PART 1

CAREER GUIDANCE POLICY AND SYSTEMS

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2. THE ‘IDEA OF CAREER’ AND ‘A WELFARE STATE OF MIND’

On the Nordic Model for Welfare and Career

ABSTRACT

While they are independent states, the Nordic countries have common features. As well as democracy and a mixed economy, a key feature is their social democratic welfare states, often referred to as the ‘Nordic model’ where equality and universalism have guided policymaking. The model and Nordic culture are closely connected. In this chapter, I argue that work, and therefore career, are central concerns in the Nordic model and Nordic culture, and that welfare is organised to ensure maximum participation in work and equal access to employment. I then explore how the centrality of work frames the concept of ‘career’.

INTRODUCTION

The ideology of the social democratic welfare model that underpins the Nordic political economy shapes the relationship between the people and the state and informs thinking about the nature of career in the Nordic countries. Career is often considered to operate in the interface between the individual and the state and so career is a key place where this uniquely Nordic relationship unfolds and develops.

PUTTING NORDIC INTO PERSPECTIVE

Jalava (2013, p. 258) cautions that ‘whoever enters the domain of historical and historiographical regions should be aware of venturing into a vague and oscillating space, which offers no steady ground under one’s feet’. Keeping this in mind I will proceed with care as I attempt to put the concept of *Nordic* into perspective.

The Nordic countries of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark and Iceland have, as is discussed throughout this book, obvious similarities that often make it useful to consider them together. But, the heterogeneity of the Nordic countries, their different cultures, different ‘styles’ and national characteristics are evident with a closer look. The ambiguity of the cross-regional identity co-existing with clear national differences comes from a history of interaction and interdependence, but also one

of conflict and striving for domination, distinctiveness and independence (Berntzen, 2017).

A part of the story of the Nordic is that the countries have been joined together under various constellations, starting with the Kalmar union in 1397. These constellations were characterised by various degrees of voluntariness, dependency and duration, but they resulted in a tight network of economic, social, cultural and political exchange since the Early Middle Ages (Jalava, 2013).

The way in which this history has been written has served a range of narrative purposes, often supporting the distinctiveness of the nation-states rather than highlighting the intertwined history of the region (Berger, 2016). For example, in light of a romantic nationalism and an emancipatory ideology, the new Norwegian nation state created after the ending of the unions with Denmark and later Sweden, nurtured, developed and remembered what was considered uniquely Norwegian (Bakke, 2018) at the cost of the history of Danish rule, commonly referred to as the 'Dark Ages' (Berger, 2016).

This period of co-dependency ended with the dissolving of the formal unions between Norway and Denmark in 1814, and later the dissolution of Norway's subsequent union with Sweden in 1905, the unions between Finland and Russia in 1917 and Denmark and Iceland in 1944. It was from this point, that the Nordic region became five separate and independent countries, with the addition of the self-governed territories of the Faroe Islands, Åland and Greenland (Berntzen, 2017; Alexander, Holm, Hansen, & Motzfeldt Vahl, Chapter 5, this volume). Important concerns for these new states were cultural, economic and ideological nation building and solidifying the institutions and systems needed to operate the state. For these five countries, the high level of activity in legislative work was concurrent, and happened under the influence of major international events. Common for all countries was the ideological influence from Germany, which had introduced large-scale social insurance schemes during the 1880s. This inspired the Nordic states to develop and pass similar laws. The similarities in the outcome of the nation-building processes of the respective Nordic countries were a consequence of the concurrent timing rather than because of a shared Nordic agenda (Alestalo, Hort, & Kuhlne, 2009).

However, the common history, the common situation of being states in development, and geographical similarities due to being situated in the global north did serve as a basis for a sense of community. Even though Nordicity as a meso-regional identity was built into what it meant to be a Dane, Swede, Norwegian, Finn or Icelander rather than being an overall concept, there was a clear Nordic identity in the region. This identity can be understood as commonality and Nordic-ness. Allied to these cultural and ideological elements of Nordicity was a more pragmatic understanding of the benefit of cooperation and coordination in matters posing similar or common challenges (Jalava, 2013).

The need for cooperation led to the establishment of the Nordic council as an inter-parliamentary body, the joint labor market and the harmonisation of social security

laws in the fifties. This, and the co-occurrence of similar innovative legislation gave the Nordic countries status as the 'avant-garde of modernity' in the period from ca 1945 to ca 1990. This was partly an intentional, ideological strategy, demarcating the Nordic as different from Europe: a democratic, protestant, progressive and egalitarian North against a catholic, conservative and capitalist Europe, as well as the communist eastern bloc (Jalava, 2013). This was intended to serve as a mobilising vision and to engender cohesion (Ryner, 2007).

Marklund (2017) argues that since the 1950s, the Nordic countries have been actively building a 'brand' as a base for cultural diplomacy, taking advantage of positive international interest in their economic and social policies and ability to combine the interests of capital and labour in a democratic and efficient way (see Hooley, Chapter 3, this volume). The book *Freedom and Welfare* (Nelson, 1953) published by the Nordic council addressed current trends, issues and policies of the Nordic countries at this time, establishing the welfare state as the common ground for Nordic cultural diplomacy, and a key part of the external image and the common Nordic identity. At the same time, the Nordic countries competed for attention, especially from the US (Marklund, 2017), and chose different strategies for international cooperation, with Norway and Iceland not entering the European union, and Sweden and Finland not entering NATO (Iso-Markku, 2018).

In other words, as well as being a description of tangible co-operation between real countries, the concept of 'Nordic' is also a phenomenon of discourse constructed and reproduced to serve diverse purposes. As such, the geographically specific set of structures that comprise the Nordic region create a socio-spatial unit where the everyday life of citizens are influenced in concrete ways (Jalava, 2013) by the policies and practices of the governments, and cross-national ideology. The identity of Nordic is, in other words, both pragmatic and ideological.

In the following sections in this chapter, I will focus on the Nordic model for welfare as a cross-national Nordic feature and important to the 'avant-garde' of the Nordic countries. I will look at the conceptual connections between Nordic welfare as an ideology and career as concept. The rationale for doing this is that in addition to being a type of government, welfare model ideology is a set of beliefs, values and opinions about how the state should work and what it should do for society. In that respect, because of the pervasiveness of the model, the ideological base is also a part of a shared culture, where culture can be understood as 'the collective programming of the mind distinguishing the members of one group or category from others' (Hofstede, 1984, p. 21). In that respect, the collective programming from the Nordic welfare model make up a part of the social structures influencing the lives of the Nordic population.

THE CONTEXT OF THE NORDIC MODEL FOR WELFARE

One assumption about culture as collective programming, is that it works as tacit, internalised knowledge. For Nordic citizens, understanding the Nordic model and

expressing the specifics of it can be difficult, as it is just ‘there’, fostering implicit expectations about how systems work after generations of experience with them (Dølvik, 2007). The Nordic model can be thought of as constituting a cultural field in a Bourdieusian understanding of culture (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2010), a playing ground defined by a certain system and a certain set of rules: the doxa. The process of internalising the doxa and the system, and the actor’s behaviour navigating this field, is understood through Bourdieu’s analytical tools as the development of the habitus. In the following sections, I will look at research on the Nordic welfare model to clarify what it is, how the cultural field is constituted and how the doxa operate in order to influence habitus, particularly as this relates to individuals’ understandings of career.

The various local specificities of what is considered the Nordic model for welfare makes the concept ‘broad, vague and ambiguous’ (Alestalo et al., 2009, p. 2). Kvist, Fritzell, Hvinden, and Kangas (2012) would even claim that there is no generally accepted definition of welfare. But, while I recognise a level of conceptual ambiguity, I believe that it is helpful to adopt Johansson’s (2001) definition of welfare as having command over the resources required to live a good or decent life. More specifically, it can be defined as having what one feels is needed ‘in terms of money, possessions, knowledge, psychological and physical energy, social relations, security and so on by means of which the individual can control and consciously direct her conditions of life’ (Johansson, 1970, p. 25, as cited in Kvist et al., 2012, p. 2).

An individual’s standard of living, and hence the concept of welfare, is multidimensional. ‘What is needed’ will vary, and is dependent on both individual and context, but the concepts of welfare relate to the experience of not having to struggle to experience a sense of security and comfort. It is a complex mosaic made up of many factors that are easy to recognise but not as easy to directly define, as they are explicitly actor oriented, interrelated, non-comparable, and variable (Fritzell & Lundberg, 2007). Individuals’ appraisals of material and intangible resources will vary, and collective resources will be important in different phases of one’s life. Even more importantly, as actors operate in contexts and systems, conditions will promote or constrain individual agency variably among different groups, for instance stratifying them by socioeconomic factors.

The influence of politics on these enabling or constraining factors and how they are present in peoples’ lives make them an issue of politics and ideology, for instance policies emphasising equal opportunities and equal access to education and welfare rights (Kvist et al., 2012). In an overall pattern of welfare, governmental policies and systems play an important role, and social factors like cultural influence, history, socioeconomic factors, urbanity, rurality, and societal players like organisations, unions and employers as well as the individual itself, co-determine patterns of welfare. ‘What is needed’ is not the same for the have and the have-nots, those in a job or in education, people living in an urban context or on the northern coast. Similarly, in the Nordic countries, the welfare model and the ideology underlying it will only be one factor in the complexity that make up a nation’s character.

The welfare model concerns the extent to which politics influences these factors by systematically affecting the living conditions of citizens. It is important to note that models and ideologies as used in this article are understood as conceptual frameworks, to analyse and organise ideas. Weberian ideal types, abstractions that describe the most prominent features of a case, and how these ideal models describe the actual living context can always be contested (Ryner, 2007).

However, the extent to which states do or do not assume responsibility and give support for a citizen's level of wellbeing is considered one of the defining features of welfare states. Welfare states are not necessarily designed, but rather emerge from political debate and compromise and through the struggles of a range of different social actors. The recognition that welfare states are politically and culturally situated helps to explain the differences that exist between the Nordic countries which all espouse that they have a 'Nordic welfare state'.

One important distinction between welfare regimes highlighted by Esping-Andersen (1990) is how far they let economic markets operate and how far they are planned and managed directly by government. Esping-Andersen (1990) defined three clusters of welfare states, and argued that to do this, it is important to 'begin with a set of criteria that define their role in society' (p. 32). All the three modes of welfare operate in the tripartite relationship between the state, the market and the family, but balance their importance or responsibility for the welfare of individuals in different ways (Fritzell & Lundberg, 2007).

Esping-Andersen's (1990) first cluster of welfare states is the 'liberal' welfare state, typified by means-tested assistance, modest universal transfers and social insurance plans which mainly support the low-income, working class and state dependents. US, Canada and Australia are archetypical examples. Entitlement is associated with stigma, and the *less* needy can benefit from private but subsidised, market-based welfare schemes. This type of welfare encourages a market economy, and results in further stratification of social classes.

The second cluster is the 'conservative, corporatist' welfare state. This is exemplified by Austria, France, Germany and Italy and has traditionally not been preoccupied with market efficiency and commodification. Redistribution has not been an issue, as rights have traditionally been attached to status and class, for example by being entirely income based. As these regimes have developed under strong influence from the church, welfare benefits emphasise traditional family values. Support of women's status as workers through day care and similar family services is limited, and the state 'will only interfere when the family's capacity to service its members is exhausted' (Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27).

The third cluster is called the 'social democratic' type, and it is here we find the Nordic countries (Alestalo et al., 2009). The dominant force behind social reform was social democracy, and in these countries, the principles of universalism and decommodification of social rights would include all citizens in the states' welfare regimes. The social democrats opposed the idea of differences between classes and dualism between market and state, and emphasised equality 'of the highest standard'

(Esping-Andersen, 1990, p. 27). Services and benefits would have to accommodate both the high standards of the middle class and guarantee the same quality of rights to the workers, for example by ensuring a relatively generous minimum benefit as basis, and calculate additional benefits based on past income.

Like the German welfare model, the objective of policies was to render social citizenship entitlements compatible with economic stability and international economic competitiveness (Ryner, 2007). However, in the German model the strategy was to continue class stratification to maintain social order (Esping-Andersen, 2009). For the regimes in the social democratic cluster, a levelling between societal classes is another important ideological principle with government and legislation in the fields of employment, education, healthcare and social matters frequently aimed at securing equal rights and opportunities.

By ensuring free education, universally affordable healthcare, family benefits and a comprehensive system of social security covering the loss of income during unemployment, sickness and retirement, the Nordic countries are considered progressive and work to reduce inequalities in individuals' chances to find a job, form a family and excel in society (Alestalo et al., 2009; Antikainen, 2006; Kvist et al., 2012). In that sense, in the Nordic model the states have assumed a higher degree of responsibility for individual welfare than in other clusters (Fritzell & Lundberg, 2007). For example, in addition to equality, Alestalo et al. (2009, pp. 2–4) summarise the main characteristics of the Nordic model as stateness and universalism.

Stateness concerns the notion that the state is present in most, if not all welfare arrangements, and thus in individuals' lives. Compared to the liberal and the conservative welfare states, the Nordic states extend into the spheres of the market and the family. For instance for families, the low cost and easy access to care for children and elderly, makes it possible for women to work. Stateness implies a closer relationship between the people and the state.

Universalism implies that services and benefits cover all, as an important realisation was that the risk of injuries and precariousness is also universal. Universalism is a central idea in the social democratic project. Equality complements universalism as welfare schemes are designed to provide equal opportunities and access to welfare for all. In the example of parental benefits, equality is affected because gender differences will play less of a role in the economics of the family, when both men and women can qualify for parental leave and benefits. However, outcomes might be different, as benefits are calculated on the basis of past income.

As such, in the welfare model, non-poverty means not only sustaining a basic standard of living and as such diminishing the worry about money, but it is also about the ability to function, make choices and fulfil individual potential – as in wanting both fulltime employment *and* family. This means that instead of securing sustenance by minimum measures when problems arise, the focus is on prevention through social investment (Kvist et al., 2012).

THE CENTRALITY OF WORK

In addition to equality, stateness and universalism as main characteristics of the Nordic welfare states, Fritzell and Lundberg (2007) argue that the countries implementing the Nordic model have a commitment to full employment. An important dimension in the understanding of the Nordic welfare model's role in citizens' lives is the emphasis that is placed on supporting individuals' ability to *work*. Active labour market policies, generous benefit levels, high quality public care services for children and older people, high taxation and low poverty rates (p. 3) are connected by the master idea of guaranteeing access to employment. It can be argued, that the level of social investment in the Nordic countries is underpinned by the fact that societal structures exist to ensure that everyone, regardless of where, when and by who one is born, can access employment. Equality does not necessarily mean similar outcomes, such as prestigious jobs and high salaries for everyone. Rather people are offered equal opportunities, underpinned by forms of social support, to work towards the individual goal of having 'what one feels is needed' and to gain access to this through paid employment. Non-poverty thus means more than having eliminated worries about money. Looking back to Johansson's (2001) definition of welfare, the goal of the welfare state is not to *give* the individual these things, but to make sure that individuals will be able to secure them for themselves through work. Realising individual potential, by gaining knowledge, experiencing social integration, security of life and property, recreation, culture, and political resources is available to Nordic citizens through work.

Benefits and support come in bundles, designed to address the complexity of peoples' lives whilst ensuring access to work. An example is offered by looking at paid parental leave (see Wikstrand & Schulstok, Chapter 4, this volume). Although the impact of this policy is contested (Dahl, Loken, Mogstad, & Salvanes, 2016), it aims to make it easier to combine work and family (Meagher & Szebehely, 2011). When this policy is combined with subsidised childcare and the payment of child benefits following parental leave, the incentive to continue working is strong for parents. Similarly, the state provision of care for disabled people and older people lifts the responsibility from individuals and allows them to continue working. The centrality of work is also demonstrated by the way in which unemployment benefits are paired with active labour market policies (Cort, Thomsen, & Mariager-Anderson, 2015) and made conditional on participation in activities designed to speed up the transition back to work, where non-compliance can lead to harsh sanctions (Kvist et al., 2012). Within the Nordic model work is not just incentivised, it is expected. Being out of work is conceived as a problem for both the jobless person, and for society at large.

Taking advantage of the benefits of the system implies a psycho-social contract that will most often mean having contributed to it by having had taxable income, meaning that individuals are expected to pay back what they have received and pay forward what they are going to get (Kvist et al., 2012). In social research, the

principle of exchange between the individual and the system in the Nordic countries has been coined collective individualism (Hernes & Hippe, 2007). Hernes and Hippe provide an explanation for the seemingly contradictory relationship between the individual and context in the Norwegian welfare system. Research on culture states that Norwegians are individualists, but the political settlement enshrined in the welfare state suggests a collective orientation. The concept of collective individualism recognises that fulfilling individual potential is possible because there is a collective system in place providing individual opportunities for all in the community. This is a system that all individuals must support and contribute to in order to keep it going, realising that their contribution will let other individuals take advantage of the system in ways that may never be relevant or possible for themselves. These individuals will later contribute and in turn make it possible for other people to take advantage of the system in ways that will support their individual journey. Hence, the collectivism denotes the idea that all individuals contribute to a collective package of opportunity and security that may not benefit them directly and that they will not be able to take full advantage of, but that nevertheless is available for the individual when it is appropriate. To engage in and support such a structure, have been suggested to foster citizenship (Ryner, 2007).

The welfare system is dependent on as high as possible participation in the work force. The quote from Esping-Andersen (1990, p. 28) stating that in the social democratic welfare society ‘all benefit: all are dependent, and all will presumably feel obliged to pay’ summarises a positive vision of universalism where the wealthy middle class will pay its share both to contribute to the common good, but also to receive benefits from the system. But this quote can also be viewed more negatively as describing a system where dependency and obligation means that you *are* obliged to pay in order to be able to depend on the system. So while Kvist et al. (2012) states that the Nordic populations ‘share a passion for work’, the question is rather: is it possible to choose not to work?

NORDICITY, WORK AND CAREER

I have argued that the Nordic countries share a culture which is intertwined with a cross-country policy theme which can be described as the Nordic welfare model. This context provides Nordic citizens with a high level of security, though it is something they have to work for. In this section I will turn to the issue of career and explore how this context frames thinking about career.

A key definitional question concerns the relationship between work and career, and the respective understanding of work and career. Career is a word and a concept that throughout the history of its discourse has been understood differently and carried diverse meanings, it is a question that has not been resolved and probably never will. Although this may not be a problem, it is still a challenge that the concept bear different meanings in different contexts.

For example, in an exploration of the understanding of the career concept in Norway (Bakke, 2018), I argued that the Norwegian working culture can be seen as emphasising community values to such an extent that career, if viewed as an individualistic upwards movement in a hierarchy, can seem alien. I argued that this is why the word career, or 'karriere' in Norwegian, has not been used to denote normal, standard, lateral trajectories in any education and any work, but have rather been reserved for people in professions where upwards mobility is key. The twist in the story however, is that Norwegian stakeholders and policymakers absorbed OECD's (2002) recommendation to make career guidance the primary framework for lifelong learning and guidance in Norway. Furthermore, a recent green paper advising on policy developments in career guidance in Norway in the years to come (NOU 2016:7, 2016) recommended that activities within the field of vocational and educational guidance should be denoted by the word career.

The term 'career' does not have the same connotations in all Nordic countries (see Chapter 1, the Introduction to this volume). For example, Swedish career guidance professionals have been called 'karriärvägledare' since the seventies (Plant, 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to understand the relationship between understandings of career and the importance of work in Nordic culture. The centrality of work, and its endorsement in culture and policy, make it important to explore the relationship between career and Nordic working culture.

Definitions of career have varied from being a sequence of work-related experiences to being progression in work, from being about just paid work to being about both education, work and life roles, from being structurally bound to fluid and boundaryless, from being determined by the organisation or by the drive of the individual. Metaphors to describe career have been equally diverse, describing how they are experienced; e.g. as role, or a good or bad fit (Inkson, 2004). Law's (2009) distinction between metaphors of career as a race or as a journey sums up the two poles around which understandings of career can be organised. Where career is seen as a race, people set their course, grit their teeth, compete and are challenged, they overcome obstacles and look for possibilities to get ahead. Where career is seen as a journey they can explore, perhaps divert and take a detour, where the experiences on route and the people they travel with are more important than where they end up. Neither of them is more right, because people prefer different things, but in the words of Law (2009), the understanding of the career as a race is the more dominant metaphor. And as Thomsen (2014) points out when writing about career management skills from a Nordic perspective, the understanding of career as progress up a hierarchy is the most common understanding outside of professional use.

As I have argued above, within Nordicity work is a central part of the culture, it is the means by which citizens participate in society and prove their worth. Work is part of the social contract, in the words of Watts (2016, p. 330), where citizens 'agree to devote a substantial part of (their) time to wider social purposes' in return for income for them to spend as preferred. To Watts (2016), (paid) work is only a part

of career and he champions a broader conception where career is viewed as lifelong progression in learning and work. As such, the concept of career encompasses work but is not defined by it. It includes the idea that while work can release human potential in itself there is more to life than just work, and humans have great potential that lies *outside* the realm of work. This is also why career is a democratic concept and should be for all.

Understanding career in relation to the Nordic welfare state and the social contract it implies, where states assume the responsibility of providing a safety net for their members who are viewed as active, engaged participatory citizens (Sultana, 2011), means that whether it is a race or a journey, the individual is interacting with the welfare system throughout. From birth, through healthcare and childcare, through schooling and education, through employment, taxes and labor market politics ensuring paid parental leave, sickness and unemployment benefits, to old age through pension and geriatric care. As these benefits and services are universal, they can be factored in, both as planned and un-planned turning points like education, job-shifts, family planning etc, regardless of income. If career is to be understood as a journey through life, education and work, then the Nordic career is a journey where the individual is in a continuing transactional relationship with the state.

Individuals' careers within the Nordic context are therefore defined at least in part by their ability to navigate the welfare state and to integrate it into their career journeys. As such, the Nordic welfare state constitutes a cultural field within which individuals have to operate. Within this cultural field, a strong commitment to paid work is central to habitus. Work is both a moral imperative and a strong external expectation and both of these aspects influence conceptions of career, when it encompasses work. Successful careers are therefore not simply about extracting benefits from the system but rather about working within the doxa of what is acceptable in terms of making contributions on one side and drawing on it on the other.

Universalism and egalitarianism implies that contrary to liberal or conservative welfare models, the social democratic model ensures equal rights across socioeconomic stratification, meaning that both low earners and high earners can benefit from the same system. Being able to secure career opportunities for upwards mobility and higher income to finance starting a family, saving for periods of job insecurity, financing children's education or your own retirement is to a lesser extent a pressing issue. The choice of job to maximise career prospects, which is central to neoliberal understandings of career, is less important in the Nordic context because participation and contributions made from all levels of the employment structure give equal rights and access to the social insurances.

The idea that the centrality of work in Nordicity makes occupational choice a less important part of career sounds like a paradox, but it reframes career as something different and less individualistic. The social contract implies that there is no individual self-determination without solidarity (Sultana, 2011). Career is from a Nordic perspective a democratic concept and the social contract is foregrounded.

This influences the nature of career guidance and individuals' career management strategies. While developing individuals' employability to access the high-level positions and win in the career race can be an individual preference it cannot define career. The welfare state ensures that quality of life is not dependent on getting a well-paid job, and so career can be pursued as a journey and the race can be left to the ones that find it amusing.

CONCLUSION

Some researchers claim that the fall of the Nordic welfare state is imminent (Baeten, Berg, & Lund Hansen, 2015). The economic recessions and the growth of neoliberalism as dominant economic and political ideology over the last decades have brought with it changes in the policies of the Nordic welfare states. Commodification, private insurances and less generous benefits and services have developed, to the point where some ask whether the welfare systems that exist can still be described as the Nordic model (Knutsen, 2017). As such, it might be conceived as naïve to be singing the praise of the Nordic welfare model at this time.

Similarly, the contention that the world of work is changing dramatically and fundamentally in the face of globalisation and technological development is a recurring theme. Practitioners, researchers and policymakers concerned with career face the question of how to respond to this change. There is a worry that automation will replace low skilled jobs, and that the future of work and employment belongs to the highly educated, flexible, resourceful and innovative worker, creating further distance between those who do well and those who do not. There is also a worry that career guidance will exacerbate these differences by responsabilising career actors (Hooley, 2018). These prospects are unsettling, and as the Nordic model is dependent on a high level of participation in the work force, the systems will struggle to sustain themselves if employment drops – even if the ideology of the Nordic model continues to withstand the pressures of neoliberalism.

At the same time however, the Nordic countries' high scores on various international measures of life quality, equality and welfare combined with a steady growth in GDP, gives other writers reason to conclude that generous and comprehensive welfare regimes are still viable, the proof of this is self-evident by their continued existence in neoliberal times (Dølvik, 2007). A similar point can be made about the future of work, how the power of continuity and slow change, combined with human hesitation because of undeclared ethical questions and lack of resources to implement radical changes slows the process down (Hooley, 2018). In other words, discussing career issues related to the context at hand and being cautiously prepared for change could be argued to be a fruitful approach.

The Nordic welfare states represent a cultural field within which career is enacted, defined by decades of stateness, universalism, egalitarianism, co-dependencies and critically by the centrality of work. They are also supported by Nordic cultural values which emphasise equality and citizenship. These values are lasting and provide a

backdrop for further discussion of a democratic career concept. Nordicity reframes career conversations in ways that do not draw so heavily on the responsibilising and individualising notions that have characterised the careers field in many other countries (Hooley, Sultana, & Thomsen, 2018). In this respect, a Nordic concept of career has something to offer in the discussion of new conceptualisations of career and career guidance. In the discussion of the open and dynamic concept of life-career, Irving (2018) calls for deeper understandings and insights into how careers that are liberated from economic discourses and market relations in the construction of human value, social inclusion and cohesion actually function. There is also a conceptual link to collective forms of career guidance, where the collective come together, in what could be argued is a transactional process of learning, support and debate about the role of work, leisure and learning that support conscientisation and develop citizenship and community resources alongside the careers of individuals (Hooley et al., 2018). Research on collective forms of career guidance and a democratic career concept, and how they come together in theory and practice (Thomsen, 2012) has opened up a new field of enquiry. Exploring how this concern with community and collective guidance connects with the ideology of Nordicity is a venue for further research.

Whether collective or individual, career guidance itself can be said to be a part of the scaffold provided by the welfare state in the Nordic countries (Plant, 2007). Welfare states' concern with supporting their citizens in navigating the employment structure and negotiating the complexity of career and life by designing and implementing different systems for career guidance in school, education, employment and the welfare structure, can be viewed as one form of stateness. The guidance professionals' role is partly determined by the goal and ideology of the welfare regime. While career professionals and interested readers who have studied career guidance and theory realise that the career concept of today includes more than the individualistically driven and achievement oriented hierarchical career, this might not be the case for the people provision is intended for (see Thomsen, Mariager-Anderson, & Rasmussen, Chapter 22, this volume). Emphasising that career is a democratic concept that encompasses *all* citizens is important, as states intervening in individual's lives to shape their careers can be deeply problematic if career is understood in hierarchical and racing terms. Career counselling can be a vehicle for fostering citizenship by encouraging participation in society and community, and career-counselling practitioners can be agents of social change (Thomsen, 2012).

In summary, the Nordic context offers an ideal laboratory for rethinking and recontextualising career theories and exploring how they can inform practice. This chapter has sought to explore the cultural field of Nordicity and show how it can inform the concept of career. The rest of the book will help to delineate the Nordic field of career guidance further in the light of this and explore what it is, and what it can be.

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