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Civil Dialogue in the Nordic Countries

Building New Partnerships to Combat Social Exclusion and Discrimination

Ziviler Dialog in den Nordischen Staaten

Aufbau Neuer Partnerschaften zur Bekämpfung
von Sozialer Ausgrenzung und Diskriminierung

Dialogue civil dans les pays nordiques

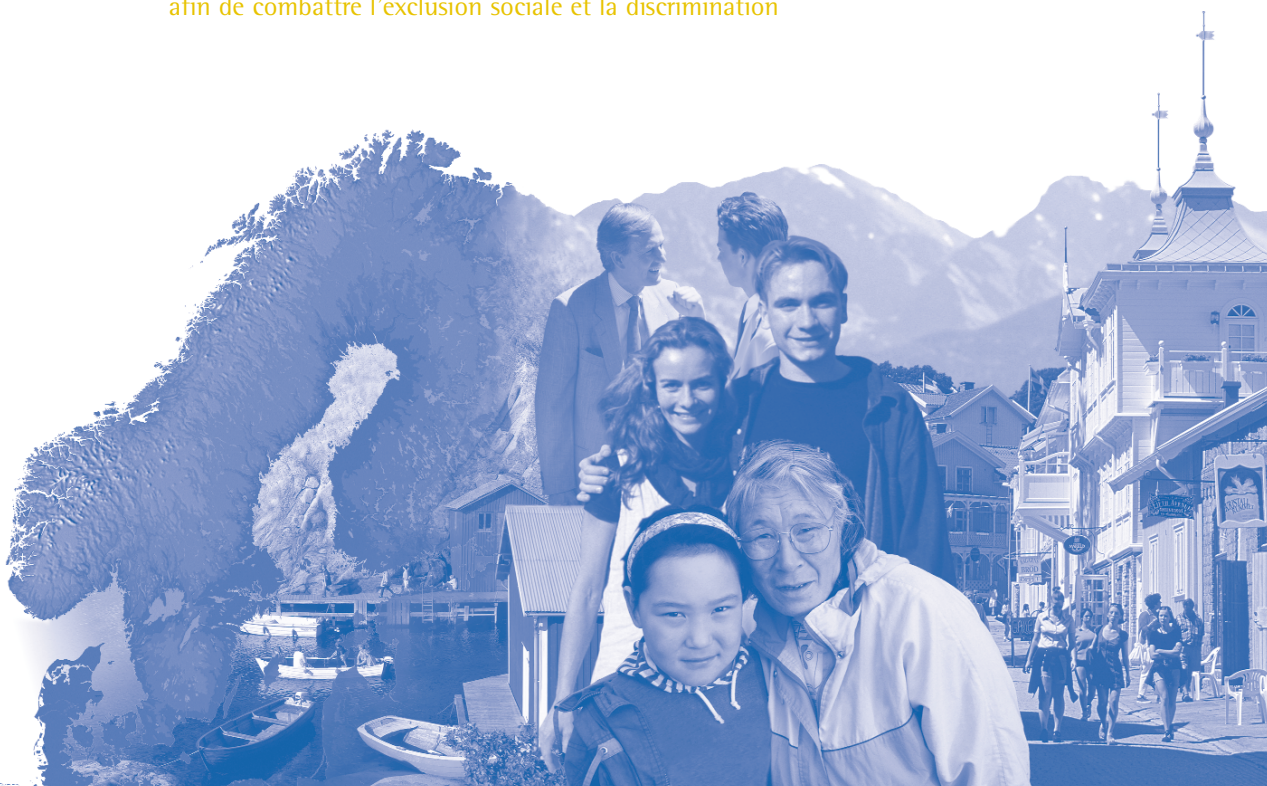
Construire de nouveaux partenariats
afin de combattre l'exclusion sociale et la discrimination



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Preface

During the last decade, the Nordic welfare state, characterised by universalism, generous benefits, tax financing and the public sector as the dominant supplier of services, has attracted a great deal of attention. The development of a basis for social policy in Europe has to a large extent used models and terminology from the systems of the Nordic countries, and the new democracies of Eastern Europe, especially the Baltic states, have expressed great interest in the Nordic model when creating their own systems for welfare services. At the same time, the Nordic welfare state is facing challenges which have the potential of profound change in the way systems are organised and services delivered.

Increased globalisation implies a society open to new and different ways of solving societal tasks, and a strong and steady flow of professionals across national borders contribute to this development. Furthermore, demographic changes will influence the tax base which is so fundamental to our systems, pension schemes, the care business, demand for professional competence etc. Increased international co-operation and international legislation form the main elements of these challenges.

In this context, the Nordic Council of Ministers through the Nordic governments' co-operation in social affairs and health has identified the development of the Nordic welfare states with regard to European and global challenges as an important part of Nordic co-operation for the next five years. Recognising the close ties between the EU and the Nordic countries by either membership (Denmark, Finland and Sweden) or co-operation through the EEA-agreement (Norway and Iceland), the relationship with Europe has a prominent place in the new co-operation programme for the social and health sectors. Recognising a strong European impact and the wish to maintain Nordic values, the aim is to identify and learn from new trends, as well as being able to influence and participate in the process of developing sustainable welfare states for the future in Europe.

When approached by the European Social Network in the autumn of 1999, the Nordic Committee of Senior Officials for Social Affairs and Health expressed great interest in the Civil Dialogue project. There were several reasons for this: an important topic, well suited to our own priorities; a solid partner to carry it through; and a first chance in this sector to co-finance a project with the European Commission, thereby creating the possibility of ensuring full participation of all five Nordic countries in such a project.

This report gives a glimpse into one of the new aspects in the Nordic welfare states; other suppliers of welfare services than the public sector. A traditionally strong NGO involvement in delivering welfare services (e.g. home care and institutions for handicapped) have now been replaced with public provision. At present, we once more find NGOs present in the Nordic welfare arena, together with professional civil organisations as relative newcomers in this market. This

illustrates well the need for a combined effort to deal with the new challenges presented to our welfare systems.

The project is a small contribution, but it marks the start of a co-operation that we would like to see extended to new areas in a debate where the best of Nordic and European systems is combined to effectively meet the challenges of the future.

Nils-Petter Karlsson

Nordic Council of Ministers

Introduction

The participation of all citizens in their society is at the heart of what we call a social Europe. This participation expresses the fullness of what it is to be a citizen with individual and collective rights and responsibilities. The European Union therefore attaches much value to the importance of facilitating and supporting the participation of all citizens. The Amsterdam Treaty in particular specified the competence of the European Union in contributing to combating social exclusion and discrimination.

For all those in Europe working with the more disadvantaged or vulnerable, there must be a particular responsibility for ensuring that their voice is heard and their involvement assured.

Nowhere is this more important than in local communities where public authorities are ultimately responsible for ensuring that the social welfare (and also often the related health, housing and financial) needs of individuals and their communities are assessed and met.

Concerns about the lack of participation of citizens in government and their communities however (witness low levels of voting), a sense of disempowerment between elections, poor access to decision makers etc., has led to the framing of the concept of 'civil society' at a European level. This describes 'civil society' as comprising non-government associations which can act as 'intermediaries' between citizens and the state, therefore enhancing and deepening democratic participation.

The five Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, have a distinctive welfare model which is to a greater or lesser extent based on local publicly delivered services. NGO's provide distinctive roles as advocates or lobbies for some service users but generally do not provide mainstream services. As NGO's are less in evidence than in, for example, Germany, does this mean that there is less 'civil society'? Alternately, if 'civil society' does exist in the Nordic countries what is different about it and how can our knowledge about Nordic civil society contribute to the current wider European debate?

The European Social Network which brings together directors of local public social services from across Europe, was concerned to explore the role of local government in 'civil society' and proposed that the European Commission support a project, involving the Nordic Council of Ministers to study this question.

The project comprised three thematic focus group meetings and this report. The meetings were organised as follows:

Young People and Civil Society	Odense Denmark	27/28 May
Disabled People and Civil Society	Stockholm Sweden	29/30 August
Elderly People and Civil Society	Helsinki Finland	11/12 October

Participants comprised Directors of Social Services, non-government associations and researchers from the Nordic countries and other European countries and a senior representative of the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The following three chapters map the discussions from the three focus group meetings which, whilst addressing different themes, nevertheless were a cumulative development of discussion which we believe has highlighted the particular role of local government social services in building participation and citizenship between the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our local communities and those who have responsibility, be it political or professional, for their care and fulfilment.

Children and youth – social services in Denmark

Denmark, as the rest of the Scandinavian countries, has a very decentralised public system. The Danish public sector consists of three different levels: 275 municipalities, 14 counties and the state level. Apart from the major cities, the average Danish municipality is rather small; between 5.000–20.000 inhabitants. The counties, of course, are larger; with between 250.000–600.000 inhabitants. This indicates rather limited distance between the local administrations and the citizens. One example of that is the turnout to the local elections, which in Denmark – with no compulsory voting – is 60–70%.

Through the last 30 years the local level has provided the majority of the social services. Today, more than 70% of the total public sector activity rests with the municipalities and counties. The main areas of local responsibility are those of social welfare, health and education. By contrast in Finland, there has been an increase in contracting to NGOs to provide fostering and other services leading to 50% of such services contracted out.

A fundamental principle of Danish policy in these areas of public services is that the Danish public sector is obliged by law to accept responsibility for the provision of services of such a nature and on such a scale as to alleviate the majority of social and health problems of each individual. Denmark and other Scandinavian countries differs quite radically on this point from other European countries where the primary responsibility rather lies with the individual himself, his family, voluntary organisations, insurance schemes and finally – as a last resort – the public sector. In Germany by comparison, where NGOs employ 1.4 million people, up to 70% of services for children and families are provided independently.

Local responsibilities in Denmark

The responsibilities of the 14 Danish counties are primarily hospitals, infrastructure, specialist services outside hospital, high school education, specialised social services institutions and rehabilitation centres.

The Nordic and also the Danish public sector is probably the most decentralised in the world with 275 municipalities representing more than half of the total public sector activity and since public consumption in total represents about 26% of the Danish GNP, it follows that the municipalities hold a key position within the Danish society.

Within the areas of social welfare and health, the main areas of municipal responsibility are, home nursing, prophylactic health care and preventive programmes, dental care for children, nursing homes, social assistance to families or children in need, social programmes as well as cash benefits, kindergartens, social Protection Benefits, rent subsidies, old age pensions and primary schools.

All services are primarily financed through income tax collected at the state level and redistributed to the municipal level or through local (county and municipal) income tax. Denmark is one of the few countries with a substantial municipal tax. Insurance schemes, of the kind found in the majority of other European countries, are also found in Denmark, but their role is limited compared to that of other countries. Major economic differences between counties as well as between municipalities are levelled out through a redistribution system.

Children and youth with social problems

The initial responsibility for acting on behalf of children or young people at risk lies with the municipal government. The first signs of social problems will occur in the kindergarten, within the home nursing systems or in primary schools. The municipal social workers will then take action, and discuss with the family possible initiatives which could be proposed to families such as counselling or treatment by psychologists/social workers, temporary assistance in the family homes by e.g. social workers, short term day care for the entire family (or mother and child), permanent residential care for either the child or (parts of) the family on a voluntary basis, residential or private care (foster care) on a non-voluntary basis.

The legislation underlines the utmost importance of initiatives being implemented in close co-operation with the family as well as the child. In the case of a non-voluntary action, this has to be decided by a special committee chaired by the local judge. This committee is independent from the local administration that proposes the initiative.

No matter what initiative is proposed, it is compulsory for the social worker to produce a plan of action in which both the family and the child views must be recorded in the action plan.

When it is decided – either voluntarily or by the committee – that a child or a youth should be placed outside his or her original home, this could be either in a foster family, a privately run residence or a public institution. Most of the approximately 12.000 children placed outside their home live in a foster family. Approximately 25% live in a public institution and this fourth consists mainly of children in the most need of care and treatment. The period of time the child spends in public residential care is usually between $1\frac{1}{2}$ – $1\frac{1}{2}$ years after which they return home or stay with a foster family.

It is the responsibility of the Danish counties to provide sufficient number of public institutions. Most are run by the counties themselves, but a declining minority are contracted out to NGO's.

NGO's and the Danish social system

The overall Danish picture tells a story of the central part played by the public social services. NGO's play an increasingly important role as representatives for different user groups or relatives of children in care. NGO's perform at the national, policy formulating level as well as the local, municipal level where many function as consultative advisors to the user in their contact with local authorities, often financially supported by the public sector. Recent national legislation

contains guidelines for the financial support to NGO's within this field.

NGO's are compulsory members of the local user-committees. The purpose of these committees is to guide local authorities in their development of social services. All new initiatives have to go through the local committees and the committees can criticise the local administration on specific matters. Local committees cannot, however, deal with personal matters. NGO's as well as the labour market organisations typically appoint the members of these user committees.

In most residential establishments there is direct user participation on the board of the home. These members are not necessarily NGO representatives but will often be somehow connected to a NGO. The general rule in Denmark is that whilst most responsibility for social services is public, when it comes to assistance to the most excluded groups, NGO's play a much more visible role as a service provider (often at street level). The target groups here might e.g. be homeless or people with an addiction problem. Within these fields of social service, the NGO's act as service providers but their services will predominately be financed by public sector agencies.

Social Services and Disability in Sweden

People with disabilities must have the same chance as others of participating in community life. Responsibility for achieving this objective is borne by society as a whole, but ultimately by the state, local authorities and county councils.

Handicap is not viewed as a characteristic of a person but as something that arises when a person with a functional impairment is confronted by an inaccessible environment.

Background

In Sweden, as well as in other Western European countries, the social voluntary organisations that grew up during the 19th century were based on liberal and Christian ideas. From that time there was a co-operation and influence between the voluntary organisations and the authorities based on their common goal to combat people's poor living conditions. The local authorities were mostly regarded as allied to the NGO's, and not competing organisations.

The establishment of the Swedish welfare state is mainly a post-war phenomenon when the social security system and other social reforms were institutionalised, and became financed and controlled by the public. The early voluntary organisations were active in fields that later were dominated by the core activities of the welfare state because of policy, demands of public health, resources and a desire for greater professionalism, services were transferred from private to public management. It seems that most of these processes were free from conflicts, and were many times supported by the NGO's.

This supportive approach was based on the organisations role as avantgarde, an advocacy role. If the public took over the activity, it also meant that the organisation had fulfilled its goal.

In other cases NGO's regard themselves as complement to the public social services and are sometimes established as alternatives, but very seldom as substitutes for local authorities.

Legislation

Basic rights to social services are guaranteed by national legislation. The Social Services Act states that every citizen is entitled to a reasonable standard of living

In conjunction with International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981, the government drew up a national action programme on disability issues, which was supported by all parties in the Riksdag (the Swedish Parliament).

Every citizen requesting help according to the social legislation can appeal in court if he is not satisfied with what has been decided by the public social services. In principal this is the basic model for social work, elderly care and care for disabled people.

For disabled people there is certain legislation – LSS – Support and Service Act for persons with functional impairments.

This means that disabled people, both physically and mentally disabled, can ask for personal assistance according to a direct payment scheme, which is compulsory for all local authorities in the country

An important remark is here that budget limitations can never be an argument to reject a request for help.

Public social services

The legal responsibility for social services is mainly the responsibility of the 289 local authorities. During the 1990's responsibility for people with learning disabilities was transferred from counties to the local authorities, so that, in principle, all social services for handicapped people are now organised by communes.

Local authorities (also in the other Nordic countries) have by European comparison a very strong position in the society. This role is especially built on the right to levy taxes. About 10% of the citizens income is paid to the counties, that are responsible for healthcare, and about 20% is paid to the local authorities. Of those money paid to the local authority, the main part is used for the two big areas of responsibility: schools and social services.

The Office of the Disability Ombudsman (Handikappombudsmannen) is an authority set up on 1994 monitor issues relating to the rights and interests of disabled people.

Disabled peoples organisations.

Of a national population of 9 million people, there are half a million members of disabled peoples movements in Sweden.

Although there is little reference to users and user rights in the legislation and contrary to what one could expect, against the background of the extensive public sector in the welfare state, there exist a wide variety of organisations engaged in different types of activity in this area. The most usual social services offered by the voluntary organisations are generally supportive ones, such as drop in centres, and giving counselling and advice. These services, though non-bureaucratic and informal, are often regular and stable. Most of these organisations are characterised by the fact that they are also by people with functional impairments.

At a national level there are more than 70 organizations representing specific disability groups with about 2000 local associations nationwide. Organisations for disabled people in particular seem to have mixed views about voluntary social work. Their basic attitude is that an increased role for NGO's combined with cut backs in the public sector could result in worse services for the members.

If we compare the voluntary sector as a whole (sports, culture, labour unions etc) the Swedish citizens engagement is comparable with most other western European countries. If we count the economic turnover for the voluntary sector in % of GNP, the share in Sweden is 4%, compared with United Kingdom 5%, Germany 4% and France 3%. An important remark is that in Sweden the voluntary sector is relatively small for the social sector (education, health care, social services), but in some niches like work for homeless, it is the dominating social activity.

About 70% of NGO's within the social sector are dependent on financing from the public sector.

These organisations receive 95% financial support from the state, 90% from the local authorities and 80% from the counties.

In the Local Government Boundaries Act it is stated that the political boards shall promote co-operation with those who use local authorities services".

The words "user involvement" and "user influence" are often used in the same way, even if it is doubtful if user involvement on its own gives real influence.

The best example of real user influence is the Swedish direct payment scheme. That gives the user a right to decide about who, when and where personal assistance should be given, but the level (number of hours) of help is decided by the local authority. These direct payments for disabled persons are also available in Denmark although Finland also applies them to elderly people.

Initiatives have, of course, been taken outside of that required by law. In almost all local authorities you can for example find a community council for the disabled. That is a council where some of the member represent the user organisations and the other members are local politicians. These councils have no formal right to decide matters, but are important advocacy groups especially in planning.

The future

The needs of disabled people in Sweden include more specialised schooling, better co-ordination between different care-givers and organisations, more employment and an improvement in general attitudes towards people with a mental illness.

In terms of the response of NGOs there are a number of changes taking place. Some are adopting a more 'market' orientated approach and there are signs that relations with the private (commercial) sector will be more important.

Surprisingly enough seems this "marketisation" may partly be a result of influence from the public sector, in practice described in service contracts. That means that NGO's to a larger extend will be providers of services, paid by tax money. The motive for this is the hope that the NGO's should provide cheaper services and in a different way than the ordinary public organisation. The use of individual financial contribution will increasingly determine the shape of payment for service delivery.

Increased contracting can in the long term mean a movement towards a higher level of professionalism.

It can also result in new types of organisations. In the Nordic countries you can see the growth of "ad hoc" organisations which are not ideological, are locally based, have close links to public social services, are interested in narrow niches and have professionals responsible for unpaid workers.

The most obvious example are the new centres with unpaid workers that are being established

here and there in Sweden. The activity is to organise help to needing people, either as single visits or more regular visits. To this could be added other kinds of activities.

In fact, there are hardly any traces of the traditional pressure group movement tradition, with volunteers having little or no influence over the services. The initiative comes rather from local politicians or managers – together with some engaged citizens – with the aim of complementing existing activities. Hand in hand with the representatives of the established welfare state are they doing social work that neither the public social services or the established NGO's has been able or willing to do. It seems as these centres attract highly motivated people both among the employed public staff and among unpaid volunteers. They have also been skilful in using mass media, both on local and national level.

These centres also seem to attract volunteers that are not willing to join as members of a large organisation. They do not want to be part of the ideology and program of a big organisation, but prefer to do a limited piece of work and possibly also get some social exchange.

A challenge for public social services will here be to work with people who want to offer their services to help others, but who do not want to join any particular organisation.

Dialogue between user and organisation. Services for the elderly in Finland

Overview

There are many different models and methods for participation and dialogue between users and local services in Finland. These include, participation in the service process itself, quality assurance, participation in evaluation: surveys, user interviews and other forms of feed-back, telephone lines, participation in management: members in management groups, user councils, participation in the strategic planning and policymaking and councils of elderly people at a local and a national level. In this chapter we should like to look at one such example in detail.

Councils of elderly people in Finland

The National Committee, appointed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, published its proposal for the National Policy for the Aged in 1996. The Committee suggested that municipalities should found councils of elderly people to function as channels for participation and influence in their own municipalities. Comparisons were made to other Nordic countries which already had experience about such councils.

Local governments are strong and autonomous in Finland. Municipalities are responsible to provide most services of so called welfare state; health, education and social services. Public transport has fairly good coverage. Private ownership of housing – one family or flats – is the major model of housing. Pension system is dual; there are basic pension provided by the Social Security Institute and earnings related pension system run by private pension companies.

Local democracy has long roots and it was not self evident that separate councils of elderly people would be accepted as another – or potentially competing, it was thought – channel of democracy. There are altogether 452 municipalities in Finland. Their population base varies greatly, from about 500.000 in Helsinki to only some hundreds of inhabitants in the smallest municipalities. Population profiles of municipalities vary as well.

A survey was made of municipal councils in 1999 in which it was seen that 52 municipalities had founded the council, 17 municipalities had made a decision to found the council and in 89 municipalities a proposal has been made to found the council. On the contrary 27 municipalities have decided not to found a council and 267 municipalities informed that the subject has not been dealt with in the municipality.

In most cases the decision concerning the council had been made by the municipal council, the highest level of municipal decision making. Most often, the proposal is made by an association of pensioners. There are 5 – 8 members in councils and are appointed for 2 or 4 year period.

Members of councils represent associations of pensioners and other voluntary organisations, politicians from local government and civil servants from various sectors.

The councils make proposals and statements on various issues concerning social and health services, housing and environment. As in many other countries, the councils of elderly people do not have decision making power. Instead, they have a power to influence decision making through statements and various forms of "civil dialogue". In Denmark all residential care homes are required by law to have residents committees where they provide an important framework for user participation.

User participation in action

The following examples from different areas in Helsinki show ways of implementing the dialogue between user and organisation.

The Helsinki council of elderly follows up the implementation of a programme for services to the elderly. If the councils of elderly are active, they can make a strong impact. To name one example, the Council of Elderly in the City of Espoo put forward about 100 suggestions in the year 2000, 60% of them were approved as such or partly. According to a recent survey, the expertise of the council of elderly in Helsinki has not been put into optimal use.

The working methods of the service project "Good Vuosaari" include a so-called "Vuosaari forum" twice a year. At this forum, participants ranging from representatives of city planning to residents the opportunity to discuss, share opinions, and give feedback on matters such as building projects or services in the area. The forum is also a venue for exchange of general information concerning the area.

According to the principles of community work, meetings where both clients and employees participate in setting rules for the community or taking decisions concerning the community, are used as discussion forums in services for substance abusers and work with mentally disabled. In service units for elderly, similar working methods are also introduced. This way of work is demanding for the employees; it requires that both staff and clients understand the common task, and continue to develop it. As a result of this method, clients are perceived as a resource, a source of wisdom, and also as support for coping.

It is easy for senior citizens to participate in the programmes of resident activity centres. These centres co-ordinate activities at local clubs. Support for own-initiative of residents and local leisure activities or hobby clubs can make the residents feel more satisfied. The resident activity centre is a link between decision-making bodies of the city or smaller communities and residents in the area.

The new service centre Albatrossi in Vuosaari wanted to stress resident participation in planning and implementation from the start. A user council for both social services and health care was founded. Senior citizens give feedback on services, such as adequacy and contents of home help services. They also put forward suggestions and new ideas on both transport services and service bus routes. The elderly show special interest in social conditions of the area, such as continued services at the local activity centre, Information Technology clubs for senior citizens, and service housing.

Some more examples of implementing the dialogue are the feedback cards and phones, and the reception of feedback from clients of social services by telefax or e-mail. So far, there are no means to register or analyse feedback received systematically - whether it is oral, written or feedback given to the social advisers. However, the Senior-Info receives positive feedback about the fact that senior citizens get to be heard, and that they feel they are treated equally in society. The Social Services Department's system for customer feedback is based on both direct feedback from the client in a service situation, and on extensive and regular surveys directed to certain client groups. One example of a regular client enquiry is the survey on home help services, which is based on principles of good home help services, as well as quality criteria and demands stipulated by the social services committee. In the most recent survey, made in 1999, the largest number of positive feedback concerned handling of applications within the timeframe given, dependability and safety of services, and friendly employees. Critical comments concerned access to information, availability of cleaning services, and help for outdoor activities. The most worrying fact concerning participation of clients is that they felt they had no influence on the planning of services. In addition, Swedish-speaking clients felt that services are not available for them in their own language.

Kustaankartano Centre for Services to the Elderly has also carried out surveys on client satisfaction, and on the satisfaction of family members or close relatives of clients. One of the results received was that the wards do not give the residents the opportunity to participate in everyday tasks. This result was noted as starting point for development of services, even though it may be very challenging to find male residents something meaningful to do.

Residents at Kustaankartano Centre for Services to the Elderly are represented in the management group of the centre. Management group meetings are televised, and both residents and employees are entitled to phone the meeting to ask questions.

As a co-operation project with for example the Finnish association for care of patients with dementia, the social services centres have started regular discussion forums for persons who care for a family member with dementia or poor health. These groups give the participants an opportunity to exchange ideas and share experiences, and as a result of this, networks start to take form. These evening sessions have proved to be very popular.

The Social Services Department of City of Helsinki is carrying out a project where all services are described and produced with a customer approach. All service descriptions will be available on the Internet and on our own Intranet. These descriptions will also include information on how the client can participate in planning, implementation and evaluation of services provided to him, and on how clients in general can participate in development of said service form. This way the chances for a better dialogue between clients and service producers are improved.

Perspectives from other European Countries

This project invited a number of senior representatives of public and private welfare organisations from other European countries.

Germany

Much of the language of civil dialogue and the role of associations owes its origin to the distinctly different tradition of 'subsidiarity' in Germany whereby the role of the state is seen as a last resort for citizens who would seek to have their needs met by independent non government organisations known as associations. Such associations of which the 'big six' group about 100.000 smaller ones together, provide about 50-70% of services for children and families, and employ 1.4 million people and use up to 3 million volunteers.

The language of 'civil society' at times may appear to suggest that this welfare model is somehow preferential to one based on local authority public services. Andreas Hutter from Diakonisches Werk, one of the German Welfare Associations acknowledged the EU's identification with the 'German Model' and expressed concern that the validity of the Nordic Model to civil society be also recognised.

France

In France the provision of childcare is on average half public, half private (NGO) provision but this can vary with for example the Département of Seine et Marne providing two thirds of foster care and all child protection. The départements otherwise contract with NGOs and also with towns and communes (centres communaux de l'action sociale) to provide a range of services alongside their own. For users there is little effective difference between the public and private provision of social services in France.

Local advisory councils bring together the public sector, NGOs and user representatives to debate issues of common concern in the planning and provision of social welfare in France. Indeed there is a recent right enacted in French law for citizens to access to information and services from local authorities. Again whilst NGOs play a central role in meeting social need in France, the view of one of the Director of Seine et Marne was that local government too had a role in civil society and that this 'civil' dialogue should function within the context of local democracy.

United Kingdom – Scotland

The third non-Nordic participating country was the UK where two Scottish directors described a changing environment within which quality and contracting were influencing the way that local authority public services worked. There was increased pressure because of cost to contract out more services. An emphasis on user and citizen participation was leading to a range of initiatives for individual and group consultation and participation in both planning and the review of services. As in the Nordic model, UK public services are the main provider of children and family

welfare services, services for learning disabled and most day care for elderly persons.

Whereas residential services were increasingly contracted out in the UK this was happening to a lesser extent in Scotland. Relationships with NGOs are established but not usually as large service providers but rather as representative certain specific needs, housing and care associations and increasingly as user led agencies. Wider civil dialogue is being developed using 'citizen's councils' independent audits, local advisory panels and participation on service management committees.

The above three brief perspectives from Germany, France and the United Kingdom, describe quite different welfare traditions and systems for providing social welfare to their citizens. Whilst none share the Nordic welfare model of highly decentralised local public authorities the contribution of the non-Nordic directors illustrated both that not withstanding a larger role for NGOs depending on the particular country, that there was significant public provision in all three countries and that there also existed a shared concern for greater user and citizen participation.

Analysis

Is there a distinct 'Nordic' welfare model?

Whilst there are more difference between the 5 Nordic countries in terms of social policy and practice, than many people would suspect, there are also considerable similarities which enable us to speak with some justification about a 'Nordic' model. This does not mean that services are always different from other European countries; homes for elderly, family centres and group homes for the learning disabled would be recognisable in most European countries who would also subscribe to similar values including promoting increasing user participation in their own services.

There are however certain differences between most continental European countries and the Nordic countries which mark them out as having distinct relationship with their citizens through local government. The Nordic welfare state is based on a high degree of universalism with all citizens having access to and benefiting from the state. Social and health services are financed from central and local taxation without, usually, higher contributions from service users. There is low income inequality and low relative and absolute poverty added to which gender equality is high as is participation in local and general elections.

Services are largely funded and directly provided by the local public authority community and with the scale of local government in the Nordic countries being relatively small, access is potentially that much greater. The decentralisation of democracy, the raising of local taxes and local service responsibility means that for many citizens of the Nordic countries, the possibilities for inclusion and participation can be perhaps higher than in any comparable European country. Despite this generally stable and popular situation, there is change taking place. As in other European countries, there is increasing social dislocation affecting young people and adults with substance abuse, homelessness and anti-social behaviour linked to mental illness, being visible community problems. The traditional homogeneity is being challenged by substantial increases in asylum seekers and economic migrants. At the same time, some individuals and groups are asking for greater independence from traditional welfare provision and a voice in their own future. The development of user groups and direct payments are contemporary examples of direct citizen participation in their own welfare.

Whilst there appears to be little contracting out in Denmark, contracting out of services is, for example, taking place particularly in Sweden to the for-profit sector in residential homes for elderly persons and Finland to NGOs in fostering. Overall, however, the project members from the 5 Nordic countries were in no doubt that a distinctively different model existed and was robust and popular.

What is the role of NGOs in the Nordic Countries

Despite the very public nature of social welfare in the Nordic countries it would be wrong to assume that there was little or no voluntary or association activity: quite the contrary. There is in fact a strong tradition of non-government or association activity to the extent that in Sweden, about half the population is thought to belong to one association or another, usually of a general social nature, be it sporting, cultural or educational, with the average person spending about 6 hours per month in such unpaid activity.

Indeed there is a saying in Sweden that when more than two Swedes get together, they set up an association!

The membership of associations is usually of a social nature acts as a societal bond, sitting comfortably within a small local democracy. It also provides an informal environment in which individuals in need can be supported.

Most social welfare NGO activity in the Nordic countries can be characterised as concerned with user advocacy, promoting the rights and independence of specific groups and many are organised by service users themselves. This is a very important role enabling often highly dependent people to be independently represented and supported.

Nordic NGOs do not, as a rule, provide mainstream services as do NGOs in other European countries, although they are increasingly active in the field of homelessness, substance abuse and generally working with marginalised persons in the community. Local authorities will normally be the principal source of funding for these activities. Of note are also examples of joint working between the public and NGO sectors.

Is there a distinctive 'Nordic' Civil Society?

A recent definition of Civil Society (Economic and Social Affairs Committee September 1999), described the role of NGOs as mediation between the State and its citizens. The 'raison d'être' for such a view include as examples that the State is too remote from the citizen, witness increasingly low electoral participation, traditional institutions with few women are clearly unrepresentative, that there is no 'vehicle' for citizen participation and consultation and that there is often poor access to State services and support from those often excluded by our societies.

A definition of civil society based uniquely on the role of NGOs is clearly inadequate in a Nordic and possibly also a wider European context. Here are societies with high electoral voluntary participation, high participation of women and low income disparity. Here are societies with a high degree of decentralised local democracy with publicly provided social welfare. Is this to suggest that civil society does not exist in Nordic countries or perhaps that there is a particular form of civil society to be found in northern Europe?

The view of the project participants was that there is in the Nordic countries a civil society in which local public services played an important role and if this ran counter to the ECOSOC

'definition' then clearly more debate was required in Europe to ensure that a more inclusive and enlightened understanding of the role of citizen and their relationship to their local authority in Nordic and other countries was developed.

During the course of this project all Nordic countries provided examples of citizen-local authority partnerships which expressed their engagement in civil society. Here are five cases, one taken from each country:

Refugees – Iceland

A few years ago, the commune of Dalvic (2100 inhabitants) led by its social services director, took an unusual initiative. It invited 23 Kosovan refugees to stay in its community for a year and together with the local Red Cross, they set about providing a comprehensive programme of support. All citizens were mailed information about the project and invited to take refugees into their own homes, to help them find work and schooling. Some of the refugees had special needs and the community worked together to provide a new start for these traumatised people. At the end of the 12 months 3 persons returned to Kosova and the others have settled in Iceland. Here is action by a local community, its social services and an NGO ensuring inclusion for refugees.

Disabled persons – Sweden

Sweden was one of the first countries in Europe to introduce the practice of 'direct payments' (providing disabled people with the means to employ their own carers and therefore manage their own personal assistance). This approach is designed to 'empower' individuals but unexpectedly by the authorities, in Sweden, some groups of disabled persons organised themselves into co-operatives and now contract with the local authorities to employ their own professionals and manage their own social service. Direct payments, promoted throughout Europe by groups of service users and often the public services demonstrate a unique transfer of power to people over their daily lives enhances the participation of all in their own society.

Dependent elderly – Finland

Highly dependent elderly people in residential care can be amongst the most 'disenfranchised' in our society. Enabling them to participate in decisions affecting their services and living environment is no easy challenge. Residents of the Kustaankartano Centre for Services to the Elderly in Helsinki are represented in the management group of the centre and a unique media programme which has cameras working across the centre, importantly provides live televising of all management meetings onto monitors throughout the complex ensuring that any resident or employee can see what is happening and can make their views known by telephone, if they can't be there in person. This open culture has encouraged even the most immobile person to know what was happening and to feel that they too can participate as citizen in this residential community.

Substance abusers – Denmark

Despite its comprehensive welfare state, increasing numbers of young people and adults with multiple problems of substance misuse, criminality, violence etc find themselves outside the scope of traditional services. A project in Copenhagen called 'Baglandet' run by Lorens Lindemann, himself in care and prison for long periods attempts to engage such persons, providing them with advice, a home and support. This work is a partnership between the local authority and the project, each recognising their separate but complimentary role in meeting the needs of those on the fringe of society. This is a remarkable example of someone starting out with so many disadvantages, can help others and how with public partnership, such local and independent initiatives can be productive in enabling even those taking drugs on the street to be citizens too.

Civil Society and Young People – Norway

A district of the city of Oslo has pioneered a youth partnership programme which is designed to empower young people and improve community services by bringing together professionals and local politicians, NGOs and the young people themselves. The local authority finances a range of services and activities for children and young people but wishes to go further by engaging young people in the community as citizens in a dialogue about their own future, enabling them to get confidential advice, access to drug free parties etc. It has not always been easy for professionals to work in this way but it can help to build civic responsibility and participation for potentially detached young people.

What can we learn?

Within the European Union, discussions about the future of social welfare too often appear to take as their model a concept of subsidiarity with provision of services being seen as essentially a non-government responsibility. The developing understanding of 'civil society' as mediation between the State and the citizen fits a view of social services as a matter for associations.

The first lesson therefore from this project is that other models exist and are robust and one such model which does not fit the current social model is that of the Nordic Countries. To ensure that thinking about civil society in the context of the new European Social Agenda is properly developed and sustainable, this project strongly recommends that the experience and expertise of the Nordic countries to be represented in discussions with the European Commission and NGOs about civil society and governance at a European level. Developing a dialogue between the European Commission and the Nordic Council of Ministers might be one way to achieve this. The ESN would also be pleased to play a role in facilitating mutual learning and development.

The second is that the State and the local authority are not the same thing and that citizens can participate locally in decisions that affect their lives both as service users through individual care contracts or plans supported as necessary by independent advocates. They can also participate as

members of their local community through citizen's councils, user consultation groups, membership of service management groups, residential homes committees, through innovative use of IT, quality programmes, audits of user involvement, independent inspection and ombudsman.

These are just some of the examples of good practice by local authorities in the Nordic and other European countries. A European exchange of such developments between the public and NGO sectors would add to Europe's knowledge base and therefore our perspectives on social exclusion and anti discrimination.

The third lesson that follows on from this is that civil society is about strengthening local democracy through the fullest participation of all citizens, then transnational programmes on civil society should importantly include the local authority sector as a stakeholder. This is not just a Nordic but a wider European issue which would regard civil society above all, in terms of the quality of user and citizen participation in local democracy and local services.

Conclusion

This project was conceived out of a desire to involve the directors of social services from all Nordic countries in a debate about the future of their welfare model and civil society. Enjoined to this debate were representatives of the non-government sector in the Nordic countries and colleagues from both the public and NGO sector from other European countries.

There is in the Nordic countries, with their unique model of social welfare and decentralised democracy, a civil society in which both the non-government and local government sectors are active players. This project seeks to better understand this experience and through this report, to make the experience more widely known and to thereby perhaps contribute to a fuller discussion about social development and the roles of local authorities and non-government organisations in building a more inclusive European society.

Ziviler Dialog in den nordischen Staaten:

Bildung neuer Partnerschaften zur Bekämpfung gesellschaftlicher Ausgrenzung und Diskrimination

Einführung

Die Mitwirkung aller Bürger an ihrer Gesellschaft stellt die Grundlage dessen dar, was wir 'soziales Europa' nennen. Daher legt auch die Europäische Union größten Wert darauf, dass eine solche Mitwirkung allen Bürgern ermöglicht und vereinfacht wird. Vor allem im Vertrag von Amsterdam wird die Verantwortung der Europäischen Union für einen Beitrag zum Kampf gegen soziale Ausgrenzung und Diskriminierung betont.

Auf Grund der bedenklich geringen Beteiligung der Bürger an der Regierung und ihren jeweiligen Gemeinschaften (was sich nicht zuletzt an der geringen Wahlbeteiligung zeigt), des Gefühls der Machtlosigkeit zwischen den einzelnen Wahlterminen, der mangelnden Erreichbarkeit der Entscheidungsträger und weiterer Faktoren werden in diesen Rahmen jedoch inzwischen auch Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NRO) einbezogen, die als 'Vermittler' zwischen Bürger und Staat auftreten und auf diese Weise die demokratische Beteiligung verbessern und vertiefen können.

Die fünf nordischen Staaten - Dänemark, Finnland, Island, Norwegen und Schweden - zeichnen sich durch ein eigenes Wohlfahrtsmodell aus, das in unterschiedlich hohem Ausmaß auf vor Ort erbrachten öffentlichen Dienstleistungen basiert. Die NRO spielen eine wichtige Rolle als Fürsprecher oder Lobby bestimmter Dienstleistungsnutzer, ohne jedoch normalerweise selber zentrale Dienstleistungen zu erbringen.

Bedeutet die Tatsache, dass die NRO in diesen Ländern eine weniger prominente Rolle spielen als z. B. in Deutschland, dass die 'zivile Gesellschaft' dort weniger ausgeprägt ist? Umgekehrt gefragt: Wenn eine 'zivile Gesellschaft' auch in den nordischen Staaten existiert, wie unterscheidet sie sich dann von der anderer Länder - und wie kann das Wissen über die nordische zivile Gesellschaft zu der aktuellen breiteren Debatte in Europa beitragen?

Das vom Europäischen Sozialen Netzwerk veranstaltete Projekt bestand aus drei thematischen Treffen von Fokusgruppen am 27. und 28. Mai in Odense (Dänemark), am 29. und 30. August in Stockholm (Schweden) und am 11. und 12. Oktober in Helsinki (Finnland).

Die vollständigen Protokolle dieser Treffen sind in der englischen Hauptversion dieses Berichts enthalten. Die folgende Fassung enthält Beispiele aus den verschiedenen nordischen Staaten für eine Beteiligung der Dienstleistungsnutzer an der Arbeit der lokalen Behörden.

Fünf Beispiele für zivile Gesellschaft und Regionalverwaltung

Flüchtlinge – Island

Vor einigen Jahren unternahm die Gemeinde Dalvic (2100 Einwohner) unter der Leitung des Sozialamtsdirektors eine ungewöhnliche Initiative: Sie lud 23 Flüchtlinge aus dem Kosovo dazu ein, ein Jahr lang in ihrer Gemeinschaft zu leben, und richtete hierfür in Zusammenarbeit mit dem örtlichen Roten Kreuz ein umfangreiches Unterstützungsprogramm ein. Alle Bürger erhielten mit der Post Informationen über das Projekt und wurden dazu eingeladen, Flüchtlinge bei sich zu Hause aufzunehmen und ihnen bei der Arbeitsuche bzw. beim Schulbesuch zu helfen. Einige Flüchtlinge hatten besondere Bedürfnisse, weshalb die Gemeinde gemeinsame Anstrengungen unternahm, um diesen traumatisierten Menschen zu einem neuen Anfang zu verhelfen. Nach Ablauf der 12 Monate kehrten 3 Personen in den Kosovo zurück; der Rest ließ sich in Island nieder. Hier ist ein Beispiel dafür, wie die gemeinsame Arbeit einer Gemeinde, ihres Sozialamts und einer NRO die Eingliederung von Flüchtlingen ermöglichte.

Behinderte – Schweden

Schweden führte als eines der ersten Länder Europas 'Direktzahlungen' ein, mit denen Behinderte die Mittel zur Beschäftigung eigener Pfleger und zur Verwaltung ihrer eigenen persönlichen Pflege erhalten. Mit dieser Methode sollen die Empfänger mehr Autonomie erhalten. Als ein für die Behörden unerwarteter Nebeneffekt organisierten sich in Schweden mehrere Behindertengruppen in Kooperativen, die nun durch Verträge mit den Behörden ihr eigenes Pflegepersonal beschäftigen und ihre Sozialdienste selber verwalten. Die in ganz Europa von organisierten Dienstleistungsnutzern und oft auch von den Behörden selber befürworteten Direktzahlungen sind für die Betroffenen mit einem beträchtlichen Zuwachs an Autonomie verbunden: Die Menschen können selber über ihren Alltag bestimmen und so besser an ihrer Gemeinschaft teilhaben.

Pflegebedürftige Senioren – Finnland

Wer im Alter in hohem Maße auf häusliche Pflege angewiesen ist, gehört oft zu den am stärksten 'Entmündigten' unserer Gesellschaft. Diesen Menschen eine Mitwirkung an den Entscheidungen zu ermöglichen, die ihre Dienstleistungen und ihr Lebensumfeld betreffen, ist keine leichte Aufgabe. In Helsinki verfügen die Bewohner des Seniorenwohnheims Kustaankartano über eine Vertretung in der Direktionsgruppe des Zentrums; sämtliche Sitzungen der Direktion werden mit Hilfe eines einzigartigen Medienprogramms über Kameras live auf Monitore überall im Zentrum übertragen, so dass alle Bewohner und Mitarbeiter die Entscheidungen mitverfolgen und per Telefon ihre Meinung auch dann mitteilen können, wenn ihnen eine persönliche Teilnahme verwehrt ist. Dank dieser offenen Kultur wissen jetzt auch bewegungsunfähige Personen, was im Zentrum vorgeht, und können als Bürger an dieser Wohngemeinschaft mitwirken.

Drogenabhängige – Dänemark

Trotz des umfassenden Sozialsystems werden immer mehr junge Menschen und Erwachsene mit Problemen wie Drogenmissbrauch, Kriminalität, Gewalt usw. von den traditionellen Sozialdiensten übergangen. In Kopenhagen bietet ein Projekt namens 'Baglandet', dessen Leiter Lorens Lindemann selber lange Zeit in Pflege- und Haftanstalten verbrachte, diesen Menschen Beratung, Unterkunft und Hilfe. Diese Arbeit stellt eine Partnerschaft zwischen den lokalen Behörden und dem Projekt dar; jede Seite erkennt die getrennte, aber ergänzende Rolle der anderen bei der Erfüllung der Bedürfnisse von Menschen am Rande der Gesellschaft an. Dieses Beispiel führt auf bemerkenswerte Weise vor Augen, wie Personen mit stark benachteiligter Ausgangsposition anderen Menschen helfen können und wie lokale und unabhängige Initiativen in Partnerschaft mit den Behörden selbst obdachlosen Drogenabhängigen zu einem Platz in der Gesellschaft verhelfen können.

Zivile Gesellschaft und junge Menschen – Norwegen

In einem Stadtteil von Oslo wurde in einem Pionierprojekt ein Partnerschaftsprogramm für Jugendliche ins Leben gerufen, das jungen Menschen zu mehr Mündigkeit verhelfen soll und die öffentlichen Dienstleistungen durch eine Zusammenarbeit zwischen den Mitarbeitern des Sozialwesens, den Lokalpolitikern, den NRO und den Jugendlichen selber verbessern will. Die Behörde finanziert eine Reihe an Dienstleistungen und Aktivitäten für Kinder und Jugendliche, möchte aber darüber hinaus junge Menschen in der Gemeinschaft an einem Dialog über ihre eigene Zukunft beteiligen, ihnen vertrauliche Beratung und drogenfreie Partys anbieten usw. Für die Mitarbeiter des Sozialwesens ist diese Arbeit nicht immer unproblematisch, doch sie kann dazu beitragen, potenziell marginalisierten Jugendlichen zu mehr Bürgerverantwortung und Teilhabe zu verhelfen.

Analyse

Gibt es ein charakteristisch 'nordisches' Wohlfahrtsmodell?

Obwohl es hinsichtlich der Sozialpolitik und -praxis zwischen den fünf nordischen Staaten mehr Unterschiede gibt, als viele ahnen, lassen sich auch deutliche Parallelen feststellen, die der Bezeichnung 'nordisches Modell' einige Berechtigung verleihen. Dies bedeutet nicht unbedingt, dass sich diese Dienste stets von denen anderer europäischer Staaten unterscheiden: Seniorenwohnheime, Familienzentren und Gruppenheime für Lernbehinderte sind in den meisten europäischen Ländern bekannt; auch Ideen wie die verstärkte Beteiligung der Nutzer an den von ihnen beanspruchten Diensten treffen in dieser oder ähnlicher Weise praktisch überall auf Zustimmung.

Dennoch unterscheiden sich die nordischen Staaten in einigen Aspekten deutlich von anderen Ländern des europäischen Kontinents: Sie stehen mit ihren Bürgern über die lokalen Behörden in

einem ganz speziellen Verhältnis. Der nordische Wohlfahrtsstaat fundiert auf einem hohen Maß an Universalismus – mit anderen Worten, der Staat und seine Leistungen stehen jedem Bürger offen. Sozial- und Gesundheitswesen werden durch zentrale und lokale Steuern finanziert, ohne dass die Nutzer der Dienstleistungen normalerweise höhere Beiträge leisten müssen. Es gibt nur geringe Einkommensunterschiede und wenig relative und absolute Armut; die Gleichberechtigung von Mann und Frau ist hoch entwickelt, die Beteiligung an den Gemeinderats- und Parlamentswahlen beneidenswert.

Die meisten Dienstleistungen werden von den Lokalbehörden finanziert und direkt angeboten. Da der Umfang der Lokalbehörden in den nordischen Staaten relativ begrenzt ist, fällt die potenzielle Erreichbarkeit dieser Stellen deutlich höher aus. Auf Grund der dezentralisierten Demokratie, der lokalen Besteuerung und der lokalen Verantwortung für die Dienste besitzen viele Bürger der nordischen Staaten wahrscheinlich bessere Möglichkeiten zur Eingliederung und Beteiligung als in jedem anderen vergleichbaren europäischen Land.

Ungeachtet dieser generell stabilen und beliebten Situation sind einige Veränderungen zu verzeichnen. Wie in anderen europäischen Staaten werden auch hier immer mehr Jugendliche und Erwachsene von der Gesellschaft ausgegrenzt; Drogenmissbrauch, Obdachlosigkeit und unsoziales Verhalten im Zusammenhang mit Geistesstörungen sind deutlich sichtbare Probleme in der Gesellschaft. Die bisherige Homogenität wird durch die wachsende Zahl an Asylbewerbern und Wirtschaftsflüchtlingen in Frage gestellt. Gleichzeitig streben bestimmte Personen und Gruppen eine größere Unabhängigkeit von traditionellen Sozialleistungen an und möchten ihre Zukunft zunehmend selber bestimmen. Der Aufbau von Nutzergruppen und die Einführung von Direktzahlungen sind die jüngsten Beispiele für eine direkte Beteiligung der Bürger an ihrer eigenen Wohlfahrt.

Während die externe Vergabe von Aufträgen in Dänemark noch relativ unbekannt ist, werden z. B. in Schweden gewinnorientierte Unternehmen mit der Leitung von Seniorenwohnheimen und in Finnland NRO mit Pflegeaufgaben betraut. Insgesamt jedoch herrschte unter den Projektmitgliedern der fünf nordischen Staaten kein Zweifel daran, dass ein charakteristisch unterschiedliches Modell vorhanden ist, welches sich einer bemerkenswerten Robustheit und Beliebtheit erfreut.

Welche Rolle spielen die NRO in den nordischen Staaten?

Trotz der eindeutig öffentlichen Ausrichtung des Sozialwesens in den nordischen Staaten wäre die Annahme verfehlt, dass es dort nur wenig oder gar keine Freiwilligenarbeit gebe. Das Gegenteil ist vielmehr der Fall: Die Tradition der ehrenamtlichen Tätigkeit in nichtstaatlichen Verbänden oder Vereinen ist vielmehr so stark, dass z. B. in Schweden etwa die Hälfte der Bevölkerung irgendeinem Verein angehört – sei es im Bereich Sport, Kultur oder Bildung – und der Durchschnittsbürger etwa 6 Stunden pro Monat ehrenamtliche Arbeit verrichtet. Nicht umsonst besagt eine schwedische Weisheit, dass bei jedem Treffen zwischen mehr als zwei Schweden unweigerlich ein Verein gegründet wird!

Die Mitgliedschaft in Vereinen ist meist geselliger Natur und wirkt als gesellschaftliche Bindung, die sich gut mit einer kleinen, lokal ausgerichteten Demokratie verträgt. Darüber hinaus liefert sie ein informelles Umfeld zur Unterstützung bedürftiger Personen.

Die NRO in den nordischen Staaten auf dem Gebiet des Sozialwesens lassen sich größtenteils als Interessenvertretungen für Nutzer beschreiben, die sich für die Rechte und Unabhängigkeit bestimmter Gruppen einsetzen und nicht selten von den Dienstleistungsnutzern selber ins Leben gerufen werden. Durch diese unverzichtbare Arbeit erhalten viele hochgradig hilfsbedürftige Menschen eine unabhängige Vertretung und Unterstützung.

Im Gegensatz zu den NRO in anderen europäischen Ländern bieten die NRO der nordischen Staaten in der Regel keine zentralen Dienstleistungen an, wenngleich sie in den Bereichen Obdachlosigkeit, Drogenmissbrauch und allgemeine Arbeit mit marginalisierten Personen in der Gemeinschaft zunehmend aktiv werden. Mit der Finanzierung dieser Arbeiten sind normalerweise die lokalen Behörden beauftragt. Ebenfalls erwähnenswert sind die Beispiele für eine Zusammenarbeit zwischen dem öffentlichen Sektor und den NRO.

Gibt es eine charakteristisch 'nordische' zivile Gesellschaft?

In der jüngsten Definition der 'zivilen Gesellschaft' (Wirtschafts- und Sozialausschuss, September 1999) wird die Rolle der NRO als die eines Vermittlers zwischen Staat und Bürger beschrieben. Zur Begründung dieser Sichtweise wird unter anderem angeführt, dass der Staat zu viel Distanz zum Bürger besitze, dass die Wahlbeteiligung sinke, dass die traditionellen Institutionen mit ihrem geringen Frauenanteil eindeutig unrepräsentativ seien, dass es kein 'Medium' zur Beteiligung der Bürger gebe und dass gesellschaftlich Ausgegrenzte oft nur unter Schwierigkeiten auf das staatliche Dienstleistungs- und Unterstützungsangebot zugreifen könnten.

Eine Definition der zivilen Gesellschaft nur auf die Rolle der NRO zu stützen, reicht im nordischen und wahrscheinlich auch im breiteren europäischen Kontext jedoch eindeutig nicht aus. Diese Gesellschaften zeichnen sich durch eine hohe freiwillige Wahlbeteiligung, weitgehende Gleichberechtigung und geringe Einkommensunterschiede aus. Diese Gesellschaften besitzen eine hochgradig dezentralisierte Demokratie und ein staatliches Sozialwesen. Soll dies bedeuten, dass in den nordischen Staaten keine zivile Gesellschaft vorhanden ist, oder gibt es in Nordeuropa vielleicht eine besondere Art ziviler Gesellschaft?

Nach Ansicht der Projektteilnehmer gibt es in den nordischen Staaten eine zivile Gesellschaft, in der die lokalen öffentlichen Dienstleistungen eine zentrale Rolle spielen. Wenn diese Tatsache der 'Definition' des ECOSOC widerspreche, dann sei in Europa eindeutig eine gründliche Debatte erforderlich, um zu einem umfassenderen und aufgeklärteren Verständnis darüber zu gelangen, welche Rolle die Bürger in den nordischen und anderen Staaten spielen und in welcher Beziehung sie zu ihren lokalen Behörden stehen.

Welche Lehren lassen sich ziehen?

In der Europäischen Union orientieren sich die Diskussionen über die Zukunft des Sozialwesens offenbar zu oft am Konzept der Subsidiarität; die Erbringung der Dienstleistungen wird im Wesentlichen nicht als Verantwortung des Staates betrachtet. Das aufkeimende Verständnis der 'zivilen Gesellschaft' als Vermittlung zwischen Staat und Bürger passt zur Sicht des Sozialwesens als Angelegenheit von Vereinen.

Die erste Lehre, die sich daher aus diesem Projekt ziehen lässt, ist die Tatsache, dass es auch noch andere, robuste Modelle gibt; eines dieser Modelle, das nicht zum derzeitigen Sozialmodell passt, ist das der nordischen Staaten. Um sicherzustellen, dass sämtliche Aspekte der zivilen Gesellschaft im Kontext der neuen sozialen Agenda Europas auf angemessene und nachhaltige Weise berücksichtigt werden, empfiehlt dieses Projekt dringend, die Erfahrungen und das Know-how der nordischen Staaten in Diskussionen mit der Europäischen Kommission und den NRO über zivile Gesellschaft und Entscheidungsstrukturen auf europäischer Ebene zu erörtern. Eine Methode hierfür wäre die Entwicklung eines Dialogs zwischen der Europäischen Kommission und dem Nordischen Ministerrat. Auch das ESN wäre gerne bereit, an diesem Prozess des beiderseitigen Lernens und der Weiterentwicklung mitzuwirken.

Die zweite Lehre lautet, dass Staat und lokale Behörden nicht dasselbe sind; die Bürger können vor Ort an Entscheidungen mitwirken, die ihr Leben als Dienstleistungsnutzer beeinflussen, indem sie individuelle Pflegeverträge oder -pläne abschließen, welche bei Bedarf von unabhängigen Fürsprechern unterstützt werden. Darüber hinaus verfügen sie über verschiedene Möglichkeiten, in ihrer Gesellschaft vor Ort mitzuwirken: durch Bürgerräte, Beratungsgruppen für Dienstleistungsnutzer, Dienstverwaltungsgruppen, Wohnheimausschüsse, innovative Nutzung von Informationstechnologie, Qualitätsprogramme, Bewertungen der Nutzerbeteiligung, unabhängige Überprüfungen oder über Ombudsmänner.

Diese Instanzen sind nur einige Beispiele für die vorbildliche Praxis lokaler Behörden in den nordischen und anderen europäischen Staaten. Wenn diese Erfahrungen auf europäischer Ebene zwischen dem öffentlichen Sektor und den NRO ausgetauscht würden, ließen sich die Wissensgrundlage Europas und somit unser Horizont beim Kampf gegen soziale Ausgrenzung und Diskriminierung erweitern.

Die dritte Erkenntnis: Wenn es bei der zivilen Gesellschaft darauf ankommt, die Demokratie vor Ort durch eine größtmögliche Beteiligung aller Bürger zu stärken, dann sollten die transnationalen Programme für eine zivile Gesellschaft unbedingt auch die lokalen Behörden als Teilhaber berücksichtigen. Hierbei handelt es sich nicht um ein rein nordisches, sondern um ein breiteres europäisches Thema, bei dem die zivile Gesellschaft in erster Linie unter dem Gesichtspunkt der Qualität der Beteiligung der Nutzer und Bürger an der Demokratie und den Dienstleistungen vor Ort betrachtet wird.

Fazit

Dieses Projekt wurde ins Leben gerufen, um die Sozialamtsleiter aller nordischen Staaten an einer Debatte über die Zukunft ihrer Wohlfahrtsmodelle und über die zivile Gesellschaft zu beteiligen. An dieser Debatte nahmen auch Vertreter des Nichtregierungssektors in den nordischen Staaten sowie Kollegen aus dem öffentlichen und NRO-Sektor anderer europäischer Länder teil.

In den nordischen Staaten mit ihrem einzigartigen Modell der sozialen Wohlfahrt und dezentralen Demokratie gibt es eine zivile Gesellschaft, an der sich sowohl die NRO als auch die lokalen Behörden als aktive Protagonisten beteiligen. Mit diesem Projekt wurde versucht, diese Erfahrungen besser zu verstehen; durch diesen Bericht sollen die Erfahrungen bekannt gemacht werden, um so u. U. dazu beizutragen, die Diskussion über soziale Entwicklung und die Aufgaben der lokalen Behörden und der NRO beim Aufbau einer europäischen Gesellschaft ohne Ausgrenzung zu bereichern.

Dialogue civil dans les pays nordiques :

Construire de nouveaux partenariats afin de combattre l'exclusion sociale et la discrimination

Introduction

La participation de tous les citoyens dans la société est au cœur de ce que l'on appelle l'Europe sociale. L'Union européenne considère par conséquent très important de faciliter et de soutenir la participation de tous les citoyens. Le Traité d'Amsterdam précise tout particulièrement la compétence de l'Union européenne en matière de lutte contre l'exclusion sociale et la discrimination.

Des inquiétudes quant au manque de participation des citoyens au gouvernement et dans leur communauté (comme le montre le faible taux de participation électorale), un sentiment de perte de pouvoir entre les élections, un accès limité aux décideurs, etc... ont conduit à un cadre dans lequel des ONG peuvent servir d'intermédiaires entre les citoyens et l'Etat, augmentant et renforçant ainsi la participation démocratique.

Les cinq pays nordiques, à savoir le Danemark, la Finlande, l'Islande, la Norvège et la Suède ont un système social distinct qui se fonde plus ou moins sur des services fournis par les services publics au niveau local. Les ONG remplissent un rôle caractéristique de défense ou de lobby pour certains usagers des services, mais elles ne fournissent pas en général les principaux services.

Etant donné que les ONG sont moins mises en évidence que dans un pays comme l'Allemagne par exemple, cela signifie-t-il que la société est « moins civile » ? Egalement, si une « société civile » existe dans les pays nordiques, en quoi diffère-t-elle et comment apprendre à la connaître peut-il contribuer plus largement au débat européen actuel ?

Le projet organisé par le réseau social européen a inclus trois groupes de réunion de mise au point thématiques qui se sont déroulées à Odense au Danemark les 27 et 28 mai, à Stockholm en Suède les 29 et 30 août et à Helsinki en Finlande les 11 et 12 octobre.

Le compte-rendu intégral de ces réunions est disponible dans la version principale en anglais de ce rapport, mais voici des exemples, pris dans chacun des pays nordiques, de participation des usagers impliquant les collectivités locales.

Cinq exemples de société civile et d'administration locale

Réfugiés – Islande

Il y a quelques années, la commune de Dalvíc (qui compte 2100 habitants), menée par son directeur des services sociaux, prit une initiative inhabituelle en invitant 23 réfugiés kosovars à rester dans la communauté pendant un an. Avec l'aide de la Croix-Rouge locale, ils établirent un vaste programme de soutien. Tous les citoyens reçurent des informations concernant le projet et furent invités à héberger les réfugiés chez eux, à les aider à trouver du travail et à scolariser les enfants.

Parmi les réfugiés, certains avaient des besoins spécifiques et les membres de la communauté travaillèrent ensemble afin d'offrir un nouveau départ à ces personnes traumatisées. Au bout des 12 mois, trois personnes rentrèrent au Kosovo et les autres s'installèrent en Islande. Voici un exemple d'action conjointe prise par une communauté locale, ses services sociaux et une ONG, afin d'assurer l'intégration de réfugiés.

Personnes handicapées – Suède

La Suède fut l'un des premiers pays d'Europe à introduire la pratique des «paiements directs» (en donnant aux personnes handicapées les moyens d'employer eux-mêmes leurs auxiliaires de vie et de gérer ainsi leur propre assistance personnelle). Cette approche vise à donner aux individus plus de pouvoir mais en Suède, à la surprise des collectivités, des groupes de personnes handicapées se sont organisés en coopératives et contractent à présent avec les collectivités locales, afin d'employer des professionnels et de gérer leur propre service social. Les paiements directs, dont la promotion se fait à travers toute l'Europe par des groupes d'usagers de services et souvent par les services publics, sont la démonstration d'un transfert unique de pouvoir aux personnes pour ce qui a trait à leur vie quotidienne, et mettent en valeur la participation de tous dans la société.

Personnes âgées à charge – Finlande

Les personnes âgées fortement dépendantes et placées dans une maison de retraite constituent une des catégories de personnes les plus privées de droits dans notre société. Et il n'est pas facile de leur permettre de participer aux décisions qui touchent aux services les concernant et à l'environnement dans lequel elles vivent. A Helsinki, les pensionnaires du Kustaankartano (Centre de services pour personnes âgées) sont représentés dans le groupe de gestion du centre par un programme d'information unique, avec des caméras qui diffusent en direct sur un écran les réunions du groupe de gestion, afin que tout pensionnaire ou employé puisse voir ce qui s'y passe et exprimer son point de vue par téléphone, s'il ne peut pas assister aux réunions. Ce système très ouvert a même permis aux plus impotents d'être au courant de ce qui se passait et de ressentir qu'ils pouvaient eux aussi participer à la vie de leur communauté en tant que citoyens.

Personnes toxicodépendantes – Danemark

Malgré le vaste système de protection sociale du Danemark, de plus en plus de jeunes et d'adultes confrontés à des problèmes de toxicomanie, à la criminalité, à la violence, etc... se retrouvent hors de portée des services d'aide traditionnelle. A Copenhague, le projet intitulé Baglandet mené par Lorens Lindemann, qui fut lui-même placé et en prison pendant de longues périodes, essaie de faire participer de telles personnes et leur fournit conseil, logement et assistance. Ce travail est le fruit d'un partenariat entre les collectivités locales et le projet, chacun reconnaissant son rôle distinct mais complémentaire, visant à répondre aux besoins de ceux qui sont en marge de la société. Cet exemple remarquable montre que quelqu'un qui commence dans la vie avec autant de désavantages peut aussi aider les autres, et que par un partenariat avec les services publics, de telles initiatives locales et indépendantes peuvent permettre même à des toxicomanes qui sont dans la rue d'être des citoyens.

Société civile et jeunes – Norvège

Un quartier de la ville d'Oslo a mis au point un programme de partenariat avec la jeunesse visant à donner plus de pouvoir aux jeunes et à améliorer les services communautaires, en réunissant des professionnels, des élus locaux, des ONG et les jeunes eux-mêmes. La collectivité locale finance une série de services et d'activités pour les enfants et les jeunes mais elle souhaite aller plus loin en faisant participer les jeunes dans la communauté en tant que citoyens à des dialogues sur leur futur, en leur permettant d'obtenir des conseils confidentiels, et de participer à des fêtes où l'on ne consomme pas de drogue, etc... Cette forme de travail ne s'est pas avérée sans difficultés pour les professionnels mais cela contribue à créer une responsabilité civique et une participation de jeunes potentiellement en marge de la société.

Analyse

Existe-t-il un modèle social typiquement «nordique» ?

Bien qu'il y ait plus de différences qu'on ne le pense parfois entre les cinq pays nordiques en matière de politique et de pratique sociales, ces pays partagent aussi de nombreuses similitudes, ce qui nous permet de manière plutôt justifiée de parler de modèle «nordique». Ceci ne veut pas dire que les services soient toujours différents de ceux des autres pays européens. Les maisons de retraite, les centres familiaux et les centres pour personnes ayant des difficultés d'apprentissage se retrouvent dans la plupart des pays européens qui adhèrent à des valeurs semblables, y compris à l'augmentation de la participation des usagers au fonctionnement des services qui les concernent.

Il existe cependant des différences entre la plupart des pays d'Europe continentale et les pays nordiques, ces derniers se distinguant par la relation particulière qu'ils entretiennent avec leurs citoyens à travers les collectivités locales. L'Etat Providence nordique se fonde sur un haut degré

d'universalité, tous les citoyens ayant accès à l'Etat et en bénéficiant. Les services sociaux et médicaux sont financés par les impôts nationaux et locaux, sans que les usagers de ces services aient à effectuer d'autres dépenses. L'inégalité en matière de revenu est faible, tout comme la pauvreté relative et absolue. A cela s'ajoute l'égalité des sexes, ainsi qu'une forte participation aux élections nationales et locales.

Les services sont en grande partie financés et directement fournis par les collectivités publiques locales et les administrations locales des pays nordiques étant relativement petites, leur accès y est facilité. La décentralisation démocratique, l'augmentation des impôts locaux et la responsabilisation des services sociaux locaux signifient que pour de nombreux citoyens de ces pays, les possibilités d'insertion et de participation dans la communauté sont peut-être plus élevées que dans tout autre pays européen comparable.

Malgré cette situation dans l'ensemble stable et populaire, des changements sont en train de se produire. Comme dans d'autres pays européens, les bouleversements sociaux affectent de plus en plus de jeunes et d'adultes, la toxicomanie, les sans-abri et les comportements anti-sociaux liés aux maladies mentales constituant des problèmes de communauté visibles. L'homogénéité traditionnelle est à présent remise en question par une augmentation importante du nombre de demandeurs d'asile et de personnes qui émigrent pour des raisons économiques. Dans le même temps, certaines personnes et certains groupes souhaitent devenir plus indépendants vis-à-vis des services sociaux traditionnels et faire valoir davantage leur point de vue quant à leur propre avenir. Le développement des groupes d'usagers et des paiements directs sont des exemples contemporains de participation directe des citoyens à leur propre système social.

Alors que peu de services sont fournis par le secteur privé au Danemark, c'est le contraire en Suède en particulier dans le domaine des maisons de retraite, et en Finlande en ce qui concerne les placements en famille d'accueil. Dans l'ensemble cependant, les membres du projet des cinq pays nordiques n'ignoraient pas qu'il existe bien un modèle caractéristique différent, solide et populaire.

Le rôle des ONG dans les pays nordiques

Malgré un système social très public dans les pays nordiques, on aurait tort de penser qu'il n'y existe peu ou pas de travail volontaire ou associatif; c'est en effet tout le contraire. L'activité des associations et des ONG y est traditionnellement importante, au point qu'en Suède, on estime que la moitié de la population appartient à une association quelconque, à caractère généralement social, que ce soit dans le domaine sportif, culturel ou éducatif; ces personnes passent environ six heures par mois à travailler dans des activités non-rémunérées. D'où le proverbe suédois selon lequel lorsque deux Suédois se rencontrent, ils créent une association !

L'adhésion à une association à caractère social sert à créer un lien sociétal, à se sentir à l'aise au sein d'une petite démocratie locale. Elle crée aussi un environnement informel dans lequel on peut porter assistance aux individus dans le besoin.

Dans les pays nordiques, la plupart des activités sociales des ONG se caractérise par une

préoccupation de défense des usagers et de promotion des droits et de l'indépendance de groupes spécifiques, dont beaucoup sont organisés par les usagers eux-mêmes. Il s'agit-là d'un rôle très important dans la mesure où des personnes fortement dépendantes peuvent être représentées et assistées de manière indépendante.

Les ONG des pays nordiques ne fournissent généralement pas les services principaux comme le font les ONG dans d'autres pays européens, bien qu'elles soient de plus en plus actives auprès des sans-abri, des toxicomanes et des personnes en marge de la communauté. Les collectivités locales sont en général la source principale de financement pour ces activités. On notera toutefois qu'il existe aussi des exemples de travail en commun entre le secteur public et les ONG.

Existe-t-il une société civile «nordique» distincte ?

Une nouvelle définition de la société civile (par le Comité des affaires économiques et sociales, septembre 1999) décrit le rôle des ONG comme étant un rôle de médiation entre l'Etat et les citoyens. Les raisons de cette position sont par exemple que l'Etat est trop éloigné du citoyen, comme en témoigne une participation électorale de moins en moins élevée, que les institutions traditionnelles comportent peu de femmes et sont donc manifestement sous-représentées, ainsi que l'absence de «véhicule» pour la participation et la consultation des citoyens et la fréquente difficulté d'accès aux services de l'Etat et d'assistance pour les exclus de notre société.

Une définition qui fonde uniquement sur le rôle des ONG serait manifestement inappropriée dans un contexte nordique et sans doute aussi dans un contexte européen plus large. Ce sont des sociétés où la participation électorale est forte, où le taux de participation des femmes est élevé et où les disparités de revenus sont faibles. Ce sont des sociétés dans lesquelles la démocratie est fortement locale et décentralisée et où les services sociaux sont fournis par le secteur public. Cela signifie-t-il que la société civile n'existe pas dans les pays nordiques ou bien qu'il existe une forme particulière de société civile en Europe du Nord ?

Selon les participants au projet, il existe dans les pays nordiques une société civile dans laquelle les services publics locaux jouent un rôle important, et si cela va à l'encontre de la définition du Conseil économique et social, un débat est alors nécessaire en Europe afin d'assurer qu'une meilleure compréhension du rôle du citoyen et de sa relation aux collectivités locales soit développée, dans les pays nordiques et ailleurs.

Ce que nous apprenons

A l'intérieur de l'Union européenne, les discussions sur l'avenir du système social montrent que l'on considère trop souvent que la fourniture de services sociaux ne relève pas de la responsabilité du gouvernement. La compréhension croissante de la notion de «société civile» comme médiation entre l'Etat et le citoyen correspond à l'idée que les services sociaux sont l'affaire des associations.

La première leçon à tirer de ce projet est par conséquent l'existence d'autres modèles qui sont solides, mais parmi lesquels on trouve le modèle nordique qui ne correspond pas à la tendance

actuelle en matière sociale. Afin de s'assurer que l'on développe de manière durable l'idée de société civile dans le contexte du nouvel agenda social européen, ce projet recommande fortement que l'expérience et le savoir-faire des pays nordiques soient présentés lors des discussions sur la société civile et la gouvernance au niveau européen entre la Commission européenne et les ONG. Une des manières d'atteindre cet objectif consiste à développer un dialogue entre la Commission européenne et le Conseil des ministres des pays nordiques. L'ESN aurait plaisir à faciliter un tel développement et une compréhension mutuelle.

La seconde leçon consiste à se rappeler que l'Etat et les collectivités locales ne représentent pas la même chose et que les citoyens peuvent participer au niveau local aux décisions qui affectent leur vie, en tant qu'usagers des services à travers des contrats d'assistance individuelle ou des plans organisés par des conseillers indépendants. Ils peuvent aussi participer en tant que membres de leur communauté locale, grâce aux conseils de citoyens, aux groupes de consultation des usagers des services, à l'adhésion aux groupes de gestion des services, aux comités des maisons de retraite grâce à une utilisation innovante des nouvelles technologies, aux programmes de qualité, aux audits de l'implication des usagers, aux inspections indépendantes et à la médiation.

Ce ne sont là que quelques exemples de bonne pratique par les collectivités locales dans les pays nordiques ou d'autres pays européens. Un échange européen de ces développements entre le secteur public et les ONG ne ferait qu'améliorer les connaissances de l'Europe et par conséquent nos perspectives sur l'exclusion sociale et la lutte contre la discrimination.

La troisième leçon qui résulte de tout ceci est que la société civile consiste à renforcer la démocratie au niveau local à travers une plus grande participation de tous les citoyens; ainsi, les programmes transnationaux sur la société civile devraient prendre en compte le rôle déterminant des collectivités locales. Ceci n'est pas une affaire uniquement nordique mais plutôt européenne au sens large, où l'on considérerait la société civile avant tout en termes de qualité et de participation de l'utilisateur et du citoyen dans une démocratie locale et des services locaux.

Conclusion

Ce projet a été conçu avec l'intention de faire participer les directeurs des services publics de tous les pays nordiques à un débat sur l'avenir de leur système social et de la société civile. Des représentants d'ONG des pays nordiques et des collègues du secteur public et d'ONG d'autres pays européens étaient également présents lors de ce débat.

Les pays nordiques ont, avec un modèle social unique et une démocratie décentralisée, une société civile dans laquelle aussi bien les ONG que les collectivités locales jouent un rôle actif. Ce projet vise à mieux comprendre cette expérience, et à travers ce rapport à mieux la faire connaître, et par là même peut-être à contribuer à une plus vaste discussion sur le développement social et le rôle des collectivités locales et des ONG dans la construction d'une société européenne à laquelle tout le monde participerait.

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