

Challenges for Greenland's Social Policies: How We Meet the Call for Social and Political Awareness

Greenland is a self-declared welfare society. In the present-day political discussions around independence, welfare is, paradoxically, a cornerstone in the political understanding of the country - and at the same time we see a lack of activity concerning new legislation, countrywide welfare strategies or communicated municipal social policies. Greenland is facing severe challenges when it comes to key areas such as cross-sectional efforts in stabilizing the social services concerning children, adolescents and families. We are experiencing a rise in violence against women, poverty and homelessness with an increase in Greenlanders leaving the country in search for better futures in Denmark. Historically, the social political focus was on children - together with widowers and the elderly. They formed the basis need for social services. Well-functioning adults, historically men, were the patriarchs of a society centered around hunting - in a Durkheimian mechanic system, where every member of the community had an important function. The shift from hunting to fishing in the 1910s coincided with a grand municipal plan, designed by the colonial power of Denmark, and called for structured social services. In modern times, the social policies of Greenland have officially been a matter of the Greenlandic people (since the Homerule Act of 1979). However, a more in-depth look at Greenland's social history reveals a somewhat autonomous decision-making process since 1968. In light of a modern call for social political awareness, this chapter discusses the challenges of implementing Greenlandic social policies with a longitudinal focus.

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Greenland's emerging social conscience – Voluntary food delivery to people experiencing homelessness in Nuuk

Greenland experienced a 5-week lockdown during the COVID-19 crisis. The lockdown effectively took out all public social support and food supply for people experiencing homelessness in the capital Nuuk. This woke up Greenland's social conscience in the form of a local NGO's mobilization of voluntary social helpers. Luckily nobody in the homeless environment got infected and suffered needlessly. From a social policy perspective, we can take three experiences away from the pandemic. Firstly, a clear learning experience from this crisis was the need to redefine the broad societal understanding of Greenland a country with a universal welfare system. The second experience was that social work comes in many shapes and forms. Finally, the experience illustrated what could take place when the political and administrative system are too slow to react in times of crisis. It kickstarted the civil society step up and help fellow citizens. In the end NGO's need to reports back and inform the public system to ensure better social emergency response in the future.

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50 years of Arctic social policy and social work education – the Greenlandic case

Greenland is on the one hand a unique case of independent Arctic social policy development and social work education. On the other hand, severe social challenges are still evident in the form of violence towards women, youth suicide (perhaps the highest in the world), and low levels of child welfare.

This paper presents, for the first time, a coherent 50-year historical timeline starting with the National Council's (Landsrådet) administration of social and labour market affairs in 1968, before the Home Rule Act of 1979 - concluding by examining current social policies anno 2018. It is discussed how social challenges, as listed above, can be linked to previous administration's struggle to anchor the social work profession to social policy development.

In Greenland, the social work education began in 1985. Today, social workers are graduating with a bachelor-degree in accordance with The Bologna Process. However, as a profession, the Greenlandic social workers are still not organized in a labour union. This poses an essential problem in terms of being able to express a voice from a professional point of view in the social political debate.

Across the Arctic the Greenlandic case is rare in regards to the historic formation of an indigenous people's administration of social policies. This is only in the making in neighboring countries.

Finally, the paper discusses the relation between an independent social work education, the necessity for a social worker labour union and the forming of future Arctic social policies.

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An illustration of 50 years of social administration & social work in Greenland

By 2018, Greenland has officially had an independent controlled social and labour administration for 50 years.

The realization in 1968 took place 12 years before the signing of the Greenlandic home rule act in 1979.

The taking over of the social and labour administration became a historical turning point for the introduction of a more organized and democratic social welfare system.

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In search of security - women's homelessness in Nuuk, Greenland

The paper explores women's experiences of homelessness in Nuuk, Greenland from a feminist theoretical perspective. By engaging with empirical evidence from an ongoing research project in Nuuk, including ethnographic interviews with support providers and women who identify as homeless, the paper examines the contributing factors to and experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness among women in Greenland's capital city. Furthermore, the literature concerning women's homelessness in northern Canada and Greenlandic women's homelessness in Denmark to link the empirical evidence to broader themes of gendered patterns of social service dependency, rural-urban migration and discrimination in northern social policy is looked upon. In

this paper it is argued that not only is the public social system in Greenland ill-prepared for the rising number of people without secure accommodation and the related social and health problems in Nuuk, but women are especially sidelined in this policy gap. It is clear from research in other contexts that women are more susceptible to hidden homelessness, and are also marginalized in services for the visibly homeless. In Greenland, and in Nuuk, there are currently no specialized programs for women experiencing homelessness, despite the fact that women's homelessness is often framed by intimate partner violence, the loss of custody of one's children, and sexual violence. In the paper it is demonstrated that, among other things, that women's homelessness and the factors that contribute to it in Greenland are nothing new, and yet remain largely absent in Greenlandic social policy. This oversight continues to marginalize women experiencing homelessness in myriad ways.

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