

The making of scandal:  
The Netherlands child care allowance scandal in international  
comparative perspective

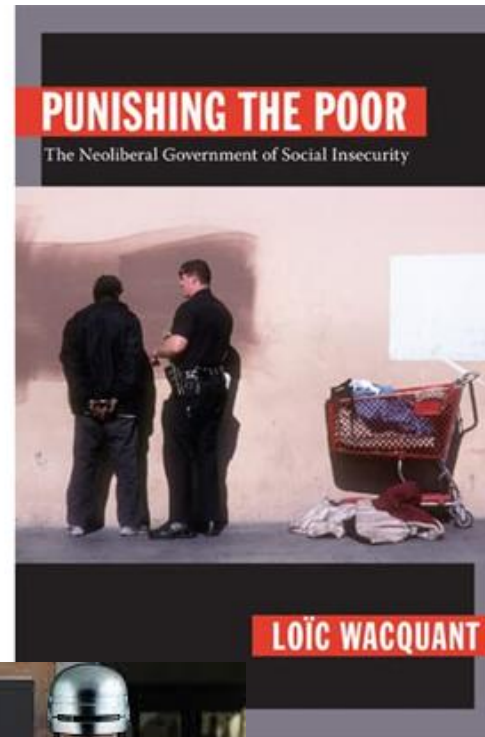
Gijsbert Vonk  
EØS-trygderettskonferansen 2025

1. Welfare state dystopia: ***an introduction***
2. The Netherlands child care allowance scandal: ***a reconstruction***
3. Robodebt (Australia), Carer's allowance affaire (UK) & NAV (Norway): ***a comparison***
4. Welfare state dystopia: ***a deconstruction***
4. The way forward: ***a conclusion***

# Welfare state dystopia: an introduction



Kafka: le Procès



LOÏC WACQUANT



# The Netherlands child care allowance scandal: a reconstruction



The story

The system

Inquiries

Compensation

Lessons learned?



Child care allowance  
scandal in the  
Netherlands



Robodebt in  
Australia

Comparison



Carer's allowance in  
the UK



NAV in Norway

# Welfare State Scandals – Comparative Overview: according to ChatGPT

## 1. Australia – Robodebt

*Causes:* Flawed automation (income averaging), reversed burden of proof, lack of oversight.

*Consequences:* 470,000 unlawful debts, severe hardship, suicides, AUD 1.8 billion compensation, Royal Commission.

*Lessons learned:* Automated systems must be transparent, legally sound, and subject to independent scrutiny.

## 2. UK – 2. Carer's Allowance

*Causes:* Inflexible reporting system, DWP inaction despite known errors, complex rules.

*Consequences:* £250 million+ overpayments, carers in debt, public outcry, reputational damage.

*Lessons learned:* Simplify rules, intervene early to prevent debt build-up, treat carers fairly.

## 3. Netherlands – Childcare Allowances (Toeslagenaffaire)

*Causes:* Zero-tolerance fraud policy, ethnic profiling, rigid administration, lack of legal remedies.

*Consequences:* Families ruined, children taken into care, government resignation, ongoing restitution.

*Lessons learned:* Uphold proportionality, ban discrimination, strengthen legal safeguards against state overreach.

## 4. Norway – NAV Scandal

*Causes:* Misapplication of EU/EEA law, administrative ignorance of supranational obligations, systemic failure.

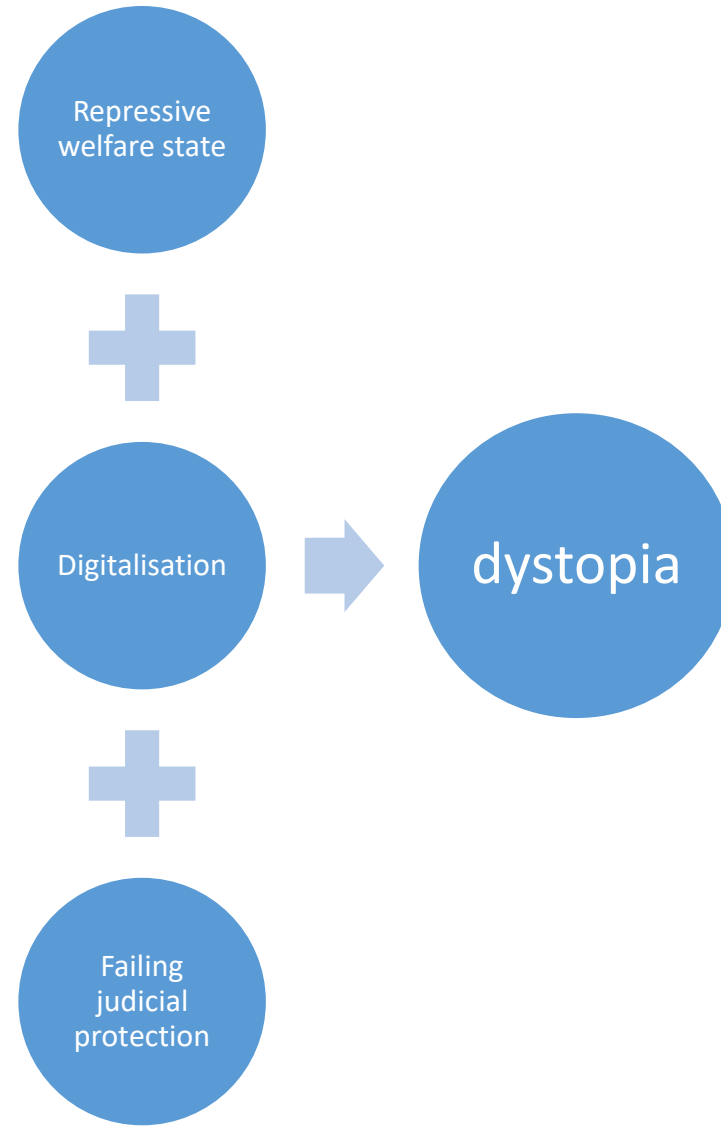
*Consequences:* 80 wrongful imprisonments, 2,400 wrongful recoveries, loss of trust, parliamentary inquiry.

*Lessons learned:* Ensure EU/EEA law compliance, train staff in supranational law, embed legal checks in welfare administration.

## ◆ Shared Characteristics Across All Four Scandals.

- Overreliance on rigid systems and automation (Robodebt, Toeslagen, Carer's, NAV).
- Punitive enforcement orientation (errors treated as fraud/debt).
- Weak legal safeguards (poor transparency, lack of due process).
- Severe harm to vulnerable citizens (carers, families, cross-border workers). Political and institutional fallout (government resignations, inquiries, compensation schemes).

# Welfare state dystopia: a deconstruction



Why dystopia favours the poor  
and the “outsiders”: from algorithm to  
chauvism

# Ways forward: conclusions

