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Civil Society in a Scandinavian Welfare State Context – Trends in Informal Care and Volunteering

2007-2011

The objective of this research project has been to describe and analyse civil society in a Scandinavian welfare state context, with special focus on trends in informal caregiving and volunteering. Specific research issues raised in the project have concerned what types of informal caregiver and what types of volunteer can be identified, what are the patterns of inter-relation between type of carer and type of volunteer and what patterns of change can be seen over time. The research project had an empirical approach but it has also engaged with and contributed to the debate about civil society in a Scandinavian welfare state context. Reanalysing earlier research has been one methodological tool used when contributing to the theoretical debate and for developing new research questions. Moreover, one additional national survey study has been conducted (in 2009) within the project, which has increased the possibilities further to fulfil the aims of the project.

The three most significant results from the project

1). Analyses of the empirical material shows that peoples involvement in civil society are greater than ever in Sweden. If we look at the development of voluntary work, in general, the results from repeated population surveys from 1992 to 2009 display that voluntary work in Sweden is extensive and amazingly stable from an international perspective, with about 50 percent of the population regularly involved in any type of voluntary organization. If the engagement in civil society organizations in Sweden can be described as broad and stable over time, the non-organized, informal help and caregiving can rather be characterized as substantial and increasing over the past two decades. A basic assumption, in order to understand this development, is that, unlike the work of voluntary organizations, informal helpgiving is not surrounded by a "protective" organizational structure, rather it is an open and sensitive system that is affected by the changes - such as cutbacks - in the public welfare system in a more direct way.

2) Analysis of the results shows that it is common in Sweden to be involved both as an informal caregiver and volunteer at the same time. Already in the 1990s it was fairly common to be "doubly active", and there has been a marked increase over time. That this group was the largest in the 2005 study is an interesting result in itself. Knowledge of different groups involvement in unpaid work problematizes the image of that volunteering and informal caregiving would be separate phenomena.

3) The studies conducted of the civil society in Sweden shows that it is common to be "doubly active" and that the boundaries between different forms of unpaid work is more fluid than has been previously recognized. It provides an additional view of the

civil society as a context for social care that is multifaceted and varied. One possible interpretation of the rather fluid boundaries between informal caregiving and voluntary work is that the organization of welfare in Sweden so far has provided the opportunity for informal caregivers to have space and time for engagement with voluntary organizations and other community involvement, as well as for the volunteers to carry out informal care work. This commitment can be seen as an expression of a vibrant civil society where both informal caregiving and volunteering is seen as a civic engagement that is an important part of civil society.

New research questions initiated by the project

The project has demonstrated the importance of maintaining research that will continue to study issues related to the development of civil society with a special focus on the extent and patterns of change. In line with continued changes in the organization of welfare the project shows that it is important to further study issues of the interface between civil society and the public sector and the market as well. What are the risks of an increasing pressure on people to carry out unpaid work, especially in the nature of care, may it be a risk not only for the potential of the kind of “double activity” that has been outlined in the project and also in general for preserving the civil society as a multi-faceted arena for engagement?

The two most important publications in the project

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2009). Caregiving and Volunteering among Older People in Sweden − Prevalence and Profiles. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 21, 4, 352- 373.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011). Links between informal caregiving and volunteering in Sweden: a 17-year Perspective. Accepted for publication in *European Journal of Social Work*.

The first article (2009) discusses the various profiles of older people who are involved in unpaid work. Older people's engagement in civil society is a multifaceted phenomenon and civil society a social sphere, in which older people have different roles and profiles. The article shows that there are similarities between different types of commitment and engagement among senior citizens, it was possible to discern a distinct group of older people who are engaged both in informal caregiving and in voluntary organizations. The analysis provides an interesting reflection of life in the 'third age' as a phase in which many older people get involved in civil society. The second article (2011) analyzes informal caregiving and voluntary work in organizations in Sweden in a 17-year perspective. The results showed that there were similarities between the various forms of unpaid work. In all four studies, it was common to be involved in both informal caregiving and voluntary work. This group of 'active citizens' were usually also involved in informal social networks. This dual-active group has increased over time and they perform many hours of engagement per month. The findings challenge the literature that argues that informal caregiving is a major barrier to engagement in volunteering. There may be reasons to pay attention to the risk of that increasing pressure on people's engagement in unpaid work may restrain the ability of this type of dual commitment.

Publications:

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2009a). Patterns of Informal Help and Caregiving in Sweden: a 13-year Perspective. *Social Policy & Administration*, 43, 7, 681-701.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2009b). Caregiving and Volunteering among Older People in Sweden − Prevalence and Profiles. *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, 21, 4, 352- 373.

Renblad, K., Henning, C., & Jegermalm, M. (2009). Future Workshop as a Method to Create an Aging-friendly Community. In Henning, C. & Renblad, K. (eds).

Perspectives on Social Cohesion, Empowerment and Civil Society. Jönköping: School of Health Sciences, Jönköping University.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2010). Äldres engagemang i civilsamhället: roller och profiler. I Tredje åldern – Sociala aspekter och medborgarskapet.

Gynnerstedt, K., & Wolmesjö, M. (red.). Malmö: Gleerups förlag.

Svedberg, L., von Essen, J., & Jegermalm, M. (2010). Svenskarnas engagemang är större än någonsin. Stockholm: Ersta Sköndal högskola.

Svedberg, L., von Essen, J., & Jegermalm, M. (2009). Patterns of Civic Participation in Sweden: Extensive and Stable in Prosperity and Crisis. Paper presented at ARNOVA conference, Cleveland, Ohio, USA.

Svedberg, L., von Essen, J., & Jegermalm, M. (2010). Stability and Variations in Civic Engagement: Sweden in prosperity and recession. ISTR, Working paper series.

Comming

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011a). Helpful citizens and caring families: Patterns of Informal help and caregiving in Sweden in a 17-year Perspective. Accepted for publication in *International Journal of Social Welfare*.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011b). Links between informal caregiving and volunteering in Sweden: a 17-year Perspective. Accepted for publication in *European Journal of Social Work*.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011c). Omsorgens gestaltningar i civilsamhället. I Jeppsson Grassman, E., & Whitaker, A. (red.). *Åldrande och omsorgens gestaltningar. Mot nya perspektiv*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Articles

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011a). Helpful citizens and caring families: Patterns of Informal help and caregiving in Sweden in a 17-year Perspective. Accepted for publication in *International Journal of Social Welfare*.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011b). Links between informal caregiving and volunteering in Sweden: a 17-year Perspective. Accepted for publication in *European Journal of Social Work*.

Jegermalm, M., & Jeppsson Grassman, E. (2011c). Civil Society as a Care Context for Older People. Chapter in a Book.