

WEST: Sustainable societies in the 21st century: From welfare states to eco-social states

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Social policy and welfare state research

Traditional focus:

- Social protection systems (old age pensions, unemployment benefits, sickness benefits, family allowances, child benefits, housing benefits)
- minimum income/social assistance schemes
- Social and health services (child care, elderly care, health care, employment services, education and training)



Sustainability of advanced welfare states

- In the context of the welfare state questions of sustainability couched mainly in terms of financial and social sustainability.
- Population ageing conceived as the main (financial) threat to the welfare state as we know it.



From welfare states to eco-social states



- WEST challenges this narrow view of sustainability and suggests that ecological challenges and particularly climate change represent a source of pressure that welfare state research needs to pay attention to.
- Sustainability is no longer ‘only’ a question about adapting to financial constraints while ensuring access to adequate benefits and services for all.
- Internationally scholarship that looks at the intersection between social policy and pressures generated by climate change and associated policy is growing rapidly.

Eco-social dilemma of the Norwegian welfare state

- To narrow the scope given limited resources in WEST our focus is mainly on Norway but with the contribution of a German and British scholars.
- We suggest that Norway faces a particular eco-social dilemma with its comprehensive but fossil fuel dependent welfare state.
- Three work packages:
 - 1) Future generations, moral arguments (Marianne T, Axel WP, Mi Ah, Uni Tübingen)
 - 2) Developments of eco-social attitudes over time based data from the Norsk Monitor biennial survey (Therese D, Axel WP + CICERO)
 - 3) European Green Deal (Mi Ah, Marianne T, Mi Ah + CICERO + Univ of Southampton)

Other possible eco-social topics

- The politics of eco-social policy: What social, ecological and economic interests and associated actor constellations are mobilised in the political struggles over the ‘green’ transition at national and/or European level? How and why do these differ across countries and with what consequences for policy output?
- The political potential for reforms that push welfare states in a ‘sustainable’ direction, including studies of popular attitudes, political party/electoral manifestos or elite discourses.
- Are some welfare models or varieties of capitalism better at balancing long-term ecological and contemporary social concerns. If so, what are the mechanisms driving differential policy performances?

Other possible eco-social topics

- What is the significance of factors like inequality and distribution in different types of welfare states? Under which institutional conditions do they hamper or facilitate the development of balanced eco-social policy agendas?
- There is a knowledge gap regarding the implications of climate change and mitigation for the social risks against which traditional welfare states are designed to protect, such as poverty. Related to this, are the 'old' tools and institutions of social protection sufficient to meet the social challenges linked to climate change/climate policy?
- What implications do climate change have for the funding of future welfare programmes?

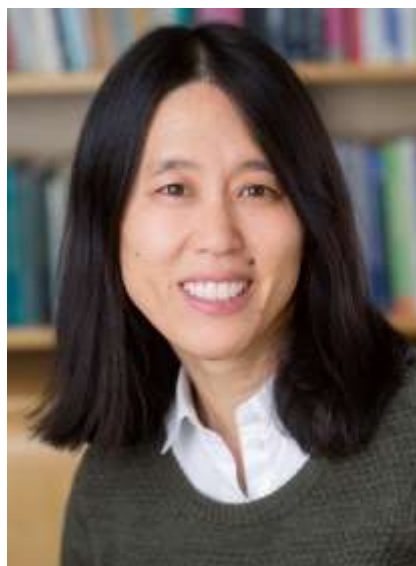
Supervision



Marianne Takle, research professor
Migration policy, solidarity, nationalism cultural studies



Axel West Pedersen, professor
Old age pension policy, social protection, inequality, redistribution, poverty, public attitudes



Mi Ah Schoyen, senior researcher
comparative welfare state research, welfare mix, eco-social policy, intergenerational solidarity



Therese Dokken, senior researcher
Development economics, climate change, Norwegian social protection system, labour market policy

Queries and expression of interest

- To express interest, please send a brief outline (1-2 pages) of the topic and question(s) you would like to study along with a 1-page CV to miah.schoyen@oslomet.no before 15 March 2022.
- If you already have some thoughts about how you would like to approach the topic in terms of theories, methods and data you are welcome to specify this.
- If you are unsure whether your interests fit this topic or not (or you think you would like to write something that addresses the climate change-welfare state nexus, but you have a hard time pinning down concrete, researchable questions, get in touch and we will try to find out)!