Social Steering and Household Strategies: the macropolitics and the microsociology of welfare states

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ABSTRACT

An analytical perspective for grasping how welfare states relate to the ordinary life-pursuits of their population and how the latter relates to the welfare state is needed. What welfare states do is distinguished into social administration, social education, social reform, and social steering. Steering reaches furthest into people's lives. As such it is problematic both to integrative and aggregative theories of democracy; it can also include the possibility of calling forth more signals from the population than less ambitious democratic policies. A systematic overview of aggregate Swedish household data the major activities of households provides a basis for analysing how the population is affected by and affects the welfare state. The state appears as an important provider of work, housing, childcare, and leisure; the most effective signals from households to the state come forward when public provision and subsidy have created tight markets. From the household perspective, signals to government through individual action of various sorts, direct or mediated, appear crucial even in very organized Sweden.

Welfare states are social systems of human reproduction for the simple and the expanded reproduction of a given state population (cf. Therborn, 1987). As such, the welfare state expresses an encounter of state politics and the life pursuits of a whole human population. To an amazing extent, that encounter has largely been left out of focus by the immense literature on welfare states, centered on states as institutional structures of varying size and shape. The literature has mainly concentrated on explanations of welfare state developments, highlighting causal forces that are macro. Descriptions, conceptualizations, and evaluations have tended to rotate around institutional counterpositions such as 'from the poorhouse to the welfare state or 'politics against markets'. To the extent that macro-micro relationships have been probed into, they have typically been guided by
economic perspectives, of, say, 'income packaging' or 'welfare production' (Rainwater et al., 1986; Rose, 1986; cf., as a Marxist variant of the same orientation, Dickinson and Russell, 1986). In so far as they have stepped outside the familiar grounds of politics and philosophy, the political philosophy of welfare states has leaned chiefly upon concepts and lines of argumentation from economics (Gutman, 1988; Moon, 1988). The only significant exception to this overwhelming macropolitical, etc. -cum microeconomic perspective on the welfare state has been provided by feminism, arguing the welfare state's patriarchality (Hernes, 1987; Pateman, 1988, e.g.).

There is, of course, a specialized literature of policy evaluation pertaining to state-population encounters. Natalist population policies have been analyzed, and on the whole, found little effective on the longer-run demographic behaviour of couples, while sometimes affecting the timing of pregnancies and births (Demeny, 1987; Teitelbaum and Winter, 1985). US policies of educational desegregation have been the object of a major sociological evaluation effort, (Coleman et al., 1966, 1975, 1982; Macrae, 1985, 118–47.). However, little of these area-specific studies has penetrated general welfare state analysis.

Prevailing approaches to the welfare state have inspired both penetrating insights and fruitful in-house polemics. The aim of this paper is to outline perspectives for looking at the imbrications of the macropolitics and the microsociology of welfare states. There is a need, then, to supplement the usual concentration on institutional structure with an action and strategy frame of reference. Both the state and its population should be viewed as actors, pursuing various strategic courses, and the encounter between the two should move into the spotlight of welfare state analysis. It is in this context that 'social steering' is used here in a distinctive sense. We are here not referring to the steering of an organization, but to steering by an organization (the state) of a set of actors outside the organization. In other words, the problematic of steering is here not an intra-organizational one, nor about an organization in relation to its environment in general. It is that of an organization in relation to a particular set of external actors, the would be beneficiaries of its outputs. Steering in this sense is akin to the concept of 'societal guidance' as developed by Amitai Etzioni (1968:ch.5) and to the West German concept of 'Steuerung', in particular as formulated by Renate Mayntz (1987), though not bound by the more far-reaching theorizations of 'macro-action' by Etzioni and by the usual critical evaluations in the West German discussion. First, we shall look at the state from this view, then at the population. The flesh for the conceptual skeleton will be taken from Swedish experience, which in several senses is more polar than typical.
I. States and Social Action: Social Steering and Other Forms of Welfare State Action

We are here concerned with state actions vis-à-vis 'society', i.e., with regard to the state's population and conditions. For our purposes here, the macropolitical actor is, first of all, the state in its implementation processes in relation to the population as a set of actors, each pursuing his or her goals. That is a deliberately simplifying assumption. But to start with, it is rather the kinds of state action than of state actors that calls for elucidation; the discussion here will be restricted to contemporary welfare state action in mainly advanced democratic welfare states.

In this perspective, we have to depart from the trodden paths of welfare state theory. The usual conceptualizations of welfare state action (e.g., Marshall, 1965; Titmuss, 1974; Foucault, 1977) disregard non-state actors and actors, only seeing them as targets, as beneficiaries or victims of state action. Unless brought into a broader framework, the language of rights, needs, and control leaves the relation of state action and popular actors' actions out of focus. Marshall used the concept of social citizenship rights in a broad, confusing sense, without paying attention to the functioning of these rights from the point of view of the recipients, indeed sometimes confounding rights and duties, as in his discussion of compulsory education. Titmuss tends to assume as unproblematic who defines the needs of the recipients of welfare, because his concern is with distinguishing different arrangements of the conditions under which the state provides for the needs of the population. The Foucauldian perspective is one of the population as an object of surveillance and control by the state, and while in other contents recognizing the resistance to power, any idea of popular subjects acting under varying state-affected conditions is alien to it (cf. Therborn, 1989: 69 ff.). Liberal or conservative critics of welfare states have often pointed to what they regard as negative effects of state action upon the strivings of parts of the population; less saving, less work effort, less family responsibility. But their aim had tended to be the unintended, ignored consequences of public action. Any general view of social policy as strategic action in relation to other actors has usually been absent (cf., e.g., Moynihan, 1970; Murray, 1984).

Welfare state actions may be grouped along at least two dimensions with regard to their bearing upon the actors of the population. One relates state action to the conditions under which social (non-state) actors have to act, including both means they may use and constitutional parameters. The other relates to the course of popular actions, the direction of their strivings. Usually, welfare state research and discussion have been, implicitly or explicitly, confined to the first dimension, assuming that democratic state action affects only, or directly only, the conditions of the people, for good or for bad, and/or assuming that the course of human
actions in welfare states is self-evident, although people’s possibilities of reaching their goals can differ. The analysis of so-called merit goods, which the recipients by definition do not demand, is related to the issue of concern here, but the problematic of goods refers only tangentially to the questions raised by the possibility of democratic states affecting the actions of the sovereign popular actors.

In Table 1 I have taken pains to spell out ‘social’ action and conditions, because a state as a commanding organization with coercive power by definition always affects the conditions of its population, so everything that the state does and everything that happens to the state have effects on people’s lives. Any state ipso facto directs the political actions of its population, its support or its opposition. Social action, on the other hand, here refers to people’s action outside the state and outside the state’s political arenas.

Social conditions, in this context, mainly involve entitlements, inducements, and obligations, pertinent to action outside the state apparatus in civil society. That is, legitimate non-consequential claims on social resources, legitimate claims consequential upon some course of action taken, and legitimate claims of others upon one’s resources, respectively. Be they property rights, insurance rights, or rights to education, health care or employment, income or in kind incentives, duties of supporting family, relatives, and/or anybody in emergency, of sending one’s children to school, of avoiding spreading infectious diseases, or what not.

The table covers the repertoire of welfare state action from the perspective of the interrelations between state and popular actions. The usual focus of comparative research is the size or cost of what is administered. Increasingly, the economic efficiency of the administration of various social entitlements has become an object of study. Political controversies, programs, promises, warnings concentrate mainly around issues of social reform, for or against reform, what kind of reform, at what pace. In the somewhat non-partisan conceptualization here, any change of, say, entitlements is a special reform, a restriction as well as an extension of social insurance.

| Table 1: Welfare State Action in Relation to Social Actors and their Goals |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Changing Social Conditions of People’s Actions: | **Directing the Course of People’s Social Action** | **No** | **Yes** |
| No | Social Administration | Social Education |
| Yes | Social Reform | Social Steering |
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Social education includes a number of exhortatory efforts by public bodies, with regard to hygiene, the use of tobacco, alcohol, and narcotics, sexual behaviour with a view to the risks of AIDS and venereal disease. These attempts at affecting people’s behaviour take place within an existing framework of social conditions. So far, little systematic research of contemporary forms of social education has been made.

The main objective of the tabulation, however, is to distinguish social steering from the other kinds of social policy. Social steering first points to the most ambitious of welfare state strivings, to attempts at far-reaching social transformation. It constitutes the furthermore extension of macro-politics into the microsociology, and microeconomics. Is social steering by the state actually possible, and if so, under what conditions and to what extent? Especially in West Germany, that is a much debated question. Mayntz, 1987; Luhmann, 1988: ch. 10). Our concern here, however, is not the ‘limits of steering’ or the relationship of macro-politics to macrosociology or macroeconomics, but how state steering meets actions by non-state actors who are targets of steering. Secondly, state steering, as well as the state educating a mature adult population, raises thorny issues of representation and democracy. On what basis, if any, can a democratic state legitimately direct the social strivings of its citizens? What signals from the population guide steering by governors? Social steering by the state is hardly covered by aggregative or by integrative theories of democracy. Nevertheless, the democratic character of countries with ambitiously steering welfare states is hardly in doubt either. Experiences of social steering, then, seem to have something to contribute to democratic theory.

Aspects of Social Steering

Behind all steering efforts to direct the strivings of other actors there seems to be a set of three common convictions. There is something good (or better) in this world, which does not currently exist but which those doing the steering know about. Secondly, this good, which does not need to be a common good or a public good but may very well be a good for a small or large sector of the population, is attainable. But, thirdly, it is not (at a desirable and possible pace) being reached by the current activities and strivings of the actors of the given population. All steering involves time, steering is not an event, as ‘change’ might be, but a purposive process with duration. This, in turn, derives from a broader implication of steering. Steering is needed, because reaching the right direction again and again risks getting derailed, for one reason or another. In sum, steering is always a continuous effort over a certain duration of time.

Upon this common basis we may distinguish (at least) two different
answers to the question; why the good is not being attained. One is clearly paternalist and sees the social actors who are targets of eventual steering as hindered by ignorance and/or inertia from perceiving and pursuing their own true interests – or the interests of some transcendental entity, such as the state or God. That rationale of steering is of little interest here in its pure form. Another, quite different source of steering endeavours derives more from a consideration of the character of the good, than of the incapacity of its beneficiaries. It is the difficulty of attaining the good, or reachability. The most relevant difficulty does not reside in its requiring great effort or great capacity – neither intrinsically calling for a steering of actors’ ends – but relates to conflicting ends among the social actors. The good can be difficult to reach, because social actors pursue a variety of different ends, of which the good in question may be one, with limited spontaneous capacity of the great and sustained concentrated effort necessary to reach the good. The interaction works the other way too. Because the good takes much time and effort to reach, it risks getting lost sight of in a myriad of immediate concerns.

The idea of the difficult reachability of the good is a clear contrast to utopian thought, and it relates uneasily, albeit not impossibly, with theories of radical, sweeping social change. The arduous accessibility of the good tends to be a conservative figure of thought, but to the extent that it enters into the vista of a force of change, a propulsion of efforts at social steering should be expected. A persistent reformism would tend towards steering, perhaps more than to a set of discontinuous reforms. Social steering can, then, be related to different political cultures, to anti-utopian radicalism as well as to authoritarian paternalism or maternalism. Efforts at social steering by the state deriving from considerations of the difficult reachability of the good do not come into direct conflict with liberal democracy. Their possible mix with paternalism opens up a democratically ambiguous area of politics, to which little attention has been given so far.

The complicated issues of this twilight zone of democratic theory should not be underestimated. Under the changed conditions of reform the social actors are, for instance, left to choose and to take their courses of action on the basis of the new set of entitlements, inducements, and/or obligations, whereas under conditions of steering the state continuously sees to it that the outcomes of these actions correspond, more or less, to the goals set by the state and intervenes when the outcome is different. In a sense, this involves a feedback mechanism from popular action in response to state action back to the state, which both signals and controls. The state steering the ends and efforts of the social actors runs counter not only to the view of liberal democracy as an aggregation of given individual preferences. It also fits rather badly with the neo-institutional-
ist 'integrative' conception of democracy elaborated by March and Olsen (1989, esp. ch. 7). Steering is not necessarily 'reasoned deliberation in search of the common good'. It may be the assertion and use of political power by a majoritarian or large minority. Nor are the 'rights' – the second characteristic feature of integrative as opposed to aggregative democratic processes according to March and Olsen – used in steering typically non-instrumental and inviolate. They may, however, be said to 'express key aspects of the structure of social belief'. Although 'steering' as well as reform involves altering the conditions of the social actors, the former's handling of entitlements, inducements, and obligations tends to take on special forms, sin steering in strongly oriented towards outcomes in a steering conception 'the rights', like 'just' or 'justice' are, first of all, ways of formulating the good, as known and defined by the steering actor. 'The right to work', the 'right to good housing', a 'just distribution of income', 'justice between the sexes' etc., are above everything else formulations of goals for social steering. They are not necessarily rights which a social actor can invoke in any legal procedure. Their operativeness does not depend on any legal validity, but on their functioning as a yardstick in the politico-administrative process. Effective rights and justice may be no more than a mirror, which the steering actor looks into to evaluate his own performance, or which critics hold up to him.

Steering is also something more than the provision of such rights. A right is something you may choose to claim or not, and it may even be something you are not de facto able to claim or that you may wisely decide not to claim for fear of repercussions. The instrumentalist view of rights in the perspective of social steering directs attention to the actual use of entitlements.

Duties also have their limits in steering. While setting out obligations and backing them up with the coercive powers of the state certainly forms a natural part of a process of social steering, its point derives from a recognition that duty is not enough. If it were sufficient to decree everybody's legal duty to reach the good, no steering would be needed, in any ordinary sense of the word. From the angle of obligations, a project of social steering starts from a critical recognition of the importance of the social actors' goals, which currently are at odds with the attainment of the good. Either because of the ignorance and inertia of the social actors or because of the difficult reachability of the good, proclaiming the duty of attaining the good and sanctioning non-attainment will not bring the population to the good state.

Less than duty, simultaneously more and less than right, steering also provides more than incentives. Incentives are hardly ever more than probabilistic; they increase the probability that a given population will undertake a certain course of action. State steering, on the other hand,
tends to be absolutistic. It aims for the good, and for the whole relevant population attaining the good. Therefore, further measures are normally called for. Education may be, and usually is, part of social steering, but steering includes a much more comprehensive set of instruments for affecting people’s actions.

The mix of social administration, education, reform, and steering is likely to vary across periods, countries, and regimes. So are the aims, the means, and the effectiveness of social steering. Swedish experiences will be used as illustrations.

A Swedish Example

Swedish Social Democratic policy offers good illustrations of social steering, such as the far-reaching postwar housing policy and the 1970s policy for ‘increased equality’. A general political orientation towards egalitarian outcomes – outside capital accumulation through private enterprise and the market – gives Swedish Social Democratic policy, and the Swedish welfare state as a whole a steering character.

The late Alva Myrdal had a hand in both major efforts. She was the co-author, with her husband Gunnar Myrdal, of work in 1934 on the ‘population question’ (Myrdal and Myrdal, 1934) that set the stage for later housing steering. In 1968 she became the chairperson of the ‘working group on questions of equality’ set up by the Social Democratic party and the manual workers’ confederation (LO) and was chiefly responsible for its two major policy reports (SAP-LO 1969, 1972). The perspective opened up by Myrdal and Myrdal in 1934 was one of rational re-organization of social life, in general, because their starting-point as radical reformers was not poverty but the low birth rate of the nation. Out of considerations for families with many children, a broader conception of housing policy emerged in the course of the 1940s. The existing housing conditions of workers were considered quite inadequate in terms of space and amenities. No market supply was in sight to overcome the deficiencies, public initiatives were deemed necessary. In close contacts between dedicated Social Democratic politicians and equally committed architects, a number of housing standards were developed, from norms of outfitting to norms of maximum rent (one-fifth of an industrial worker’s wage). The reformers considered it possible to provide the working class with adequate housing only in apartment buildings, which is why widespread working class preferences for more homeowning went unheeded. The ‘right to a good dwelling’ was a political slogan, taken very seriously, but not a legal right. The public housing exchanges operated a number of criteria and exceptions, not (as far as is known), in any corrupt or nepotistic way, but also not in a calculable bureaucratic manner. With
scant attention to households' expressed preferences, a massive programme of housing steering was pursued for decades after the Second World War, through regulations of the capital market and of land use, and by municipal and Social Democratic cooperative construction. (See further Egerö, 1979; Engfors, 1987; Strömberg, 1989.)

The Equality reports of SAP-LO also provided a steering orientation, geared to affecting the outcomes of actors' strivings in a number of areas, from wage differentials to gender relations, towards 'increased equality'. The most visible effect of the 'increased equality' campaign is probably the declining wage differentials over time among Swedish workers (Hedborg and Meidner 1984:63). Disposable income in Sweden is more equally distributed than anywhere else in the West (Vogel et al., 1987:110), although when Sweden came to occupy that position is not known.

The Democratic Paradox of Social Steering

Social steering constitutes the furthermost penetration of macropolitics into microsociology, one side of the span bridging the two. The discussion above has refrained from entering into the debate of the possibility and the desirability of steering. Instead, it has tried to spell out specific contours of social steering as one major type of modern state action. An understanding of social steering is necessary in order to comprehend some of the most ambitious democratic welfare states, and the concept may also serve as a tool of comparing, say, Eastern European and Scandinavian, attempts at social steering after the Second World War (cf. the remarkable work by Ferge, 1979).

Democratic politics of social steering does not need to be thought of in terms of a common good. It may as well be either giving a direction to the good of a majority or to that of a minority with the support or connivance of a majority. Social steering does not need to be a 'developmental democracy', in the sense that it is geared to developing the political skills of the governed population, it tends to cater to the governed's socioeconomic needs. And it is not necessarily a participatory democracy. To perceptive foreign writers, from Kathleen Nott (1961) to Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1987: 16 ff.), the steering aspects of Sweden often appear as a kind of soft authoritarianism, and ideologically militant critics of Social Democracy use even stronger words. While possibly authoritarian, social steering is not necessarily so. It may at times even call forth more democracy, or more signals from the population to the government, than regimes which care less about what their population do in their social relations.

There are at least four ways, in which ambitious steering efforts may
entice more, rather than less, inputs from the population. First, and foremost, steering requires information, which largely has to be gathered from the targets of steering. The behaviour of the micro-population recorded by official data provides important signals to governors, although the latter interprets and reacts in any case, the steering efforts in Sweden have spawned a large number of surveys of people’s housing conditions, and even of people’s preferences (cf. Engfors, 1987). The ‘increased equality’ campaign gave rise to a whole new conception of Swedish official statistics, and in 1972, a new research institute, the Institute for Social Research attached to Stockholm University. From the ‘Low Income Study of 1965 there developed a permanent series of Living Conditions reports by the Swedish Bureau of Statistics, covering most aspects of distribution, mainly based on respondents’ own reports (see Johansson 1979).

Steering efforts can, secondly, engender or further collective organization beyond that of to transmission belts of central decisions. Postwar Swedish housing policy was a major stimulus to municipal politics, which in a number of ways meant an extension of democratic organization (cf. Egerö, 1979; Gustafsson, 1988). The centralized national Tenants Association, with legally empowered bargaining rights, is another main example, politically more controversial. The increased equality campaign has involved a very important support for organizations and committees in a number of walks of life.

State steering may provide new or widened channels for individual action in accordance with state objectives, possibilities which otherwise may have been non-existent or difficult because of inequalities of power in civil society. The Ombudsman for Gender Equality (Jämställdhetsombudsmannen, JämO) offers such a new course of action against gender discrimination.

Finally, governmental steering efforts may, under conditions of democracy, be controlled by, and even provoke more clear electoral options, conflictual or consensual. Swedish electoral politics, since 1970 officially polarized, municipally as well as nationally, between a so-called socialist bloc of Social Democrats and Communists and a bourgeois bloc (Moderate Conservatives, Liberals, and Centrist ex-farmers), tends to offer the electorate more clear options than most party systems. At times, in 1948, in 1960, and in 1982, the choice for or against a Social Democratic kind of social development has been relatively quick. Although postwar housing policy had electoral legitimacy, its ramifications were hardly decided by the electorate. Crucial features of Social Democratic government policy after 1982, the devaluation, the boost of private capital, the retrenchment of the public sector, were not put to any electoral test (cf. Therborn, 1983).
As the Social Democratic-cum-Communist majority has rarely been much larger than 50 per cent of the vote, it may well be asked about the input from the outvoted half of the population. A brief answer is, that under conditions of competitive democracy attempts at longterm social steering are dependent upon the dynamics of public opinion, which implies a process of mutual adaptation of government and opposition. On some occasions there has been, at least temporarily, a broad consensual wave upon which the Social Democrats have been riding. The egalitarian turn of policy, for instance, was preceded by an election campaign in 1968, in which parties were competing in support of egalitarianism. Inversely, the Social Democratic government of the 1980s has been strongly influenced by liberal and environmentalist oppositions. This ideological dynamic clearly posits certain limits to democratic social steering.

While cutting the traditional conceptions of both aggregative preferences the rights of integrative democratic politics, the politics of social steering may nevertheless be partly guided by signals from the population. The key to the paradox is, that while in conflict with some aspects of popular sovereignty, social steering by the state requires good signals from the population in order to keep the steering on the desired track. However, in order to get a better grasp of the interrelationship between the governors and the governed, we should turn from ways of governing to features of being governed.

**II. Households and Their Encounters with the State**

*Households and Other Microsociological Actors*

Above, we have assiduously kept talking of social actors without any further detail concerning the targets of state actions to administer reform, educate or steer society. The kind of actors the state faces and deals with requires a few moments of reflection and elaboration.

Since we have stated our field of interest as the encounter, within the territory of welfare state macropolitics and microsociology, one set of social actors fall outside as social actors of macropolitical weight associations, capital organizations (corporations) and classes. Our sociological interest further excludes market agents and citizens as microactors. Their elimination is more than a matter of disciplinary demarcation; for the purposes of relating the macropolitics and the microsociology of contemporary states, economic market agents and political citizens are subsumable under the broader category of microsociological actors. The citizen appears at times of elections, occasionally in between as a petitioner of or protestor against authorities, and, in some cases, as a political activist. For the rest, citizenship is little more than the
entitlement to a passport and to residence. Operations on the labour, consumer, housing, and other markets take much more time, and are linked together in a microsystem of action wider than that of market agency.

Having left aside market agents and citizens, we have still at least three possible contenders to choose among as more concrete specifications of microsocial actors, the individual, the family, and the household. For each a case could be made. The individual is, of course, the basic unit of all human action. Most social entitlements, inducements, and obligations of modern times refer to individuals, and a considerable part of welfare state policies relate to the individual life cycle. The family operates as an important microsocial collective actor, and many rights, incentives, and duties pertain to the family. Few public policy outputs have the household as their direct target, apart from housing services and subsidies and certain rules delimiting the rights of single parents. (The Netherlands, however, has in the 1980s adapted a number of social rights to the kind of household that the beneficiary belongs to, the so-called ‘front-door-sharing’ principle.) On the other hand, the household functions both as a collective actor in a number of contexts and as a node for a lot of basic human activities, sleeping, eating, personal hygiene, consumption, gaining on income through work and/or other strategies, and as a very important, if not exclusive, context of profound human relationships.

For most purposes, households will constitute the most appropriate set of microsocial actors, which the macropolitics of the welfare state has to cope with. The household incorporates and combines a lot, though certainly not all of individual and family action, while the opposite is not true. From a recent time budget study by Statistics Sweden it can be calculated that the Swedish population aged 20–64 in the late 1980s spends on the average about 70 per cent of its time in the household – sleeping, doing housework, watching TV, and carrying out a number of other, less time-consuming activities (Statistiska Centralbyråns 1988a). Another twenty per cent of the average total time is spent on gainful work, which provides a material base for the household. While the household concept takes account of the fact that a number of activities by individuals are pooled with those of one or more other individuals, the household is not synonymous with the family; 36% of Swedish households in 1985 consisted of one person only (Statistiska Centralbyråns 1988b: 127).

In order to relate households and the state, now from the perspective of the household, we have to develop some heuristically systematic framework for getting at the activities and the problems of households. For these purposes, the currently popular, related concepts of ‘everyday life’ and ‘life-world’ (German: Lebenswelt) offer themselves. They do not appear very apt, however, until much further conceptual work has been
done. Noteworthy contributions are Elias (1978), who distinguishes eight different meanings of ‘everyday’ (Alltag) in contemporary social discussion, and Lechner (1988:47-66.). Whatever value they may have in contexts of Kulturkritik, social philosophy, epistemology, meta-sociology, and pure micro-sociology, for example (cf. Lefevbre, 1947; Goffman, 1959; Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Douglas, 1973; Gouldner, 1975; Heller, 1978; Hammerich and Klein, 1978; Habermas, 1982), for the structuring of micro-cum-macro empirical analysis, the concepts of everyday life and life-world carry a philosophical baggage with little empirical precision. They may, however, serve as a pointer to, or as a reminder of the routines of ordinary people (cf. Björnberg and Bäck-Wiklund, 1987) Here, we will focus on households, spelling out their elementary characteristics through Swedish examples of basic activities, affected by the state, and what signals they send to the state to facilitate the analysis we will deal only with aggregates of households.

The activities of households, in which members pursue their lives, have been grouped under eight headings, seven of which refer to concrete areas and the eighth to combinations of activities in what may be termed household strategies. The seven pursuits may be grouped into three main categories derived from systems analysis. The first is the procurement of necessary inputs; housing and sustenance. Secondly, there are tasks of internal processing and organization – housework, providing for children and other dependents, and the integration of members, or more prosaically, keeping the household together. Finally, there is what might be seen as the surplus output of households – apart from what is paid in effort and money in exchange for the necessary inputs. Two important combinations of household activities will be singled out, combinations of consumption and leisure into life-styles and combinations of work with non-work as manifestations of life-modes. This starting-point of the household as a social system will provide a broader systematic overview of household endeavours than the perspective focusing on forms of work, sources of service provision, relations between production and reproduction, as used, in a fine sociographic study with a different purpose by Pahl (1984), elaborating upon Gershuny’s (1978) thought-provoking analysis.

Household and Their Provisioning: Housing and Sustenance

At the time of the latest census, i.e., on 1 November 1985, the population of Sweden was 8.3 million, of whom 7.9m were citizens in the legal sense of residence and passport rights and 6.2m were citizens in the political sense of having the right to vote in the parliamentary election. There were 3.6m households; the average household had 2.23 members. Twenty-two per cent of the households included both children and cohabiting parents,
thirty-six per cent were one-member households, and forty-five per cent of all households had a single adult. In brief, the households are a heterogeneous set. (Unless otherwise stated, the statistics in this part is pieced together from Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1988b.)

The size, and thereby the number, of households is partly but only marginally affected by measures of national and/or local government. The availability of housing for the young and of services and pensions for the elderly affects when and to what extent youths leave the parental household, and for how long and to what extent old people live in a household of their own. The changed manner of setting up a household, e.g. the large increase of non-married co-habitation to 19% of all cohabiting couples in November 1985 – has, via family research and the census statistics, been taken by the government as a signal. It has been interpreted and recently acted upon as calling for legal regulation of non-married cohabitation, with regard to rights of dwelling and other property, children and child custody etc. But this is a new pattern of household behaviour, which becomes a signal to the government only through an interpretation of general information gathering, not, for instance, by a noticeably increased judicial load of litigation between extra-marital cohabitants (Statistiska Centralbyrån 1988c: 163–4, 172 ff.). Cohabitation, in its turn, rose as a process of household formation circumventing the legal and ceremonial institution of marriage.

Housing in Sweden is strongly affected by government policies through two mechanisms. First, by largely determining the supply. In 1985, about a fourth (24%) of all dwellings in Sweden were publicly owned, a sector which also governs the rent of the further 17% of dwellings in apartment buildings not publicly owned (Statistiska Centralbyrån 1988b: 124; 1987: 165). Secondly, by subsidizing demand. Net of tax on real estate, housing subsidies including tax expenditure amounts to about 25 per cent of total private consumption for dwellings, including fuel and power. (Donovan, 1989: 2 and Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1988b: 234.)

The two interventions counteract each other, in the sense that about two-thirds of the subsidy goes to private owners of one-family houses (63% in 1980, the latest available figure, Frykman, 1985: 72). Supply-side policy has probably had most effect, pushing up the proportion of apartments in the very much increased dwelling stock from 53% in 1945 to a peak of 58% in 1970–75. Almost half – 48%, of Swedish households, and 60% of the population – live in one- or two-dwelling houses.

Households qua households have two direct ways of sending a message to the housing policy-makers. One is collective action in direct forms, collective action has operated mainly since the 1970s as organizations of tenants of public housing projects, which since then have actively encouraged tenants’ participation. The mobilization of tenant households
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has been much less successful than expected, and the effects of this sort of unmediated collective action have been marginal (cf. Lennartsson, 1982 and Soidre-Brink, 1987).

Secondly the market was for a long time very ineffective as a policy-relevant signal. The market also functions as an allocation mechanism, for about 60% of dwellings which are owned one-family houses or condominium flats. Because the government nationally and locally had a firm grip on supply through extensive local planning powers, national control of the construction volume, and through municipal housing projects at especially favoured interest rates – household actions on the market could only become significant signals when supply came to exceed demand. This happened in the mid-1970s, after the completion of an unparallelled, state-guided and mainly public construction programme, the temporary stop to metropolitan growth, and with the international economic downturn. The public housing corporations suddenly found themselves with apartments impossible to let out. Between 1971 and 1976 the construction of apartments went down with 80% and that of one- or two-family houses increased by 25%, and the relative proportion between them was reversed (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1987: 164). Locally, various forms of upgrading public housing started, and stimulation of tenants’ involvement (Gustafsson, 1988: 146 ff.).

Indirectly, households have provided three more cues to the makers of Swedish housing policy. As respondents of a number of official interviews and questionnaires, households have furnished reformers with information. Of most interest have been data on dwelling size per resident, on the technical standard, and on the amount of rent (see, e.g., Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1987: 170–1; Frykman, 1984; Vogel et al., 1987: 140 ff.).

Secondly, though queuers at the housing exchanges have not been capable of collective action, their plight has sometimes reached the politicians via interventions of the mass media, which have found resonance among opposition politicians. A major example in Swedish politics was the tough – in the opinion of many, devastating – TV questioning of Prime Minister Erlander about the housing shortage in the electoral campaign of 1966, after the government itself had put the issue on the agenda by announcing in 1964 a programme for the building of one million dwellings in ten years.

Thirdly and not least, households have weighty messages on housing policy sent them by formal interest organizations. The most powerful is the Tenants’ Association, which is part of the Social Democratic machine, and provided with state-licensed rights of representation and bargaining. There is also the more loosely organized and more rightwing-oriented Home-owners’ Association. About fifteen per cent of the population are active in some sort of dwellers’ organization (Petersson et al., 1989: 108).
Employment is the main source of household income. Wages and salaries accounted for 59% of gross household income in 1988. Public transfer payments constituted 28%, with property and enterprise and other sources together providing the remaining eighth. Pensions alone made up almost 16% of gross household income (Riksdagen 1989: 47-45), and constitute a good source of income in Sweden. The disposable average pension of an ordinary old-age pensioner was 93% of the disposable wage (Vogel et al., 1987: 136).

For all households in the age bracket 20 to 64, transfer income amounted in 1984 to 21% of factor income, (both figures before tax), with early pensions accounting for 77. For single parents transfers corresponded to 65% of factor income. (Statistiska Centralbyrä, 1987: 80ff). The total volume of work, measured in the number of paid hours per year, has increased slowly since the trough of a longer term trend of decline in 1978. (Statistiska Centralbyrä, 1987: 97). Of all women aged 25-54, 90% were gainfully employed in 1986, and about 94% per cent of all males (Statistiska Centralbyran 1989). There are no real data on the procurement of resources by other means through the so-called informal economy. Its importance should be very marginal in the Swedish case. Fringe benefits of private business have grown, as a means of circumventing income taxation. But the extra-market sector of the economy has probably rather decreased than increased in Sweden, with the much higher rate of female employment, the growing proportion of urban and of one-person households, and the continuing slow decline of the number of self-employed and entrepreneurs.

Of the labour force, 37% of all gainfully employed work in the public sector about one-third of the total population aged 18 to 64 (Statistiska Centralbyrán, 1989 and 1988b: 33). Its general macroeconomic and specific labour market policies – the ‘Swedish model’ elaborated by trade union economists (cf. Hedborg and Meidner 1984: chs. 6–10) – significantly affect the availability of employment (Therborn, 1986). Within this broader framework, the state also offers a set of incentives and disincentives to household actions vis-à-vis the labour market. Individualized income taxation encourages female employment and high progressive taxation discourages women from staying at home. High sickness benefits and even higher compensation for work injury marginally discourage labour market participation. The outcome of the income of the whole household is closely watched by the state and by the political system, including the trade unions, with a view to keeping an egalitarian distribution.

The overwhelming majority of the actors on the Swedish labour market are collectively organized, but that is an institutionalized inter-organizational pattern, and only between a fourth and a fifth of union members are
in some sense active during a year (Petersson et al., 1989: 114). At times, threats to local livelihood by plant closings have brought forth some mobilization of households, but only seldom and marginally. One reason for this is that the central government has often acted in local or regional crises, such as by the closure of most of the shipyards and much of the mining and steel-making in Berslagen, without having to be triggered by collective action. Pensioners are organized too, but to the great bulk of pensioners' households their organizations are chiefly concerned with leisure. Other kinds of households, for instance with children, are by and large unorganized qua households. Tax-payers are remarkably quiescent, although there is a professionally run, moderately rightwing Tax-Payers' Association.

If they regard themselves as treated wrongly by the authorities, Swedes take recourse to individual direct action. A national survey in 1987 found that 11% of the respondents thought they had been treated wrongly by a public authority – most frequently the tax assessment office and the health insurance – in the past year. Among these 86% had taken action, principally by calling, writing, visiting or appealing to the office (Petersson et al., 1969: 64 ff.).

Signals to the political government above all go via the market. On the labour market, Swedish households have recently come to occupy a strong position, because of the labour shortage. This shortage is largely, though hardly intendedly, created by the state, directly through the enormous expansion of public employment and the stopping of any import of labour, indirectly by facilitating the competitiveness of the export industry and the labour market adjustments to it. The signal to government has been, that if more labour input from households is wanted, then workplaces and work remuneration must be more attractive, which the political system interprets as the need for substantially lower taxation of work incomes and for an overhaul of the organization of work in the public sector. Much public work, particularly at the lower end of social services, had become unattractive, resulting in much absenteeism, large turnover, and increasingly difficult new recruitment.

Declarations of income are public information in Sweden and are closely watched by the media. Special, large household surveys are regularly conducted in order to get income information beyond the taxation categories. The labour market organizations also have statistical units, closely following interorganizational and other distribution patterns.

*Running the Household*

Gainful work, including (travel to and from work) took less than a third of
the waking hours of Swedish household members aged 20–64 in the mid-1960s. About a fourth (24%) of the time was spent on housework (including helping children and outdoor repairs) Statistiska Centralbyrån 1988a: 31, 49). Both activities were clearly gender affected, although this is much less the case in Sweden than in most other countries (Table 2).

The organization of housework is not very high on the long agenda of public policy-makers. The state has intervened here mainly as a supplier and as a provider of a statistical mirror for male and female household members, or concerned opinion-makers, to look at themselves.

A major plank of Swedish postwar housing policy was the furnishing of households with functional kitchens. Architectural expertise was developed in the 1930s and early 1940s, the findings of which were translated into postwar construction norms, and implemented (Rudberg, 1987: 10 ff.). These and other housing and housework norms were backed up by official lessons about their use, organized in the 1940s by, for instance, the Social Democratic Youth together with the association of Swedish interior decorators (Slöjdforeningen) and other labour movement organizations (Holm, 1987: 52).

From the late 1960s public supply of housework help is more important, however, mainly to old and handicapped people but also to households with children. Since the mid 1970s service provision for the latter has decreased, from about 110,000 households helped in 1975–76 to about 30,000 in 1985. There has also been a slight decline in the extension of home services for the elderly (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1987: 42). In 1985, 19% of all people above the age of 65 received some public help with their housework (Statskontoret, 1987: 222).

The source of households’ time budget used above in this section exemplifies the second type of state intervention in this area, the statistical mirror. The publication came out as a response to a report on opinions about ‘statistics from the viewpoint of gender equality’ (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1988a: 1). Household members spend on the average two

<table>
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<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gainful work</td>
<td>41.09</td>
<td>25.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housework</td>
<td>19.50</td>
<td>33.29</td>
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minutes a week on medical treatment outside the home, which in Sweden by and large means in some public clinic. Four per cent of the adult pre-retirement population have that experience in an average weekday. One minute a week is spent in public offices which may be anything from the post office to the job exchange or a social assistance bureau – something which seven per cent of the population do on an ordinary weekday. There seems to be rather little communication between these interfaces of state and households, on one hand, and the political system, whether locally or centrally (cf. Ahne 1989: chs. 7–9).

Vital aspects of a household are the personal relations among its members and with people outside. A functioning household is integrated in itself and differentiated from the environment. Swedish households in the mid-1980s seem to have a considerable short-term stability. In a national panel survey in 1984 and 1986 it was found, that only five per cent of all households age 18–74 had had any change in their composition between the two years (Flood, 1988: 3). The number of divorces in a year is about 1% of the stock of marriages (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1988b: 55). Since changes of family law in 1973, the keeping together or dissolution of married households has been left entirely to its members. On the other hand, the legal assumption of joint custody of children, since 1976 for married couples and since 1983 for non-married but cohabiting couples, after separation seems to have had positive effects on the relationship between ex-members of a joint household, and the cases of judicial litigation have been halved (Jacobsson, 1984: 204ff; Statistika Centralbyråen, 1988c: 173). The latter indicates that the law has moved with opinion, as a mood sensed by experts.

Playing with and taking care of children are the two most popular activities of Swedish adults, both men and women, followed by work, if we shall believe what people say in a national household survey (Klevmarken, 1985: 15). But in a society where both parents normally are gainfully employed, the organization of the care for children before school, and after the schoolday has become a major problem for households with children.

The organizational problems are twofold: a form of care or attention has to be found, and the solution be fitted into the time budget of the household’s work schedules, transport systems, and facilities for necessary shopping (cf. Lundén Jacoby and Näsmann, 1989). On the other hand, Swedish households hardly have any problems of organizing the schooling of their children, given the comprehensive, territorially organized public school system, to which very few alternatives exist. Their need to plan for elderly dependents is also much smaller than in other countries. Only about 5% of the retired population live with their children (data for 1980–81, Sundström, 984: 188).
The organization of child care is a recent area of massive public intervention, dating since the late 1960s only. It figured in the plans of social reforms of the governmental Population Committees of the 1930s and 1940s, but there was little demand then, and political expenditure priorities went in other directions. The main forms are two. One is the provision or care and attention, mainly in municipal institutions of daycare but also through subsidies to recognized day custodians in their own homes. In January 1989, 49% of all pre-school children in Sweden are inscribed in municipal daycare. (Socialstyrelsen, 1989:24). There are also extended services offered children after school. The second major policy instrument is the inclusion of parenthood into the social insurance system. Since 1 July 1989, a parent has a right to one year of fully compensated time to take care of a newborn child. Even before that date, when fully paid parental leave was nine months Swedish provisions were more generous than in other countries (Petersson, 1989:10). Parents also have the right to 60 socially insured days to take care of a sick child up to the age of 12. It is empathically a parental, not motherhood insurance, and can be used by either parent. About a fifth of fathers make use of it, although for a shorter time than mothers, which will call forth a central governmental campaign for male attitude change in the fall of 1989 (Dagens Nyheter, 8 May, 1989).

Households have had rather little say in the organization of child care in a full employment society, although the main policy lines can claim general electoral legitimacy. The comprehensive school reform of the late 1950–early 1960s was processed through the party system and its first, experimental stage was successful, as evaluated by pedagogical research with hardly any parental involvement (cf. Lundgren, 1988). Although most parents make use of the institutionalized contact system of the schools, they regard the latter as beyond their influence.

The Swedish Power Study has asked a large national sample to evaluate their possibility of influence in a number of areas, the results are telling. In particular, they underline the long and indirect lines of communication between households and public providers, the democratic problems of social steering. (Table 3)

Nor were households very much involved in the societal organization of child care in the 1970s, although there were political demonstrations for daycare for everybody. Market signals were probably more important. Women’s labour force participation started to increase rapidly in the mid-1960s, pushed by inflation-escalated progressive taxation and pulled by the demand for female labour from the expanding public health care sector, in particular.

The current pattern of daycare provision was worked out in an avalanche of public investigatory reports of the typical Swedish kind, well researched, policy-oriented, and politically anchored at the same time.
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Table 3: Household members’ evaluated possibility of influence

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<tr>
<th>(Subjective rating from 0 to 10; the higher value, the larger the influence.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Purchase of consumer durables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child care</td>
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<td>Health care</td>
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<td>School</td>
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Notes: The rating is an average for the answers to 3 to 6 specific questions pertaining to each area. Ratings were asked only from people, to whom the area was currently relevant as parent, as gainfully employed etc.


(Andersson, 1984: 18; Widerberg, 1980: ch. 6). Feminism and more traditional social reformism were clearly influential in these reports and in the policy-making process. At the time, this was probably more an avant-garde than a representative opinion, and the major policy divisions, such as a 6-hour working day for parents with small children or a flat-rate benefit for a parent taking care of a small child versus employment-related parental insurance were fought out among political leaders and experts. Once in place the system has received widespread support. Of the six above-mentioned areas investigated by the Power Study, there was relatively little discontent with child care; 63% of the respondents showed ‘no discontent’, a figure second only to that for the purchase of consumer durables. Only 11% were very discontented with existing child care (Petersson 1989: 44).

The public efforts at providing child care are clearly appreciated, but problems remain and seem to have become more serious in the metropolitan areas since Petersson’s 1987 data. There is still a shortage, which has recently been aggravated in Stockholm in particular, due to the tight labour market. Demand is measured both through annual household surveys by the Central Bureau of Statistics and by municipal planners working with register data about the child population and labour market situation of their parents. In the spring of 1989, there is, according to the former measure a demand for municipal daycare for 57.5% of all pre-school children (Socialstyrelsen, 1989: 24), i.e. for an extra 17 percent of the available supply. Existing daycare centres find it increasingly difficult, and sometimes impossible, to find and to keep sufficient personnel. Private enterprise has been prevented from entering into competition, with a parliamentary decision of June 1984 excluding profit-oriented enterprises from any public subsidy of daycare. The otherwise so pragmatic Swedish Social Democracy has here taken a
strong principled stand. The shortage situation in the capital has been amply covered by the media, but the households have been quiet, although their often hard pressed situation has been documented (Lundén Jacoby and Näsman 1989).

Even if they have little affected politicians, households do have possibilities of influencing their child care. To get a place in a municipal daycare centre or one with a municipal day mother significantly depends on communicative skill and perseverance (cf. Lundén Jacoby and Näsman, 1989: 140–141). For that and other reasons, such as shift work, households of manual workers are underrepresented in municipal daycare (Lindholm, 1985, 26–27). This should not be interpreted, that public social services are distributed regressively. Whether it is depends on the distributive pattern of private alternatives. Household cooperatives can get municipal subsidy for child care, grandparents may be recruited or some unrelated person, perhaps paid unofficially. At the end of 1986, 11% of the care of pre-school children was private but external to the household, and with parental insurance and more costly options, 43% of the total daycare of pre-school children was still provided by a parent at home (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1987: 40).

**Consumption and Leisure**

Consumption and leisure are private activities, which may be thought little affected by and little affecting the political system. In fact, almost a third of the consumption of Swedish households is social and publicly provided, consisting of child care, education, health care, and other social services (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1987: 67). A third of people's leisure is also publicly provided in Sweden, i.e., the broadcasts of radio and television, which occupies a third of leisure time (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1988a: 61). The provision of sports and other leisure facilities, especially for children and youth, became an area of municipal policy in the 1960s. It plays a significant part in the leisure time and child planning of households (Björnberg and Bäck-Wiklund, 1987: 115 ff.). Leisure time is also legally regulated. Legal vacation and holidays in Sweden amount to 37 days a year, in Western countries surpassed only by Austria's 38 days (Pettersson, 1989: 9). By collective agreement or regulations for particular categories, such as school and university teachers, vacations may be longer. Private consumption and its hazards are watched in Sweden by the Consumers' Board, with its testing capacity and regulating possibilities. In an average week of an average Swedish household, leisure amounts to a good fifth of the total amount of time (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 1988a: 31; Klevmarken, 1985: 11).

The influence between government and households regarding by
consumption and leisure is asymmetrical. While a considerable part of the consumption and the leisure of households is publicly provided and a further part publicly regulated, the influence of households is at most remotely indirect. Consumers and people at leisure tend to be private, and collective action, though conceivable, is difficult. In the 1970s there was one rather small collective effort of consumers with a view to influencing public policy, for the reduction of food prices, by a considerably publicized group of women in a Stockholm suburb (Stärholmen). Youth riots, of which there have been a few rather mild ones in Sweden, are normally interpreted as signals for more leisure provisions, such as rock concerts, motorbike centres etc. The building of new sports facilities may figure as an issue of municipal politics.

Public provision in Sweden is mainly located outside markets, although competing private television is currently sneaking in. Household signals therefore tend to be mediated through processes of public information gathering, of consumption indicators of relevance to macroeconomic policy and of audience surveys by the public broadcasting corporation.

Life-styles and Life-modes

The major activities of households relate to each other. Changes of work are at times undertaken for family reasons, and changes of housing for reasons of work (Flood, 1988: 6 ff.). Childcare planning, housing and work are intimately connected and have to be made to fit together in one way or the other. Activities tend to cluster in combinations expressive of different household life-strategies, they emphasize the autonomy of households, as a bottom line of public policies.

Sophisticated arguments to the contrary (Offe, 1985: ch. 5), gainful work still constitutes a key concept for grasping the basic strategies of households. Inspired by the Marxist view of modes of production and their classes, the Danish ethnologist Thomas Højrup (1983a,b) has been influential in Scandinavia in his distinction of three different ‘life-modes’, corresponding to self-employment, workingclass work, and salaried middle class work.

Translating the analytical categories into social types (Table 4), we would get the striving manager or professional, the socialite or

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<th>Table 4: Household Life-modes</th>
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<td>Achievement-oriented</td>
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<td>Being-oriented</td>
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<td>Career</td>
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competitive sports-oriented, the work-absorbed self-employed or the occupation-proud worker, and the vacation and after-work oriented worker. Though members of the same household may differ in these orientations, for the joint household to function some kind of hierarchy or sequencing will be needed, giving the household its main orientation.

Besides these life-modes different combinations of consumption and leisure activities may be distinguished, for which the term life-style seems appropriate. One of the more ambitious examples of laying out different life-styles is Fabris and Mortara (1986). Scandinavian scholarly-cum-ideological discussion, however, has tended to view the concepts of life-modes and life-styles as competitive and as ideological signals, the former indicating an intentionally sophisticated Marxism, the latter an embrace of post-modernist individualism (cf. Löfgren, 1988: 70 ff.). At some distance from ideological controversy, the two concepts appear as supplementary to each other, although not every life-style seems compatible with every life-mode. Both concepts point to a boundary between the private and the public with which households make fundamental life choices, and over which the encounters of households and the state take place.

The welfare state was built in relation to class and life cycle. In the future it is likely to have to relate to the life-modes and life-styles of households as well. The latter will also increasingly affect households' demand for and their support of social services. The relationship seems to be assymetrical. The life-modes and life-styles appear little affected and affectable by governmental social steering.

**The Interrelation of Steering and Market Action**

Looking at a welfare state from the perspective of households gives a view different from public expenditure or the compensation of social risk. Instead, public provision and public regulation come to the fore. The destination of welfare state policies are not simply beneficiaries, but autonomous actors, pursuing courses of their own, most of the time rather remote from the considerations of policy-makers.

From the perspective of signals to government, the importance of mediations between households and governors comes out clearly, mediations by collectors of official statistics, by mass media, and by interest organizations. Experts and professionals loom less large than in many accounts, although we did find the latter in the original elaboration of housing, labour market, and family policy. Little direct exchange between governors and households appears, except at some critical elections. Households adapt to, or circumvent, governmental regulations and engage rather seldom in collective action to change public policy.
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On the other hand, what also comes out very clearly is a new perspective on the relationship between politics and markets. Rather than being alternatives, they appear to be importantly interrelated. The steering efforts of the Swedish state provided a large amount of opportunities, housing, work, child care and unasked for by their beneficiaries. When in place, the altered housing and labour situations offer a new set of options for households and household members in state-created tight housing and labour markets, which make possible higher household demands on public services rendered. So far, the public monopoly maintained for child daycare has meant that this effect of expanded social services cannot be used by parents for increased demands, but only by daycare personnel.

A dynamic perspective brings out a paradoxical relationship between political steering and markets as well as between steering and democracy in the sense of collective popular sovereignty. Steering against democracy and markets, may, if neither of the latter is abolished, at a later stage be conducive to clearer signals, more autonomy and more sophisticated demands from households. That may or may not occur. More certain is that welfare states will be increasingly looked at and evaluated from the perspective of how they meet and respond to the actions of households and their members.

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