

Institutionalising transnationalism: The national welfare system's encounter with people who lead transnational lives

Summary

Individuals increasingly lead lives that span national borders. These 'transnationals' are simultaneously attached to several countries through residency, work, family or national welfare systems, and may call two, or more, places home. The very act of living *transnationally* rattles the ground on which the national welfare system is built: sedentary ideals are challenged and state-citizen relations change. This dissertation explores what happens in the encounter between the Norwegian social security system and people who live transnationally. Drawing on the perspective of the bureaucrats who work in this system, it investigates how the welfare system approaches, perceives and adapts to transnational living.

The theoretical framework consists of three different parts: a conceptual background, a theoretical approach, and a methodology. In brief, the conceptual approach lies within the broad field of *transnationalism* in migration studies. The theoretical approach is positioned in the nexus between several schools, broadly grouped as *welfare state studies*, *(transnational) social protection*, and *(transnational) social policy and social work*. The methodological approach is designed through sensitive complementing of two institutional theoretical strands: *neo-institutional theory* and *institutional ethnography*.

The dissertation builds on empirical fieldwork in the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) and the Directorate of Labour and Welfare. Based on interviews, observation and textual analysis, the analysis sheds light on the scalar and multifaceted experiences in the Norwegian social security system. The main findings are laid out in three academic articles. The first of these articles explores institutional categorisation of people who lead transnational lives. The second focuses on how social security bureaucrats perceive transnational clients' agency and behaviour. Finally, the third article investigates how institutions and bureaucrats adapt to accommodate transnational living through a historical and scalar analysis of the Norwegian social security system.