

Food security in welfare capitalism: Comparing social entitlements to food in Australia and Norway

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Abstract

The concept of food security is often anchored in popular understandings of the challenge to produce and supply enough food. However, decades of policies for intensive agriculture have not alleviated hunger and malnutrition, with an absence of food security featuring in both economically developing and developed nations. Despite perceptions that the economic growth in advanced, capitalist societies will ensure freedom from hunger, this is not universal across so-called 'wealthy nations'. To explore the dynamics of food security in economically *developed* countries, this paper considers institutional approaches to domestic food security primarily through responses to poverty and welfare entitlements, and, secondarily, through food relief. Through the lens of social entitlements to food and their formation under various expressions of welfare capitalism, we highlight how the specific institutional settings of two economically developed nations, Australia and Norway, respond to uncertain or insufficient access to food. Whilst Norway's political agenda on agricultural support, food pricing regulation and universal social security support offers a robust, although indirect, safety net in ensuring entitlements to food, Australia's neoliberal trajectory means that approaches to food security are *ad hoc* and rely on a combination of self-help, charitable and market responses. Despite its extensive food production Australia appears less capable of ensuring food security for all its inhabitants compared to the highly import-dependent Norway.

Keywords: Food security, Australia, Norway, Welfare Capitalism, Social Entitlements

1. Introduction

It is often taken for granted that inhabitants of advanced capitalist nations are universally food secure, the primary conditions being economic prosperity and the ability to grow abundant food. However, economic inequalities are rising across the world – including in economically developed countries (Jaumotte et al., 2013; Piketty, 2014). It has been argued that broadening social inequalities, and in particular poverty, lead to food insecurity and that food security is first and foremost a matter of unequal distribution of resources (Burns, 2004; Carolan, 2013; Sen, 1981).

Food security research predominantly focuses upon economically developing nations within Africa, Asia and South America – where poverty and hunger are most severe. This paper contributes to an emerging literature that examines food security in economically developed nations, for example: Dowler and Lambie-Mumford (2015) and Kirwan and Maye (2013) on the United Kingdom (UK); Heynen et al. (2012) and Anderson (2013) on the United States (US); and Miewald and McCann (2014) on Canada. Given indications that food insecurity is also experienced by people in relatively wealthy nations this paper focuses on the formal status of public responsibilities for food and welfare in two economically developed nation states, Australia and Norway. Our approach is to compare two country cases that are modern capitalist states of a Western type, but which represent contrasts in both welfare and agricultural policies due to different governance structures. Norway is a typical example of a Scandinavian, social democratic welfare state with a protected and domestically-oriented agriculture, whereas Australia represents a liberal, Anglo-Saxon state both in terms of welfare and agricultural policies, with a highly export-oriented agricultural industry.

Drawing upon sociologist Gøsta Esping-Andersen's (1990) work on 'welfare capitalism' and economist Amartya Sen's (1981) work on 'poverty and food entitlement', we explore the social, political and economic underpinnings of domestic food security. Interestingly, neither Australia nor Norway has a specific policy to deal with domestic food security, but we find that other, more indirect, policies addressing agriculture, pricing and social security are decisive for the outcomes, which are quite different in the two countries. By comparing two countries with generally different political traditions with regard to social rights and redistribution the aim is to identify key institutional and political factors influencing societal responses to uncertain or insufficient domestic food availability at the individual and household level. Of the two countries, Australia clearly has a much higher productive output due to the climate and volume of land but, as we show in this paper, availability of food does not necessarily equate to universal food security within a nation. To explore this matter in depth we ask the following questions: i) How are responsibilities for food security allocated between the nation state, market and civil society? ii) In which ways are formal entitlements to food established in terms of universal rights, means-tested¹ relief or, instead, dependence on private sources? and iii) How can the overall arrangements be explained in view of institutional processes?

The paper firstly addresses the problem of food insecurity in developed nations, challenging the (often implicit) assumption that all citizens are food secure. The literature demonstrates that food insecurity and poverty are intrinsically linked, suggesting that food insecurity cannot be *a priori* ruled out in times of growing social inequalities and increasing numbers of poor. Next, we present the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of our study. The formal and legal conditions for people's access to food are discussed through the concept of 'entitlement' (Sen, 1981), a concept that captures the close links between food policies and

¹ Means testing refers to a method for determining whether someone qualifies for a financial-assistance program based on their income, assets and possessions.

social policies. We then apply theories of welfare capitalism as a basis for comparing policies of food and welfare in Australia and Norway and their implications for entitlements to food. Using these perspectives the paper identifies key features of how the two countries are addressing food security, including agriculture, food and welfare policies. We conclude that, while entitlements obtained through employment represent the primary foundation for access to food in the two countries, entitlements in the form of social rights are crucial in addressing food insecurity. Low food prices are not solely determinate of food security, as without sufficient wages or compensation through benefits food may still be unaffordable for the economically marginalised.

2. Food security

According to Carolan (2013), the term 'food security' has been around for at least 40 years, first emerging at the World Food Congress in 1974. Earlier uses of food security referred not only to availability of and access to food but also to its sustainability, nutritional value and sustainable livelihoods for food producers. In 1996 the World Food Summit emphasised the need to address the household level, with food security referring to "a condition where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary preferences for an active and healthy life" (FAO, 1996). Still, others contend that the term has been hijacked (Carolan, 2013) or captured (Carney, 2011) by corporate actors advocating privatised, market-driven and often technologically-driven solutions to the global food supply, such as genetically modified food. However, the main challenges remain in that food security needs to be addressed through social, economic and distributive justice (Carolan, 2013; Patel, 2007);² if people do not have

² This is not to say that we disregard other vulnerabilities in the food system. For instance, scholars are now drawing attention to the impact of climate change on food security (Burton et al., 2013; Lawrence et al., 2013; Sundström et al., 2013). Further, peak oil, or any disruption to the oil supply, will have a profound effect on the current food system which is heavily oil-dependent.

the means to purchase food, it does not matter how much food is produced and distributed via market mechanisms, food security cannot be achieved.

Whilst poverty can be severe in developing countries there is evidence that all inhabitants even of developed nations do not equally attain food security. In Downtown Eastside Vancouver, Canada, for instance, residents experience multiple barriers in accessing nutritious food (Miewald and McCann, 2014). These barriers include low incomes, homelessness, poor quality housing, disability and drug use, leading people to seek food through a mix of charity (such as community kitchens) and cheap, store-bought fast food. In the UK, Dowler and Lambie-Mumford (2015) report that household food security has suffered under austerity measures, requiring an increased reliance on charitable assistance such as food banks. Rising food and fuel prices, coupled with static or falling incomes have reduced food affordability by 20% for the lowest income households (Dowler and Lambie-Mumford, 2015). In writing about food justice and hunger in the US, Heynen et al. (2012) draw attention to how the modern industrial agriculture complex produces empty calories cheaply, whereas the most nutritious food has become the most expensive and less accessible. They argue that the characteristics of food distribution in poorer areas of the US are responsible for both hunger and obesity, with urban “food deserts” selling mostly unhealthy fast food.

Various contemporary definitions of food security, including the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) definition, tend to omit notions of power and control in the food system, as ownership of inputs, processing, distribution and retail become increasingly concentrated (Patel and McMichael, 2009). In the context of such critiques the concept of ‘food *sovereignty*’ is now favoured by many non-government organisations (NGOs), human rights organisations and small-scale farmer groups, giving priority to participation by food-insecure groups and individuals. First defined by the transnational peasant organisation *La Via Campesina* in 1996 as the people's right to food and autonomous

food systems, support for agro-ecological practices and resistance to trade agreements and policies, food sovereignty restores food security as a rights-based goal and is critical of development trends that focus the concept of food security on food production only (Carney, 2011; Carolan, 2013).

Yet, both food security and food sovereignty approaches tend to overlook institutional aspects in the fair provision of food for all sectors of society. Specific regulatory and welfare institutions as well as food distribution systems need to be factored in; that is, how food needs are ensured through formal and informal systems on an ongoing basis as well as in times of crisis. This involves understanding not only local community-based systems and market structures but also the arrangements linking the regulation of food prices, employment structures and social security systems – systems that often come together at a national level. A few contributions have addressed such institutional and structural issues (e.g. Pritchard et al., 2014 on India), but they rarely focus on food security in developed nation contexts.

3. The state, welfare capitalism and food rights: a conceptual framework

A social and political analysis of domestic food security should start with the question of the ways in which people acquire or access food, through their own production, purchase or otherwise. Important modern determinants of hunger include a lack of purchasing power and poorly developed public policies (Rashid, 1980; Sobhan, 1990, p. 87). Further, Nally (2011) observes that since the 17th and 18th centuries a shift has occurred from a 'moral economy' to a 'political economy' of hunger, the latter promoting market mechanisms as a response to hunger rather than focussing primarily in issues such as distributive justice or the deserving vs the undeserving.

According to Sen (1981), poverty is a lack of 'entitlements' that can be exchanged for food and, as such, hunger will always be linked to poverty. Entitlements are based on rules formulated as a system of legal relations (ownership rights, contractual obligations, legal

exchanges etc.). As Sen states, “The law stands between food availability and food entitlement” (1981, p. 160). When entitlements obtained through a person’s own labour and workforce participation fail, access to sufficient alternatives, such as social security, is crucial. The legal status of public responsibilities for food and welfare may take many different forms, ranging from universal rights to a certain level of income or minimum cash benefits in specific cases, to food price regulation, food coupons, soup kitchens and extra work for the unemployed (and even land reforms). Three major dimensions may be distinguished: first, whether responsibilities for people’s wellbeing are part of public social security systems or devolved to market distribution alone; second, the coverage of welfare policies – from universalism to restrictive means-testing; and third, whether access is based on legally founded rights or voluntarism. According to Sen’s (1981) definition, the latter category does not represent a real entitlement at all.

Following these perspectives, we can place notions of food security within the frame of comparative welfare state studies. The structural welfare mix of state/market/civil society/family responsibilities varies between states, as do welfare outcomes in terms of stratification, expenditures and policies (e.g., Esping-Andersen, 1990; Arts and Gelissen, 2002). Esping-Andersen’s seminal book from 1990, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*, developed a typology of welfare capitalism,³ key aspects being differences in stratification, de-commodification of labour and types of social entitlements. He identified three types of welfare capitalism: the social democratic model (the Scandinavian countries); the liberal welfare state model (US, Canada, Australia); and the conservative, corporatist state model (France, Germany, Austria and Italy). However, policies are developing and evolving, and of particular interest in this paper, is how welfare capitalist typologies play out in influencing food entitlements in Australia and Norway.

³ Based on both heavy influence from, and critique of, Esping-Andersen’s (1990) initial typology a series of subsequent models have been developed (see for example Arts and Gelissen, 2002, for an overview).

The social democratic model of Esping-Andersen (1990) is characterised by relatively low social stratification, an emphasis on universalism and a high level of de-commodification, which indicates that labour is less exposed to the vagaries of the market; a person can survive without relying on the labour market (or the family or charity). The model corresponds with a social policy aim of maximising capacity for individual independence (Arts and Gelissen, 2002, p. 142), where the responsibility for social protection ultimately falls on the state. In these cases food security is to be obtained through universal policies lifting standards of living through a Keynesian demand-supporting policy (Keynes, 1936). This first type springs from the Beveridge principle of universal rights of citizenship, regardless of the degree of need or extent of participation in the labour market (see Beveridge, 1942).⁴ Eligibility rests on citizenship or long-time residence in a country. Only this type of policy, characterised as social rights, counteracts the unequal outcome of market-based distribution. The social democratic model does not single out food *per se*, but addresses state-provided income for citizens outside of the formal labour market.

The liberal, Anglo-Saxon model is associated with low levels of labour de-commodification and high social stratification.⁵ In such countries there is a mix of self-reliant people who can afford private insurance and poorer people dependent on public support. Public obligation enters only when the market fails and there is demonstrable and abject need. Social benefits are therefore not universal, but distributed to the 'worthy' or 'needy' as means-tested poor relief. This model is expected to create a 'moral market' for charity and voluntary work by private actors rather than the state to respond to the needs of under-

⁴ "Under the scheme of social insurance, which forms the main feature of this plan, every citizen of working age will contribute in his appropriate class according to the security that he needs, or as a married woman will have contributions made by the husband. Each will be covered for all his needs by a single weekly contribution on one insurance document. All the principal cash payments – for unemployment, disability and retirement will continue so long as the need lasts, without means test, and will be paid from a Social Insurance Fund built up by contributions from the insured persons, from their employers, if any, and from the State" (Beveridge, 1942: 11).

⁵ There are of course particularities among such countries as well. Australia is sometimes described as a liberal regime (e.g. Esping Andersen, 1990; Arts and Gelissen, 2002) and sometimes as another 'radical' type of welfare state (Castles, 1993).

privileged people. With starker social inequalities and many 'very poor' people, keeping food prices low becomes politically more important (Patel and McMichael, 2009). Although Esping-Andersen (1990) was writing on this topic over 20 years ago his work seems to hold much relevance in today's neoliberalism and its push towards privatisation, user-pays and self-reliance.

The third, conservative, corporatist state model, such as that found in Germany, lies somewhere in-between the Scandinavian and the Anglo-Saxon models, with broader alliances than the liberal models, albeit less broad patterns of solidarity than the social democratic model. This type is an insurance-based system of social entitlements where rights and benefits may be ample, but where access is conditional upon a blend of labour-market attachment and individual financial contribution. In this study we have chosen to concentrate on the two most contrasting models: the social democratic and the liberal models.

Income support or replacement is associated with economic conflicts in the labour market, such as unemployment/underemployment. Yet, even though income is an important basis for food entitlements, conditions in the food commodity market, such as price, are also decisive for food acquisition and buying power. In general, commodity market tensions have received less political attention compared to labour market conflicts (see Dixon and Richards, 2015; Rokkan, 1970, p. 109; Weller, 2015).⁶ Sen's (1981) concept of entitlements includes those generated via labour markets as well as commodity market participation. There are numerous examples of intense conflict involving active consumer protests even in Western countries, frequently leading to compromises in terms of public policy historically (Pugh, 1991; Thompson, 1971; Tilly, 1975) as well as in recent times (Lawrence and McMichael, 2012; Orlove, 1997; Patel and McMichael, 2009). An analysis of food entitlements, therefore,

⁶ The conflict is mainly discussed as a rural–urban conflict, between primary producers and the manufacturing industry (Rokkan, 1970); however, for food, a logical continuation is to see the conflict between suppliers (of all kinds) and consumers as part of this conflict dimension, as being parallel to the capital–worker conflict in the labour market (although not of the same order).

needs to consider the interaction between welfare and food policies, in particular the relationship between the level of income and income replacement on the one hand, and food prices on the other.

4. Methodology

Our approach is to compare two country cases that are modern capitalist states of a Western type, but which represent contrasts with regard to the dimensions we study. Australia and Norway are opposites in both welfare and agricultural policies. Norway is a typical example of a Scandinavian, social democratic welfare state with a protected and domestically-oriented agricultural industry (unlike, for example, Denmark). Australia can be described in Esping-Andersen's (1990) terms as representing a liberal, Anglo-Saxon model both in regards to welfare and agricultural policies, with a highly export-oriented agricultural industry.

Methodologically, the ambition of this paper is twofold. First, we describe the institutional development of policies interacting with food security in the two countries, thereby getting a better understanding of the background of food security policy in the two cases. Second, we use this comparative case study⁷ as a plausibility probe (Eckstein, 1975; Mill, 2002) for the applicability of the framework of welfare capitalist typologies and entitlements for analysing different directions of food security policy. We cannot straightforwardly assume that the welfare typologies which originally developed in the early 1990s are suitable today: domestic 'food security' takes place at the intersection of welfare and agricultural policies – both are rapidly developing policy areas globally as well as within specific national contexts. We must therefore be sensitive to responses in the two countries

⁷ We are not pursuing explicitly to *explain* the differences between Australia and Norway in terms of food security approaches, but implicitly this is a part of our design. As such we use a logic related to a comparative method of difference as categorized by Mill in his "A system of Logic" from 1891 (Mill, 2002).

that do not fit Esping-Andersen's (1990) 'ideal-type' models. The comparison will address the following items:

- *Rates of food insecurity and poverty.*
- *The food sector and agriculture and food policies*, including: the characteristics of the food provisioning system, its supply structures, major actors and their relative powers; food policies, including food pricing structures; and state intervention in food pricing.
- *Welfare policies and entitlements to food*, including: poverty alleviation policies, social security systems, and food relief; and charity and private efforts.
- *The division of responsibilities among state, market and civil society actors* in safeguarding food security.

Our analysis relies on secondary sources when it comes to describing general welfare and food policies as well as food market structures and indicators of social inequality. In addition we have examined relevant policy papers for a closer analysis of how food security is addressed in each nation.

5. Australia: Free market and 'self-help' responses to food insecurity

5.1 Rates of food insecurity and poverty

Food insecurity is often hidden "...and individually embodied rather than monitored and addressed by society" (Dowler and Lambie-Mumford, 2015, p. 1). With this in mind, this section reports on the few studies in Australia that have attempted to quantify levels of food insecurity. Interestingly, there is consistency in the findings of a number of studies that around 5% of Australians are severely food insecure, whilst around 16% experience moderate food insecurity. For instance, in 2012, Lockie and Pietsch administered a telephone survey on food security to a national random sample of the adult population aged 18 years and over. Twelve hundred people were interviewed, with a response rate of 40.5%. The findings show that 16% of respondents reported to be 'often' or 'sometimes' worried that their food would

run out before they had money to buy more. Four percent of respondents had needed emergency assistance from a charity, food bank, soup kitchen or other source. The same figure of 16% of people experiencing 'significant levels of food insecurity' was also found by Temple (2008) in a survey of South Western Sydney residents (19,500 people surveyed with a response rate of 89.5%). Drawing upon 2004–05 data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' National Health Survey, Temple (2008) reports that 5% of people reported running out of food and not being able to purchase more, or missing a meal due to financial constraints. These studies indicate that a significant proportion of Australians (5% of the population, equalling about one million people) are severely food insecure, being unable to access sufficient and adequate food on a stable basis. The situation is worse for Indigenous Australians. Browne et al. (2009) report that during 2004–05, 24% of Indigenous Australians aged over 15 years ran out of food in the previous 12 months, compared to 5% of non-Indigenous Australians.

Predictors of food insecurity are largely related to income, including insufficient purchasing power, capacity to save, the presence of children in the household and housing tenure (Nolan et al., 2006; Temple, 2006, 2008). The ability to access shops was also reported to be an inhibiting factor, particularly for people with disabilities, those with young children and those without cars, highlighting the relevance of 'food deserts' for food security in the Australian context (Coveney and O'Dwyer, 2009). The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS) (2012) estimated that in 2011, 13% of all people (2.2 million), including 17% (575,000) of all children, lived in households below the most austere 'poverty line'. By 2014 these figures had increased to 14% (2.5 million) of all people and 18% (602, 604) of children living below the poverty line. The poverty line is set at 50% of the median disposable income for all Australian households – an indicator widely used in international research (ACOSS, 2010). ACOSS reports that 37% of people on social security payments, such as the job seekers' allowance, disability pension and parenting payments, live below the poverty line, as

do 62% of Australian age pension recipients. Based upon 2011 census data, the Australia Bureau of Statistics reports that 105,000 people were homeless on census night – an 8% increase from 2006 data. Unemployment rates are relatively low in Australia, 5.7% in June 2013 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013), decreasing slightly from the previous year but this was largely attributed to increases in part-time employment. For low-income households food may be the only flexible item in budgeting – whereas there is no flexibility on fixed costs such as rent/mortgage and utility bills. In 2012 the Commonwealth Government reported that Australia had the ninth highest level of inequality across 26 OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries (Commonwealth of Australia, 2012). With the disbanding of the Social Inclusion Unit by the incoming conservative government in 2013 current data on the income gap are not available.

The next section considers food and agricultural policies in Australia and their response to matters of domestic food security.

5.2 The food sector and agriculture and food policies

Australia is very much a food-producing nation, producing bulk commodities such as beef, lamb, grain and wool for export. One of the reasons for the colonisation of Australia by the British was to exploit its natural resources. Food production began soon after the arrival of the first fleet of colonisers in the 1780s to feed prisoners deported to Australia – with the aim of reducing the burden on Britain to feed them (Lawrence et al., 2012). Today, around 60% of Australia's total production of food is destined for overseas markets, representing 76% of the gross value of farm production (Lawrence et al., 2013). Australia does not subsidise its agricultural production; agricultural policies are instead directed towards the liberalisation of markets. The little remaining state support for agricultural producers is wholly decoupled from production, responding to farm hardship via means-tested welfare payments, particularly during times of drought declaration. Drought payments seem likely to be phased out with a

new focus on “encouraging farmers to prepare for and manage the effects of drought and other challenges” (Department of Agriculture, 2015).

The domestic distribution of food in recent years is characterised by a significant power asymmetry and increasing prices (Burch and Lawrence, 2007). Two supermarket chains, Coles and Woolworths, control around 70-80% of the food retail market, placing them in a strong position to increase prices into the future. The food retail duopoly has been cause for concern for producer, processor and consumer groups, leading to a retail price inquiry by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) in 2008. It has been claimed that such heavily concentrated ownership of the food retail sector not only undermines food security but, in the absence of competition, will push food prices higher in the long run (Zumbo, 2009). Indeed, Australia’s food prices were reported by the OECD to have risen 40% in the decade from 2000 – more than any other economically developed country (Richards et al., 2012; Robinson and Vasek, 2009). Despite the market concentration and reports of retailers abusing their market power and ‘bullying’ producers the ACCC found food retail in Australia to be ‘workably competitive’ (ACCC, 2008; Richards et al., 2012). However, in 2014, the Federal Court of Australia found the Coles supermarket chain, owned by Wesfarmers Ltd, guilty of unconscionable conduct against suppliers (ACCC, 2015).

Australia’s domestic food security policies have been regarded as particularly weak (Lawrence et al., 2013; Rose and Croft, 2012). Food security did not appear on the government’s agenda until 2010 when the Prime Minister’s Science, Engineering and Innovation Council (PMSEIC) published a report on Australian Food Security. Like subsequent Australian food security policies, the focus was grounded in agricultural productivism, efficiencies, regulatory flexibility and technological innovations (PMSEIC, 2010, p. 2).

These themes were also evident in the Australian Government’s first National Food Plan (DAFF, 2013) which was criticised as ‘business as usual’ (Australian Food Sovereignty

Alliance, 2012; Rose and Croft, 2012). The plan was abandoned before its implementation due to a change of government. Its replacement is the *Agricultural Competitiveness White Paper* (Commonwealth of Australia, 2015). As depicted by the title, Australian food policy has shifted from a 'national food plan' to 'agricultural competitiveness'. Food security is referred to in the White Paper as an obligation to provide increased volumes of food via export to developing nations in the region through market mechanisms. There is no other Australian Government policy that deals with domestic food security, despite the nation's increasing reliance on food charity (Booth, 2014). If food policy overlooks household-level food security then there is potential to fill this gap through welfare policy that deals with poverty. This is explored next.

5.2.1 Welfare policies and entitlements to food

Since its inception 100 years ago Australian social welfare policies have not directly addressed social entitlements to food, other than considering food a basic need, along with housing. The current legislation, the *Social Security Act 1991*, provides a basic safety net to alleviate poverty through payments. The federal welfare agency, Centrelink, also offers *one-off* crisis payments to recipients of benefits that can be spent on food when experiencing severe hardship, natural disasters, homelessness or when on release from prison (Department of Human Services, 2015). The Department of Human Services' website on food relief links directly to pages on 'income management', highlighting a 'self-help' rather than material response. A range of charitable church and community organisations, such as the Salvation Army, provide food vouchers or food boxes to those in need. Many charitable organisations receive food from charitable 'food banks' such as SecondBite and AusHarvest who receive food via donations from producers, processors and retailers (Booth, 2014; SecondBite, 2014; Woolworths, 2010).

This approach to poverty and welfare has its roots in the early colonial times where charitable relief from benevolent societies, sometimes coupled with support from the authorities, provided basic means for those unable to care for themselves (Herscovitch and Stanton, 2008). From this, state support evolved through a number of manifestations offering relief to the sick, aged and unemployed. Between the wars social security moved from a state-based system to the Commonwealth, harmonising welfare benefits across the nation, continuing also their broadening of coverage (Department of Social Security, 1999). Many social welfare payments were, and still are, means-tested. Universal, public-funded welfare is evident in health care and education systems, with other protections such as the minimum wage, paid sick leave and, more recently, compulsory employer superannuation contributions that provide for the payment of a benefit to a person upon retirement.

Overall, however, increases in food and housing prices have not been matched with increases in welfare payments (Booth, 2014). Under the conservative government in 2006, social security reforms included 'welfare to work', an aspect of which was popularly referred to as the 'work for the dole' scheme. Carney (2006) recognises this as an era of neoliberalism with the privatisation of job matching services and an emphasis on 'mutual obligation' in work schemes for the unemployed, sole parents and people with disabilities.

5.2.2 Division of responsibilities among state, market and civil society

The Australian welfare system is not wholly state-based, with arrangements for private sector social insurance enshrined in Australian legislation (Herscovitch and Stanton, 2008). For instance, Australians receive tax incentives to enrol in private health care schemes. Consistent with the privatisation of many social services access to food relief has also followed this pathway. State involvement in feeding the poor is to act as an 'enabler' of societal self-help rather than as a direct service provider. For instance, in 2010, the supermarket chain Woolworths and the Australian Government jointly announced a 'fresh

food rescue campaign' that would provide AUD\$2m for food relief charities and two million meals for low-income people (Woolworths, 2010).

Charities and non-profit citizen groups have reported an increased demand for food relief in Australia. A number of 'food rescue' organisations such as Foodbank, SecondBite, OzHarvest, Food4Life and Fareshare have formed to address the growing need for food relief by diverting food that would otherwise be wasted via charitable organisations for distribution. Booth (2014) reports that 2,600 charitable agencies subscribe to food banks. SecondBite's (2014) website reports to have diverted 11 million kilograms of food from waste, providing 23 million meals to food insecure households. Such schemes are predominantly run on volunteer labour, with a small core of paid staff.

The Australian welfare model is thus characterised by limited social rights, a high degree of volunteerism and a strong government commitment to market-based solutions. There is no specific Australian policy on social entitlements when it comes to food, beyond state advice on income management, one-off crisis payments for limited recipients or referrals to food relief agencies. At a time when official statistics show that poverty is growing in Australia (as reported above), many of the food banks report a growing need for food relief – or worse, having to turn people away (The Australian, 2013).

6. Norway: A political agenda combining food and welfare

Norway is different than Australia in a number of ways; in particular, Norway has maintained closer links between food and welfare policies through processes of distributional justice.

6.1 Rates of food insecurity and poverty

No surveys of household food security have been published in Norway for many decades. With economic prosperity the general level of income in Norway has increased

steadily in the post-war period. Norway discovered oil and gas in the North Sea in the late 1960s and since then the Norwegian population has benefitted from the prosperous oil and gas economy. At present, oil and gas account for around 25% of Norway's Gross Domestic Product (Olsen, 2015). Norway's Sovereign Wealth Fund, the Government Pension Fund Global, is the biggest in the world at around US\$800bn and owns 1% of global stocks with an annual return of approximately 6% (Norges Bank Investment Management, 2015). The affluent turn for Norway has been associated with decreased (or at least not increasing) economic inequalities.

Eurostat (2015) data from 2013 reports 14% of Norwegians are at risk of poverty or social exclusion – a figure that has decreased from 17% in 2006. Much of the efficiency of the welfare state when it comes to combating poverty is a consequence of its capacity to engage the labour market as a welfare delivery institution (Vogel, 1999). Eurostat's (2013) statistics for 2012 show that the proportion of employed (age group 15–64) in the Nordic region is 74%, against 64% for the then 27 member states of the EU. Only 3% of Norwegians were unemployed in 2012 (compared to 6% in Australia in 2013). In 2010 the rate of the working poor (full-time) was 2.5% in Norway (Spannagel, 2013). Whilst rates of unemployment are relatively low in both countries, Norway and Australia respond differently to unemployment and underemployment, as will be shown below. Yet, despite a strong Norwegian economy and distributive welfare policies uncertainties are emerging in the form of the European economic crisis, a declining oil economy, as well as strengthened political forces in Norway aiming at a weakening of employment contracts, foreign labourers with lower wage rates, and a more restrictive social security system. The number of poor seem to increase, but the reports are still uncertain.

6.2 The food sector and agriculture and food policies

Throughout most of the 19th century liberal public policies concentrated on market solutions, without special public measures for food provisioning, even in cases of emergency. Average incomes and food supplies increased, but the number of poor was also growing. A poor relief system for individuals in abject need was formalised through the Poor Law of 1900 (Seip, 1984). Like many other countries limited food supplies and surging prices towards the end of World War I forcefully brought food security to the political agenda, and new institutions for provisioning were rapidly put in place. However, food entitlements for the poor were not solved. Critique of an insufficient and demeaning poor relief system increased in the inter-war period, when concerns about food and nutrition were addressed in a broad mobilisation for better social security and support to the unemployed (Evang and Hansen, 1937). Another aspect was also given attention: the welfare of the many small-scale farmers. Food problems were redefined as questions of food supply, and production incentives (especially in the dairy sector) were put in place (Sandmo, 1991). This was a radical attitude when the market problem was one of surplus due to low purchasing power. The approach reflects the influence of the Keynesian economic policy of stimulating demand and increasing incomes. Also, the Labour Party wanted support from agricultural labourers and small-scale farmers in order to obtain a broader electoral basis. Underlining mutual interests between urban and rural workers, the Labour Party came into power in 1935 through support from the Agrarian Party.⁸

After World War II welfare and production goals were combined through macro-economic planning and a negotiation-based implementation system (Lien, 1990). Aims of high and stable prices as a means to ensure the welfare of small-scale farmers were combined with encouragement to modernise the agricultural industry. The political red–green alliance

⁸ Similar political processes eventually took place in all Nordic countries as an early stage in the development of the Nordic welfare states.

formed a long-lasting alliance that supported the trade-off between agricultural interests and labour interests (Steen, 1988).

Today the agricultural industry is heavily reliant on dairy and, increasingly, meat production, while cereal production is limited (due to climate and geographical limitations) and declining. More than half of Norway's food calories are imported, and import of animal feed is expanding. Dairy and meat production are protected through high import tariffs. In contrast, the Norwegian fisheries and fish farming industry exports more than 90% of its production. Despite – or because of – high costs of food production in Norway reducing prices through increased efficiency has been a key issue in the food sector. While Norwegian farms are relatively small, food manufacturing and retailing are highly concentrated with four companies holding a 98% share of the food retail market (NOU, 2011, p. 4). This market concentration will soon intensify, following the Norwegian competition authority granting permission for Swedish-owned ICA (a leading grocery retailer) to sell its 93 stores to the Norwegian supermarket chain, Coop (Vane, 2015). The proportion of Norwegian household expenditure spent on food is around 11% (Directorate of Health, 2015), which is the same as Australia and Sweden, but higher than the US (7%) and the UK (9%). There is a stark difference when compared to less economically developed countries such as Kenya (47%) and Nigeria (57%) (Knoema.com, 2015).

Even so, the question of food prices is highly contested, being a key issue in the complex setup of Norwegian agricultural policy (Jacobsen et al., 2003; Kjærnes, 2015). Yet, little attention is being paid to how this turns out for the poor since it is assumed that enough money for food is ensured through the social security system.

Food security has been emphasised in recent policy papers, even including reference to the FAO definition of food security (Ministry of Agriculture and Food, 2011). However, this is not followed up in the assessment of the situation or in actual policy measures, where attention is directed only towards production and where consumers represent 'the market'.

6.3 Welfare policies and entitlements to food

Emerging from the historical processes described above was the establishment of food entitlements ensured through wage negotiations and universal social rights. This was based on state involvement in both welfare and the food market, with an underlying consensus emphasising sufficient incomes rather than low food prices. Instead of a minimum wage the dominant policy has been that the lowest pay (and social security) should develop according to changes in mean incomes; that is, a relative understanding of poverty. In the post-war period the state as a third party provided calculations of total and relative price changes through the Consumer Price Index (CPI) (SSB, 1996), bringing food entitlements based on income into the collective bargaining system. Thus social benefits were regulated with reference to wage changes; increasing prices were to be compensated by higher wages.

A public pension system was established in the 1960s and 70s, including a universal minimum pension for the retired and people with a disability, independent of former incomes, plus payments reflecting former wage levels (Ministry of Social Affairs, 1995). There are additional allowances for dependents,⁹ including rent support and assistance during temporary absences from work (due to illness, unemployment, maternity leave, care for sick children). In cases where all these rights are irrelevant or insufficient, individual social assistance serves as a safety net. The *Social Assistance Act 1993* is intended to ensure essential subsistence for all citizens. While pensions are state-regulated social assistance is provided locally and decided individually according to needs and local norms (Ministry of Social Affairs, 1995, p. 173). As such, access to social security has a social rights character. Social assistance is rather low and has a poor relief character.

⁹ Universal birth and children's allowances are distributed uniformly and regulated separately through parliamentary decisions. Children's allowances have frequently been linked to food prices (especially milk) in the political debate, but there are no institutionalised relationships.

Pension schemes for the retired and those with a disability follow wage development, but in recent years without full compensation, thus producing a widening gap between wage incomes and public social security. There are no standards related to food needs, and claims of general or minimum standards have been met by strong political reservations, referring to relative rather than absolute conceptions of poverty. This is all the more relevant to study now following major reforms in the systems of social security and public pension schemes (Fredriksen and Stølen, 2011; Whitehouse, 2012).

6.4 Division of responsibilities among state, market and civil society actors

The Norwegian system for addressing food insecurity has concentrated on providing sufficient purchasing power by avoiding too low wage levels and by offering universal and relatively generous social security for those outside the labour market, including compensation for food price increases. Charity and the private sector play a marginal role compared to those in Australia. In larger cities the Salvation Army and other voluntary organisations offer soup kitchens and food banks, the users being primarily homeless people and poor people in particularly acute situations. That does not mean that poverty does not exist, but the system is assumed to avoid absolute poverty of a kind that threatens food security. Food businesses do not play a role in addressing food insecurity in Norway. The protection of the food sector from competition from imports has for a long time been criticised for not considering 'consumer interests', and the new conservative government has this high on the agenda. Thus, stricter social policies and a less organised labour market are paralleled by stronger political weight put on cheap food.

7. Discussion: Poverty, food insecurity and the right to food

At the start of this paper we asked three questions. The first was whether claims of food security are established as universal social rights met by the state or have been devolved to

private interests. In Australian and Norway domestic and household-level food security does not feature as an explicit part of public policy-making. Both countries strongly emphasise general 'exchange' entitlements obtained by selling labour, with the underlying assumption that access to paid work will ensure sufficient purchasing power and thus food security. However, the outcomes are highly unequal, with very different levels of food insecurity and poverty in the two countries. This is first of all linked to the difference in how the labour markets are organised and their close association with the production of poverty. While Australia is characterised by large inequalities, low labour bargaining power and many working poor, Norway has a more compressed pattern of wages, which is linked to a comparatively strong labour movement and a characteristic system of cooperation between employers, the labour movement and the state.

Policies for income replacement and support to the needy are also very different in the degree of public involvement as well as the preferred types of measures. At the onset, the Norwegian system emphasises an understanding of poverty relative to mean incomes, while Australia focuses on absolute poverty by defining minimum levels. The Norwegian approach is explicitly seen as a way to counteract economic inequalities, while the question of whether basic needs are met among the poor is rarely addressed. In Australia, however, economic inequality and poverty are generally less a matter of public policy-making.

Applying Esping-Andersen's (1990) work to the modern Australian context requires identifying non-state actors in the provision of a new type of 'welfare': partnerships with government and supermarket chains to redistribute waste food. While the Australian schemes for public support to people who cannot support themselves is largely means-tested and restrictive, with strong targeting towards particular groups, the Norwegian system is dominated by universal services and relatively generous benefits. Eligibility for universal social rights in Norway is linked to citizenship, but that also means that people are rejected on this basis. The growing numbers of migrants, for example, face problems of exclusion.

Australia has less of a citizenship component to its welfare policies, with both citizens and non-citizens falling through the gaps. As mentioned above, those experiencing high levels of food insecurity include the aged, people with a disability and single-parent households. Private systems are relevant to both countries in terms of private insurance systems as well as charity/private sector intervention, but their importance varies significantly. This means that entitlements linked to income replacement are not only more limited in Australia compared to Norway but are also more uncertain and much less established as rights.

Our second question addressed the interrelationship between welfare policies and food policies. Since entitlements to food rely heavily on purchase in a market and, following from that, food prices, linkages between welfare policies and the regulation of food prices are important. Increased agricultural production is high on the political agenda in both countries, but the links to welfare policies are very different. Intensified food production has for decades been legitimated by the argument that increasing supplies will reduce food prices. Yet, it turns out quite differently in the two countries when it comes to the regulation of food prices. The export-oriented and largely deregulated Australian food sector has in recent years produced increasing food prices (reflecting fluctuations in global markets and, likely, the supermarket duopoly at the domestic level), without any solid, state-based responses when it comes to effects on poorer consumers. In contrast, the import-dependent and market-protected Norwegian food sector has, over recent years, produced lower food prices compared to other consumer goods as well as mean incomes. The oil-driven economic prosperity is one reason; competitive retailer chains putting pressure on prices is another. Food prices seem to be much more politically contentious in Norway than in Australia. However, the worries are not specifically related to poor consumers, instead focusing on political conflict around protection of the agricultural sector.

In both Australia and Norway food entitlements are first and foremost a matter of purchasing power. In Norway, publicly-provided schemes focus on cash benefits rather than

food in kind or food stamps. In Australia, food distribution is largely devolved to the volunteer sector that works in partnership with food businesses to divert food waste from landfill to people with precarious access to income and food. Food entitlements in the two countries are founded on income, either through labour or public benefits, rather than on direct service delivery. This is in contrast to, for example, Norway's neighbouring country, Sweden, where school lunches and to some degree even meals at work and in institutions have come to constitute a significant component of food entitlements, with explicit references to goals of universal welfare (Kjærnes, 2003).

The third question addressed whether institutional processes could explain different national arrangements. Guthman (2008), for instance, identified specific historical and structural trajectories behind the liberal character of the Californian food economy; liberal in economic and regulatory terms as well as culturally, as reflected in the very significant mobilisation for alternative food in the state. In the same vein, we observe large consistency in the food entitlements within the two countries, founded in institutional historical circumstances. In Australia, over 20 years on from Esping-Andersen (1990) identifying Australia as a 'liberal Anglo-Saxon' model of welfare capitalism, our findings concur with his observations of a system that is associated with high levels of labour commodification and high social stratification. Price rises in food and housing have not been matched by welfare payments. Rather, the food policy response has been consistent with neoliberal ideology, aiming to enable rather than regulate or protect markets and capture a substantial share of the global market.

These findings are consistent with Sen's observations: "The law stands between food availability and food entitlement" (1981, p. 160). Australia produces an excess of food, yet access to it is uneven as food security is not inscribed into Australian policy or law. Those outside of the formal work economy, such as the elderly or people with a disability, are reliant on longer-term welfare payments that are below the severe poverty line. This politically

(neo)liberal country aims to produce a self-reliant society. Where the economically marginalised fall through the public welfare safety net, food security is augmented through volunteerism and partnerships between charitable organisations and food businesses.

In contrast, the Norwegian state is extensively involved in ensuring entitlements in the form of social rights (implicitly including food). Labour mobilisation and the historical alliance between the labour movement and the farmers represented the beginning of claims concerning universal rights to food. In the early social democratic welfare state food needs were used as arguments for raising poor families' incomes through a universal social security system. This motivation was also reflected in labour bargaining by linking wages and consumer prices. Both measures influence the distribution and development of buying power; that is, *exchange* entitlements to food. This setting formed the foundation for more equal distribution of entitlements to food. The strong political position of farmers has been reflected in an agricultural policy that combines increased production with high (although decreasing) food prices – compensated through the labour bargaining system and, for a time, consumer price subsidies.

A welfare policy organised around labour market conflicts (in the critical sense) and a de-emphasis of commodity market conflicts has contributed to a marginal position of consumers as a political force in Norway, and little political concern for commodity market entitlements (Kjærnes et al., 2012). Also, the minimum safety net concerning food is poorly described, a problem which may become evident in less prosperous times. Food insecurity among the poorest and among groups with limited social rights may therefore emerge unnoticed by the Norwegian political community since its existence is largely ruled out.

8. Conclusion

The relationship between market and state is currently being redefined in both Australia and Norway. This is not only relevant for the question of privatisation of services or

restrictions of social security, but also in traditional areas such as regulation of the food market. Australia is committed to taking a deregulated, market pathway and positioning itself as the 'food bowl' of Asia, whilst Norway meets increasing internal as well as external pressure to reduce its economic protection of the food market. The Norwegian emphasis on universal access to social benefits is still in place, but the system is under political pressure. Similarly, in Australia, the current welfare discourse is based around 'return to work' for people with a disability, the long-term unemployed and sole parents, as well as 'income management' for those struggling to survive on benefits.

Turner (1990) pointed to fundamental changes in the politics of industrial societies, including the end of the reformist era that had dominated the post-war period of social reconstruction. Our study finds that the capability of the different models of welfare capitalism to address and reduce food insecurity varies considerably and systematically. This is not a matter of specific policies addressing food insecurity, but is primarily caused by the diverse ways in which they produce and handle economic inequalities and poverty. It is also linked to differences in the food economies and the way in which the food sector policies around production and distribution interact with welfare policies. The combined effects of labour market politics, social security systems and food price regulation produce very different food entitlements and, thus, new situations of food insecurity.

It is important to recognise that while representing diverse versions both Australia and Norway are countries with capitalist economies. Both emphasise the production of welfare through economic growth and individuals aspire for jobs within a market economy. Moreover, while there are considerable differences in these versions of welfare capitalisms, they are constantly changing, and possibly in a common direction of globalised, neoliberal capitalism. In Australia, the neoliberal turn (Lawrence et al., 2013) has increased the reliance on markets, rather than publicly-funded welfare, to address domestic food insecurity. This is evident in the new collaborations between civil society and private companies to redirect food

waste to those living below the poverty line. Whilst neoliberal tendencies have been observed also in Norway (see, for example, Shammass, 2015; Snertingdal, 2103) the extent to which they have penetrated the Norwegian model of welfare capitalism is unclear. However, there are signs that the numbers of poor people who struggle with food expenses is increasing, especially among immigrants (Epland and Kirkeberg 2015; Thorsen 2014).

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