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5

Look to Norway – A Sobering Challenge to a Success Story

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1. Introduction

For several years, the United Nations has ranked Norway as having the highest standard of living in the world. This position is the result of a complex mix of 'politics of solidarity' (redistribution of resources), 'professional administration' (efficient, loyal and competent bureaucracy), and 'good luck (oil resources since the 1970s). A comparatively large degree of economic equality, not least safeguarded through a compulsory and generous insurance system (the National Insurance Scheme), has contributed to giving Norway a reputation as the prototype of a successful Keynesian welfare state.

There is hardly any disagreement about the characterisation of *all* the Scandinavian welfare states as success stories, at least if one agrees on the overarching aim of income equality and even distribution of wealth (Barth et al., 2003). However, the recipe for success in a period of relative scarcity is not necessarily the recipe for success in times of affluence. Or to be more specific: The recipe for success when people have a 'lack of money' is not necessarily the correct recipe if the pressing problem is 'lack of meaning'. While the first type of problem can be attacked by stimulating economic growth, this is at best only partly true for the second type of problem. The research topic I want to bring into focus in this article is the (general) dilemma related to politicians using yesterday's problems and especially, *yesterday's way of understanding these problems,* to attack today's problems. My frame of reference is the Norwegian welfare state. I ask to what extent the traditional welfare approach (as seen in all of the Scandinavian countries) is able to grasp the essence of modern social problems. Not disregarding the importance of safeguarding people's economic basis, and not disregarding the strong efforts that have been taken to prevent social problems to arise, I want to argue that the 'technocratic' and 'administrative-managerial' approach to welfare politics need to be supplemented with a more 'sociological' approach, where the challenge of 'lack of meaning' is given closer and more serious attention. Even though the awareness of such a perspective has been present – at least at the rhetorical level - since the 1970s, the significant operational implications of such recognition have been more difficult to identify. By raising the discussion on problem identification ('what is the *real* problem?') I do not want to challenge the celebration of the Scandinavian welfare state model as a project of success, but I ask what type of challenges we are confronted with if ideals about social inclusion, social solidarity, and the quest for living a respectful life, are given due attention. In this regard I am not talking about technical

questions related to indexing of pensions or actuarial accounting of insurances etc. I am talking about sociological challenges regarding belonging, respect and recognition in a society of atomisation and exclusion. My assertion is that even the celebrated Scandinavian welfare state is unable to handle these challenges satisfactorily. It is unable to fulfill its basic promise about protecting its weakest citizens, not primarily against material, but against existential distress[1].

The general perspective underlying my research question was clearly expressed by Galbraith back in 1958 when he made the important observation that 'we are guided, in part, by ideas that are relevant to another world; and as a further result we do many things that are unnecessary; some that are unwise, and a few that are insane'[2] (Galbraith, 1971: 32). He added that the ideas by which politicians have interpreted their existence and challenges were not forged in a world of wealth but in a world of poverty. By asking this type of question, Galbraith turns our attention to what should really be a focus of science: what *really* is the problem? In societies characterised by *The Great Disruption* (Fukuyama, 2000) and *Liquid Modernity* (Bauman 2000), with an increasing number of people *Seeking Safety in an Insecure World* (Bauman, 2001), politicians and ministries are continuously searching for 'solutions' to a broad variety of social problems; problems which actually call for a deeper reflection concerning what this problem *really* is about, and which, in turn, might call for qualitative new approaches regarding problem solving.

Furthermore, having control of the national economy in a period of protectionism is something different from having control in a period of global market competition and a disempowered national state. If a fair income distribution ('Robin Hood politics') was a realistic aim in the days of Keynes (until the mid-1970s), the chances of ending up with increasing income differences ('Matthew effect') and processes of social exclusion are high in an era of neo-liberalistic economy. But most of all, there is a good chance that alienation, withdrawal and resignation will create a situation of deep mental distress among an increasing number of people.

Inspired by the thoughts of Galbraith, I will first give a brief *outline of the main social problems* in Norway in different periods after WWII. Most attention will be given to the period 1945-80 when the main standards and principles were set. I will look at how the dominating social problems were *interpreted* at that time (i. e. how did they answer to the 'what-is-the-problem' question), which *measures* were implemented to combat the problems, and then I will ask to what extent these strategies could be described as adequate in preventing social problems occurring. In conclusion, my analysis is a story supporting Galbraith, not in the assertion that politicians have done 'insane' things, but in the observation that politicians

[1] Some have argued that the failure of the welfare state to prevent social problems was a main reason for the New Right turn from the early 1980s. As an illustration, Minister of Finance (1990-93) in New Zealand, Ruth Richardson (referred in Boston, 1999: 25) formulated this critique of the comprehensive welfare state: 'It set out to reduce poverty and ended up increasing poverty. It set out to reduce income inequality and ended up increasing inequality. It set out to allow people to live in dignity, and ended up creating ghettos where lawlessness and hopelessness are rife. If that is success, its ways must be mysterious indeed'.

[2] Einstein (referred in DeHart Hurd, 1998) has formulated a corresponding insight when saying that, 'the significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them'.

have been 'guided, in part, by ideas that are relevant to another world'. More specifically, I find that the strong emphasis on *macro* and *structurally* oriented measures after WWII (i.e. labour market politics, regional politics, trade and industry politics, in combination with an extensive 'cradle to grave' welfare policy) were successful regarding income compensation for most citizens. However, when it comes to tackling the welfare problems of late modernity (i. e. not the lack of money, but the lack of meaning) I find that even the successful Norwegian welfare state has been unable to compete. I will argue that there is a mismatch between some types of social problems ('the lack of meaning' problems) and the measures applied to combat them. In short, the way of thinking is characterised by (mainly) applying yesterday's medicine to today's problems – *and these problems are in certain regards different from yesterdays' problems.* While safeguarding economic security still represents a basic mandate for the welfare state, I maintain that the dominating technocratic, professional, scientific, bureaucratic, and pecuniary approach to modern welfare problems is insufficient. For many years, Norwegian politicians have announced a strong belief in the contribution that social scientists, *qua social engineers,* in cooperation with an efficient administrative system, could deliver to create an inclusive society. Because of this strong optimism in scientific solutions to a variety of social problems, the politicians have avoided a more fundamental debate on social problems as value dilemmas. And even more: the ability to decode and interpret modern social problems in a language of *value conflicts* and *value priorities* seems to have been weakened as social scientists gradually entered the role as 'state consultants in preventive work'. While waiting for scientific solutions to significant social challenges, the politicians were 'protected' from being exposed to these problems as being deeply political.

The perspective presented here implies a critique of overly optimistic politicians when it comes to their strong belief in 'social engineering' solutions to some of the main challenges in late modernity. For many years governments have been seeking support from the social scientests for help in much the same way as they sought support from the economists when the markets went into meltdown in the 1930s. At that time, the economic science actually succeeded in 'rescuing' the crisis ridden economies (with Keynesian medicine). Now it seems that politicians expect representatives of the (remaining) social sciences to solve today's *social* problems by way of some sort of social engineering strategies. No doubt, these sciences *should* do their utmost to help curb emerging social problems. However, today a 'dangerous' mix of interests has occurred between governments in search of legitimation and solutions, and a 'social science industry' (social researchers accompanied by a swelling profession of social workers) which (too) easily promises 'technocratic' solutions to what essentially is a political problem. In Norway, as in so many other countries, politicians are searching for what they call 'evidence-based' knowledge that can tell them *in a scientific way and with scientific certainty,* 'what works' in our endeavours to prevent crime, mental distress, suicide, drug addiction, etc. As problems escalate, so does the rhetoric about 'prevention first', and so do calls for scientific solutions. I do not want to discredit the social sciences and their capacity for supporting governments in their efforts to create social integrative societies. However, I do signal a need for critical reflection when it comes to differentiating between 'value conflicts' and 'administrative problems'. Herbert Marcuse (1991) has formulated the problem very distinctly, when saying that 'the historical achievement of science and technology has rendered possible the *translation of values into technical tasks* – the materialization of values. Consequently, what is at stake is the redefinition of values in

technical terms, as elements in technological process' (Marcuse, 1991: 236, author's italics). From a philosopher's point of view, von Wright (1994) has made a corresponding remark, when warning against the illusion that more scientific techniques can protect us against threats in modern society.

While the Norwegian welfare state probably deserves its good reputation when it comes to safeguarding basic economic necessities for its citizens, this should not prevent us from asking critical questions like those presented above. In this article I want to address the society of social sciences as well as the society of politicians and plea for drawing a clearer line of demarcation concerning 'what belongs to Caesar and what belongs to God'; i. e. what is for politicians to tackle as questions that belong to the sphere of values, and what is for social scientists to handle as a 'professional' topic. As an illustration of the implications of my way of arguing, I want *fewer*, not more social workers, psychologists, professional care takers, to occupy kindergartens, schools, etc., to 'help' our children. I want *fewe*r, not more, advisors, counselors, coaches, to guide our coming generation into society. But I want *more* discussions about ethical implications of political priorities that most likely produce *The Exclusive Society* (Young, 1999). Today, I think too many social scientists are offering 'tools' that represent the 'wrong' answer to the main challenges of today. Even though he puts the message sharply, Ivan Illich (1973) has a point when saying: 'The pooling of stores of information, the building up of a knowledge stock, the attempt to overwhelm present problems by the production of more science is the ultimate attempt to solve a crisis by escalation'. Norway is a country that can afford to 'professionalise' (as Illich describes it) social challenges in late modern society. However, I am not sure if this represents a (socially) sustainable road to the future.

2. The Norwegian welfare state 1945-2010: the success and the limits of state intervention

2.1 1945-60: Work and welfare as synonymous concepts

At the end of WWII, the answer to the question: 'what is the problem' was more or less self-evident and could be converted into one word: *poverty*. For the Labour Government (in office for some twenty years after 1945) the overarching challenge was to rebuild the country through optimal and responsible investments, and through safeguarding full employment. As Hanisch (1977: 58) expressed it, 'work and welfare became two sides of the same political coin, which means that the economic policy was targeted towards preventing social problems through stabilising and increasing the level of employment'. With this point of departure, the logical implication was that the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour became the two dominant institutions to 'remove distress, insecurity and inequality' (Labour Party, Policy Program, 1949: 2). For those citizens who, for different reasons, were unable to contribute through regular work (pensioners, disabled or sick people, the unemployed) all the political parties in Norway agreed on a plan to (hopefully) render superfluous the old 'Poor Law' (means tested payments) by incorporating different benefits into an integrated National Insurance Scheme (passed in 1966). Once again, the challenge confronting the politicians was how to safeguard an *economic* bottom line for every citizen.

The important message is that there was absolutely no disagreement about concluding that there was a complete overlap of interests between the economic and the socio-cultural system: what was beneficial for Norway Inc. was beneficial for its citizens. The main

challenge was to speed up economic and human investments and in this way contribute to the indisputable aim of rapid economic growth. 'The Construction State' became almost synonymous to 'The Welfare State'. Social prevention became synonymous to rebuilding and developing the country economically, and the sooner the better. In principle, all the main social problems that existed could be converted into a question of money to meet well-known needs (and not as later on, a question of knowledge and expertise to meet complex human needs).

2.2 1960-70: Integrating welfare into the process of economic growth

This is a decade of optimism. However, already in this period the first signals of uneasiness concerning *social* development appear on the political agenda. In the long-range program 1958-61 from the Labour Government one reads that there was a need to re-adjust social policy thinking:

> *Economic progress and social reforms through many years have brought new types of social challenges to the forefront. The significant social problems are to an increasing extent about health problems in its broadest meaning (mental depression, lasting disability, chronic illnesses and alcohol abuse), about family and crime problems. Exclusively economic support will in these cases rarely represent a lasting solution* (White Paper, no. 67, 1957: 72, author's italics).

This was the argument behind the conclusion that a re-orientation of social policy strategies was desirable. The most important aspect of the proclaimed change could be described as a 'scientification' and 'professionalisation' of social policy ('a significant need for social research has appeared', as expressed by the Ministry of Social Health and Welfare; op. cit.: 72). The most important aspect of this emphasis was recurring declarations about the importance of social preventive thinking; to which the social sciences most certainly could contribute.

The feeling of 'uneasiness' referred to above was expressed by the Party Leader Trygve Bratteli (LP) at the National Congress (NC) in 1965. After a short presentation on the profound economic and technical changes that had taken place since 1945, Bratteli continued:

> *Modern societies – to an increasing extent characterised by science and technical innovation – seem to have entered an essentially new type of development. What is happening is that some very profound changes take place at a very high speed. However, these rapid changes that take place in the everyday lives of ordinary people will lead to uneasiness and uncertainty, and it will lead to significant industrial and social problems'* (NC, 1965: 147).

The speech ended, however, in an optimistic way: 'The challenge confronting our Party is to take the lead in taking advantage of the enormous possibilities that modern times represent and to find a solution to social problems accompanying economic growth and change' (op. cit.: 147).

In the early 1960s leading politicians recognised that involving Norway in an increasingly competitive European free market system[3] would speed up geographical, technological and

[3] After a relatively protectionist period, Norway gradually liberalised its trade relations after WWII. In 1960, the country joined the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which meant a gradual deconstruction of customs and tariff barriers. The immediate result was a speeding up of geographical and social changes.

economic changes that very likely would generate social problems. While these social problems were only vaguely identified by the politicians (e. g. the talk about 'uneasiness'), public documents show that 'mental problems' (mental distress, drug and alcohol abuse, family problems, crime) rather than 'pecuniary problems' (poverty) were coming to the forefront of the political agenda. How should these 'new' challenges be confronted?

At the *rhetorical* level the Labour Party responded by including 'contentment' into the established general aim about 'economic growth', and, in addition, announced as an overarching aim that the government wanted to create 'safety during social change'. Furthermore, an appeal to the social sciences entered the political programs. Since the *economists* had been very successful in saving a wrecked economy in the 1930s (Keynes), it was now reasonable to ask the *social scientists* for help with new types of problems appearing in the socio-cultural system. Once again, Trygve Bratteli presented the authoritative message:

> *During a period of huge changes and reform of our society we have to give priority to the science about man and his environment, about the body and the health of our soul, about contact and living together, about human society and about human history. In every regard we have to invite the help that science to an increasing extent can supply us with'* (NC, 1965: 149).

This declaration was mirrored in the Working Plan for the Labour Party from the same year:

> *The expertise among researchers and the impatient struggle among ordinary people for a better society represent dynamic forces that can develop our new society in a way that induces safety and security in a world of changes'* (op. cit.: 149).

In other words; science (together with ordinary people's struggle) was seen as a kind of guarantor of the social well-being of its citizens. While the politicians in 1945 appealed to what they defined as 'all constructive forces' to participate in rebuilding the country, twenty years later this appeal explicitly included the social sciences. From the historical documents it is evident that the political interpretation of the existing social problems was that well informed administrative measures at different levels could curb eventual 'barbaric' side effects in the wake of a 'civilising' economic growth. Social problems could, as in the first decade after 1945, be converted into administrative problems of regulation, and consequently, they did not directly provoke political questions regarding value priorities etc. The confidence in the problem solving capability of the social sciences was not only unquestioned, it was taken for granted. In the political debates from this period politicians were talking about *how* the social sciences could help find solutions to the different types of social problems, not *if* they could.

At the *'operational'* level (i. e. practical politics) the Labour Government introduced through the 50s and 60s a wide variety of regulation instruments. In this way the classical social democratic ideology was visualised: instead of taking direct control over the means of production, one took a more indirect control via economic, financial, labour market, and regional politics. The basic way of thinking was expressed in the Principal Program from 1967 (when the Labour Party was not in office). After having referred to the massive technical and economic changes that had taken place, the program declared that this development called for 'bold efforts' from the government. Since the country was only at the beginning of a process of change, a process that would set thousands of jobs at risk, it was steadily underlined that the government had to guarantee that every citizen was taken care

of and that any kind of passive resignation to the market forces was out of the question. In a political manifesto produced in 1967 this message was emphasized with these words: 'What the country needs is firm control' (NC, 1967: 227).

This is not the place to go into details about which policy instruments Norwegian governments implemented in this period. What is well documented is that Norway figures as one of the most consistent social democratic governments in the world through at least three decades after 1945, with a strong focus on protecting every citizen from the negative side effects of economic turbulence. While it was explicitly recognised that taking advantage of global market involvement would have its price (from protectionism to free market competition), it was also declared that these changes would take place within full governmental control. Due to a well equipped tool box in the governmental offices, no one should fear for their overall living conditions: 'We must be able to guarantee that the extensive structural changes taking place in economic life shall not hit anybody', Per Kleppe (Minister of three different Ministries 1971-81) announced in his speech to the National Congress in 1969.

Summing up, we have seen that what was described as 'new social problems' (i. e. problems that could not be converted into problems of poverty) appeared on the agenda in the period 1960-70. In retrospective, the government did not interpret these problems in a principally different way from how they interpreted social problems in the earlier period. Social uprooting and uneasiness did not really challenge the value priorities the government had made in the direction of turning the Norwegian economy into an open market economy. The hypothetical problems that were discussed as a (possible) consequence of a tougher economic climate were more or less passed over by reassurances saying that the omnipotent and interventionist state could act in a proactive and preventive way. What was the result?

Given the strong measures that the government introduces in this period, the following quote from the Labour Party's Principal Program (passed in 1969) appears surprising:

> *Even in societies that have reached the highest material and technical level of standard one can register discontent, human callousness, conflicts and dissatisfaction. The industrial society has not succeeded in developing human ways of being together that satisfies basic social and psychological needs. We experience that people are alienated and that the competitive society and the one-dimensional cultivation of material goods generate a barren and empty life for many people'* ('Labour Party', 1969).

To the extent that this description gives a fair portrait of the situation, the political ambition 'Economic growth *and contentment'* from the early 1960s seems to have been partly achieved. While the political obligation to focus social prevention was formulated as early as in 1953, and the long term program from 1957 promised to 'pay close attention to preventive health and social work' (White Paper, no. 67, 1957: 72), towards the end of this decade different sources of information indicated that something had gone wrong. Also, this is the period when (in Norway) the relatively newly established science called 'sociology' started to report on 'the social state of the country'. Book titles like *The Myth of the Welfare State* (Norway) and *The Hollow Welfare State* (Sweden), illustrates what should become even more apparent in the next decade. The optimism as for what could be obtained by way of an interventionist state seemed to have been exaggerated. It was not uncommon in the political

debate to hear that a concept like 'the welfare society' had to be put in inverted commas until the negative trends had been turned. The sudden increase in expenditures to social security benefits (the old means-tested 'poor law') represented only one worrying signal that 'something was wrong'. Increasing crime figures was another. Even though the Labour Party had been out of office in the period 1965-70 it was admitted that the power balance between 'market forces' and 'political control' had developed in disfavor of the latter:

> *'To a large extent we are still hampered by insufficient tools for political control. We have too little knowledge about the society we want to change and the world we are a part of. We have to obtain more knowledge, more statistics, more research documentation in all fields of importance for the change of society'* (Per Kleppe, NC, 1969).

A recurrent topic in the above presentation was the need for more and stronger measures to get political control over societal developments. In accordance with classical social democratic ideology, Per Kleppe was true to the voluntaristic perspective on politics, namely that, in principle, anything can be attained in terms of political goals as long as one occupies political power. Within a social democratic context, 'governing' is synonymous to 'ruling'. The technocratic elements in this ideology were easily identifiable in these years. When negative traits of development occurred it was only a question of time before ingenious planning tools could be invented (be it within the economic, the labour or the welfare policy). Especially, the belief that *science* could contribute to solve political challenges was strong. Gradually the planning tools were developed more in relation to the economic system (industrial, financial, regional, labour) than to the socio-cultural system (the National Insurance System was carried through in 1967).

Let me return to the announcement made by Trygve Bratteli in 1965, when he said that the challenge for the next few years was 'taking advantage of the enormous possibilities that modern times represent and to find a solution to social problems accompanying economic growth and change'. At the end of the decade it was openly admitted, even among Labour Party representatives, that this 'solution' was not yet found. As shown in Leonardsen (1993) this was not only due to a 'lag' in the preventive measures in relation to problem producing mechanisms, but also to a gradual policy change over some decades, expressed by Halvorsen (1977: 76) in this way: 'While the safeguarding of full employment in the 1930s was considered as a part of the general welfare policy, these two fields were split after the War. The National Benefits System and the Social Security System were developed to take care of those who could not stick to or take a job'. How did these changes, away from a comprehensive perspective on welfare, affect the ambitious aims for welfare policy in the next decade?

2.3 1970-80: 'A qualitatively better society'?

While the two preceding decades (in spite of some emanating social problems) had been characterised by broad optimism, the situation changed in this period. After almost thirty years of steady economic growth the international economy lost drive. Even before the oil crisis in 1973, a process of (relative) stagnation had started: a process that announced essential political readjustments. Traditional Keynesian demand side economics did not work in a globalised market economy and the new political signals were tellingly open: 'It is already evident that, on longer terms, it would not have been possible to increase the

activities and the income redistribution to the extent that is included in the present arrangements and plans' (White Paper no. 71, 1972-73, Special Analysis no. 2). These were the days, in Norway as well as outside the country, when expansive governmental policies were replaced by careful contractions, mirrored in book titles like *The Fiscal Crisis of the State* (1973), *Can Government Go Bankrupt* (1978), and *Legitimation Crisis* (Habermas, 1976).

The dilemma confronting politicians in Norway could be described in this way: on one side, social scientists reported that social problems were on an even steeper increase than in the preceding decade (at this time, the concept of 'the client producing system' was often used in reports, Kolberg, 1970: 140). One of the more profiled voices among sociological researchers made his point clear by saying that;

> *until now, the social policy has to a large extent safeguarded the life quality of ordinary people and those with disabilities and made them secure and safe if something negative was to happen. In this way, social policy is an expression of the power balance in society – the welfare benefits are used by the strong ones when they need it. Even if the intention with social policy is to help the weakest among us, there is a lot to be improved in the coming years* (Løchen, 1970: 208).

This critical perspective on the situation in the early 1970s was actually echoed by one of the dominant voices in the Labour Party itself, Per Kleppe:

> *I will go as far as to say that I do not think we are able to carry out our aims as for our welfare policy in a society that is so strongly dominated by capitalist influence as Norway is today. The implementation of our welfare program takes as a premise quite a radical change of society. We are not running for "adaptation policy"* (LP's Conference on welfare politics, 1971: 81-82).

While sociologists (and politicians themselves) reported negative trends concerning social problems and the economists reported that 'throwing money at social problems' was a non-sustainable alternative, the situation became even worse for the politicians, when the electorate started reacting against what was labeled 'kind-ism' (i. e. too much social support paid to all sorts of 'needy' people). In 1973, a populist tax-paying-refusers' party was established in Norway ('The Anders Lange's Party for a significant reduction of taxes and customs') with some 5% support among the electorate. For the politicians in charge, this looked like a 'catch 22' situation. Dahl Jacobsen (1971: 39) presented the problem in this way:

> *A joint problem for all the Scandinavian countries is that the very fundament for the welfare policy until today is about disintegrating. The debate on welfare policy has gotten a taint of breaking up atmosphere, and it is absolutely not evident in which direction we are to move from here.*

Most of the political parties took responsibility for these changed attitudes by inviting a broad debate about the future of the welfare state, and in 1971 the Labour Party launched their strategy under the headline: 'A new perspective on the welfare policy'. Minister of Social Welfare, Odd Højdahl presented the outline of this strategy by first openly admitting that, for the politicians, it had come as a big surprise that social problems escalated at the same time as economic affluence and social reforms had been attained. '[We] thought that the abolishing of mass poverty, improved housing, and better educational and working conditions, would make main elements of the welfare policy superfluous. However, it was not that simple'. This 'welfare paradox' (less poverty, more social problems) was hard to

understand for those politicians who had their historical background in the 1930s (crisis ridden economy with high unemployment) and the 1940s (war economy).

However, when it came to the *content* of the new signals regarding welfare policy, the perspective was much the same as in earlier days. While Højdahl admitted that 'the strong demands for efficiency and productivity in different sectors of society make many people fall by the wayside', he concluded his presentation by saying that, 'the only solution is further economic growth. I will ask you not to equal economic growth with social problems' (NC, 1971: 254-255). He explicitly announced that what was good for the economy was good for people in general. In short, the way of understanding the social problems of the 1970s was much the same as it was in 1945: it was through rapid economic growth in combination with a broad variety of governmental measures through which the welfare society could be sustained.

For sure, the measures that were introduced to prevent social problems were many and strong also in this period. What had been implemented in the 1960s as a vigorous regional policy, industrial policy, financial policy, labour policy, and an extensive welfare policy, was prolonged in this decade. Especially important was the introduction of the 'Establishing Control Law', 1977, and the support system for industrial activity called 'Geographical differentiation of the payroll tax'. However, the general economic development in Europe and elsewhere led to a change (from around 1977) in the direction of more micro oriented and selective measures. Through different sets of 'micro stimulations' the government hoped to avoid an economic setback as could be seen in the rest of Europe. But as the economic setback lingered on, the government was 'forced' to resign over its attempts to cause the intermediary deletion of the market mechanism (direct support to factories etc.). Towards the end of the decade the message was a call for giving priority to those businesses and factories that had the ability to restructure and modernise. The Robin Hood principle had to resign for the Matthew principle. As Østerud (1978: ii) observed, there was a striking tendency to 'lower the level of ambitions, and to adapt to the external leads and changes, and to regard public plans as a **foundation of information** in the continuous process of decision' (in bold in the text). This implied, according to Østerud, a completely new role for planning and planners. The fact that Norway gradually became more involved in an open, competitive European market economy[4], and also, that Norway since 1970 became an oil nation, clearly amplified this development. A process of abdication from political control of the economy became increasingly dominant at a time when the impetus for change escalated.

One should note that in spite of economic conditions that indicated increasing turbulence, and in spite of negative reports regarding increasing social problems, the level of political ambitions was unchanged. Taking care of 'soft values' was as important as before. Within the frames of what was called 'a new welfare policy' the Labour Party continuously talked about 'giving social values preeminence' in every regard and it was imperative that 'social policy' (which in Norway is written in *one* word, indicating a type of sector politics) from

[4] After having become a member of the EFTA, the government tried to become a member of the EU. However, this attempt was turned down twice (1972 and 1994) by the electorate. However, in 1994 Norway became a member of the European Economic Area (EEA). EEA is based on the same four 'freedoms' as the EU (the free movement of goods, person, services and capital among the EEA member countries).

now on should be written in *two* words (indicating that social values should be a premise for all types of planning). A stronger focus was directed at developing what was called 'self-supporting networks'; not least because one had gradually reached an awareness that 'the state cannot make people happy'[5]. All these declarations were formulated at the same time as the 'winds of change' were accelerating. What Vice-President Reiuf Steen at the National Congress described in 1973 as the (existing) 'panting competition society' (NC, 1973: 62) should be transformed in the direction of 'a real equal society where people had a chance of experiencing peace and prospects for developing all their abilities' (op. cit.: 62). However, such an ambitious aim could be attained only if stronger measures were introduced. The message from Steen was crisp and clear:

> *'For the Labour Party there should be absolutely no doubt concerning the main perspective: by intervening directly into the societal system, by removing the causes of the problems, through the regional policy, through measures like rehabilitation allowance and rehabilitation employment, we will reach a society with people that function in accordance to their talents rather than investing a lot of money to repair damages evolving due to cold and inhuman conditions of competition in the labour market and in society in general'* (underlining in text, NC, 1973: 66).

We can conclude that the government continued having high ambitions for building 'a qualitatively better society'. The overarching strategy for the governing Labour Party was condensed in the slogan 'Economic growth and protection' (i. e. of people and nature). This was the declared road to 'a qualitatively better society'. In addition, a continuous flow of new administrative tools for keeping structural changes under control were implemented in the 1970s. But perhaps most importantly, the trust in the social sciences for supporting the politicians with the necessary know-how to manoeuver in a complex and mobile society was uncontested. Facing the question of how much change society could take, the Minister of Education and Research Einar Førde declared in 1980: 'One of the most important tools for political governing that should be implemented is an action program for social research' (Førde, 1980: interview). In other words, the technocratic paradigm taking for granted that 'science' would come up with continuously new approaches that would counteract negative side effects of rapid change, was still the dominating way of thinking.

However, the initiatives in the direction of increasing the politicians control of society, took place at the same time as steps were taken to speed up economic changes in society. Increased integration in European and global markets alongside a developing oil-based economy (i. e. two strong impulses of change) were the backdrop to an expansion of governmental steering instruments. To use an illustrative picture, one pushed harder on the accelerator but as a compensation one also pushed harder on the brakes. Bratteli gave a precise presentation of the situation in 1973 when saying: 'I think most people think the speed of change in society is quite good. What we need now is safety and security during the accompanying changes' (NC, 1973: 29). The question is: would it be the political slogan 'safety and security during change' that would be the most likely outcome in the coming years or would it rather be 'a change of safety and security' for the citizens?

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[5] This perspective was presented by Gro Harlem Brundtland (Minister of the Environment) at the National Congress in 1979, when she declared that 'it is a main challenge to follow a strategy where people are empowered to handle their problems themselves' (NC, 1979: 134).

2.4 1980-2010: From Keynes to Adam Smith. Paradise lost?

In 1983, Kolberg published a book (about Norway) entitled *The welfare state – goodbye?* Five years later, Marklund (Sweden) published *Paradise lost? The Nordic welfare states and the recession 1975-1985.* Both titles indicate the main focus of the welfare state debate, actually all through the period 1980-2010. These were the years of a general right wing turn in politics. Even though (as we have seen) the economic contraction started in the mid-1970s, in all Nordic countries it took until the early 1980s before governments implemented the first more systematic restrictions in welfare spending (Marklund, 1988: 30). Norway, in these years economically strengthened through its new status as an oil nation, representing no exception to this general trend of welfare contraction. An important *political* change characterising this period was that the Labour Party lost some of its hegemonic status. During the period 1981-86/1989-90, and 1997-2000/2001-2005 Norway had conservative/centre-right governments, to some extent inspired by neo-liberal thinking. While the Norwegian Labour Party held a rhetorical distance to this ideology, like its sister parties in Europe, the neo-liberal influence was easily identifiable also within the social democratic camp. However, in the midst of a new recognition that one had to define limits for public expenditures, these problems (as they were experienced by the politicians) did not actually seem to decrease[6].

But which type of social problems were registered during the period 1980-2010? To what extent did the extensive preventive interventions announced in the preceding periods (regional policy, labour market policy, structural policy, *and* the general extensive welfare policy) result in a *decrease* of social problems? At the entrance of the 1980s the strong efforts in *preventing* social problems seemed to have had a rather disappointing effect:

> *The strong economic growth has had its price…. The rapid changes have created uneasiness, alienation and insecurity about the future. New human problems have appeared: new illnesses and new troubles. Drug abuse increases. … Beneath the surface of wealth we can find huge human and social problems that are unsolvable within the present system of dominating capitalistic features* (Labour Party, 1981).

The Party Leader, Reiulf Steen, was very explicit when, in 1981, he declared that 'not at any time since WWII has social security been more vulnerable than now'. Vice President Einar Førde expressed his worries in 1983 by saying that 'we can fill up a medium big Norwegian city with children suffering from what is known as "serious lack of care"; adding that the youngsters optimism for the future had changed in the direction of pessimism and fear. According to Førde, the 'No-Future Generation' had arrived. In the Labour Party's program 1986-89, the challenge was identified in this way: 'A big and increasing number of children and youngsters are being neglected, maltreated, they drop out of school and end up drifting'. Also, it was stated that 'queues for getting financial assistance are increasing' (primarily due to increasing unemployment rates and increasing housing costs) (Election Manifesto, 1986-89). In the 1990s, the worrying signals referred to 'too many children getting too little care and supervision', and cases of incest, child maltreatment and children living on the street represented illustrations of this (Election Manifesto, 1990-93). In a statement

[6] An overview of references regarding official publications (1980-2010), covering topics on social prevention and social welfare, amounts to at least 60 references. Like in the preceding periods, I delimit myself to references referring to the Labour Party.

passed at the National Congress in 1992, the Labour Party declared that 'loneliness, fear, increase in psychiatric sufferings, increase in suicides, even among children and young people, indicate that time and efforts do not suffice for giving the necessary care we should offer each other'. An increase in crime (especially serious crimes) was part of the picture. Four years later, the 'Principles and values program' talked about problems like lack of social network in society, little reciprocity and contact among people, increasing crime, drug abuse, and mental illness. Suicide was reported to be one of the most frequent reasons for death among young people, mirroring increasing loneliness and social isolation among people ('Principels and values', 1996). At the Labour Party National Congress in 1996 the Party Leader Torbjørn Jagland announced that 'a new under-class' and 'new class divisions' were emanating. At the turn of the century, poverty and the abolishment of poverty had become an essential problem to combat. At the Congress in 2000, Jagland reported that some 70,000 children were living below the poverty level (Election Manifesto, 2001-05), 'many children are not in a position to have their dinner every day; they never go for a holiday; they cannot participate in school excursions'. Problems regarding eating disturbances also occurred at this time. Two years on, Jagland admitted that 'the stress, the pressure, and the competition drive for more and more material goods had made a significant number of groups burned out and expelled from the labour market' (NC, 2002: 18). Finally, at the National Congress in 2005 and 2007 Prime Minster and Party Leader Jens Stoltenberg had to admit that, in spite of strong governmental efforts, social and economic inequalities and injustice had taken a hold in Norwegian society[7]. The increasing amount of immigrants was only one of the reasons that one could register an expansion of the 'new under-class'. While people continuously had become materially richer they were not necessarily living a richer life, he stated.

One should remember that it was a conservative government that was in office during most of the 1980s, implementing policies of a more neo-liberal character than the Labour Party wanted. Accordingly, Labour Party representatives were strong in their critique of those voices preaching a language of free competition and celebration of narrow-minded capitalistic efficiency. These groups (i.e. the conservative government) were actually presenting 'an uninhibited appeal to human egoism' (Gunnar Berge, NC, 1985: 68) while, on the other side, the Labour Party would recommend stronger efforts from 'society'. However, when analysing why inequalities and injustice had increased 'in spite of decades of intense endeavors to safeguard that every citizen had equal opportunities', Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg (Labour Party) admitted that it was not only the centre-right government that was to blame. Increasing inequalities were due also to 'strong forces in the societal development that continuously pull in the direction of inequality. Thus, inequality is reproduced from generation to generation' (NC, 2005: 16). Stoltenberg did not at this occasion specify what he meant by 'strong forces', but if we look at earlier presentations by leading Labour Party representatives, one will find this: The Labour Prime Minister Odvar Nordli declared in 1979 that they (i. e. the Labour Party) for too long had disregarded that the international system needed leadership through a binding international cooperation, and that they 'for too long had failed to take the consequences of the fact that this system was without real control by national and international organisations' (NC, 1979: 62). Even

[7] According to a OECD report from 2008, 'income inequality increased significantly in the early 2000s in Canada, Germany, Norway and the United States' (OECD, 2008). For further documentation, see Wahl, 2009.

though this was not equal to saying that the Norwegian economy was 'drifting weak-willed on a rough ocean' (expression used by Nordli), it meant that some basic prerequisites for the national economy were set in this open international system. Reiulf Steen (Party Leader) shared this analysis when (two years later) he said that 'as a political party and as a political movement, we have not to a sufficient extent been in control of the new societal conditions we ourselves have been the driving forces behind' (NC, 1981: 85).

In short; as the Norwegian economy gradually had become more and more deeply involved in the European free market system, leading representatives of the Labour Party admitted that essential dimensions of the societal development were outside political control. But what could be done? No doubt, an essential ideological shift took place within the Labour Party during the 1980s; i. e. the period when a conservative government implemented what roughly could be defined as a neo-liberal inspired program (privatisation, marketisation, 'modernising' the state administration, etc). The way leading representatives of the Labour Party interpreted the electorate in the 1980s, it was evident that the old rhetoric about governmental and bureaucratic solutions, heavily dependent on taxing and centralised solutions, had come into miscredit.

The ideological shift that had already started in the 1970s was amplified during this period. The Labour Party, originally heavily anchored in a Keynesian tradition with a strong belief in the omnipotence of the central state, gradually had to recognise that an increasing integration in the European free market economy came at the price of shrinking national political control. For the Labour Party, political as well as economic arguments favored participation in an open market economy. However, this called for sobriety regarding which instruments were available in the political tool box.

The main arena for declaring this ideological shift was the National Congress in 1987. Two speakers, Prime Minister/Party Leader Gro Harlem Brundtland and Vice President Einar Førde presented the 'new' message. As Norway had become more integrated into the European as well as the global economy, one had to acknowledge that 'the task for political organisations should be the setting of political aims and defining the framework. After that, it is the leaders' and their employees' challenge to reach the given aims. We believe this will redeem innovation and engagement' (Brundtland, NC, 1987: 21). Due to stronger demands among the electorate for more individualised and tailor-made services, one had to become more sensitive to such demands. The main challenge was to see that the services were offered on equal terms. It was argued that monopolies (public or private) more often developed in the direction of organisational coagulation than competing institutions. Accordingly, it would be a good strategy to bring competition into the public sector. From mixed economy to mixed administration – this was the message, and it was underlined that the trade-off between public and private sector was not to be defined once and for all.

The political ambitions were no less than before. Taking care of the weakest in society, a universal welfare state, giving priority to the common interest, prevention instead of repairing; all the political aims from earlier periods were intact. The Prime Minister ascertained that it was *people,* not *money,* it was *children,* not *cars,* that should be in focus. However, new times demanded new strategies. In his introduction to the Labour Party's election manifesto, Førde asked for a willingness to being self-critical about a socialist tradition where bureaucratisation and centralising tendencies had been strong. Referring to

the new manifest, he stated that the choice between public and private operation had to be done according to what was most convenient for reaching the given aim. It was the need of the customer that should be the defining standard. And people had to show more responsibility themselves. However, one precaution was taken: 'We shall offer no compromises when it comes to stating that health, social security and education are so basic common needs that we will not allow commersialisation of these services. In this connection I will recommend dogmatism', Førde concluded (NC, 1987: 73). When the political program for the decade 2010-2020 ('Social Democracy 2020: A New Party Program') was launched, the traditional social democratic value foundation was confirmed by Vice President Helga Pedersen, who 're-named' the Labour Party to 'The Social Security Party'. The essence of this program, according to Pedersen, was social security for every citizen, for their jobs, education, and their welfare. And, like before, a significant strategy for safeguarding these aims was 'a significant strengthening of the preventive efforts' (NC, 2009: 78).

Summing up the period 1980-2010; as a result of fundamental political and economic changes, the Labour Party 'modernised' much of its strategic thinking in this period. While the defense of the Scandinavian welfare state stood firm, a 'realistic' approach to what this meant in an era of fierce competition and demands for efficiency was adopted. Like in China, the pragmatic approach saying that 'it doesn't matter whether the cat is black or white as long as it catches mice', became a central mark of recognition for the Labour Party. 'New politics for new times'; this was the recurring slogan, while simultaneously taking care of the old ideals.

3. Look to Norway? Limits to social engineering policy and limits to social science solutions

I want to use this historical overview, on a principal level, to discuss what kind of lessons can be drawn from the paradox that a strong, distributive welfare state (but less so during the last decade) in a very rich country like Norway has had to see social problems escalate (according to the politicians themselves) as material affluence increases? Why has social exclusion, crime, drug addiction, mental distress, and even expenditures on municipal financial assistance, been on an upward trend in spite of a strong political will for preventive politics, a broad (but decreasing) array of regulating measures, and a solid economy? If any country in the world should be able to compete with processes of alienation and anomie in late modernity, it should be Norway and the Nordic countries. As we have seen, the politicians themselves as well as governmental papers, appear to be quite disillusioned. Why look to Norway? I will trace this question in deep respect and recognition of what has been attained by the Nordic welfare states[8]. In a comparative perspective, there is obviously more on the credit than on the debit side of the account. However, the pronounced technocratic approach in the confrontation with 'modern' social problems (defined as 'problems of meaning') call for critical comments. Furthermore, the obvious success story should not prevent us from asking searching questions about the role of, and the use of, the social sciences in political-administrative planning[9].

[8] In addition to a general high living standard and economic equality, the Nordic countries are characterised by high levels of trust (Uslaner, 2007).

[9] My approach in this analysis is in many ways complementary to what Asdal (2011) has done concerning environmental policy in Norway. In her detailed analysis, Asdal shows how the rhetoric about nature and environmental questions clearly announced that these topics should have *pre-eminence*. When it came to environmental questions, one had to take 'the asthmatics of nature' as the staring point.

As we have seen, during some 25 years after WWII one could argue that 'social problems' was another term for 'poverty', and, accordingly, these problems could be converted to a pecuniary dimension. Preventive politics was synonymous with politics for economic growth. The period of welfare optimism; i. e. the period of uncontested belief that political-administrative instruments would be able to prevent social problems, lasted as long as the Keynesian fundament for economic policy held firm. When the international scene changed and a neo-liberal ideology took control, this perspective gradually changed. Even though the ideology from the 'old' welfare state remained intact (taking care of people from cradle to grave), ideas about 'individual responsibility' and 'self-supporting networks' were announced. However, while the social problems appearing from the 1970s could be described as being of a complex and existential character ('problems of meaning'), the interpretation of how these problems could be tackled or even prevented did not change in a way that affected the overarching priorities for general societal development. Generally speaking, the situation is not very different today. The confidence that, somewhere out there, there has to be some kind of sociological correspondence to Keynes that can be implemented seems to stand firm. Is there an alternative perspective?

George and Wilding (1976) might represent an interesting starting point. When giving a kind of ideal type description of the modern economic system, they observe that if this system is to flourish, it both requires and generates a particular value system. According to these authors, the capitalistic system depends on and fosters an ethic of self-help, freedom, individualism, competition and achievement. They confront these values with the values needed to underpin a successful public welfare system, and continue:

> *If such a system is to flourish, the stress on the virtue of self-help must be replaced by stress on the need to help others. Individualism must be replaced by a concern for the community at large; competition by co-operation; achievement must be defined in social and communal rather than in individual terms – values that are socialist rather than liberal'* (p. 118).

In concluding, these authors bring to the forefront the deep value conflict that actually exists between the economic and the socio-cultural system; a conflict that is essential to understand 'why fundamental aims set out in a period of post-war collectivist euphoria have not been achieved' (p. 118).

I will argue that a message pointing to a *rationality conflict* between the economic and the socio-cultural system is really what the science of sociology has been pleading for, from Durkheim to Bauman, from Polanyi to Sennett. A flourishing economy in a market society demands efficiency, competitiveness, flexibility, and an ideology of individualism and survival-of-the-fittest thinking. Contrary to this, a flourishing socio-cultural system calls for time, cooperation, routines, and an ideology of collectivism and 'caring-for others' (Leonardsen, 1993, Leonardsen forthcoming). While participation in the economic system demands *certification* (education), participation in the socio-cultural system is *open*. While being *independent* of others is important in a competing system, being *dependent* on others is what characterises life in the socio-cultural system at different times of the life span (children, pensioners, unemployed, handicapped etc.).

The challenging question is whether this means that we are confronted with an *antagonistic* value conflict (as seems to be the position of George and Wilding) or not. Is the relationship between the economic and the socio-cultural system primarily a zero-sum type of

relationship (what one gains, the other loses), or is it realistically imaginable that a state of *entente cordial* can be arrived at (i. e. a situation of more even 'power balance' between conflicting values)? Asked sociologically; what does it take to bring the socio-cultural system into a more harmonious relationship with the economy than politicians *and* social scientists seem to think it is today (as shown above)?

The basic philosophy behind the social democratic project has been the so-called 'welfare principle' (Tawney, Crosland). According to this principle, all kind of problems can be explained away in the sphere of *distribution*. For governments disposing a sensitive stethoscope and a multitude of governing instruments (including an army of knowledgeable researchers), there are principally no limits to what can be brought under political control. Governing is synonymous to ruling. The question is: Are the variety of modern social problems (here defined as 'lack of meaning' problems) of such a character that they can be converted to the formula of being 'governable' problems? Can these problems in a satisfactory way be handled in the sphere of distribution? 'The welfare principle' takes as a given premise that mostly all problems can be converted into this type of problem. My critique address two types of challenges in this connection:

1. *Antagonistic value conflicts.* I do not want to simplify a very complex field of research by arguing that all the modern welfare problems should be regarded as the fruit of a merciless capitalistic system. They should not. No doubt, the welfare state has contributed to the mutation and modification of many value conflicts in these societies. As Esping-Andersen (1990) has pointed out, the welfare state has contributed to a de-commodification of labour (i.e. public services are rendered as a matter of right, meaning that people can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market)**.** Nevertheless, to the extent that the quality of a good society is demonstrated by the way it treats its poor and depressed, one has to admit that, even within the Nordic welfare state model, the inclusive society, where 'people had a chance of experiencing peace and prospects for developing all their abilities' (Steen 1973: 12) is at a significant distance. What's more; this aim is a moving target which, even according to the politicians, seems to be extremely hard to attain. In the renowned book *The Strategy of Equality,* LeGrande (1982) has a chapter titled 'The Dreamers'. In this chapter he presents the basis of the social democratic welfare project and the strategy of equality. The presentation shows the confidence these people had in a belief that public expenditures on the social services could promote social equality. Unfortunately, the conclusion to the chapter is rather depressing since, according to LeGrande, one can as much identify a 'Matthew effect' as a 'Robin Hood effect' in the wake of decades of social democratic redistributional politics. My focus has not been on economic and social equality in itself but rather on the operationalised consequences of such inequalities (i. e. what in this chapter is called 'modern social problems'). My own conclusion is no less optimistic than LeGrande's.

For those who would argue that these are *ex post* conclusions I would remind them that the historical presentation given above shows that the politicians in charge at a relatively early point of time warned about this development, as did the researchers (Leonardsen, 1993, Hovedkomiteen, 1976). However, instead of entering an analysis about market forces released contra the omnipotence of the welfare state, one took the last premise for granted. From my argument above, I think it is fair to conclude that responsible politicians today should invite a debate where value conflicts in late modern capitalist societies are given full attention. An open discussion on topics like *injustices* and *lack of respect and recognition*

(Honneth, 1995, Sennett, 2003) for people struggling with being fully competitive in a risk society should be an important ingredient in such a discussion.

2. *The structure of problems and their solving strategies.* As mentioned above, a prerequisite for the welfare principle was that the state had full control over those values and interests that were to be safeguarded. However, values like 'meaning of life', 'happiness', and 'social inclusion' are difficult to implant by way of administrative instructions. As Habermas (1976: 71) points out, 'the structural dissimilarity between areas of administrative action and areas of cultural tradition constitutes, then, a systematic limit to attempts to compensate for legitimation deficits through conscious manipulation'. This is due to the fact that cultural traditions have their own, vulnerable conditions of reproduction that are shaped with what Habermas calls 'hermeneutic consciousness'; in other words that 'there is no administrative production of meaning' (op. cit. 70). What Habermas does here is to draw a principally important distinction between two types of rationalities, one referring to the 'system world' and one referring to 'the life world'; each having their own idiosyncratic ways of reproduction. In practical life, of course, these principles do not (and cannot) operate in separate spheres. However, there is a strong case for arguing not only that in late modern society the value system of the economic system has invaded the socio-cultural system, but that political parties have had too high expectations about manipulating social problems away through ingenious interventions. Once the spirit is released from the bottle (once the global market forces are set free) it is hard to get it back again (to get political and social control of it). Actually, some influential fractions of the Labour Party argued for a long time in a way which reflected on these perspectives. An economist like Per Kleppe (who also was a Minister in Labour governments all through the 1970s) was (as we have seen) aware of the huge challenges Norwegian participation in an open global economy would mean for this country. As we have seen, Reiulf Steen was another spokesman for such perspectives. However, it was the pragmatic 'right wing' part of the Labour Party that came to dominate and define the political direction to be followed from the mid-1980s. In spite of endeavours to revitalise local communities and promotion of concepts like self-supporting networks, it was the 'traditionalists' (i.e. those arguing that rapid economic growth was the road to a qualitatively better society) that had the upper hand.

4. Conclusion

How should the above arguments be interpreted? Are the everyday endeavors for a better society useless unless we start working with the 'root causes' of social problems? Of course not. What I am saying is that political promises about social prevention and social inclusion should be confronted with an analysis of power relations in modern market societies. If agreed upon aims are not attained, in spite of financial muscle and a broad basis of scientific know-how then there has to be some strong interests, some powerful centres that have become too influential. If political rhetoric about 'soft values' are to be taken seriously, it seems that one has to change some of the political priorities in advance. From a sociological point of view, speeding up the pace of change in a world of speedy changes is hardly compatible with safeguarding values like social inclusion and participation for everybody. The sociology I know about and the sociology I appreciate gives strong support for such a conclusion.

Furthermore, one should not discount that the social sciences, given these premises, can support the political-administrative system with tools that will create balance were imbalance already exists. In the above presentation we have seen that, at an early stage, Norwegian politicians appealed to the social sciences for being 'practically useful' for decision makers at all levels of society. To a large extent one could say that the social sciences were turned into a troop of 'rescuing angels' for the political-administrative system. It would be an exaggeration to argue that these sciences have been able to 'deliver'. Two conclusions could be drawn from this observation: one is that the social sciences are still 'young of age', but in due time they will certainly develop know-how and practical instruments that will help bringing the socio-cultural system back into balance. Alternatively, the problem is not one of scientific immaturity among sociologists, criminologists, psychologists etc. Rather, the problem is that these sciences are embarking on types of problems that they have few chances of solving. I think the short historical overview of the Norwegian welfare state above gives credence to such a conclusion and supports an argument in favour of taking Galbraith, Illich, vonWright and Marcuse (see introduction) much more seriously[10].

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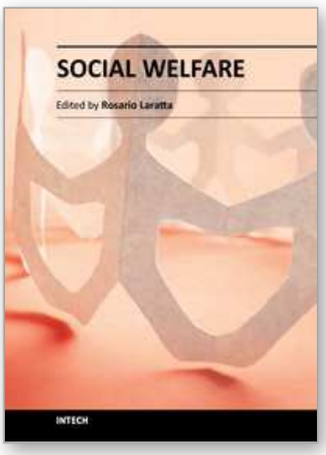
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[10] Or to draw a parallel: Braithwaite (1989: 7) makes an interesting observation in his famous book on *Crime, shame and re-integration.* He points to the paradox that the country with the highest crime rates in the world is the country with (assumingly) most expertise on crime: 'Criminology has become an export industry for the United States in recent decades. Third World criminal justice professionals are accustomed to discrete jokes abut American criminologists being funded as UN consultants, or by some other form of foreign aid, to communicate words of wisdom to countries that manage their crime problems much more effectively than the United States'.

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