selectivity in terms of income-related fees is consistent with universalism." If services are of very low quality, it is possible that groups with better resources will turn to market to receive the services they need. This again is a threat to universalism. The richer the country is the higher the standard has to be for universal benefits and services to reach enough popularity and political backing. "A process of creeping selectivity may be triggered if services deteriorate and groups with more resources start looking for private alternatives" (Vabø & Szebehely 2012, 123). This is very much the issue of diversity within universalism for universalism to survive.

Thus, we have two important lessons to learn through services. First, universalism has to be sensitive to diversity allowing some degree of particularism or positive selectivism (Thompson & Hoggett, 1996). For instance, among elderly people even daily care needs vary a lot. This leads to the second lesson: what degree of attractiveness or generosity is

enough for universalism to be supported by majority of citizens. At least, in rich countries universal services and benefits have to exceed the minimum in meeting the needs.

Universalism cannot be defined in a one-dimensional way. It gets different meanings in different times and places, and it has different significance in the early 21st century welfare mix, where welfare is produced by a number of providers, not only the state or the family. In a Nordic welfare state universalism means that all the people have access to universal systems that create well-being, being good enough even for the middle class. Universalism is supported only if middle class standards become the norm for high quality services.

On the way to understand what universalism is about, the other side of the coin shows what universalism is not about: selectivism, residualism, subsidiarity, and diversity. Also the concept of de-universalisation (Goul Andersen 2012), the movement away from the ideal type of universalism, is important here. The ethos and organisation of public service delivery has moved toward targeting and residualism in the last thirty years in many advanced welfare states. The most extensive reforms have been carried out in Anglophone countries that have “led the way in making welfare more conditional, more targeted and more oriented to market logics” (Clarke 2010, 384). It is possible to speak even about anti-universalism in social policy context.

During the golden years of universalism people, at least in the Nordic countries, generally assumed that an expansion of welfare state was an inevitable consequence of democracy and economic growth. However, in 1980s the political climate started to change due to expanding free trade, changes in international division of labour, financial deregulation, and the qualitative change in world economy from production toward financialisation. These processes were not separate from national political changes, such as consistent efforts to weaken the power of labour unions, privatisation of public goods and marketization of services, all of these very much justified by neoliberal ideologies. The economic competitiveness of the West has become a burning political issue and the high level of social expenditure has become a major object of political discourses. There is a bunch of issues to be answered. Are production costs too high? Is the cost-effectiveness of public services too low? Is the volume of precarious labour so extensive that tax revenues will drastically shrink in the future? Does ageing of societies threaten public economies?

Is universalism turned into an out-dated policy solution in relation to the above mentioned and many other problems? Or is it possible that more universalism in social policy would help to solve the system crisis that bothers rich Western countries? Would universalism help effectively to achieve goals such as social security, social investment, sustainability, participation of citizens and social cohesion?

Next, we bring into discussion only one suggested solution, that of universal basic income. As mentioned, there are many reasons for the political popularity of the idea of universal basic income, especially among the younger generations. The prototype of basic income is a flat rate benefit for all adult persons without income test. The problem is, however, that there are many ideas and models on how to implement the system but few experiments. How should basic income be related to other social benefits and different life circumstances?

Basic income may help to prevent poverty and increase social cohesion because it reduces economic insecurity. It might increase opportunities to participate in attractive activities. As a cash benefit, it allows some diversity of consumption. It is also a flexible benefit to support informal care. The other side of the coin is that basic income raises problems in how to reconcile work and basic income. Work ethics and social responsibilities, in general, should not be weakened. Some of the recent experiments are however very positive (e.g. in Namibia, Haarmann & Haarmann 2012). No doubt the consequences very much depend on the context.

Universal social policies have been excellent means in creating individual and social capital and capabilities for all. Universal policies are however hard to initiate and generate: there are many preconditions for universalism to flourish. Universalism also requires a new way of thinking about public governance and responsibility, which may strongly contradict with cultural and political traditions. However, in a number of countries universal solutions are regarded as very important social investments. For instance universal access to free education improves not only the capabilities of individuals but also the entire society.

Even if universal policies have been successfully implemented it is not self-evident that these policies are sustainable. When the majority of population is no more poor and the social structure pyramid-shaped, there is a chance that collective interests weaken and

majority of population look after self-interest and start to use private solutions to protect their income and get the services they need.

Finally, it would very important to study universalism in a much broader spatial context than now. What are the lessons learned from non-European countries? Why very different countries have adopted universal ideas as major policy solutions to some problems? We definitely need to know more on recent success stories in social policies. To understand what might be successful tomorrow, we should know much better, what was successful yesterday. A more long-term aim, common to all social policy researchers, would be to gain better understanding on how social policies could and should respond to the enormous world system changes, economic, environmental or political, we are witnessing daily.

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