

# 18

## The Nordic welfare model, civil society and social work

*Gurid Aga Askeland and Helle Strauss*

Over several years the United Nations (UN) has been ranking the Nordic populations amongst the happiest in the world. One of the factors that seem to contribute to the happiness is an underlying trust between people. Another factor is the income equality with a small gap between rich and poor. Equality is one of the characteristic aspects of the Nordic welfare state. Equal communities produce less social problems, such as lower crime rates, less substance abuse and less mental health problems.

The chapter introduces the Nordic welfare state model, and some of the characteristics of the civil society. It briefly discusses how the welfare state and civil society influence social work education and practice.

The Nordic welfare state is a well-known concept. It refers to the five Nordic countries of Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Denmark and Norway. While there are variations between these countries, there are major similarities that distinguish the Nordic welfare model from systems in other countries in the world. This chapter will primarily consider Denmark and Norway.

The welfare state developed in a period when Denmark and Norway were rebuilding after World War 2. It built on reforms and regulations from the late 18th century onwards when structures in communities were changing due to industrialisation and urbanisation. We are aware that our countries today are rich and prosperous, which influences the way our societies deal with welfare. Both countries have a population of about five million. While Denmark is a member of the European Union and Norway is not, both countries are to a much lesser degree affected by the financial crisis that has hit southern European countries.

A few decades ago several politicians and researchers predicted a cut-back of welfare state services. It was claimed that globalisation would put pressure on the Nordic welfare state and make it impossible to maintain this welfare model. But despite undeniable problems posed by globalisation, the Nordic welfare model has proven to be highly resilient and popular (Greve 2007).

## Different welfare models

There exists no generally accepted definition of welfare, and the term is used with different meanings. In this chapter we refer to the welfare state as the way a country arranges for, creates, regulates and finances social institutions. The welfare society or regime are concepts which came into use in the 1990s when it was admitted that the responsibility for pursuing the welfare state lay in the cooperation and interaction between the state, civil society and the market.

Welfare models have been explained as three types by Esping-Andersen (1990):

- Liberal/Anglo-Saxon model (UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand): social benefits reserved for the neediest. The state is responsible for core services, mostly in cooperation with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Individual freedom and self-responsibility is valued.
- Corporatist–Conservative, also called the Continental Model: social security is funded mainly by mandatory regulated insurance linked to work.
- Social Democratic – Nordic countries: universal model characterised by progressive tax rates, and the state carries out most of the social welfare (Esping-Andersen 1990).

In many countries in the world, including the Mediterranean countries, social problems are expected to be taken care of by the extended family, the church or voluntary organisations. Today the three models mentioned above, are carried out in blended forms in various countries. Some general characteristics, however, are still recognisable as particular for the Nordic welfare model.

The Nordic welfare state is multi-dimensional and aiming at a high level of human wellbeing. Johansson defines this by nine components: ‘health, employment, economic resources, knowledge and education, social integration, housing and neighbourhood, security of life and property, recreation and culture, and political resources’ (Johansson cited in Kvist et al. 2012, 2).

Values behind the Nordic welfare states were consolidated by the social democratic parties in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. According to this understanding, citizens were born into a social community. A slogan created by the Social Democrats put people in the centre of the policy, ‘Denmark for the People’ (Christiansen 2007).

The seeds for the welfare state in the Nordic countries were planted long before the social democratic parties came into government. Nevertheless, the model is called a social democratic one as the growth of the welfare state happened when these parties were in power, and therefore have been credited for it. Nonetheless, it is important to emphasise that all political parties in Nordic countries have over the years and to a very large degree agreed with the basis of the welfare state.

## Ideology of the Nordic welfare regime

Universalism is a central aspect of the Nordic welfare systems by which basic, standard support for every citizen is secured through social laws. This means that any individual or family, rich or poor, is entitled to social security. Universal rights are linked to illness, disability, unemployment, old age pension and child raising (child benefit). This system provides a basic feeling of security in everyday life, and as legally based rights, avoids con-

veying a sense of charity. Universalism was not primarily a social democratic principle, but a compromise of risk-sharing between different classes. Later on it has become a political and social value adhered to by all parties and a basic characteristic of the welfare state (Kuhnle 2012).

Solidarity is an important principle by which ‘the broadest shoulders bear the greatest burdens’. The fortunate support the less fortunate, and stronger people take care of the weaker, because the individual sees itself as part of a unity, where the cohesion of the community is not just a political cliché, but a set of community rules – a way of acting – which is rooted in the common culture. There is an expectation that nobody exploits the system. Everyone does his/her duty and receives his/her rights.

Equality in relation to social security, free health care, education and job opportunities is an ideal of the Nordic welfare state. The state aspires to achieve formal equality in several ways, like by sex discrimination acts, and in Norway quotas for admission to various education programs, and board positions for women in the public and private sectors. Real equality, however, is difficult to obtain, as the state cannot make up for differences in private networks, informal resources and support systems. Equality in result is not obtained by universal rights alone as less advantaged people will need more support in order to achieve the same opportunities as more advantaged ones (Hansen 2007). Accordingly, social work and social care systems as well as means-tested benefits are necessary supplements to the universal rights.

### **Principles of the Nordic welfare state**

The structure of the Nordic welfare model is based on politically agreed principles to enact or be responsible for:

- political conflict resolutions and decision making, based on consensus
- financing the welfare policy
- organising the services
- content and extent
- welfare policy resulting in less poverty and less income difference (Kuhnle 2012).

The welfare system builds on a long tradition. In Denmark the first poor laws mentioned were in 1708, in Norway 1755. Whether the governments are liberal, conservative or social democratic, the differences in their interpretation of the welfare system are rather small, as the majority of the populations agree with the ideological basis of the welfare state. It is based on a balance between the authority of the state and the freedom for the individual. Our parliaments consist of many different political parties and also our governments are often formed as a coalition of two or three parties. This model has been possible as the Nordic countries have developed a specific parliamentary democracy of consensus between the parties (Kuhnle 2012), made possible by there being less opposition between classes in the Nordic countries than in the rest of Europe. The welfare state deals with essentially democratic decisions on issues such as state investments, employment, housing, health, social security and education, and whether the state manages these in such a way that at least some minimum standards are achieved.

Globalisation has made the economy more complex. However, in this global market the Nordic welfare states have been, in spite of high wages, high taxes and with high levels

of public intervention, very competitive. Some companies that have moved offshore have started to move their businesses back home. Competitive success has been due to high efficiency, know-how, innovation and a trusted public sector with minimal corruption. This has resulted in these countries maintaining prosperous economies as well as commitment to a state-supported welfare sector. One strategy has been an emphasis on human-capital formation and high labour-force participation.

The Nordic Governments have been following a mixed economy, which is a combination of a planned and market economy. The state constitutes a large part of the economy as it provides a good-sized amount of jobs in the public sector. This facilitates a strategy of active interventions with high public expenditure in order to maintain high employment and social welfare. Through the progressive tax system the necessary redistribution of wealth is provided. This progressive tax system is an important basis for financing the welfare state.

To pursue an extensive welfare state, a stable, sufficient tax income is necessary. This has been achieved by keeping up a high employment rate which also requires women to take part in the workforce and become taxpayers. As a consequence of most women working outside the home, the state has had to take over several of the obligations that used to be family responsibilities. Thus, a need emerged for care institutions for children provided by the public, as well as institutions and home care services for disabled and elderly people. This again created new workplaces, particularly for women. In order to secure a high quality service, institutions should be staffed with professional people, which relies on educational institutions to train them.

A basic idea is to make it possible for the society to alleviate its social problems and to enrich and equalise the living conditions of individuals and families (Greve 2007). In this way the most socially damaging effects of the market are reduced. The welfare system represents a compromise between the need for profit maximisation of the market and the consequent social insecurity for individuals, and, on the other side, individuals' need for a minimum of social security.

### **Administration of the welfare state**

The distribution of public welfare state services in the Nordic countries is divided between the state and municipalities. While the social security scheme is rules-based, founded on universal rights and financed by the state, the social services are means-tested and covered by the municipalities. The majority of the social workers are employed by the municipalities and provide supplementary social services based on assessments. Social workers' tasks in the municipalities are primarily within child protection, integration into the labour market, social benefits, housing and supporting vulnerable people and families. Additionally, social workers are employed in hospitals, mental health, probation, refugee centres and in voluntary and private organisations.

User participation, which can be traced back to the social work original principle of client self-determination, has now been adopted and included as a principle in the social legislation. In reality, user participation is interpreted and practised to various degrees, from filling in various forms, to expecting users to express their opinions or to make their own decisions. An example of the latter is that disabled people are entitled to hire personal assistants paid by social security.

The public organisation and administration of social work in the Nordic countries has been influenced by neoliberal principles politically and economically (Høilund and Juul 2003). The new public management (NPM) approach has recently permeated the welfare regime, with its market orientation philosophy, privatisation, competition, standardisation, contracting, outsourcing, accountability and control. Citizens become consumers in the NPM system with purchase-provider arrangements. Language, titles and concepts are changing to fit with business and management ideology: people have become products; social workers are titled 'social entrepreneurs' and 'result managers'. Social work and social workers are less frequently used concepts in public documents and laws.

There is also a change from political and professional social work leadership to management leadership, followed by reorganising and merging of services into bigger units. The idea has been that transferring the NPM system, developed with business methods, into the public sector should increase the quality and efficiency of the latter, and reduce the encroachment of the state (Payne & Askeland 2008; Greve 2007). However work principles in a business sector might not work as well in a non-profit public sector. Thus the influence of NPM has resulted in increasing bureaucratization, creating dilemmas for social workers in relation to their values and professional approaches.

What is described above is supported by a Finnish study based on interviews of 24 social service workers. It shows that the social sector increasingly operates according to market principles and economic-rationalistic framing of time, contrary to the relational understanding of time in social work. 'To maintain their sense of self as skilled professionals, workers actively re-access and adjust their identities to exigencies of working life, but not without difficulties' (Hirvonen & Husso 2012, 351).

Social workers' potential to support individuals in their decisions for positive change is often based on a trusting relationship developed over time. In social work, following bureaucratisation the request for professional assessment has declined and professional autonomy reduced. Social workers experience less time and space for relationship building and individual needs-assessment based on a holistic approach (Røysum 2009, 2010).

For some time politicians and administrators have become more aware of how time-consuming administrative procedures are, detracting from resources that could be used in services that assist people. The new conservative Norwegian Government, in office from 2014, has as one of its goals a reduction of bureaucracy in public services. The municipality of Copenhagen in October 2013 decided upon an ambitious 'trust reform' making the social services more efficient and promoting professional core performances by dismissing demands for unnecessary time consuming documentation and procedures (Rasmussen 2013).

### **NGOs and private organisations**

As a supplement to the services provided by the welfare state, NGO, private and volunteer organisations have always existed, partly supported by public funding. As mentioned above, the role the voluntary organisations play has been particularly acknowledged since the 1990s. Sometimes voluntary organisations function as an eye opener for the public as they may recognise and deal with people's immediate needs in a less bureaucratic way. Examples are crisis centres for women with violent partners, and drop-in centres for prostitutes, homeless people or drug addicts. NGOs have thus been forerunners before the state

took over responsibilities. Private organisations may be non-commercial or commercial enterprises, which offer services for the public sector, for instance in foster care, child and youth institutions and services for people with substance abuse.

## Civil society

A high percentage of the population use their voting rights compared to most countries. The voting rate for the national parliaments in Norway was 78% in 2013. In Denmark about 8% voted in 2011, which is the highest percentage achieved in that country. This may show that the population trusts the voting system and the political system and wants to make their contribution. Although voting not compulsory, many people consider voting a moral duty. Freedom of speech, free press, transparency in the public sector and access to social media makes it possible for people to express their opinions, and politicians are easily accessible. This has an ideological basis, and voter influence is greater due to the relative small population in our countries compared with many other countries.

In the Nordic countries about 40% of the population is engaged in voluntary organisations compared with 20% in the rest of Europe. On average people uphold 6.5 memberships in various organisations, which is twice as many as in Western Europe (Arnesen et al. 2013). Voluntary organisations contribute to the democratisation of a country. People are occupied with voluntary work in areas of sport, culture, health, in church and in other religious organisations. In addition, people might unite temporarily to pursue a common interest like refurbishing public institutions. Voluntary activities also provide people with social relations, social networks and may result in better health (Loga 2010).

Work is a deeply rooted value for Nordic people influenced by a protestant thinking (Kærgård 2007); although today the Nordic countries are secular societies. Employment serves two purposes: financial self-support and work as an activity which at the same time gives better self-esteem and accomplishment as well as access to social relationships and informal network in the workplaces.

Membership in trade unions is high although declining. The labour movement has had significant influence on the development of the welfare state (Wahl 2009). In negotiations with the employers' organisations salaries, standard working conditions, including average working hours (now approximately 37 hours weekly) and vacation (around five weeks a year) are settled. In case important national services are put at risk by strike or lockout, the state may become involved as a third party during negotiations. The parliaments in our respective countries will then launch impose compulsory mediation, whereby the conflict will be settled by arbitration.

Participation and influence on working conditions is legally stated, and decision-making about the future in public and private workplaces takes place in boards through democratic processes where employees are represented. The distance between management and employees is small and the relationship is based on mutual trust. Employees have high degree of autonomy and influence how their work is carried out, and in some professions possibly from a workplace at home. Similarly, parents are represented on boards in their children's institutions and schools (Gudmestad 2013).

The Nordic countries are considered to be family- and women friendly with a balance between work hours, family responsibilities and leisure time. Equality between women and men has been facilitated by women's participation in the labour market, which also made

them independent of a male provider, and by many women taking up important civil and political positions, supported also by women's rights organisations.

Even if quite a few women have double workloads, it is fairly common that household responsibilities and tasks linked to children are approximately equally split between partners. Parental leave can be divided between parents according to different legal regulations. In Denmark the mother has 18 weeks of maternity leave. The parents can divide an additional 32 paid weeks according to their preference and 14 weeks without funding. Mandatory leave for fathers has been discussed but was not passed through legislation. In Norway parents may choose between 100% payment for 47 weeks or 80% for 57 weeks. Twelve weeks each are reserved for of the mother and father, the rest has to be divided between them according to their preference. Parental leave is an active policy instrument to change the male role, by emphasising the fathers' duties and rights, which have resulted in fathers strengthen their relationship with their children (Kabeer 2008).

Schooling is compulsory for 10 years in Denmark and 12 in Norway. Free education for everybody including university level has been an aim in the Nordic welfare state, which has resulted in a high degree of social mobility. Access to education is a feature of social justice and applies to any citizen regardless of life conditions and social class. Public grants and study loans have been supporting young people in their aspirations for higher education. Anybody who has skills and desire should have access to compete on equal terms for the highest posts in society regardless of social origin.

Children are trained in democratic processes and asked to express their opinions in kindergartens, schools, higher education, in pupils' councils and at home. They are used to having their voices heard and expect to be able to negotiate their rights. Children's opinions must be heard before formal decisions that affect them are made, even from a very early age. For instance, this includes decisions concerning parents' custody by divorce and interventions by child protection services.

### **Social work education – past and present**

The welfare state developed particularly from the 1960s onwards with an expansion of the social security system and social services as well as in the health and educational sectors. The 1970s has been called the golden age of social services with a focus on prevention, education and rehabilitation.

Accordingly, there was a growing demand for a profession to staff the bureaucracy that was established to carry out tasks related to the social policy laws and regulations. Social work was found to be an appropriate profession to perform the functions, and separate schools of social work were established during this period, building on the short and few courses developed in the 1920s and 1930s. During the few last decades social work education has been expanded and merged into universities or university colleges.

Social work education has been reorganised to adhere to the Bologna system of higher educational programs. The countries' educational institutions offer bachelor's and master's degrees and some also PhDs. While the bachelor programs are based on a generalist model, masters' programs have different profiles and offer various specialisations. Some master's and PhD programs are primarily social-work oriented and others are interdisciplinary.

## Who decides the content of the educational programs?

The state regulates the structure, length and content of the social work education through governmental frameworks and publicly funded evaluations organised by relevant government department, to ensure equal quality on a national level. Various stakeholders, such as government officials, the social worker union, labour union, educational staff, students and user organisations are invited to voice their opinions in hearings. Social work education has also been influenced by new public management.

Apart from the governmental framework, there is a certain freedom for the educational institutions and staff to prioritise specific courses and curriculum, and thus decide which ideologies and theories to emphasise. Sometimes professional unions will be invited to have their say. Students have their influence through membership on the institutional board.

Most social work programs on a bachelor level emphasise basic knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare students to reflect on and adjust to various future jobs and organisational and political changes. In accordance with that social work in our context is closely related to the welfare state, social policy and social legislation are important courses in all bachelor programs.

The authorities expect social work students to graduate with ready-made knowledge and skills to practice in a bureaucratic social service field, and be familiar with various passing fashions in models and methods, although there are different opinions between social work employers and the government representing the above view. Educational programs, on the contrary, emphasise what constitutes social work as a profession. Social work is more than assisting people through a bureaucratic system, and thus social work students need to understand social problems in a holistic context, including obligations of the society as well as people's opportunities. It is important to prepare students for the challenge of finding the balance between support and control in their future work with clients. They need to learn how to analyse and influence administrative and political processes when social justice is pursued or resources are not sufficient in the organisations in which they are to perform their work. Students furthermore need to be able to integrate theory and practice, to critically reflect on values, various approaches, practices and social systems; to meet, understand and build relationships with people in various positions (Strauss 2012). Students' ability to reflect is usually more highly valued than mere reproduction of exact knowledge in assignments and exam papers. External examiners are used to various degrees, and students have a right to appeal the exam boards' markings.

In our secular societies spirituality and religion have to a large degree been overlooked in a holistic perspective in social work education. In this way the coping resources that people might find in spirituality and religion may get lost. Our students also need to learn to be aware how religion can be used as a tool for oppression.

A policy principle in all higher education is that students are responsible for their own learning. Students are expected to acquire the curriculum partly on their own, by reading and in study groups, as lectures will not give a thorough review of the literature, but rather widen the perspective of it. Educational programs offer various learning and teaching approaches and resources. The students teach each other, are actively involved in discussions and reflection, take part in skill training groups and in performing various oral and written assignments with or without staff supervision. Teachers invite students to engage and share

their opinions in class, in order to train their competences in verbal expressions. This is also seen as an important tool in supporting their professional and personal development.

### **Student and staff exchanges**

According to the Bologna Process, an extensive international student exchange is required. This takes place both in field placement and in theoretical studies within the frame of the different Nordic and European exchange programs, which also covers staff exchanges. In addition, quite a few students prefer to go to countries in Africa, Latin- and North-America, Asia or Australia. Regrettably, this seems to be a one way stream, as few foreign students are able to study in our countries, due to language barriers and the cost of living.

A few bachelor programs offer one semester in English inviting foreign students to study together with local students, and some master programs are offered totally in English. However, few students from developing countries succeed in getting funding for their studies in our countries, unless they are accepted as quota students.

### **Academisation and research**

Over the years academisation of social work education has taken place, resulting in an increasing emphasis on research, theory building and publishing. Following from this, social work education has become highly independent of Anglo-American professional literature as Nordic social work literature is sufficient for study and research. However, to keep up-to-date in the various fields of social work and for inspiration, professional literature, particularly in English, is widely used. Except for Finnish, the Nordic people are able to read each other's languages, and thus social work literature can be used across the Nordic borders.

Contextualisation of the curriculum is important, not the least because of the strong legal aspects of social work in the Nordic countries. The teaching staffs do not only comprise social workers with different experiences and specialisation, but also other professionals teaching law, social policy, economy, sociology and psychology, and thus from different perspectives contribute to a holistic understanding of social problems, people and society.

Over the years there has been increasing expectations and financial support from the government to involve educational staff in research. Today there is a tendency for social work research to include users and practitioners. Practice research is attempts to build a closer relationship between research, theory and practice to make research more relevant and useful for practice and for education.

### **What are the challenges?**

The welfare state secures basic conditions of existence and satisfaction, which is strongly supported by the majority of the Nordic people and the political parties. To maintain a welfare state requires a public bureaucracy. However to reduce bureaucracy is an aim of the political parties in our countries. The ultra-right wing parties would also like to reduce

the level and amount of welfare services. Still, it must be kept in mind that even traditional liberal and conservative parties in the Nordic countries are in most aspects far more left than for instance the Democrats in the US.

The Nordic welfare state has been continuously exposed to criticism. The criticism falls in particular in three areas. Firstly, it has not reached its goals. We continue to have social problems like crime, substance abuse, relative poverty and not satisfying integration of refugees and immigrants. Secondly, the welfare state bureaucracy and security system is too expensive to maintain and in the long run may be unaffordable, especially since financial coverage may decrease with a declining tax paying workforce as the number of children is less than the growing elderly population. Expenses have gone up, due to an increased population and more extensive administration, which does not mean that the services have been better (Wahl 2009). Thirdly, it has been claimed that the welfare society produces dependency and irresponsibility (Hansen 2007). One criticism is that benefits are so high that some people prefer to live on those rather than support themselves by work. But it has also been found that some children, whose parents living on social security or benefits, cannot afford to participate in leisure and social activities together with their classmates (Andersen, Ejrnæs & Larsen 2010).

Even if the welfare state seems to survive, we also see signs of undermining and weakening of the welfare state through increasing individual responsibility, increasing poverty, social exclusion, bigger differences between rich and poor and commodification. So what we think should be the essence of a welfare state, will influence how we judge its status (Wahl 2009).

Despite the Nordic successes in stemming the tide of income inequalities better than most countries, inequalities have also somewhat increased in our region. However, even if there are slightly more poor people today in the Nordic countries, the proportion is still lower than southern Europe.

Furthermore, it has been maintained that high wages make it impossible to compete in the globalised world. The importance of formal education has been emphasised by the academisation process supported by politicians. However, some young people without particular academic skills have increasing difficulties as our communities have developed into knowledge societies. When practical skills are not appreciated in the schools, the schools produce drop outs, and these young people may later have difficulties in getting jobs, since almost any job requires some academic skills. Instead, guest workers are taking over.

Nordic countries had a very homogeneous population until the mid-1970s when immigration primarily from Turkey and Asian countries started. Later on there has been an increasing flow of refugees and asylum seekers from Latin America and Africa which continues to be a challenge to inclusion in society. Although it is an issue of concern, studies have shown that Nordic countries do not perform well enough when it comes to integrating immigrant in the labour market or preventing poverty among them (Gerdes & Wadensjö 2012). From former Eastern European countries our countries have had an increasing amount of guest workers, primarily doing manual work. In addition some people from these countries, including Roma people, arrive with no rights, nowhere to stay and try to make a living by begging in the streets. People from southern European countries now come in search of work because of the financial crisis.

The unemployment rate is low in Norway and Denmark, about 3% in the former and about 6% in the latter in 2013. Both countries are members of Schengen, the EU pass-

port cooperation, which allows citizen to move freely within the borders of the member countries. With a youth unemployment rate of about 25% in Sweden, both Denmark and Norway have seen a flow of youngsters seeking work in our countries. In Norway 85 000 Swedes are registered in the labour market. By living and working in the Nordic countries, guest workers earn social security rights, some of which are also valid after returning to their home countries. This is causing discussions about universal rights.

To combine support and control is often presented as a dichotomy between management and client orientation, and becomes especially a challenge when social workers are in positions where they provide means tested support. However, how to negotiate the balance between the two orientations is an old discussion (Christiansen 1990). According to Terum (2003), few models and methods exist that are developed for how to practice social work in a bureaucracy of the welfare system. They will not solve the dilemma, but it might have helped social workers more to be less prone to become influenced by and adjusting too easily to the ideology of the sociopolitical system and the bureaucratic management, and less likely to set aside the theoretical basis and social work values. A study of a critical reflection group in a social service agency showed that the social workers were not used to and felt uneasy about being asked about the value basis for their decisions (Askeland et al. 2011).

There are parallels between the Nordic social welfare state characteristics, like universalism, solidarity with the vulnerable, user participation, and social work principles such as users' self-determination and human rights. Following from this, the welfare state should be a work place where social workers should be able to work according to the principles of the profession. New public management which includes a high degree of control and less democratic processes (Wahl 2009) does not seem to fit well, either with traditions and culture in the Nordic countries, nor with social work values. Rather, the degree of control and accountability seems to demotivate employees, where quantity counts more than quality.

In some countries the efficiency and economic benefits of competition, reduction and fragmentations have been questioned, and they are looking for coordination and holistic thinking, which has been denoted as post-NPM-reforms (Stamsø 2009, 74). New public management has been influencing public administration in the Nordic countries, including social welfare over the last decades, but in several places critique is growing towards the weaknesses of the model and how resources are spent on procedures rather than on core performances towards service users. There seems to be a political awareness of this and a will to do something about it. However, the only reforms that have been introduced are intended to counteract the negative effects of the NPM, and not to counteract the ideology behind it.

## Conclusions

The welfare state and equality of the civil society contribute to the wellbeing of people. According to the World Happiness Report people's experience of happiness has to do with how they experience confidence, security, prosperity, freedom, community, health and a balanced life in regard to work and family. The importance of these qualities is recognisable in the Nordic welfare principles and the society. For social work these values are key, and the values of the profession fit well with the values of the Nordic welfare system.

However, the lack of sufficient services in different areas of our community is pointed out all the time, and calls attention to service providers as well as politicians. The free press plays an important role in maintaining the values and the good condition of civil society and welfare state.

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## 18 The Nordic welfare model

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