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Some roots of Finnish Welfare Society

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Under the governance of Sweden

Only little information will be available from the legal practice in Finland before the time of the Swedish governance¹. It is known that about AD100, the Finns who had different origin and language began to move from Baltic countries across the Finnish Gulf to the inner land of Finland². Swedish king and church created Finland into vassal state in the 13th Century. In those times Catholic Church was an authority. It determined women as incomplete, whose duty is to serve men. However it was just the Catholic Church which offered opportunities for women to study firstly. Civil society has been progressed for example by education. From the viewpoint of Finnish women interesting document from the year 1316 states:

Let it be proclaimed that all those living in marriage, widows, nuns and maidens shall enjoy the same peace and safety in respect to property as a person as in the realm of Sweden³.

In the development of Finnish society there was so called “the peaceful period” (1323–1473) which included the royal power and the power of the Roman Catholic Church⁴. The Russo-Swedish War (1808–1809) broke the peaceful development. This war was a consequence of Napoleon’s wars in Europe⁵. At the end of the war Finland was divided between Russia and Sweden. The culture of eastern parts of Finland has been influenced

¹ M. Laine, *Access to Finnish Public Law*, Helsinki: WSOY, 2006, p. 7.

² B. NØkleby, *Nordic Chronology*, [in:] Ø. SØensen, B. Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997, p. 286.

³ M. Manninen, *Finnish Women’s Opportunities before the 19th Century*, [in:] M. Manninen, P. Setälä (eds.), *The Lady with the Bow. The Story of Finnish Women*, Helsinki: Otava Publishing, 1990, pp. 10–11.

⁴ Laine, 2006, p. 7.

⁵ Manninen, 1990, p. 15.

by the Russian Orthodox Church and western parts by Catholic and Lutheran churches. During this time Finland was a very poor country. People earned their livelihood mainly by hunting, fishing, picking up berries, mushrooms etc. and doing some agricultural work. "The upper class" was Swedish speaking minority. On the other side of the society were landless, poor people. City of Turku (Åbo) was the main administrative centre. Little by little the cultural roots turned to the Lutheran, rural culture in Finland, as well as in all Nordic countries⁶. Marriage was the most common livelihood for women, then domestic work like baking, cleaning and spinning. Female widows could continue the work of their husbands like keeping shops or working as shoemakers. The first real occupation for all Finnish women was to be a midwife⁷.

If we are thinking of local decision making and the opportunities of women to vote, they varied from town to town in those days. Active citizenship was not possible to all women. In 1686 women earned the right to vote in the parish election⁸. In 1865 tax-paying women and widows received right to vote, and in 1873 those living in the cities in the municipal election. However, they could not be eligible for election.

Under the governance of Russian Empire

During 18th and 19th centuries Finnish class-divided social system was replaced by a new civil society. The earliest part was named as revivalist period, second one was the seeking of official shape of civil society and the third one was the new form of the society based on Russian culture. During revivalist period social and economic situation of the municipal residents change a lot. Identity of individualism and gender system existed. Seeking for an official shape of civil society means the political and social discussion of own state of Finland. In addition it means development of formally organised civic associations and voluntary organisations, for example for care (read: poor) work. It was the starting point of the modern society. The new form of society is organised by party system, parliamentary work and municipalities. Also the collective understanding of human being was a growing phenomenon. It created needs to develop civil society, public administration, welfare services and, above all, welfare state. This was the starting point of the welfare state, which later, during 2000, turned (back) to the welfare society⁹. During 19th century rights of citizens and equal opportunities were under the discussion. However women's rights are based still on the social class and sex¹⁰. Women's workload was huge continuous work. They worked in the fields, cow houses and inside home. However, decision making was in the hands of

⁶ H. Stenius, *The Good Life Is a Life of Conformity: The Impact of the Lutheran Tradition on Nordic Political Culture*, [in:] Ø. SØensen, B. Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997, p. 161.

⁷ Manninen, 1990, p. 12.

⁸ Manninen, 1990, p. 14.

⁹ I. Sulkunen, *The Mobilisation of Women and the Birth of Civil Society*, [in:] M. Manninen, P. Setälä (eds.), *The Lady with the Bow. The Story of Finnish Women*, Helsinki: Otava Publishing Company Ltd., 1990, pp. 42–53.

¹⁰ Manninen, 1990, p. 15.

men, because thinking way was that “the weaker sex” cannot understand important issues of the municipalities.

At the same time forest and metal industry started to develop. The Russian Empire developed especially the City of Helsinki. It got the powerful position as the capital of Finland. Business life developed especially between St. Petersburg and the biggest cities of Finland. In addition the Russian Empire supported the development of the Finnish culture and architecture. This can be seen even today in the buildings of Helsinki city centre. Finland was still so poor a state that the earnings of women were compulsory for the families to have daily livelihood. Anyway work did not mean the same to all women¹¹. Education was then and now as a key tool for developing women’s life opportunities. It has been seen also as the key concept to develop the welfare state and civil society¹².

The time of independence

Finnish political and administrative system developed between 1917–1919¹³. The Finnish Constitution is a compromise between republican and monarchist opinion. The president got a huge power, which has become nowadays smaller according to the constitutional changes in 1980’s and 1990’s¹⁴. However, patriarchal legislation affected the positions of women in the society, though in 1906 women received voting rights for national election (as the first country in Europe) and the right to be electoral candidates (the first country in the world). In 1917 universal voting rights for local government elections started. After that women gained the right to work without their husband’s permission¹⁵.

So called russification existed in Finland between 1899 and 1917. Finnish citizens had different political opinions on the presence of Russian troops still being in Finland at the beginning of independence period. Even there were radical hopes for revolution. This social situation, as well as poverty gap between Finnish people, led to the Independence War, called also as Civil War (1918). Another explanation is that the war broke out from the Russian Revolution and the Finnish Declaration of Independence. In this war, against each other were the supporters of left wing politics “The Reds”, (left wing political ideology, supported by Russia) and The “White” (right wing political ideology, supported by Germany). This was a very crucial war, “brother against brother”, and poor people against richer people. White troops won the war. The social and political situation stabilized with foreign states

¹¹ See more: P. Markkola, *Women in Rural Society in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, [in:] M. Manninen, P. Setälä, 1990, pp. 17–29.

¹² See more: M. Läheemäki, *Vuosisadan naisliike. Naiset ja sosialidemokratia 1900-luvun Suomessa*. Helsinki: Hakapaino, 2000; A. Korpi-Tommola, *Education—The Road to Work and Equality*, [in:] M. Manninen, P. Setälä, 1990, pp. 31–41.

¹³ Laine, 2006, p. 9.

¹⁴ Laine, 2006, p. 11.

¹⁵ See more: Laine, 2006; M. Läheemäki, *Vuosisadan naisliike. Naiset ja sosialidemokratia 1900-luvun Suomessa*, Helsinki: Hakapaino, 2000.

in 1919¹⁶. Even today the memories of this war are present in the political discussion of the parties, especially between right and left wing politicians.

After the Civil War, Finnish political life started to develop. The atmosphere of the political discussion was to find peaceful solutions how to lead the new state. However bitterness of the position of the poor people was present. In any way the first parliaments of Finland included both “The Reds” and “The Whites” as well as women and men.

In 1917 all residents of the municipalities got universal right to vote and eligibility for election, when s/he was 21 years old. Finnish citizens received principle of equality in 1919 by the Constitution Act. Of course, this was not true in the everyday life¹⁷. At the beginning of 1900, women entered more and more to the work outside home. This was not the gain of the emancipatory work done by leftish women. It was only a phenomenon of the society. Families needed salaries both women and men. At the same time Finnish Society started to move towards industrialism. Waving factories needed cheap work force, for example women. Salary of women was lower than that of men. Industrialism and changing society created gendered separated labour markets. The birth of civil society started¹⁸.

Civil Society and Welfare State

The idea of civil society has long roots in the western political thinking. In this article the concept of civil society is a common term for all societies. Under that are the terms like welfare state and welfare society. In this article the term of civil society is seen as critical political thinking of societies including western and eastern styles of societies. It discusses connection between civil life, democracy, state, social movement and citizens in all aspects of life¹⁹.

The Development of Civil Society and Welfare State has been multiphase as well the development of active citizenship. In Finland the development has been rather different in the southern, eastern and western parts of Finland. According to Anttonen²⁰ the Nordic Model of welfare state has focused on work, family issues, labour relations, gender equality and marginalized groups such as women which have become a part of social policy contract. As a part of this social concept the term of “social/active citizenship” was used in the Finnish

¹⁶ Laine, 2006, p. 9; B. NØkleby, *Nordic Chronology*, [in:] Ø. SØensen, B. Stråth (eds.), *The Cultural Construction of Norden*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997, p. 293.

¹⁷ M. Pohls, *Women's Work in Finland 1870–1940*, [in:] M. Manninen, P. Setälä, 1990, p. 73; A. Moring (ed.), *Sukupuolen politiikka. Naisten äänioikeuden 100 vuotta Suomessa*, Helsinki: Otava, 2006.

¹⁸ Pohls, 1990, p. 73; I. Sulkunen, *The Mobilisation of Women and the Birth of Civil Society*, [in:] M. Manninen, P. Setälä, 1990, pp. 42–53.

¹⁹ See: J.L. Cohen, A. Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, 1994, http://www.google.fi/books?hl=fi&lr=&id=gPvk-eE7t0IC&oi=fnd&pg=PR7&dq=civil+society+definition&ots=kf7P3xYZQX&sig=CWeGzNr4FUUnnXb9eubeW7yXAMfA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=civil%20society%20definition&f=false. Retrieved: 5.1.2013; M.W. Foley, B. Edwards, *The Paradox of Civil Society*, “Journal of Democracy”, 1996, vol. 7(3), pp. 38–52; A.B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society*, Chichester: Princeton University Press, 1995.

²⁰ A. Anttonen, *Vocabularies of Citizenship and Gender*, “Critical Social Policy” nr 18(13), vol. 56, 1998, p. 34.

context²¹. In addition women's active citizenship was influenced by social motherhoods connected to social rights²². This means being "a mother" for someone without being a "real mother". In other words it means work for example in the day-care centres and schools for children. It also means equal rights and responsibilities between women and men in the society based on the ideology of welfare state.

At the global level women's suffrage started from peripheral poor states like New Zealand, Australia and Finland. In the centre of this movement were economic, social and political questions from women's perspective. It was not until 1929 that Finnish women got their independence from their husbands' guardianship. In any way Finland had been clearly back of many European states concerning social legislation. It happened in Finland after the Second World War, but in other European States in the 1920 and 1930²³.

Women participation in the political life of the Social Democratic Party (later SDP) started suffrage movement in Finland—even before Finland got independence. The political agenda for equality between women and men in all sectors of life, for example in politics, education, working life (an aim: 8-hours working day) was the aims of SDP in 1903. These political decisions and aims were the first big steps to develop positions of women and men in the Finnish society. These aims and political work of SDP helped working class people especially. Before that (1898), the social democratic women published the newspaper entitled "Palvelijatar" (The Maid) SDP—women and men together—organised education, sport activities, art, theater and music clubs. Also working against Fascism and building peace were included in the political programme of SDP-women²⁴. One metaphor on SDP-women were: "Alone I am only a slave—together, sisters, we can win"²⁵. Strong work continued and some results brought about female famous politicians: the first one female minister Miina Sillanpää (1907, SDP), the first one female Prime Minister Anneli Jäätteenmäki (2003, The Centre Party) and the first one female president in Finland Tarja Halonen (2000–2012). President Halonen has strong roots in the work of SDP and Labour Union as well as in the Social Democratic Party²⁶.

The Poor Law (1922) demanded the municipalities to organise social and health care services. Before that the social work was mainly charity work of churches, NGOs and women. This development continued by the legislation so that in 1936 Finnish Government published Child Welfare Act, in 1937 The Act of Maternity Allowance, in 1937 social security pension, national insurance pension (1949 for all citizens of Finland). School meals were introduced in 1943. Maternity and health care clinics started in 1944 by work of municipalities.

²¹ P. Ahponen, P. Jukarainen (eds.), *Tearing Down Curtain, Opening the Gates, Northern Boundaries in Change*, Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä University Printing House, 2000.

²² Anttonen, 1998, pp. 361–363.

²³ Sulkunen, 1990.

²⁴ P. Aro, Hentilä M.-L., I. Nissinen (eds.), *Työläisnaisen tarina*, Helsinki: Hakapaino, 1995; M. Läheemäki, *Vuosisadan naisliike. Naiset ja sosialidemokratia 1900-luvun Suomessa*, Helsinki: Hakapaino, 2000.

²⁵ M. Kalavainen et. al., *Naisen työ—sosiaalidemokraattinen naisliike 80-vuotta*, Joensuu: Kansan Voima, 1980.

²⁶ A. Moring (ed.), *Sukupuolen politiikka. Naisten äänioikeuden 100 vuotta Suomessa*, Helsinki: Otava, 2006.

The Winter War (1939–1940) broke the peaceful development of Finland. It was the war between Finland and the Soviet Union. Finland had to give away Karelia-area to Russia. Other Scandinavian states were neutral. They gave humanitarian help to Finland. Peace time was short. In June 1941 Finland entered once again the war with Germany. Finland wanted to have their back land, which was lost to Russia during the Winter War. Finland lost the war and once again the Karelia area.

The war created a group of refugees, about 400,000 people, mainly from Karelia-area. They entered Finland. The need of care and accommodation was huge. Lots of refugees got a small farm yard, so called “cold farms” or they got opportunity to work in cities, for example in factories. Today the roots of Basic Finnish Party are in those days, when the ministry Veikko Vennamo (1913–1997) organised accommodation and care for Karelian refuges. No one was left out from the housing system²⁷.

The most of the Karelian people selected to accept the Finnish government “gift”, a piece of land for their farms. They built houses with their own hands from timber and started agrarian work. Later this kind of housing solution was criticised a lot, because those people had a lot of hard work but not good opportunities to have decent life. The farms were too small according to the present thinking. Anyway, that housing development created small farmhouses around Finland, especially in the Eastern part of Finland—far away from the big cities. It also meant that the municipalities needed to build new primary schools, hospitals, day-care centres, old people homes etc. The development of the welfare services was huge. It gave work mainly for women. Nowadays small farm yards and schools in the countryside will become empty and people are moving to the south in search of work and educational opportunities. It means empty houses and empty schools in the countryside, especially in the eastern part of Finland and in Lapland.

After 1945, agrarian Finland became an industrial country. It was a very rapid development. At the same time Finland developed as a welfare state mainly according to the models of Sweden and other Scandinavian states²⁸. The industry developed quickly, for example Nokia and Wärtsilä. A reason was that Finland had to pay war compensation to Russia. It is said that Finland was the only one state in the world, which has paid all demanded war compensations.

Families started to receive child allowances benefit in 1948. After the war it was a very important source of income, especially for poor families. In political life women came from all parties like Agrarian Party (Nowadays Centre Party), National Coalition, Social Democratic Party and other left wing parties. However, it was not earlier than 1970, that the first woman became a Municipal Manager. During the same year the Abortion Act was passed. At the state level Finland ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in 1986. This development continued so that the Act on Equality between Women and Men was accepted in 1987²⁹. Basic and human rights

²⁷ V. Vennamo, http://fi.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veikko_Vennamo. Retrieved: 5.1.2012.

²⁸ Laine, 2006.

²⁹ See more: A.L. Westman, *Under the Northern Lights. The Reflection of Gender on the Career of Women Managers in Finland*, “University of Joensuu, Publications in Social Sciences”, 43, Joensuu: Joensuun yliopistopaino, 2000.

have been developing also in accordance with the legislation of the European Union and International Agreements. It means rights of participation, liberties and due processes, the right of equality as well as economic, social and cultural rights³⁰.

Welfare state or society?

Nordic welfare state is based for example on the understanding of public, tax-paid welfare services. Some studies see welfare in subjective way: how do people understand their welfare in their local space and municipality. It included also an idea that women and men had the same rights and responsibilities to act as active citizens in their municipalities. Nowadays according to financial crises of the municipalities, unemployment and global markets the production of welfare services faces problems. Many politicians—especially right wing politicians—want to privatize municipal welfare services. This kind of discussion has led to the terminological change from welfare state towards welfare society. Roughly saying, welfare society means both private and public produced welfare services. It could also mean the return of class-society. It means changing mechanism of the social order to produce welfare services. In addition it means the new order between the capitalist economy, labour and democracy politics. This kind of phenomenon can be seen in Finland nowadays. There are about half of million unemployed citizens. People are tired to vote. The gap between rich and poor people is growing all the time. The discussion in the municipalities who and what way welfare services can be produced, how much welfare services can pay and should they be funded from tax or privately financed services? That is why we can ask: Do we want to keep up our welfare state and do we accept welfare society?³¹

Today it is said that welfare services of the municipalities cover about 500 different tasks. Social- and health care services are about 50–80% out of the municipal budget. General and vocational education and training adds up to 10–20% of the budget. This means that the municipalities have not many opportunities to develop other duties like libraries, cultural activities, housing, energy supply, water supply and sewage treatment. Municipalities fund welfare services from local income taxes, real estate tax and some fees³².

According to the Constitution, Finland is divided into self-governance municipalities³³. The land-areas of the municipalities were based at the beginning of Finland's independence on the borders of the former parishes. Now, this starts to be history. Municipalities are joining together. The aim is to offer basic welfare services to residents of the municipalities. This

³⁰ M. Laine, 2006.

³¹ See for example: G. Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Social Foundation of Postindustrial Economies*, Oxford: University Press, 1999; G. Esping-Andersen (ed.), *Welfare State in Transition. National Adaptation in Global Economies*, London: Sage Publication, 2001; U. Schimank, "The Fragile Constitution of Contemporary Welfare Societies: A Derailed Functional Antagonism between Capitalism and Democracy". Presented paper, Univesität Bremen, 2012.

³² Kuntalaki 17.3.1995, <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1995/19950365>, p. 365; M. Laine, *Access to Finnish...*, dz. cyt., p. 76.

³³ See Perustulaki 11.6.1999/73, <http://www.finlex.fi/fi/laki/ajantasa/1999/19990731>, p. 731 and also Kuntalaki, 1995.

duty demands 20,000 residents a municipality for producing services by economic way according to the suggestion of law, which is under discussion among municipal political bodies during spring 2013.

The future of welfare state is insecure. The ideology of welfare state is continuously under the political discussion both at municipal and state level. It struggles for social protection and security. Too often welfare state is seen as economic project, without thinking about welfare of municipal residents. Active citizens have questioned this kind of discussion. The question of welfare is also the question of social solidarity, reduction of class differences and maintaining a peaceful state³⁴. Now this kind of development is under threat due to financial crises of municipalities and global markets. However the parliament and central government of Finland defines the general principals of municipalities by acts and other laws. Municipalities offer welfare services by variety of methods:

Municipalities produce welfare service by variety of methods:

- a) municipal offer of services by themselves
- b) municipal business organisation offer services
- c) municipalities (for example 4 municipalities where there are 20.000 residents) offer services together
- d) municipal buy services from free market.

The left wing parties are more eager to produce welfare services as work of the municipality and the right wing parties are more eager to privatize the production of the welfare services. I would like to ask, have we any opportunities to produce tax-paid welfare services in the municipalities or even decide how to produce welfare services? Do we need to accept the back-flash of social and economic equality in the Finnish society? As we know, all politics will always be also local politics, which influences working class family life people in the first place. Without doubt the services of the municipalities are important for families and especially for women. Welfare service give opportunities for women to work outside home. But, could we keep even our welfare society, is a huge question now, in 2013.

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³⁴ See more: Esping-Andersen, 1999.

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