



Esko Kähkönen & Teemu Pauha (eds.)

**Faith-Based Social Action in Combating
Marginalization**

Conference Proceedings, Helsinki, 17.–18.11.2011

Esko Kähkönen & Teemu Pauha (eds.)

**FAITH-BASED SOCIAL ACTION IN COMBATING
MARGINALIZATION
CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS, HELSINKI, 17.-18.11.2011**

**Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulu
Helsinki 2011**

PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED REPORT

Einar Vetvik (Diakonhjemmet University College)

POVERTY AND DIGNITY IN A RICH WELFARE STATE — THE CASE OF NORWAY. DOES DIAKONIA MATTER?

1 Introduction

This paper is about poverty in a rich state, which is also a welfare state — contemporary Norway. A hundred years ago Norway was a poor country in the North Western Periphery of Europe. Poor economic conditions led to a massive emigration from Norway to the USA in the period from 1870–1930. The emigration rate as a percentage of the population was only exceeded by Ireland among the European countries.

This paper is structured to address the following questions relating to the main theme. Has the rich welfare state abolished poverty? If not, which forms of poverty exist? What interest and response does the problem stimulate in Norway today? How does poverty appear in statistics and social life? What is the role of public policy and diakonia in combating the existing forms of poverty? Does diakonia matter, that is, does it make a difference in terms of its impact on important aspects of poverty in Norway? These questions are considered in this paper from comparative and contextual perspectives using both national and international data.

Poverty is as old as human life and it is related to other problems threatening the quality of life and in severe cases life itself, like starvation, illness and lack of care. In the past this challenge to life was overcome by work and family solidarity based on an informal contract between the generations. Even though this has been modified and changed in the modern world, the institutions of work and family are still more important for poverty relief than is normally recognized. But the sharing that takes place within the fa-

mily over a life time in accordance with the cycle of life does not redistribute resources over different income strata.

At present more than eight million people die from poverty each year (Sachs 2005). This is related to the stark reality of extreme poverty which means that people and households lack basic means of survival. The standard for defining extreme poverty used by the World Bank is a purchasing power of less than one US dollar per day per person. Moderate poverty as a less severe category is defined as income between one and two dollars per person per day, barely enough to meet basic needs. More than 90% of the world's extreme poor live in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Overall extreme poverty in the world declined strongly between 1981 and 2001, but in sub-Saharan Africa extreme poverty was much increased over the same period (Sachs 2005). It was against this background that the UN made its Millennium Declaration which includes several socio-economic goals, the first of which was to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day between 1990 and 2015.

The situation with regard to poverty is markedly different in Europe and particularly northern Europe. Poverty is also a social/political issue here, but in a different form. The concept most commonly used here is relative poverty, which is defined and measured as the income of a household/person 50% (in OECD) or 60% (in the EU) below, average income as measured by the median income in each nation. This means that poverty in the public statistics and political discussion in the western world is mainly connected to income inequality in the population. It also means that the poverty threshold in terms of purchasing power for the individual varies significantly from nation to nation for example in the European Union. In the academic world and research it is necessary to go deeper in analyzing the empirical data to provide more knowledge on a complicated phenomenon. Although for academic and research purposes deeper analysis taking account of complicated phenomena has to be undertaken it should not be overlooked that poverty is strongly connected to income distribution and inequality in a given society.

Poverty is of course normally viewed as an unwanted social phenomenon, which attracts social and political attention although to varying degrees. Over the last 20 years the issue of poverty has once again become a focus of concern within Europe, both in nation states and increasingly in the Eu-

ropean Union (EU). In the Lisbon strategy for the period 2000–2010, the EU declared that poverty in EU should be abolished by 2010. The EU asked members to formulate national action plans (NAP) for implementation of the goal.

As it is well known, this strategy did not succeed at all. Poverty increased through the period. But the EU did not give up fighting poverty. The year 2010 was proclaimed the European year for combating poverty and social exclusion. Learning from its experience in implementing the Lisbon strategy EU realized that poverty was a more complex and difficult problem than earlier believed. The new EU development strategy for the period 2010–2020 was based on a modified goal of reducing poverty among the citizens of member states by 20 million persons. The precise meaning of this goal remains somewhat unclear.

2 What is poverty? About the concept and understanding of poverty

Poverty is a classical social problem which societies and politicians in Europe (Rowntree 1951) and all over the world have tried to resolve (Sachs 2005). Sometimes the problem has been proclaimed solved in the modern affluent welfare societies in EU and OECD. At the end of the 1960's and in the 1970's politicians in Norway declared that poverty had been overcome. These statements reflected the fact of economic and social progress but the frame of reference was poverty in the form of people lacking basic means of subsistence. Relative poverty in the form of economic inequality, labeled by some as “the new poverty”, was never abolished. Current data shows that poverty is still present in wealthy welfare states (See Eurostat and OECD statistics). At the end of the 1970's the very important work “Poverty in the United Kingdom” by Peter Townsend (1979) presented a broad and thorough approach to modern Poverty studies.

Use of the concept of “poverty” declined in social policy studies and the public debate (Lavalette & Prat 2006). Other concepts such as “social exclusion”, “low income”, “marginalization”, “relative deprivation”, “low standard of living/conditions” and others have been used instead or as supplements (Lister 2004). Among the possible reasons for this are both new insights into the problem and its correlations and also the wish to avoid stigmatising people in poverty. These can be seen as positive and legitimate reasons but

can also be seen as escapism arising from uneasiness about society's lack of success in handling the problem. Poverty is seen as something which is best not mentioned by its crude, but proper name.

In Norway there has been a revival in the use of the poverty concept in the last 15 year (Fløtten, Pedersen & Lødemel 2009). There are several reasons for this. The fact that grassroots client organizations started to use the poverty label on themselves was important. Also political parties and the government became aware of poverty again and put it on the political agenda.

Poverty can be understood as consisting of three dimensions.

The first and basic is about money, that is, total economic capacity. Poverty is about lacking economic resources for a normal life in society for an individual or a household. This is relative poverty, a significant negative deviation from the average economic standard in the given society. Level of income is the central denominator, but other economic factors such as wealth and social capital contribute to the assessment. When the level is so low that material basic needs like food, clothes, housing and care cannot be met, it is appropriate to use concepts such as "strong deprivation" or "absolute poverty."

Poverty is basically about lack of economic resources but many factors that correlate with lack of economic resources, both in terms of causes and of consequences have to be taken into consideration to understand the phenomenon. This is reflected in the second and the third dimension of the concept of poverty.

The second dimension of poverty is social exclusion. This includes low participation, low integration into society and sometimes real isolation. This dimension relates to economic poverty both with regard to causes and consequences. Social inclusion in a community is the opposite of this.

The third dimension of poverty is lack of dignity in the sense of lack of respect and value demonstrated by the way that a person is treated in society and by his/her fellows. Dignity is a crucial attribute of being human. Most of the international human rights conventions and declarations have an initial reference to the dignity of all mankind as a precondition and a basis for the different human rights. See for example the Preamble to the United Nation Declaration of the fundamental human rights from 1948 (Laqueur & Rubin 1989). Dignity is also a fundamental precondition for the rights in the European Social Charter. The dignity dimension enlarges

our understanding of poverty as something spiritual in addition to its economic and social aspects. Dignity is about equal rights, self-determination, respect and human value.

Empirical analyses show that the three dimensions are correlated. The problems are related and partly overlapping. Having one problem increases the risk of suffering from the others. We also see that they often develop into vicious circles of causes and consequences reinforcing each other. This phenomenon can be illustrated by a passage from the bible, the so called Matthew principle (Mt. 25:29). Poverty and its problems are often transferred from one generation to the next; a social and economic inheritance. In political science poverty has been connected to social policy, distribution of resources and power in a broad sense (Bachrac & Baratz 1970). In Norway the concept “political poverty” has been used to describe “powerlessness” as an important aspect of poverty (Jacobsen 1970).

3 The return of poverty to the Norwegian political and academic agenda

In a book with the critical title “The myth of the welfare state” (Lingås 1970) a group of radical academics pointed to the fact that there were few studies and little information about poverty in Norway at that time (Aubert 1970). On the political level poverty was little discussed and the general view was that poverty belonged to history. But towards the end of the 1970’s research started to rediscover poverty in the western world (Stjernø 1989). Poverty also was put on the agenda in the European Community where a report to the Commission reported more than 10 million people living in poverty in the member states. In Norway Steinar Stjernø published “The modern poverty” (Stjernø 1985). He reported that there was little interest in the question of whether poverty was still a fact of life in Norway up to that time. His study concluded that the new/modern poverty was best understood as a relative poverty. 5% of the adult population had an income of less than 50% of the average income in Norway in the beginning of the 1980’s. 5% of the population at the same time had an income lower than the lowest pension from the National Insurance System (Folketrygden). Stjernø referred in his work to Peter Townsend’s definition of poverty in his extensive work on poverty in the UK (Townsend 1979). The fruitful concept of “relative dep-

rivation” was central to his definition, that is, a situation where people lack the necessary resources to obtain adequate food, equipment and social life that are common in the society where they belong.

During the 1990’s little happened with regard to the poverty issue in Norway. Norway was much less affected by the economic crisis that for example became a real, major problem in Finland and some other European countries. But from the end of the 1980’s Norway also had to reconsider some of the development which took place during the 1980’s where a conservative government had pursued a more liberal economic policy. This resulted in a banking crisis and massive government support to stabilize the economic system.

Finland and Sweden joined the European Union in 1994, partly as a response to these economic problems. In Norway the majority of the people voted against membership in spite of a massive campaign from the political elites, the economic elite and the overwhelming majority of the media. It may be seen as a true sign of democracy that the people can still beat the elites of a society in a fight over really important issues in a peaceful way, by voting. There were many reasons behind the people’s No-vote in the referendum about membership of the EU. Protection of the welfare state and a desire to maintain control over the country’s vast natural resources were central issues. There was also concern about the so called democratic deficit in the EU and a desire to protect national political independence. In national election campaigns from 2001 onwards, poverty became a central issue on the political agenda. It was seen as problem, if not a shame, that the rich welfare state had to realize that the poverty in the country had not been abolished. The issue was brought to the centre of national politics by various governments. In 2003 the Ministry of Social Affairs on behalf of the Center-Right/conservative coalition government published an action plan to combat poverty (Det kongelige sosialdepartement 2002). In the election campaign before the 2005 election opposition Social democratic parties attacked the government parties for lack of success in the matter. They argued that the problem was easy to solve. They argued that if the political will was there, the means to solve the problem were available. The so called red-green coalition (Social Democrats, Socialist Left Party and the Agrarians/Green Party) won the 2005 election and formed a new government. In the government’s declaration they promised to eradicate poverty in the co-

ming four year period. A new plan to combat poverty was launched in 2007. Norway was thus on the same wavelength as the EU statement in the Lisbon Strategy. As in the EU the much regretted conclusion at the end of the period was that poverty was on about the same level as before, measured by relative income indicators. This represented not only a problem for political rhetoric and the credibility of politicians, but could be understood as a severe dysfunction of the welfare state. As the rhetoric says, the quality of the welfare state is best measured by the way poor and marginalized people are treated both with regard to dignity and to material wellbeing (Chan & Bowpitt 2005). On the positive side it was commonly accepted that the poverty issue was more complicated and demanding to solve, than had earlier been believed. This emerged as one result of the 2009 election campaign. The time for the bold promises was over.

The issue has not been shelved however. The Red-Green coalition won the election again in 2009, probably benefiting from the effects of the international economic crisis. The majority of the population held the opinion that the crisis was an argument for the continuation of a political leadership which was implementing elements of a Keynesian economic-policy approach to the economy. Some on the Conservative side voiced more liberal economic ideas.

The government has continued to focus on welfare issues, employment and social policy. The political differences over these issues are however smaller in Norway than in many other countries. The idea of “principled pragmatism” (Heclø 1979) is a common heritage in Norway and the Scandinavian countries. This paves the ground for a high degree of consensus and compromise on a practical level in most health, social and welfare policy issues (Elder, Thomas & Arter 1988).

The political will to continue an emphasis on poverty and poverty related issues has recently been documented in a public report to the government with the title: “Welfare and migration. The future of the Norwegian model” (Det kongelige arbeids og velferdsdepartement 2011) and a Government Report to the Parliament: “The report on distribution” (Det kongelige finansdepartement 2011). These reports contain a lot of empirical data and important analyses and value statements about the actual status of the multifaceted poverty issues in public policy.

In the report to the Parliament the government stated that the “The goal

of the government is a society without poverty”. The action plan to combat poverty will be continued in 2012, the report says.

The will of the government is thus clear. Various means to accomplish this are analyzed and discussed. The government policy is to attack the problem in a broad, comprehensive/holistic manner with a long term perspective and emphasis on preventive measures. This is a very important positive basis for working to meet the poverty from the central political level. This may be seen as a necessary condition for improving the situation. But it is probably not sufficient to handle the poverty issue as it appears on the micro level of individual problems in local society. The understanding of the problem and the instruments the government proposes to handle it may be questioned. To what extent is government policy adequate and relevant to meet real challenges as they emerge in concrete terms on the local level? The relationship between intention and reality needs to be examined both more extensively and more intensely.

This point can be developed by looking at some basic information about the Norwegian welfare state structure and its functioning. A comprehensive picture of the main pillars of the Norwegian welfare state is presented in two recent books (Hatland, Kuhnle & Romøren 2011; Halvorsen & Stjernø 2008). The latter is in English.

4 Some aspects of the structure of the Norwegian welfare state model

The formation of Norway’s modern welfare state dates back to the end of World War 2. The economic crisis in the 1930’s lead to strong support for Keynesian economic policy amongst the ruling elite. Also the experience of the resistance and necessity of solidarity during the Nazi occupation from 1940–45, paved the way for the proclamation of the goal to create a welfare state after the war. All political parties signed a joint statement in 1945 to cooperate to implement this goal.

The building and operation of the welfare state coincided with the longest growth period in Norway both economically and socially. Without going deeper into questions about causality, it may be maintained that this development, which is fairly similar in the Scandinavian countries, modifies or even contradicts the popular liberal economic theory that high social protection, in the form of public spending to obtain a high level of so-

cial and economic security in a society, will harm the economic performance of that country.

The basic structure of the welfare state was completed around 1970. From this point in time a new development started that is very important for the performance and the challenges of the welfare state today. Firstly there is the strong movement towards gender equality and a changed role for women in society, as well as a change regarding the role and functions of the family. At present we see a situation where females are equal with men both with regard to work and education. Secondly Norway changed to become a country of immigration. From a modest beginning Norway today has an immigrant population on the same level as the other Scandinavian and North western European countries. Thirdly, Norway found oil in the North Sea/Norwegian Sea, and after initial investment costs oil and gas production since the 1980ies have made an important contribution both to the private and the public economy of the country. Most of the surplus from the state income from the oil sector is kept in financial funds which have been steadily growing and is designed to give security for the growing pension costs in the future (Halvorsen & Stjernø 2008).

During the Neo-liberal period in the 1980's the idea that the future of the welfare state was insecure and its days numbered was voiced both in politics and in academia, in Norway as elsewhere (Glennerster 1983; Kolberg 1983; Ringen 1981). In one of my works I argued, on the basis of a survey of a representative sample of Norwegian citizens, that the welfare state was regarded positively and that the support from the people would continue if the need for more information and participation from the citizens was met by the system (Vetvik 1988). The support of the population has always been an important element in strengthening the legitimacy of the welfare state in shifting political and economic environments (Bay, Blomberg-Kroll & Kroll 2009).

The welfare state continued, with some elements changed, but the basic structure survived and it has been maintained as the central structure of social policy in Norway. Since 1990, however, use the concept of the welfare state has declined. The new concept "welfare society/community" has been used in order to make the point that the wellbeing of society is not solely the task of the public sector.

The Scandinavian version of the welfare state is a political organisation

of a nation where the state has undertaken the basic responsibility to protect its citizens/inhabitants from the effects of social problems through legislation granting rights and services to help people to sustain a normal life in society. The value of dignity and human rights underpins this obligation. The mantra of the system for individual members of society is: “Do your duty. Claim your rights.” This is a strong ethical obligation that may best be understood when the Lutheran religious tradition in Norway is taken into account. A strong emphasis on work ethics is a central aspect of the principle of the welfare state.

There are two principal dimensions which need to be measured to assess the quality and sustainability of a modern welfare state.

The first dimension is the quality of the social fabric of society and its sustainability. Because social problems appear and must be handled in a broad social context, the question of how “good the society” is for the people living there, is central. If a high level of social and societal problems are present in a society, more resources are needed to combat them than in a society with fewer and lower levels of problems. A society with a poor economy, high levels of social conflict, poor health conditions and high levels of unemployment, represents a greater challenge to social policy and poverty relief, than a society with more positive scores on these variables.

Secondly, the capacity and quality of social policy with regard to income maintenance and social services, among others, is very important in determining the total sustainability of the society. These two dimensions are correlated positively and negatively. They reinforce each other. Low levels of problems and high sustainability of the social fabric makes it easier for the social policy system to build capacity to cope with problems. This capacity is particularly needed when society is faced with new challenges. Thus such a system contributes to building and sustaining trust, credibility and responsibility in society. This can be understood as belonging to good or vicious circles (Mt. 28). Another concrete and simple illustration of this point, at least partially, is given in the biblical story of Joseph’s dream about the seven good years which were followed by the seven bad years and how to handle these changing economic conditions (Gen. 41). This may also be expressed by the modern term of shifting economic cycles.

The main points emerging from these considerations are that if the sustaining structures of a society collapse, there is no social policy system that

has the capacity to deal with the consequences of it. And if there is no will in the population or policy from the government to build capacity in the public sector and its welfare systems, you cannot expect the public sector to be able support you much when a crisis comes. The ongoing crisis in Europe can perhaps be seen as an illustration of this.

This also means that social spending figures do not always show the generosity or the priority of social policy in a society. The employment situation and demographic factors may cause both reduction and increase in social spending at different times, regardless of, or with little correlation, to political priorities.

Socio-economic progress has been the main driver of Norway's progress from a poor country with few social rights, rudimentary income maintenance systems and few social services and towards a rich welfare state. Simultaneous and related investment in a comprehensive and relatively generous welfare state in interplay with this has been the pattern for the last 60 years. This has reduced and changed the country's social problems and challenges. No society can, however, completely solve its social problems in the sense that no problems will occur. The Norwegian sociologist Gudmund Hernes has stated that whatever reforms are undertaken, there will still be problems to solve. Solutions often create new problems. Hernes states that what we must find out is whether we prefer present problems to the problems of the past (Hernes 1988).

The goal of the welfare state is to address social problems, their causes and correlations — to help people and particularly to abolish or at least reduce the relatively strong correlation / overlap between poverty, health and lack of care as basic social problems; again, maintaining good circles and breaking vicious circles in the life of human beings.

The following chapter gives an overview of the present situation using statistical data relating to some important factors regarding poverty in the Norwegian welfare state to make the discussion more concrete. Some resource variables are presented and then some problem indicators are examined.

5 Central data about the Norwegian welfare state in a comparative perspective

In table 1 we present some data on national economy, the economy of the

households and employment for some European countries and the USA.

5.1 Economic resources

TABLE 1. INCOME AND EMPLOYMENT IN SOME COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	NNI/CAP	HOUSE- HOLD INCOME	EMPLOYMENT (15–64 Years)
	2006	2009	2007
Norway	45.600 USD	31.000 USD	76.5%
USA	38.900 USD	31.000 USD	67.6%
United Kingdom	30.000 USD	25.000 USD	70.6%
Netherlands	31.800 USD	24.000 USD	75.8%
Sweden	31.200 USD	23.000 USD	72.2%
Finland	28.200 USD	21.000 USD	68.4%
Germany	27.600 USD	21.000 USD	70.4%
Italy	24.400 USD	17.000 USD	57.5%
OECD Average	26.500 USD	19.000 USD	66.1%

Source and explanation: The sources for this information are the publications *Society at a glance 2009 – OECD Social Indicators* and *Society at a glance 2011 – OECD Social Indicators*. The columns Net National Income per Capita and Average Household Income are both measured in USD and adjusted for different price levels by using PPPs (Purchasing Power Parity standards).

The table demonstrates Norway's solid economic position for, particularly with regard to the national income, but also with regard to the average household income. The correlation between the income variables and the total level of employment is also clear, even though the US has a lower employment rate as compared to the income variables.

The high level of employment in Norway, Netherland and Sweden is connected to a general high level of productivity and economic activity. It is also connected to the fact that in the Nordic countries, particularly in Norway and Sweden, the percentage of employment in the age group 55–64 is much higher than in the euro countries or in EU-27 (European Union 2010, table 5.1). This is among other factors connected to the formal pen-

sion age. When the French turn to the streets to fight a one year increase of their relatively low pension age, this is not well understood in the Nordic countries.

Another factor making an impact on the total level of employment is the high level of work participation for females, almost on equal level with men. This is clearly connected to effects of welfare state family policy in the Nordic countries. This is also reflected in current higher fertility rates for the Nordic countries compared to southern and eastern Europe.

Another way of presenting national wealth is to measure GDP per capita in PPPs. In the Eurostat table 1.1 for 2010, containing figures from 2008, we find that Norway scores 190 where the average of the EU-27 is 100 and the euro area is 108. The US scores 154, Netherlands 135, Sweden 121, UK 117, Finland 115, and Italy just on the average by 100.

The figures for state debt show that the euro area has higher debt than the EU-27. The Nordic countries, with the exception of Iceland, have a much more comfortable situation with regard to this in comparison with large EU countries like Italy, France and also Germany (European Union 2010, table 1.6).

Data on taxation as a percentage of GDP show that the Nordic countries, with the exception of Iceland, have a higher level of taxation than the average both in EU-27 and the average in the euro area (European Union 2010, table 1.7). The point is that in the Nordic countries more of the cost for the households and for contributions to and services from the welfare state are met from taxation. As it can be seen from the data, this does not mean that the economy of these countries and their households are weaker than the average in EU and the OECD. On the contrary — the Nordic countries are scoring higher.

5.2 Problem indicators: unemployment, inequality and poverty

In table 2 we give an overview on the factors unemployment, inequality and poverty in Norway in comparison to some other European countries and the USA, same countries as in table 1. The sources are data from OECD and Eurostat.

TABLE 2. UNEMPLOYMENT, INEQUALITY AND POVERTY IN SELECTED COUNTRIES

COUNTRY	UNEMPLOYMENT 2009	INEQUALITY, Late 2000s	POVERTY, Late- 2000s
	% of total employment	Gini Coefficient	50% of median income
NORWAY	3.2%	0.25	7.8%
USA	9.4%	0.38	17.3%
UNITED KINGDOM	7.8%	0.34	11.3%
NETHERLANDS	3.9%	0.29	7.2%
SWEDEN	8.5%	0.26	8.4%
FINLAND	8.4%	0.26	7.9%
GERMANY	7.8%	0.30	8.9%
ITALY	7.9%	0.34	11.4%
AVERAGE OECD	8.1%	0.31	11.1%

The average of the EU-27 is about the same as OECD average with regard to unemployment and inequality. Because EU uses the 60% of median income as their “risk of poverty” indicator, these figures are not equal, but the structure with regards to ranking and differences are rather similar.

Using these indicators we see that Norway has a better score than the other countries and the average in OECD/EU and it has the lowest scores for unemployment and for inequality. With regard to poverty, the Netherlands has a somewhat better score. The table also shows that the Nordic countries and the Netherlands have fewer problems measured this way, than the average of the OECD and the EU countries.

One important fact that is demonstrated through particularly the OECD studies is that inequality and poverty have been rising over the two last decades when considerable economic growth has been taking place. This is a main topic in the OECD report: “Growing Unequal”? (OECD 2008). The report analyses growth and poverty and income distribution in the OECD

countries. There are also data in the OECD 2011 version of “Society at a glance” and in the Eurostat Yearbook 2010. Evidence of increasing inequality and of relative poverty point to the need to re-examine poverty and distribution policies in OECD and euro countries.

In Norway, however, both relative poverty and inequality have been reduced since 2006 (Det kongelige arbeids og velferdsdepartement 2011; Det kongelige finansdepartement 2011). Relative poverty and inequality are highly correlated and can be seen as two sides of the same coin.

The inequality problem can be seen as the basic lasting expression of poverty. In an interesting contribution by Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) the authors present a vast empirical study with comparisons between many different nations with regard to equality and other social dimensions. They maintain that in advanced societies the sensitive social indicators of health, life expectancy, violence and literacy are much more dependent on nation's levels of equality than on their levels of wealth. They conclude that equality is better for all. The conclusions from Wilkinson and Pickett are in line with some of the findings in a study by Glyn and Miliband (1994). They point to the fact that inequality also gives rise to severe economic costs for the society. A similar point is made in relation to the experiences of liberalisation of western economies in the 1980's. The free market policy brings heavy social costs (Taylor 1990).

The figures we have shown above have not yet reflected much of the ongoing crisis in the western economy since 2009 because statistics are lagging behind reality. Figures from OECD demonstrate that from 2010 the economic crisis is causing income difficulties for an increasing number of people who are finding it difficult to live on their current income (OECD 2011). 24% of the people in the OECD report that they have this kind of income difficulty. In Norway the figure is 6%, Sweden 7%, Netherlands 9% and Finland 11%, these countries are at the on the positive end of the scale, while USA (21%), Italy (26%) and Greece (49%) have more widespread problems. This is a different way of measuring poverty, but the main picture is reinforced by it.

Another way to compare the poverty situation is to look at indicators of purchasing power for individuals and households on low incomes in various countries. A median income in Norway would produce a high purchasing power in some other countries. This factor among others, particularly

climate difference, explains the movement of elderly people from Northern Europe to the Mediterranean countries.

It is necessary, for several reasons, to identify supplementary indicators to measure relative poverty by income at a certain point in time. To find indicators of absolute poverty or strong deprivation is, however, more methodologically complicated than the relative measures we have been discussing so far. Better data about forms of absolute poverty is, however, required to make a valid assessment of poverty. The OECD have done some work of this kind in their study "Growing Unequal" (OECD 2008). There are also national studies of this type for some countries.

An OECD study of 2008 mentions the use of more absolute standards in the form of "a basket of goods and services required to assure minimum living conditions..." (OECD 2008, 129–130). By using such a measure the report concludes that there has been a significant reduction of absolute poverty between 1995 and 2005. In the 15 OECD countries where this information is available the absolute poverty rate fell by 40% in the period. This is an important fact to take into account in the analysis of poverty.

5.3 Briefly about some other relevant social indicators

Migration into many of the OECD countries increased significantly over the last decade. In 2008 the average foreign born population in the OECD was 11.7% of the total population. Norway had 10.3%, while Sweden had 13.9%, Germany 12.9%, USA 13.7%, Netherlands 10.9%, Italy 6.6% and Finland 4.1%. Migration is a factor that represents both advantages and challenges, much dependent on the need for employment and the composition of the migrant population in terms of their qualifications and values.

Migration to Norway started as labor-migration in the 1970's. In recent years migration has come mainly from Poland and Sweden due to the extension of the inner market in the EU and the difference in labor opportunities in Norway and Sweden. The need for qualified labor, good salaries and high living standard has made Norway increasingly attractive for unemployed people and experts in other parts of Europe. Many people from the countries of southern Europe now come to Norway to look for employment. This is made possible through Norway belonging to the inner market of the EU due to the European Economic Area agreement. Norway is, however,

further away from EU membership than ever. A monthly opinion poll in October 2011 showed that, 78% of the population was against Norwegian membership, while only 14% were in favor and 8% were undecided.

Social trust is an important quality for a society's sustainability and level of cooperation. In the OECD social indicators (OECD 2011) the Nordic countries and Netherlands score highest on 'trusting other people in society'. All these countries have a level of trust over 80%, while OECD average is 59%.

The Nordic countries also perceive the lowest levels of corruption in society and the highest level of confidence in the national institutions (OECD 2011).

5.4 Some conclusions from the OECD 2008 study on poverty

A main finding from the OECD study is that income poverty among the elderly has been falling over the two last decades, mainly as a consequence of better pension systems and the general economic development. Poverty for children and young people has been on the rise. Absolute poverty has been decreasing considerably. The saying "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer" is true if relative income criteria is used. But it is normally not true if you look at absolute poverty or compare the growth in the national economy of countries, neither in Europe nor in the rest of the world.

Income poverty at a point in time does not necessarily say much about poverty. Only if people have a low income over many years are they likely to be really poor and deprived. Entries into poverty very often reflect negative change in work and family situation.

Measures taken by governments to reduce income inequality make inequality less than it would have been without them. Public services are distributed more evenly than income in society and in this way social policy matters. Income maintenance schemes reduce inequality in many countries. Wealth, however, is distributed much more unevenly than income. This may be seen as an argument for redistribution as a means of fighting economic crises and poverty.

Social policy of governments uses both the strategy of work and the strategy of redistribution. If these strategies are well combined their effects are maximized. The norms and values in society are important for the actual

social policy chosen.

My interpretation of the report is that economic growth and high employment are positive factors in meeting the challenge of poverty. But a policy which is limited to these aspects cannot by itself combat the serious remaining aspects of the poverty challenge, particularly when we take equality and dignity into account.

6 A tentative reflection about the link of religion and quality of society

The data we have presented clearly demonstrates correlations between situations in different countries. Richard Titmuss (1968; 1977), Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990; 2000) and others have in several works tried to develop typologies of welfare states according to the similarities and differences between nations. In most of these works religion as a factor has been almost absent. Looking to older works from the sociological classics we find however that both Karl Marx and Max Weber had interests in the role of religion in society.

Max Weber argued that the ideas and norms in society were of great importance to understand the society and its development. He explained his views on the link between the two in his famous work about Protestant Ethics and the emergence of the capitalist economy (Weber 1976). His work and his conclusions have been much discussed. But his main point, that the culture, the ideas and the religion of a society have an impact on the development and functioning of society, remains a fruitful analytical perspective.

Karl Marx, from his basic materialistic assumption, saw religion as a negative force in society, giving people false consciousness and illusions of reality. Religion was “opium” for the masses and stopped them from rebelling against the ruling order in society — the dictatorship of the capitalists (Marx 1844). Marx may also be understood to emphasize that the individual life in society was formed to a very high degree by the social structures of that society, especially the forms of ownership.

Certainly both perspectives need to be examined. To understand society you need to understand the individual at the micro level of society. To understand individual behavior in a given society you need to know the main economic and cultural structures of that society.

Modern social policy in Europe can be said to start with the conservative German Emperor Bismarck who made social security legislation to curb rising social unrest which resulted from industrialisation and urbanization after the middle of the 19th century. His initiative can be seen as a counter measure to the popular support for the ideas of Marxism (Kuhnle 2000).

A little earlier, diakonia emerged in Germany, also as a reaction to the social circumstances for people in a poor and weak position. This initiative was based on a Christian calling based on Lutheran Protestant theology. In modern terms the initiative could be labeled as an act to protect the integrity of the creation with the purpose of protecting human beings from the destructive aspects of modernisation. From the beginning there was a strong spiritual dimension in this.

Anthony Giddens (1998) has in our time proclaimed social democracy as the “Third way” between conservatism and communism. In Europe Protestantism can be seen as a third way between Catholic/Orthodox Christianity and a secular worldview. Diakonia in Europe is certainly a child of protestant religion, even if charity work in general has been associated with Christianity from the beginning.

On this sketchy background and the empirical data from this paper I will pose the following question: to what extent may religion be seen as a driver behind the different welfare states in Europe (Vetvik 1992)? An answer to this must be very tentative and sketchy too.

On the surface, anyway, it seems that Protestant countries with relatively high levels of diakonia, also have the most advanced economies and also the best scores on welfare indicators in comparison to the Catholic area, not to mention the former communist Eastern bloc in Europe based mainly on Catholic and Orthodox Christianity.

These empirical findings are not confined to the Nordic countries. It is also true for the Netherlands, Northern Germany and Switzerland. The divide between north–south–east in Europe also represents a difference in the religion and culture of these societies.

The idea and existence of a comprehensive, universal and tax based welfare state, is highly correlated with the prevalence of protestant religion as a social, cultural denominator. The value basis of these Lutheran countries also gives relatively higher legitimacy for the state to intervene in private and family life where abuse and lack of care is found to be threatening the

social wellbeing and dignity of individuals. Legislation about child protection and abuse are concrete examples of this.

So, perhaps religion matters for the fabric of society and its social policy. Both Weber and Marx pointed to important aspects of this although there are, of course many differences between present day Europe and the Europe of the 19th and early 20th century. This theme does, however, deserve more research attention than it currently receives.

7 Poverty and dignity in Norway at present in a general assessment

The people of Norway enjoy a privileged situation in a nation with a strong economy and high levels of employment in a welfare state which has an annual budget surplus and a positive export/import balance. The welfare state provides for good public services and relative comprehensive income maintenance schemes. The system is mostly universal, mostly tax based and based on rights to a higher degree than in most, if not all other European countries. The large annual contribution to the state from oil revenue is mostly allocated to a fund to secure the future high demand for pensions for the elderly.

If the poverty problem was only about money, Norway has, over the last two decades, had the resources to solve it.

But as it has been shown in the previous data, Norway still has poverty problems and problems related to inequality. Even absolute poverty has not been completely abolished. The poor in Norway are found more often in some groups than in others. This is similar to the general picture in Europe, but to a lesser degree. Young people and migrants have about the double level of unemployment compared to the national average. Some migrant groups have much higher levels of unemployment than the average. Child poverty has been on the increase while poverty among elderly people has been reduced. Also entry to the labor market is hard for relatively many young people, particularly for young people dropping out of high school without being able to get relevant work. Levels of poverty and also of homelessness are much higher in urban areas, particularly in Oslo, than in other areas. These factors require closer attention both in practical action and research.

Taking dignity into account I will argue that the universal rights based

model, with some redistributive functions, has great significance for people's experience of dignity. It may be said that the model almost is a necessary precondition for dignity, but this may be discussed, modified and opposed by other views. My argument is, among others, that creating a unitary and comprehensive system of public social security can make an important contribution to social integration/inclusion. If these issues are handled through a fragmented system of diverse private and public systems, the risk of falling out of/through the system is much higher than in the universal one. The system in the USA in this respect can be seen as an extreme example of this. But also the so called "subsidiary principle" adopted by many of the countries in the European Union, represents in my assessment a problematic practice if dignity is the yardstick. This is because the knowledge about who is paying for your services and treatment will relate to your self-esteem and to the respect and dignity you are afforded by others.

The relevance of Titmuss's (1977) statement that services to poor people tend to be poor services is still valid in Europe today. The same may be said about the level of contributions different people receive to sustain their daily expenses. This was part of his argument in favor of universal welfare systems against a more particularistic system.

The universal welfare state such as Norway's, is however, not sufficient to meet the challenges of poverty and inequality, even if the situation may be seen to be better than in many other countries.

Firstly we see that some people are falling through the safety net of the welfare state, both because the system is not completely comprehensive and also because some people are unable for different reasons to obtain their rights.

Secondly we see that the way that welfare bureaucracy is operating, both with regard to the treatment of people and the rules that are regulating the system, sometimes denies people their dignity. More precisely we can say that all services and contributions which require the individual to make an application, can represent a risk to personal dignity, even if it is not normally so. This argument relates very much to services and contributions which are means/need tested. Disability pension, social assistance and services to the elderly come in this category.

We see examples of this in sometimes heated debates over stigma and contributions to disability recipients and social assistance recipients. The argu-

ment is that people who are not in a real need of these contributions get such generous economic contributions that they get more from the system than they could get from work. Disincentives to work in a system that relies very much on work as the main strategy for combating poverty, is of course a problem. On the other hand we may question the idea that people unable to work should not have the same level of income and living standard as others. We also need to be aware of what it is like to be out of work and poor in a society that is filled with working, well off people.

The old debate over "worthy" and "unworthy" recipients of social contributions and services is still alive as an undercurrent in social life in Norway. Individuals, whose case for getting these contributions is not clearly visible, run the risk of stigma and the need to legitimise themselves as worthy recipients can be humiliating.

There is, however, the political will on the part of the government to improve the situation as a recent report to the Parliament about the issue indicates (Det kongelige finansdepartement 2011). Civil society, voluntary organizations and diakonia share this objective and work towards improving the situation. Does diakonia matter in practice in meeting this challenge of combating poverty and lack of dignity? Can diakonia make a difference?

Of course it does, some will say. Maybe it does not matter so much as we think, I will ask? The answer is not self-evident. So let us take a closer look at some perspectives and elements/conditions of the answer. There are interesting aspects both of actual practice and future possibilities that require closer examination.

8 Some aspects of diakonia actions and roles related to poverty and dignity

Social policy is about the good life in society for human beings. Diakonia is a concept that is not very well known in circles concerned with social policy. From one point of view diakonia is about bringing a religious/spiritual dimension into social policy/social work in society.

The concept is normally primarily related to church and theology. I will not at this point, consider theological literature concerned with the "right" conceptual understanding of diakonia. Diakonia will be primarily in terms of Christian based social practice. Diakonia is here defined as "Christian

based action for people in need”. It stems from a Greek word that basically means “serving”. The idea of diakonia is to serve God through serving his creation and mankind in particular. The Lutheran Church of Norway, which still has 80% of the population as members, has made a normative program for diaconal activity in the church and its congregations. This program has been translated into English (Church of Norway 2008). The New Testament professor Hans Kvalbein has made an important contribution to the biblical understanding of poverty in his PhD thesis (Kvalbein 1981).

Diakonia maybe acts on the individual level. The Merciful Samaritan in the Bible (Lk 10:30 -37) is often mentioned as an example of this both by lay people and the clergy (Røed 1993). But normally diakonia is connected to activity from collective organisations like churches/congregations and Christian based NGOs (Lutheran World Federation 2009). Diakonia implies both actions and words based on Christian values. It covers both micro level action and macro level propagation of values and norms for society.

In the Norwegian context it is necessary and fruitful to make an analytical distinction between the Lutheran Church on one side and the Christian social NGOs on the other side. The church and its local congregations play a relatively limited role in relation to poverty and issues of inequality. Christian organizations/NGO's related to the church but with formally independent status are, however, doing much work in the field of social welfare in a broad sense. They also make a difference through activity directly related to the challenges of poverty and inequality.

Diakonia is active in a variety of social fields in European countries. The umbrella organization Eurodiaconia reports and co-ordinates this activity on behalf of national organizations/institutions on the protestant side (Eurodiaconia 2010). The Catholic organization Caritas has a similar role. These organizations are very active in Brussels feeding information and value positions into the processes of the European Union.

A recent study in the so called FACIT project set out to analyze the activity of diakonia in various national contexts in European cities (Dierckx, Vranken & Kerstens 2009) taking a broad approach under the heading of “faith-based organizations”. It is too early to evaluate the outcome of this project, although the work appears somewhat fragmented and uneven. There are other projects which take a more direct view of the role of religion in modern Europe (Bäckström & Davie 2010). However these studies only

cover parts of the picture and are not directly related to the issue of poverty. More research is necessary.

Research about diakonia in the Nordic countries has increased considerably over the last decade. An article by Olav Helge Angell (Angell 2007), within the framework of a European project Welfare and Religion in a European Perspective (WREP) examines the role of organized religion in a city in Norway. He maintains that the local congregation in the Lutheran Church of Norway does not live up to expectations in practice. However, a Christian NGO was seen as acting as a value guardian in support of human dignity and the collective support for the welfare state. This finding is in line with a more general impression about the structure of the diaconal activity in the country.

A study by Jan Olav Røed found that few principal priests (sokneprestene) in local congregations of the Lutheran Church of Norway saw actions for poor and marginalized people as a normal and natural task for their congregations (Røed 1993). When this was published some priests maintained that the reason for this was lack of poor and marginalized people in their local community. This in my opinion was because poverty and marginalization were not generally very visible in Norwegian society at the time. It also may indicate a lack of understanding and knowledge of the problem. Poverty was less of a public issue than it became some years later, as earlier described.

There was also, however, an element of principled pragmatism in the responses to the survey. The problem of poverty and marginalization was seen as a task that was properly handled by the Welfare State.

In Finland at the same time local congregations of the Lutheran Church in Finland were very active in helping victims of the economic crisis (Hii-lamo 2009). This can be explained by the considerable difference in the level of economic need in the two countries. It is also because the capacity of Finnish diakonia was and is much higher than in Norway. This is because, in Finland, national legislation requires that a diakonia worker should be employed by all congregations. In Norway this is a voluntary choice dependent upon the financial means and priorities of local congregations. Only about 30% of congregations in the Lutheran Church of Norway employ a deacon.

There is however also another important dimension in Røed study. He

finds that in the hypothetical situation where the welfare state does not cope with social challenges, the great majority of the priests, 63%–89% depending on the concrete task, answered that the church under such circumstances ought to contribute to meet the challenges. This attitude is still to my knowledge the dominant value in the Lutheran Church of Norway. The church leadership, represented by the bishops supports the welfare state. They scored as more radical than other elite groups in society on social ethical issues in the large national so called ‘Power study’ around year 2000 (Guldbrandsen et al. 2002).

The standpoint of church leaders is based on Lutheran teaching about the distinction between the spiritual and the social realm. In this view the state will act in line with the will of God in societal matters in normal situations, giving order, support and protection to the people. In exceptional situations when this is not the case, the church will take extraordinary responsibility. An example of this is the churches’ role under the Nazi-occupation in 1940–45 (Austad 1978).

The capacity and willingness of the church to act in a situation of acute crisis was tested in a conflict with the state over church sanctuary for asylum seekers during the 1990’s. In November 1993 more than 700 Kosovo Albanian asylum seekers sought church sanctuary in more than 140 churches and prayer houses, to avoid forced return to Kosovo. This caused a conflict between the church and the state as the state saw this as illegal obstruction of democratically based decisions. The church argued that this was legitimate protection of vulnerable people and therefore an ethical obligation for the church. The conflict was resolved in a peaceful way through negotiations between the church leadership and the Government (Vetvik 1996).

The main view in Norwegian research about the voluntary organizations/NGOs with regard to their role in the welfare state/welfare society, is that they have a supplementary/complementary role. Kuhnle and Selle (1992) maintain that the public sector takes on the main responsibilities and most difficult tasks in the provision of social services and contributions while the NGO’s take on the smaller and easiest tasks. The authors have a broad perspective and make general statements about the whole NGO sector. There may in my view be a need for clarification of both concepts and analysis here.

The conclusions of Kuhnle and Selle have, however, also been repeated

by some more recent studies which have focused more directly on diakonia organizations' actions to combat poverty in Norwegian cities. Nuland (2007) and Gautun (Gautun et al 2005) give interesting descriptive analyses of what the diakonia organizations actually do and how they do it. Their general conclusion is that the diakonia organizations' activity is merely a supplement to the public social services in helping the poor.

From a quantitative perspective, measuring the services, clients and expenses, I think the conclusion about diakonia as supplementary/complementary activity may be valid. But if the matter is examined in a more qualitative manner it can be hypothesized that diakonia is making a qualitative difference.

Part of the evidence for this comes from indications in data collected in the above mentioned studies and also others. The data show that the users of diakonia services and activities often report that their experience of its service is that the service is more respectful, open and dignifying than that provided by public services (Stjernø & Saltkjel 2008).

It is also reported in studies both from Finland (Kummel-Myrskog, Sarelin & Ekstrand 2009) and Norway (Angell 2007; Gautun, Drøpping & Fløtten 2005) that the work of diakonia organizations are seen both by the diaconal workers, by clients and by research as a work helping the most needy at the bottom of the social ladder and living in a form of absolute poverty. Such work is certainly not easy. The title of the report from Gautun and the title on the report from Finland is similar in English translation: "When the need is the largest". Some of diakonia's proclamations state that diakonia is serving the poorest of the poor and helping people who no one else is helping.

Again I feel there is a need for a closer look at this in order to make a valid and comprehensive picture of the activity. Many of the users or clients of diakonia services are undoubtedly in great need, but definitely not all of them. We know that many of the users have their basic means of income met from social assistance and social security. We need more precise and reliable empirical studies of this. We need more information about the background and situation of the users of diakonia. Diakonia should be open to self-criticism and open to critical research just as much as others.

We also may need to modify the view that diakonia has a great reservoir of dignity that is automatically handed out when diakonia organisations and

people are meeting the needy. Diaconal services receive complaints and have conflicts with their users.

The fact that diaconal services very seldom give money to the poor, but instead provide counseling, mediating, food, shelter clothes and other gifts, may also be discussed critically from a dignity perspective. If you get money, how you use it is your own decision. When the church is “feeding the poor” you have to take what you get.

Dignity connected to self-determination is a fundamental part of the concept. There have always been questionable aspects of charity, despite good intentions.

Nevertheless the central research question is in which forms and to what extent can diakonia provide qualitatively different services and results for its users, clients and the people they meet. Is diakonia only present in the gaps of welfare society as a purely quantitative resource, or is it sometimes functioning qualitatively better in helping poor and marginalized people? Diakonia has a long history of pioneering help to poor and ill people. It started long before the welfare state and social policy. Is it still possible for diakonia on the basis of its practice to be an innovator in finding new ways to deal with the old problems of poverty, inequality and injustice?

An important point for consideration and research is the relationship between diakonia and other providers/stakeholders in society, both private and public. Much of diaconal activity in Norway would not be possible without economic support from a generous welfare state and a partial integration into the public system of services and contributions. Studies of diakonia actions to combat poverty should therefore always take into account their relationship to other actors. To act in ways that increase cooperation and diminish competition, hostility and unfamiliarity with the work of others, should be a goal for diakonia if it wants more dignity for people in society.

One conclusion from a closer study of diakonia is that “practice based evidence” is required as well as “evidence based practice”.

The challenge is not only to design structures and actions to combat poverty and marginalization in theory and legislation. We also need to find out how it works in practice and find ways to improve that practice. In doing so there is a need to focus on the value basis. Inequality and poverty can never be overcome without the willingness to share. That means redistributive policies on the macro level and resource sharing among people in local

community. Diaconal values of serving people and society may be a fruitful approach to making a change and a difference with regard to dignity.

Whether diakonia represents a qualitative innovative practice is an interesting research question. A comparative case study method, may give new insights into this (Flyvbjerg 2001; Yin 2003). The community building side of diakonia may have great importance for social inclusion and dignity. To what extent and in which forms can diakonia act as an inclusive factor for poor and marginalized people in society? How inclusive is diakonia in reality in organizations and congregations? Is it sometimes more exclusive than inclusive? Can diakonia strengthen local community resilience through local development?

The diakonia approach is to a high degree targeting individuals and local communities. Can diakonia contribute to a qualitative change in the lives of individuals trapped in a vicious circle of marginalization and poverty? This has to do both with the idea of breaking bad circles to prevent a negative development and to supporting people for example on the way out of treatment and problems. Very often we see that the transition periods in people's lives are high risk periods. We have looked upon some diaconal practices in Norway which may be very interesting for closer empirical studies (Greaker & Vetvik 2000; Kvalvaag, Sørbye & Vetvik 1995; Kvalvaag & Vetvik 1997; Vetvik & Greaker 1998; Vetvik & Omland 1995; Øygard and Hardeng 2001).

9 Some tentative conclusions

The universal welfare state model based on human rights, including the social rights for citizens, in combination with a high emphasis on work strategy and work ethics has many advantages over other models with regard to combating poverty and giving dignity to the people. But as we have demonstrated through the paper this is not sufficient to abolish poverty and give dignity to all people. Sometimes we may even get the impression that the strong emphasis on employment and work ethics has side effects that are harming the dignity of poor and marginalized people. This needs more attention both in research and in practice.

Poverty even in a rich welfare state like Norway still presents important challenges to social wellbeing and dignity. Poverty in a more absolute sen-

se can perhaps be seen as an issue which is no longer paramount, but it is still visible and threatening in the lives of poor and marginalized people. They can be seen on the streets of Oslo both in the cold winter and the rest of the year. These problems are not easy to solve. There is a need for a different approach to improve the situation from where it stands today. The words of Jesus, “The poor will always be among you” (Mk. 14:7), are still an actual challenge.

Poverty in the relative sense is still persistent and is so widespread that it cannot be labeled as not of immediate concern. This fact leads to the observation that poverty is not something that we can get rid of through the use of money and material measures alone. Poverty poses a more fundamental problem about equality and dignity for people in society. We need more qualitative research and good innovative practice to make further progress here. This new practice must be a combination of macro political reforms and targeted social practice on the micro level, meaning individuals and local communities. For diakonia the tale of the “good shepherd” (Jn. 10:11–16), may be seen as an inspiration to such innovative practice.

Diakonia already plays a role on both levels supporting the welfare state from an ideological perspective based on social ethics and Lutheran theology. The greater part of diakonia work undertaken by Christian social organizations is in tandem with and integrated into the welfare state. It is financed and controlled to a large extent by the welfare state system. It can be seen as a supplement/complement to the welfare state, as a mainly quantitative resource. That is not bad and must be assessed in positive terms as a contribution from diakonia to the common good of society.

But there are also examples of some more independent, grassroots oriented diaconal contributions targeting poverty and social exclusion more directly. This could be studied more closely so that more can be learnt about the situation for the weakest members of society both with regard to their life situations and their possible ways out of a vicious circle of poverty. We need more qualitative research and more quality social practices to make progress here. In my assessment such studies may demonstrate that diakonia can sometimes be innovative and make a qualitative difference to the work of the welfare state. One theme which calls for more research in particular is invisible/hidden need. Some people suffer for a long time in isolation in modern society.

The actual role of diakonia in European welfare states can also be seen as a dilemma, particularly from a Marxist perspective.

In a Marxist perspective diakonia can be seen, not as opium, but perhaps as a sleeping pillow for the responsible governments. Diakonia softens the blows from and conscience about injustice in society. The governments may be using diakonia to get off the hook and slide away from the consequences and responsibility of their mistaken policies.

On the other side diakonia based on its ideals has to care about the weakest members of society and cannot use poor people's increased suffering as gunpowder for political purposes to maximize the crisis.

Will diakonia accept being a "hostage" because of being dependent of government funding of much of their services, even if this limits its freedom to voice criticism of economic and social policies in society and their consequences for poor and marginalized people? Or will the government not only allow, but also welcome a diaconal based criticism of the functioning not only of welfare bureaucracy, but also of government social policy? It may be difficult, but Norway is after all the country which invented, developed and still maintains the ombudsman system. From a Christian point of view diakonia will always have to assess whether it will stay by the meat pots in Egypt or make an exodus to more freedom (cf. Ex 37–42).

Combating poverty and making dignity means breaking bad economic cycles and sustaining the good ones on the macro level. On the individual, micro level it is about breaking vicious circles for people and sustaining them in good circles.

References

- Angell, Olav Helge 2007. Church-based welfare and public religion. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 20 (2), 179–193.
- Austad, Torleiv 1987. Eivind Berggrav and the Church of Norway's resistance against Nazism, 1940–45. *Mid-stream: An Ecumenical Journal* 26, 51–61.
- Aubert, Vilhelm 1970. Fattigdommen i Norge. In Lingås, Lars Gunnar (ed.): *Myten om Velferdsstaten*. Pax Forlag, Oslo, 16–32.
- Bachrac, Peter & Baratz, Morton S. 1970. *Power and Poverty – Theory and Practice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bay, Ann-Helén; Blomberg-Kroll, Helena & Kroll, Christian 2009. En Nordisk Opinion? Syn på fattige i Norge og Finland. In Bay, Ann-Helén; Pedersen, Axel West & Saglie, Jo (eds): *Når Velferd blir politikk – partier, organisasjoner, opinion*. Oslo. Abstrakt Forlag, 202–247.
- Bäckström, Anders & Davie, Glen (eds.) 2010. *Welfare and Religion in the 21st Century Europe: Volume 1 – Configuring the Connections*. Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Chan, Chak Kwan & Bowpitt, Graham 2005. *Human Dignity and Welfare Systems*. Bristol, Policy Press.
- Church of Norway National Council 2008. *Plan for diakonia*.
- Commission on Social Justice 1994. *Social Justice – Strategies for National Renewal*. London, Vintage Books.
- Det kongelige arbeids og velferdsdepartement 2011. *Velferd og migrasjon – Den norske modellens framtid 2011*. Norges offentlige utredninger 2011: 7. Accessed 2th of December 2011. <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/16413697/PDFS/NO-U201120110007000DDDPDFS.pdf>
- Det kongelige finansdepartement 2011. *Meld. St. 30 (2010–2011) – Melding til Stortinget. Fordelingsmeldingen*. Accessed 2th of December 2011. <http://www.regjeringen.no/pages/35133947/PDFS/STM201020110030000DDDPDFS.pdf>
- Det kongelige sosialdepartement 2002. *St.meld. nr. 6 (2002–2003) – Tiltaksplan mot fattigdom*. Accessed 2th of December 2011. <http://www.regjeringen.no/Rpub/STM/20022003/006/PDFS/STM200220030006000DDDPDFS.pdf>
- Dierckx, Danielle; Vranken, Jan & Kerstens, Wendy (eds.) 2009. *Faith based Organizations and Social Exclusion in European Cities – National Context Reports*. Den Haag, ACCO Leuven.
- Elder, Neil; Thomas, Alastair & Arter, David 1988. *The Consensual Democracies – The Government and Politics of the Scandinavian States*. Oxford, Blackwell.

- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta 1990. *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta 2000. *The Social Foundations of Post Industrial Economies*. Oxford, University Press.
- Esping-Andersen, Gøsta (ed) 2002. *Why We Need a New Welfare State*. Oxford, University Press.
- Eurodiaconia 2010. *The Social Cost of the Crisis: Even More in Need and More Needed – Report on the social repercussions of the economic and financial crisis*. Accessed 30th of November 2011. <http://www.eurodiaconia.org/files/Financial%20crisis/The%20Social%20Cost%20of%20the%20Crisis,%20Even%20More%20in%20Need%20and%20More%20Needed.pdf>
- European Union 2010. *Key Figures on Europe*. 2010 edition. Luxembourg, Publications Office of the European Union.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent 2001. *Making Social Science Matter – Why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Fløtten, Tone; Pedersen, Axel West & Lødemel, Ivar 2009. Når problemet er fattigdom. In Nuland, Bjørn Richard; Tranøy, Bent Sofus & Christensen, Johan (eds.): *Hjernen er alene – institusjonalisering, kvalitet og relevans i norsk velferdsforskning*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
- Gautun, Heidi; Drøpping, Jon & Fløtten, Tone 2005. Når nøden er størst – En analyse av frivillige organisasjoners hjelp til fattige. Fafo-rapport 476. Oslo, Fafo.
- Giddens, Anthony 1998. *The Third Way – The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge, Polity Press.
- Glennerster, Howard 1985. *The Future of the Welfare State – Remaking Social Policy*. Aldershot, Gower.
- Greaker, Arild & Vetvik, Einar 2000. *Ettervern for domfelte – Samarbeid mellom frivillige organisasjoner og det offentlige – Sluttrapport fra B.A.R.M.-prosjektet*. Oslo, Diakonhjemmets høskolesenter, Forskningsavdelingen.
- Gulbrandsen, Trygve; Engelstad, Fredrik; Klausen, Trond Beldo; Skjeie, Hege; Teigen, Mari & Østerud, Øyvind (eds.) 2002. *Norske makteliter*. Oslo, Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Halvorsen, Knut & Stjernø, Steinar 2008. *Work, oil and welfare – The welfare state in Norway*. Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.
- Harsløf, Ivan & Seim, Sissel (eds.) 2008. *Fattigdommens dynamikk – Perspektiver på marginalisering i det norske samfunnet*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
- Hatland, Aksel; Kuhnle Stein & Romøren, Tor Inge (eds.) 2011. *Den norske vel-*

- ferdsstaten. Oslo, Gyldendal Akademisk.
- Heclo, Hugh & Madsen, Birger 1979. *Policy and Politics in Sweden – Principled Pragmatism*. Temple University Books, Philadelphia.
- Hernes, Gudmund 1998. Reformledelse. In Kolbjørnsen, Tom (ed.): *Ide, konsekvens, handling – Suksesskriterier for endring*. AFFs årbok 1998. Oslo, Cappelen Akademisk forlag.
- Hiilamo, Heikki 2009. How the Church became engaged to help the victims of a deep economic down turn? Experiences from Finland in the 1990ies. Presentation in Reykjavik 14.9.2009
- Jacobsen, Knut Dahl 1970. Politisk fattigdom. In Lingås, Lars Gunnar (ed.) : *Myten om velferdsstaten*. Pax Forlag, Oslo, 175–180.
- Kolberg, Jon Eivind 1983. *Farvel til velferdsstaten? Folketrygdens økonomi, sosialpolitiske modeller, offentlig og privat omsorg, nedskjæringer*. Cappelen, Oslo.
- Kramer, Ralph M. 1981. *Voluntary Agencies in the Welfare State*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kuhnle, Stein 2000. Velferdsstatens idégrunnlag i perspektiv. In Hatland, Aksel; Kuhnle, Stein & Romøren, Tor Inge (eds.): *Den norske velferdsstaten*. Oslo, Gyldendal Akademisk, 9–31.
- Kuhnle, Stein & Selle, Per (eds.) 1992. *Government and voluntary organisations – A Relational Perspective*. Aldershot, Ashgate.
- Kummel-Myrskog, Pia; Sarelin, Birgitta & Ekstrand, Sixten (eds.) 2009. *Där nöden är störst – En introduktion i diakoni ur finländsk synvinkel*. Helsingfors, Kyrkostyrelsen.
- Kvalbein Hans 1981. *Jesus og de fattige*. University of Oslo. Faculty of Theology. PhD thesis.
- Kvalvaag, Heidi; Sørbye, Liv W. & Vetvik, Einar 1995. *En evaluering av AAN's organisasjon og virksomhet*. Rapport nr. 4/95. Oslo, Forskningsavdelingen, Diakonhjemmets høskolesenter.
- Lavalette, Michael & Pratt, Alan (eds.) 2006. *Social Policy – Theories, Concepts and Issues*. London, Sage.
- Laqueur, Walter & Rubin, Barry (eds.) 1990. *The Human Rights Reader*. Meridian Books, New York.
- Lasswell, Harold D. 1936. *Politics: Who gets what, when and how?* Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Sivesind, Karl Henrik; Lorentzen, Håkon; Selle, Per & Wollebæk, Dag 2002. *The voluntary sector in Norway – composition, changes and causes?* Oslo, Institutt for samfunnsforskning.

- Lingås, Lars Gunnar (ed.) 1970. *Myten om velferdsstaten*. Pax Forlag, Oslo.
- Lister, Ruth 2004. *Poverty*. Cambridge, Polity.
- Lund, Monika 2006. *De frivillige og de fattige – Frivillige organisasjoners hjelpetiltak overfor fattige*. Fafo Rapport 528. Oslo, Fafo.
- Lutheran World Federation 2009. *Diakonia in Context – Transformation, Reconciliation, Empowerment – An LWF Contribution to the Understanding and Practice of Diakonia*. Geneva, Lutheran World Federation.
- Marx, Karl 1844. *Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechts Philosophie*. Accessed 2th of December 2011. <http://www.zeno.org/Philosophie/M/Marx,+Karl/Zur+Kritik+der+Hegelschen+Rechtsphilosophie>
- Nuland, Bjørn Richard 2007. *Ansikt til ansikt med fattigdommen – Frivillige organisasjoners hjelpetiltak overfor fattige*. Fafo-rapport 2007:18. Oslo, Fafo.
- OECD 2008. *Growing Unequal? Income Distribution and Poverty in OECD Countries*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD 2009. *Society at a Glance 2009 – OECD Social Indicators*. OECD Publishing.
- OECD 2011. *Society at a Glance 2011 – OECD Social Indicators*. OECD Publishing.
- Ringen, Stein 1981. *Hvor går velferdsstaten? Fordelingspolitikkenes opprinnelse og fremtid*. Oslo, Gyldendal.
- Ringen, Stein 1988. *The Possibility of Politics – A Study in the Political Economy of the Welfare State*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Rowntree, Benjamin Seebohn 1951. *Poverty and the Welfare State*. London, Longmans Green.
- Røed, Jan Olav 1993. *Soknepresten og Menighetsdiakonien*. University of Oslo. Faculty of Theology. Thesis.
- Sachs, Jeffrey 2005. *The End Of Poverty – How We Can Make It Happen In Our Lifetime*. London, Penguin.
- Stjernø, Steinar 1985. *Den moderne fattigdommen – Om økonomisk knapphet og ydmykelse i 1980-åra*. Oslo, Universitetsforlaget.
- Stjernø, Steinar 1989. *Fattigdommen og fattighjelpen – ved et vendepunkt?* In Lingås, Lars Gunnar (ed.): *Myten om Velferdsstaten – 20 år etter*. Pax Forlag, Oslo.
- Stjernø, Steinar & Saltkjel, Therese 2008. *Gjennom det siste sikkerhetsnettet? En studie av Frelsesarmeens og Bymisjonens brukere*. In Harsløf, Ivan & Seim, Sissel (eds.): *Fattigdommens dynamikk. Perspektiver på marginalisering i det norske samfunnet*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

- Taylor, Ian (ed.) 1990. *The Social Effects of Free Market Policies – An international Text*. New York, Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005.
- Titmuss, Richard Morris 1968. *Commitment to Welfare*. London, Allen & Unwin.
- Titmuss, Richard 1977. *Social Policy – An Introduction*. London, Allen & Unwin.
- Townsend, Peter 1954/2010. The Meaning of Poverty. *The British Journal of Sociology* 61, 85–102.
- Townsend, Peter 1979. *Poverty in the United Kingdom – A survey of household resources and standards of living*. Harmondsworth, Penguin.
- Vetvik, Einar 1988. Folk og forvaltning – Reformen kreves om velferdsstaten skal overleve. *Nordisk Administrativ Tidsskrift* 4.
- Vetvik, Einar 1992. Religion and State from a Western Christian Perspective. In Nielsen, Jørgen S. (ed.): *Religion and Citizenship in Europe and the Arab World*. London, Grey Seal, 7–24.
- Vetvik, Einar 1996. Kirkeasyl – religion og politikk på norsk. *Norsk statsvitenskapelig tidsskrift* 2, 163–178.
- Vetvik Einar & Omland, Torunn 1995. *KRAFT – veien tilbake til samfunnet?* Oslo, Diakonhjemmets høskolesenter, Forskningsavdelingen.
- Vetvik, Einar & Kvalvaag, Heidi M. 1997. En modell for forebyggende arbeid med ungdom i problemer – En evaluering av arbeidet ved Kirkens kontaktsenter i Bergen. Oslo, Diakonhjemmets høskolesenter, Forskningsavdelingen.
- Vetvik, Einar & Greaker, Arild 1998. *Aktivitet og Mening – En studie av Kalfarhuset i Bergen som ettervernstiltak*. Oslo, DHS.
- Weber, Max 1985. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. London, Unwin.
- Wilkinson, Richard G. & Pickett, Kate 2009. *The Spirit Level – Why More Equal Societies Almost Always Do Better*. London, Allen Lane.
- Yin, Robert 2003. *Case study research – Design and methods*. 3rd Edition. Thousand Oaks, Sage.
- Øygard, Lisbet & Hardeng, Stein 2001. Divorce Support Groups – How Do Group Characteristics Influence Adjustment to Divorce? *Social Work with Groups* 24 (1), 69–87.