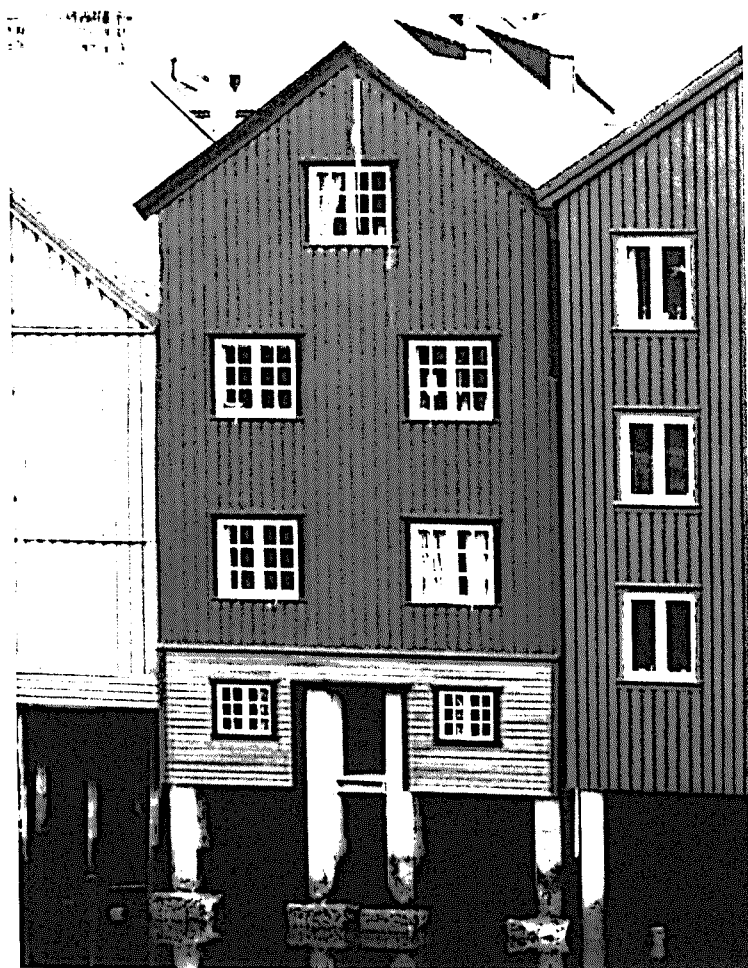


Roar Sundby, Arno Heimgartner

The Welfare Society – an Aim for Social Development



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Introduction to the proceedings from the 14th Biennial ICSD European Conference

Roar Sundby and Arno Heimgartner

This presentation of articles are papers and presentations given at the 14th Biennial European ICSD Conference under the heading "The Welfare Society – an Aim for Social Development" 11th – 13th September 2014 hosted by the Sør-Trøndelag University College in Trondheim and ICSD (International Consortium for Social Development) European Branch.

The Harald Swedner award 2014 for promotion of Social Development was presented Sven Hesse, Professor of Social work – chair emeritus at Department of Social Work at Stockholm University Democracy. His presentation on the Relationship between Global North and Global South in Child Welfare Research is an important reminder that the best intentions of helping and doing social research in the poor parts of the global south may be part of the richer norths exploitation of the weaker part.

The International Consortium for Social Development (ICSD) is a network of practitioners, scholars and students in the social work and social development professions. The first ICSD Europe meeting was in 26 September 1989 in Heidelberg under the leadership and initiative of the founder of the European branch Dr Harald Swedener. In order to emphasize the need for cooperation and social work professions and research in the former Warsaw nations a number of the conferences in the 90ies were organized in the East European countries. ICSD has a strong focus on building networks for peace and social development. The tension between local belonging, community projects and global citizenship has been a focus through the history of ICSD. The vision of ICSD is to make a meeting point and a community of researchers, teachers and, practitioners' in the field of community work, social development and peace.

The Nordic countries, identified as models for the welfare state system have all a strong public sector and governmental regulations of social life. In contrast to the centralized understanding of welfare the concept of welfare society is including a broader definition of how non-governmental bodies, civil life, social relations,

economic conditions, sustainable development and social commons plays a part in addition to, in cooperation with, as a supplement to or in opposition to public services as important factors for life quality. Some of the challenges related to these shifts will be explored throughout these contributions.

Two main topics will be addressed in relation to the welfare society discussion and the contributions to this book are also organized under these heading.

The chapter "*Welfare: state policy or local solidarity?*" will focus on the design of social policy solutions, public services, and social work, social care and social actions in the frame of public sector, NGOs, community work or civil life as a basis for creating or solving social problems. One of the main problems connected with the welfare state as provider for social security and welfare is the obvious rigidity and control regime connected to these services. The paternalistic idea that the client is responsible for his destiny and that he should change or be treated by a special method in order to change his behavior, is central in this thinking.

The activity and participatory principles connected to community based social welfare and NGOs and interest groups are inherently more democratic. The shift from the concept of social welfare as provided by the state to the social client as a giver-receiver relationship to realizing the disadvantaged population as actors in their own life with the obvious right to express and define their own problems are main trends in the social development and democratization as experienced in today's society.

The same shift is reflected in the research where the objectified relationship between the researcher and the passive client as object for research towards participatory principles in the research process. The opening article by *Sven Hessle* is addressing some of the serious consequences of this traditional research paradigm on the international arena, as a part of the western imperialistic worldview.

The concept of welfare understood as an integral part of human rights is proposed by *Hans Kolstad*. Each human has fundamental human rights, which are considered as fundamental welfare rights where each person takes part in the forming of the welfare policy and thereby his personal future. The importance of local solidarity and communicative is underlined.

Liljana Rihter is discussing if the local community can substitute the role of the state in guaranteeing welfare by using the case of Slovenia as example. She strongly suggest that the communities are given responsibilities, but not the adequate resources to respond to these needs. The result is increasing inequalities between communities and between individuals as seen in the liberal societies.

The European influences on national welfare schemes are critically investigated by *Peter Szyuka* with the "Social-Investment-Package (SIP)" as a case. The Schumpeterian term of creative destruction is used to analyze the outcome of this

implementation as either a precondition for further development or a preparation for a lower level of social service delivery. He suggests that it rather "may be taken as an example for Schumpeter's long term prognosis that capitalism on the long run will destruct his social base instead of creating something new and sustainable." Szyńska characterizes the SIP as *New Feathers for an Old Hat*.

The popular support of the welfare state is considered as a basis for social services. The Effect of Immigration on Attitudes towards Economic Redistribution is examined by Isaksen and Jakobsen in their paper on *Migration and the Welfare State*. By analyzing the survey data from 30 OECD countries they find that there is a threshold effect when it comes to attitudes to economic redistribution. When this threshold is reached further diversity will decrease the support in favor of redistribution.

The theory of recognition as forwarded by Axel Honneth has been increasingly central to the understanding of welfare as he is claiming that recognition is essential to self-realisation. Knut Magne Sten is exploring the connection between *Recognition and the symbolic value of work*, with examples from Norwegian job schemes for youth drug addicts. He claims that the connection between recognition, solidarity and social rights remains to be investigated.

Lucjan Miś from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow describes in his essay "*To be like Copenhagen... Central European city residents' dreams versus reality*" how the social problems in the city are closely related to the city development, a city with a strong attraction to new residents. The population growth connects to both favorable and negative factors. In this context the term "Copenhagenize" has become a description of Young peoples dream a people-friendly city.

In the second part of the book, *Inclusion of disadvantaged groups*, the focus is turned towards inclusive processes and work with minorities, vulnerable groups and children.

In the article of Baturina, Majdak and Berc, *Framing the problem and challenges of dropouts in Croatia*, (Invisible people around us but not us) among high school students. They approach the problem of dropping out from school and how it leads to unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. The focus on education is a crucial condition for social development both for individuals and for society. Initiatives and programs to meet these challenges in Croatia are encouraged.

Lasse Skogvold Isaksen is also drawing our attention to the importance of school and basic skills for Children in Residential Care. This article describes strategies to enhance collaboration between schools and residential institutions in order to improve children's basic academic skills and inclusion in the school. It is still a close correlation, between social economic background and school

performance and these groups of disadvantaged children need special attention and continuous observation to improve their life chances.

The principle of User-Participation in social services is becoming more and more widespread. *Peter Szynka* addresses the challenges of involving homeless people in user-participation in the case of German services for homeless people. Szynka also gives examples of how this can be managed and recommendations how to support participation in homeless services. The recognition of the users as experts of their own situation and the clients taking back control over their lives is a trend in all parts of social services these days and represents a shift in the power structure in social work.

Anne Juberg is also addressing the young homeless adults in her paper "*Because I deserve it*": *Self-assured welfare claimant action amongst socially marginalized young adults (18–23) as an intake to current tendencies in the newer Norwegian welfare state*. The social services counts on self-reliance among its clients that these young adults find problematic to realize

Hyrve and Collin-Hansen are asking *How to include marginalized youth* using the case of motor-sport project in Trondheim as case. They stress the importance of the relational aspects provided by accessible and confident adult figures. The participation in the project provide status and self-esteem to the participants as well as social skills and new knowledge. The experience of being seen, heard and recognized is crucial.

The importance of participation is further developed in the paper of *Inger Sofie Dahlø Husby* in *The Children's Interview -From resistance to partnership*. From the point of view of the researcher in the open interview situation with children, gives access to more detailed information if the child can determine the content of the interaction, the resistance to share vulnerable information ends, and the dialogue is instead marked by cooperation and equality. Husby thereby underlines the importance of relationship also in the research process.

It is possible to see a trend in these papers that reflects a movement or a shift in social work and social services. The role of the client is changing from a passive receiver of services towards an active spokesperson defining his own life situation and needs. We welcome this development as a part of the general democratization of society

Traditionally suppressed groups defined as children, drug abusers, unemployed or women do not accept to be passively stigmatized, analyzed, defined or diagnosed but describe their own reality. We hope this book can contribute to this liberating trend. And thanks to Anneliese Pirs for her administrative support!

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