

Is there a social democratic civil society regime in the welfare field?

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Abstract

It is frequently assumed that voluntary and nonprofit organizations play a limited role in welfare service provision in the Nordic, social democratic countries. The public sector has the main responsibility for meeting the population's welfare needs (Janoski 1998; Salamon & Anheier 1998). This paper confronts this assumption with results from a comparative analysis of highly industrialized countries with extensive welfare arrangements. We focus on civil society sector employment in relation to total employment in the welfare field, including education and research, health, and social services. Explanatory factors are public welfare spending, share of income from donations, and religious homogeneity. Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Ragin 2000) is applied to sort countries in types. The results show that the consequences of public sector welfare spending on civil society welfare employment vary depending on other social conditions. In liberal countries, low public sector welfare spending results in a small civil society share of employment. The preconditions are religious heterogeneity and large shares of civil society income from donations. In other Western European countries, the size of public sector welfare spending is inversely proportional with the size of the civil society share of employment, depending on religious heterogeneity. The Nordic countries have the smallest share of civil society welfare services, highest religious homogeneity, and largest public welfare costs. They do not represent a separate constellation of factors, but are closely followed by presumably corporatist countries like France and Austria. When data from Denmark are available and taken into account together with recent developments, the distinctiveness of the Nordic countries will probably be further reduced.

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Introduction

A 'social democratic' civil society model or regime is often used to categorize the Scandinavian countries, or the Nordic group of countries. In the social democratic regime, it is assumed, voluntary or nonprofit organizations have a small share of the welfare services, because these fields are mainly the responsibility of the public sector. Voluntary organizations are, however, relatively active when it comes to the promotion of political, social and recreational interests (Janoski 1998; Salamon & Anheier 1998; Salamon et al. 2003; Salamon & Sokolowski 2001). The main purpose of this paper is to confront assumptions of this type in comparative research on nonprofit sector or civil society² with results from a comparative analysis. The empirical analysis focuses on employment in voluntary sector welfare services. Is there a social democratic civil society regime in the welfare field in Norway, Sweden and Finland? Do the voluntary sectors of these Nordic countries display conformity and distinctiveness in accordance with the theoretical assumptions? If so, can the commonalities of social democratic countries be explained by similar and distinct social mechanisms (Hedström & Swedberg 1998)? We compare data from the Nordic countries that so far have participated in the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project (CNP)³ – Sweden, Norway and Finland – (Helander & Sivesind 2001; Helander & Sundback 1998; Lundström & Wijkström 1997; Sivesind et al. 2002; Sivesind et al. 2004) with other highly industrialized countries with extensive welfare arrangements belonging to the corporatist and liberal regimes, i.e., EU countries, Australia and the USA (Salamon et al. 1999).

The idea of civil society regimes

The term civil society means a sphere in between the markets and the 'state'. It is also different from the private sphere, which covers on long-lasting, intimate relations between family members, relatives and friends (Cohen & Arato 1992; Ehrenberg 1999; Habermas 1992a; Janoski 1998). Participation in such activities is important for cultural, political and social integration, and for the social distribution of rights, obligations, and welfare.

² While the term 'nonprofit sector' means a sector other than the market and the state, 'civil society' in addition often is associated with a central importance for public discourse and a critical and constructive function (Habermas 1992b). This paper is concerned with civil society in the latter, wider sense, but the terms will be used synonymously.

³ In Denmark researchers are currently gathering data for their CNP-study, due for completion in April 2006.

It is commonly assumed that the design of public welfare services largely determines the share of voluntary welfare services. However, in civil society, interest and pressure groups often attempt to secure and expand the legal, political and social rights and duties of the citizens. At the same time such institutions and initiatives bolster these citizenship rights from domination by the market and the public sector (Cohen & Arato 1992; Ehrenberg 1999; Habermas 1992a). Voluntary organizations may be alternative providers of such services to the public sector (Hansmann 1987; Steinberg & Young 1998; Weisbrod 1977), there may be interdependence and partnerships (Grønbjerg 1987; Salamon 1987), or voluntary organizations may promote public involvement in welfare services (Kuhnle & Selle 1992a). In the research literature, there is little agreement on how to explain the voluntary sector's composition, size and role in society. This research shows clearly that no single factor explains the voluntary sector's importance. Instead, we find that mechanisms of one type of theory do a better job of explaining features of some countries, whereas other types of theories fit better with other countries. It may therefore be useful to divide countries into different types.

The concept of "regimes" has been of great significance in the field of welfare research. A regime is an ideal-typical pattern of causes and effects. Some ideal-typical traits may be common in some countries, less so in other countries. For instance, in his analysis of how welfare systems structure labor markets and stratification, Esping-Andersen constructed regimes from three general characteristics of welfare states: protections against loss of income, equality of benefits, and the prevalence of public over private welfare providers (Esping-Andersen 1990). Based on scores on these dimensions, it should be possible to distinguish between a social democratic regime, i.e. the Nordic countries (Sweden, Denmark, Norway and Finland) and the Netherlands; a traditional or corporatist regime, i.e. Central and South European countries; and the liberal regime of countries such as USA, Canada, Australia and Switzerland (Esping-Andersen 1990; Janoski 1998).

Regime theories presume that citizenship, welfare, and civil society depend on each other in different ways in different societies. For instance, some societies emphasize universal social rights, others individual, insurance-based arrangements. In consequence, civil society will vary in size, composition and role in different countries, and regimes are models or heuristic devices that make this variation more comprehensible (Janoski 1998; Salamon & Anheier 1998).

The idea of a regime means that the pattern of causality may vary between clusters of countries. However, the contention that a combination of factors can explain certain common characteristics of countries with resemblance to a certain regime, but not the characteristics of other countries, creates serious challenges to our use of methods. If we do not exclude the possibility that the same cause may have one effect in combination with certain causes in one regime, and another effect in other combinations of causes in other regimes, conventional methods that are used to find the most general causes or combination of causes in a sample, such as analysis of correlations or regressions, are rendered useless. We need methods that can differentiate between regimes or types of countries, and find which constellations of causes that can be associated with certain outcomes in each regime. We apply here a method called Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) (Ragin 1987; Ragin 2000) to sort countries in types or regimes. This analytic approach has not been used on the CNP data before.

A social democratic model

In a number of publications, Lester Salamon and his co-writers argue that economic nonprofit theory, such as government failure/market failure theory (Weisbrod, 1977), supply side theory (James, 1987) and trust theories (Hansmann, 1980; 1987) fail to account for characteristics of the nonprofit sectors in different countries due to their single-factor explanations (Salamon & Anheier 1998; Salamon & Sokolowski 2001).

As an alternative Salamon and co-writers present ‘social origins theory’ that views the nonprofit sector “as an integral part of a social system whose role and scale are a by-product of a complex set of historical forces” (Salamon & Anheier 1998: 245). The purpose of the theory is to classify the countries into different groups in which different causal mechanisms are in operation. This echoes by and large Barrington Moore Jr.’s classification of countries according to their “routes to the modern world” (Moore 1966), and Esping-Andersen’s three welfare “regimes” (Esping-Andersen 1990; Esping-Andersen 1999). The assumption is that there is no single factor that can explain the size and composition of the nonprofit sector in different countries. Complex relations exist between, on the one hand, social forces such as the working class, the landed and urban elites, the peasantry, and external powers, and on the other hand, social institutions like the state and the church. The objective of the theory is to explain current similarities and differences of nonprofit sectors in various countries in terms of size and composition of employment, expenditures, revenues, and volunteering. The proposition is that they cluster into four types they call the social democratic, corporatist,

statist and liberal models according to size of public welfare spending and scale of the nonprofit sector, or at least, that these four ideal-typical models are useful heuristic devices (Table 1).

Social democratic and corporatist countries both have large public welfare expenditures. The difference, according to the theory, should be that in the corporatist countries, larger shares of these expenditures go to voluntary sector service providers than in the social democratic countries, which consequently have smaller voluntary sectors. Here, the state “crowds out” the voluntary providers.

Table 1 *Social origins model of the nonprofit sector*

Public welfare spending	Nonprofit sector scale	
	<i>Small</i>	<i>Large</i>
<i>High</i>	Social Democratic	Corporatist
<i>Low</i>	Statist	Liberal

Source: (Salamon & Anheier 1998: 240)

Social origins theory predicts that the extensive public sector welfare of *social democratic regimes* or models should leave little room for nonprofit organizations in that field. They may, however, be quite active in other fields as vehicles for expression of political, social and recreational interests.

The explanation for this pattern, according to Salamon and Anheier, is that early in the phase of industrialization, the working class was able to exert effective political power, often in allegiance with other groups. Urban and/or landed elites had no blocking majority (Salamon & Anheier 1998:229 and 242). In this situation, it was in the interest of the social democratic rulers to secure the rights of their supporters to essential health, educational, and social services. Furthermore, the church authorities in many social democratic countries had been domesticated as a result of the Reformation. During the social democratic rule, according to these authors, church-related welfare was gradually absorbed by the public sector in the process of extending social rights. The public and third sectors were seen as alternative providers of welfare services, the former preferred by the social democrats because it offered the only way, it was thought, to ensure unitary standards and equal access for all.

The so-called expressive role of nonprofit organizations could grow unimpeded, because it was considered instrumental for the political mobilization that underpinned the social-democratic regime (Salamon & Sokolowski 2001: 15). This raises the question about which expressive organizations actually add force to the social-democratic regime. Volunteering is expected to abound in this expressive field, which, in this theory, includes culture, sports, recreation, environmental protection, political expression, advocacy, labor unions, and professional and business associations. We will use the term “membership based organizations” to designate this field. However, volunteering is expected to be low in the welfare service field which is seen as a public responsibility (Salamon & Sokolowski 2001: 16). Furthermore, “the voluntary sector would be financed more heavily by private charitable contributions” (Salamon & Anheier 1998: 230), since the sector was rejected as an alternative mechanism for meeting public needs in the welfare field.

This adds up to the following implications: The social democratic model should first result in extensive public social welfare services and a relatively small nonprofit sector, particularly in the welfare service field. Second, it should result in high levels of volunteering in the membership organizations, and low levels in the welfare field. Third, it should result in donations as a relatively large proportion of the funding base (Salamon & Anheier 1998: 230-31).

The social mechanisms (Elster 1989; Hedström & Swedberg 1996), which according to social origins theory can explain this pattern, are first, that the working class was able to exert effective political power, partly based on support from other groups. Second, the social-democratic rulers wanted to extend social rights to their supporters. Third, the public sector was consequently preferred to the third sector as a provider of welfare services. Fourth, the membership organizations were considered as instrumental for the political mobilization that underpinned the social democratic regime.

Comparative “fuzzy-set” analysis of civil society welfare employment

In the following analysis, we will try and find out if the Nordic countries belong to a social-democratic regime, when compared to advanced industrial countries with extensive welfare arrangements. We believe that the mechanisms that may explain the size of the civil society sector are different for different subfields such as culture and recreation, civic and advocacy,

housing etc. One important characteristic of the welfare field is that service providers from market, public and non-profit sectors in principle may replace each other wholly or in part. Instead of trying to explain the size of all civil society sector employment, we therefore focus exclusively on the welfare field, which means education and research, health, and social services. Measuring the size of the civil society sector in relation to all (nonagricultural) employment, as Salamon and Anheier do, also adds undesired heterogeneity, since the structure of employment varies greatly, even within the subgroup of countries selected. We therefore try to explain the share of the civil society sector employment in relation to total employment in the *welfare field*, including civil, public, and market sector providers.

This measure does not display any clear-cut regime differences at first glance. Norway, Sweden and Finland have the smallest civil society sector employment shares, but Netherlands, which is also sometimes thought to belong to a social democratic welfare regime, has the largest share. Continental European countries, presumably belonging to a corporatist regime, have larger shares than the UK, but smaller than USA and Australia, which presumably belong to a liberal regime. To find differences between groups of countries that correspond to regimes, we must see the shares of civil society sector employment in relation to constellations of relevant factors. Since the focus is on the Nordic countries, we will be looking for constellations of factors that help explain a small share of civil society sector employment in the welfare field.

We believe that both economic factors and historic/institutional factors are relevant for explaining such country differences. However, we want to account for the persistence of a regime, not just how it emerged during early industrialization. The first factor concerns a country's welfare state ambitions. They are measured by public welfare spending per inhabitant, which means social expenditures and direct expenditures on education (Source OECD). Does an ambitious welfare state "crowd out" the civil sector in the welfare field, or is there a symbiotic partnership? Salamon and Anheier's regime theory presumes that a large welfare state will "crowd in" a large civil society sector in corporatist countries. In the social democratic countries, however, a large welfare state will "crowd out" the civil society sector, whereas in liberal countries a small welfare state is substituted by a large civil sector in the welfare field.

The second factor covers donations as share of total income for civil society organizations in the welfare field. This has to do with the willingness of the population to contribute directly to civil society sector welfare services through donations and not just

indirectly through taxes. According to Steinberg, the extent to which government spending crowds out the nonprofit sector may depend on charitable donations and preferences for self-reliance (1991; 1998). What kind of exchange relationship do people have to the state? Do they expect the public sector to take care of their welfare needs because they pay taxes, or do they feel they ought to make direct donations? Janoski claims that people in different regimes develop varying conceptions of the exchange relationship with the state, or different citizenship-selves (1998). Salamon and Anheier presume that in a social democratic regime a large share of income from donations is associated with a small civil society sector, because it is rejected as an alternative mechanism for meeting public needs. Since the public sector does not tend to contract out welfare services to civil society organizations, they will have to rely on other sources of funding.

The third factor is the religious heterogeneity of the population, measured by the probability that two randomly selected persons belong to different religious groups. This can be related to Weisbrod's demand heterogeneity theory (Weisbrod 1977). A universalist welfare state, and hence a small civil sector in the welfare field, which is associated with a social democratic regime, would be easier to sustain if religious homogeneity is high. Under other circumstances, there will be demands that are not satisfied by the public sector services, resulting in a willingness to pay for nonprofit providers.

In table 2 below countries receive scores between 1 and 0 according to their belonging to the group of countries with small share of civil society sector employment in the welfare field. Among the advanced industrial countries with extensive welfare arrangements, only the Netherlands and Ireland are considered to have a large civil society sector in the welfare field. They are therefore the only countries attributed scores below 0.5. The civil society share of the welfare services in these countries is more than 75 percent, whereas no other country has more than 45 percent (USA). Sweden's share is only three percent, while Norway and Finland have 13 and 14 percent (unweighted average of three service fields. Source: CNP), close to the maximum score for belonging to the group of countries with small shares of civil society sector employment in the welfare field.

In the same way we have scored the countries according to their belonging to the group of countries with ambitious welfare state, with a large share of income from donations for civil society organizations in the welfare field, or with large religious homogeneity of the population.

Table 2 Fuzzy scores for analysis of small share of civil society sector welfare employment

	Small share of civil society sector welfare employment	Large public welfare spending	Large share of income from donations	Religious homogeneity
Sweden	0.97	0.94	0.39	0.87
Norway	0.87	0.84	0.18	0.89
Finland	0.86	0.69	0.39	0.86
UK	0.78	0.28	0.72	0.28
France	0.76	0.70	0.53	0.68
Austria	0.70	0.68	0.39	0.71
Germany	0.68	0.75	0.08	0.34
Italy	0.66	0.32	0.17	0.79
Australia	0.64	0.18	0.48	0.05
Spain	0.59	0.15	0.99	0.62
USA	0.55	0.35	0.70	0.22
Netherlands	0.24	0.59	0.01	0.26
Ireland	0.22	0.20	0.35	0.95

Sources: CNP and OECD

By using Charles Ragin's "fuzzy-set" comparative methods based on Boolean algebra (Ragin 1987; Ragin 2000), this table can be reduced to the following two expressions:⁴

Small civil society sector welfare employment =

Small public welfare spending AND Large share of income from donations AND Religious heterogeneity

OR

Large public welfare spending AND Religious homogeneity

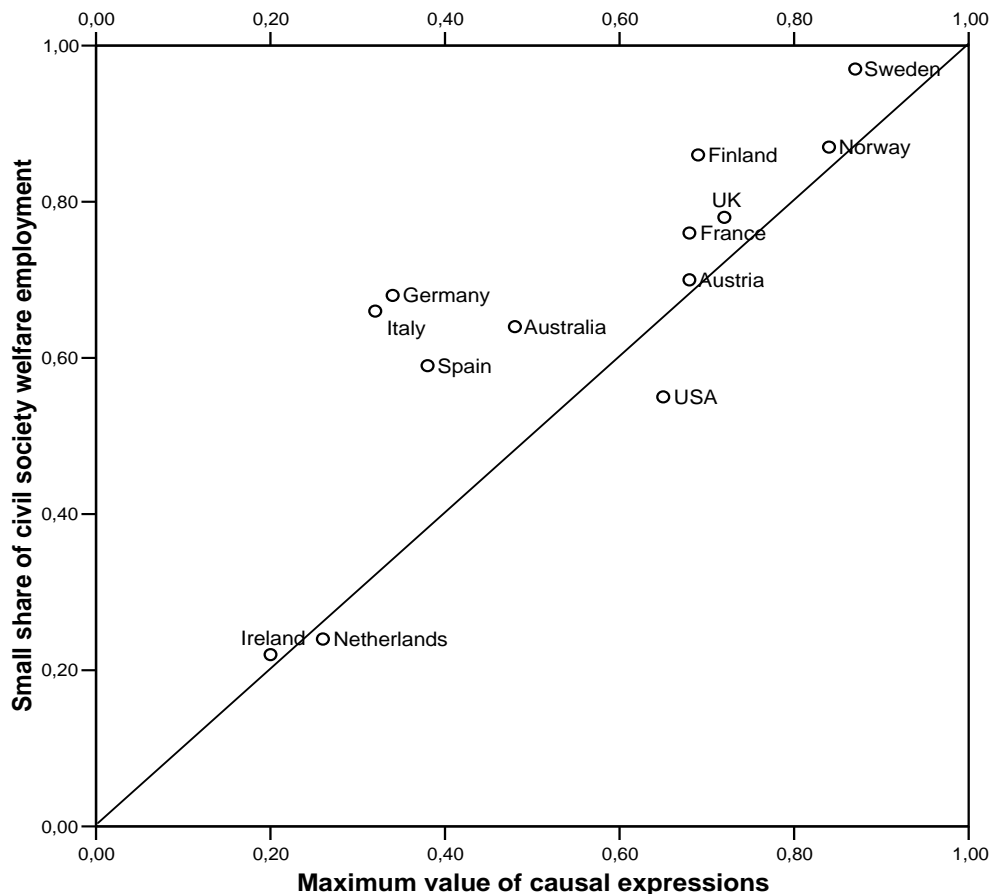
This shows that we have two regimes or constellations of factors. In the first, small civil society sector welfare employment is associated with *small* public welfare spending, a large share of income from donations, and religious heterogeneity. In the other, small civil society sector welfare employment is associated with *large* public welfare spending and religious homogeneity. The analysis shows that these expressions are *sufficient conditions* for a small share of civil society sector welfare employment. There is no need to make any simplifying assumptions about combinations of factors that lack empirical instances. There is, however, a

⁴ These expressions were generated by the computer program Fuzzy-Set/Qualitative Comparative Analysis 1.1 (Ragin et al. 2003).

third expression of factors that also are sufficient conditions for a small share of civil society sector welfare employment. This is a large public welfare spending and a large share of income from donations. We consider this expression to be redundant, since all countries are accounted for equally well (Ireland) or better by the two first expressions. We do not find any *necessary conditions*, i.e., outcome scores that are less than or equal to any causal conditions score. Given the complex nature of the matter, this is not surprising.

Figure 1 and table 3 below show that the two *sufficient sets of conditions* combined produce a very good fit with the expected outcome for all countries. In set-theoretical terms, the cases displaying the causal conditions form a subset of the cases displaying the outcome (Ragin 2000: 233). The highest score on any of the two sufficient sets of conditions should be close to, but lower than, the score on the outcome variable. In other words, the countries should be close to, but above, the diagonal in figure 1.

Figure 1 Civil society employment in the welfare field



Since the scoring of the countries is not an exact procedure, despite deriving from the best available statistics, we use an adjustment factor of 0.1 fuzzy points. This means that if no case has a score on a causal condition which is more than 0.1 fuzzy-membership units higher than the outcome variable, the pattern is considered consistent with causal sufficiency. This adjustment factor is only relevant for the Netherlands and the USA with a slightly *higher* score on one of the causal combinations than on the outcome variable. Countries with considerably *lower* scores on the any of the two sufficient sets of conditions than outcome variable, such as Germany, Italy, and Spain, show that there is still some variation that is not accounted for by these factors. Thirteen countries are too few to do a probabilistic testing of the model. However, the coverage of the model is 0.81,⁵ which is very good considering the simplicity of the causal expressions.

Table 3 *Fuzzy scores in expressions that are sufficient conditions for a small share of civil society sector welfare employment*

Country	Outcome	Causal conditions		
		SMALL public welfare spending * LARGE share of income from donations* Religious HETEROGENEITY	LARGE public welfare spending * Religious HOMOGENEITY	LARGE public welfare spending * LARGE share of income from donations
Sweden	0.97	0.06	0.87	0.39
Norway	0.87	0.11	0.84	0.18
Finland	0.86	0.14	0.69	0.39
UK	0.78	0.72	0.28	0.28
France	0.76	0.30	0.68	0.53
Austria	0.70	0.29	0.68	0.39
Germany	0.68	0.08	0.34	0.08
Italy	0.66	0.17	0.32	0.17
Australia	0.64	0.48	0.05	0.18
Spain	0.59	0.38	0.15	0.15
USA	0.55	0.65	0.22	0.35
Netherlands	0.24	0.01	0.26	0.01
Ireland	0.22	0.05	0.20	0.20

Note: Bold shows the causal expression with maximum score for each country

The results from the comparative analysis are in line with the assumption that the selected advanced industrial countries with extensive welfare arrangements belong to different regimes

⁵ "Coverage" concerns the relative importance of combinations of sufficient conditions in the effort to explain or "cover" instances of the outcome (Ragin 2003).

when civil society sector welfare employment is considered. The UK, Australia and USA have maximum scores close to their scores on the outcome variable on the combination of small public welfare spending, a large share of income from donations, and religious heterogeneity (table 3, column 3). Spain also has its maximum score on this combination. However, the difference to the outcome score is large, which indicates variation weakly accounted for by any of the causal expressions.

The other European countries have maximum scores close to their score on the outcome variable on the combination of large public welfare spending and religious homogeneity (table 3, column 4). The Nordic countries, France and Austria belong to this regime. Netherlands and Ireland also have maximum scores close to their score on the outcome variable on this combination. However, the scores are low on the outcome variable, as well as on the causal expression, which indicates that large shares of civil society sector employment in the welfare field can be accounted for by religious heterogeneity and small public welfare spending. Germany and Italy also have their maximum scores on this combination. However, the difference to the outcome score is large, which indicates variation weakly accounted for by any of the causal expressions.

The analysis suggests that causal mechanisms that may contribute to sustaining small shares of civil society sector employment in the welfare field are related to, but different from, those described by Salamon and Anheier.

The first mechanism operates in the liberal regime where small public sector welfare spending results in a small civil society share of employment in the field (table 3, column 3). The preconditions for this mechanism are religious heterogeneity, and large shares of civil society income from donations. According to Weisbrod's theory (1977), the public sector's supply of welfare services, reflecting the median voter's preferences, will leave an unsatisfied demand in a country with great heterogeneity. To meet this demand people are willing to pay for welfare services through donations. Heterogeneity theory does not predict, say Steinberg and Young (1998: 252), whether this results in large public sector employment or contracting out to other sectors. Heterogeneity theory can be properly tested therefore on the relationship between government spending and private social service donations. We find a constellation of factors, i.e., small public spending and a large share of donations in countries with high religious heterogeneity, in line with Weisbrod's theory. To understand why this results in a small share of civil society welfare services, we propose a theory of partnership and interdependence between the two sectors (Grønbjerg 1987; Salamon 1987). The voluntary

sector has inherent limitations in meeting public needs, including difficulty with generating resources to scale up operations. The public sector, on the other hand, fails in situations of great heterogeneity. Under such circumstances, a cooperative relationship may develop. However, because of the reliance on public funding, small public welfare spending also results in small civil society employment in the welfare field. The market sector is therefore an important provider of certain types of welfare services in the liberal countries.

The second mechanism is not as clearly linked to a given regime, but operates when public sector welfare spending is *inversely* proportional to civil society share of employment in the field (table 3, column 4). In countries with high religious homogeneity, it is possible for the public sector to provide services that satisfy the needs of the median voter (Weisbrod 1977). An ambitious welfare state may then “crowd out” civil society organizations, as in the Nordic countries, France and Austria. In contrast to expectations from the regime theories, these countries do not represent separate constellations of factors. France and Austria are presumed to be corporatist countries, but comes close to the social democratic countries. The same mechanisms also explain why countries with high religious heterogeneity, like the Netherlands, go to the other extreme with a large share of civil society employment in welfare services.

However, “crowding out” may only be a part of the story. In the Nordic, “state-friendly” societies, broad, general welfare organizations working for other groups than their own members have often spurred increased public responsibility in the welfare field (Berven 2001; Kuhnle & Selle 1992b). The collaborative search for the common good has been facilitated by a universalist welfare state based on generalized exchange principles; the recipients of welfare services tend to represent different generations and social groups than those who pay. This redistributive welfare state regime has enjoyed wide popular support in the Nordic countries with homogeneous populations, small wage differentials as the result of highly coordinated industrial relations, and a perceived need to ensure protection against rapid changes in open economies. However, an expanding knowledge economy that creates stronger incentives for individual wage formation and social insurance may eat into support for universalism (Barth et al. 2003). The welfare arrangements depend on people’s understanding of the exchange relationship with the public sector (Janoski 1998). If this understanding shifts towards restricted exchange in the Nordic countries, it may inaugurate the spread of a contract culture regulating relations between public sector and civil society.

Conclusion

This analysis shows that there are different relationships between civil society, welfare state, and citizenship rights, in line with the regime theories. The consequences of the size of the public welfare costs vary with constellations of other factors. Small public sector welfare spending results in a small share of civil society welfare services in the liberal regime, while there is an inverse proportional relationship in other Western European countries. The Nordics are among the countries with the smallest share of civil society welfare services, highest religious homogeneity, and largest public welfare costs, but they do not represent a different constellation of factors, or regime. They have conformity, but contrary to theories of a social democratic civil society regime, they lack distinctiveness. France and Austria are presumed to be corporatist countries, but come close to the social democratic regime. In contrast to expectations, the welfare state tends to “crowd out” civil society organizations.

It may be possible to single out a social democratic regime by including other factors in the analysis, as for instance the strength of left-leaning parties and unions. Imminent data from Denmark and updates from Sweden and Norway may present new possibilities and challenges to the analysis. In Denmark, the civil society share of welfare services might be higher than in the other Nordic countries, because of a long tradition of extensive cooperation and multiple forms of partnership (Bundesen et al. 2001; Henriksen & Bundesen 2004). In Sweden, the civil society share, which was very low in the early Nineties, has probably increased, for the most part due to changes in the education system and the end of formal public control of the Church of Sweden. However, if these expectations hold true, the distinctiveness of the Nordic countries will be further reduced. We may in the mean time conclude that this analysis illustrates what seems to be a useful method for finding constellations of factors by combining different kinds of theories, and thus empirically outline civil society regimes in relation to citizenship and welfare state regimes.

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