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## **Voluntary Service Provision in a Strong Welfare State**

Bente Blanche Nicolaysen

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Bente Blanche Nicolaysen

**Voluntary Service Provision in a Strong Welfare State**

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Editorial Note:

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## Abstract

In this paper an analysis of childcare provision in Norway is used as a tool to raise questions about the place of voluntary providers in a strong welfare state. I argue that any attempt to contain developments in voluntary provision in the period 1930–1985 within a linear model of change would be to impose on them a decidedly inappropriate conceptual framework. The paper deals critically with the notion that developments in childcare provision in a strong welfare state can be captured as an evolutionary movement from ‘a golden age’ of voluntary provision later subverted by ever-increasing statutory provision. At the core of this notion is the idea that voluntary provision of services should be seen as a precondition for the rise of the modern welfare state and possibly as a contemporary response to the welfare state crisis in the Scandinavian countries. The main thrust of the argument in this paper is that voluntary service provision cannot, even in a strong Scandinavian welfare state, be relegated to periods ‘before’ or ‘after’ welfare state expansion. Voluntary service provision in Norway did not precede, but rather coincide, with the expansion phase of the Norwegian welfare state during the 1950s and 1960s. In the light of such an interpretation, the idea that the plurality of providers evident from the mid-1980s onwards is ‘new’ and a direct response to the welfare state crisis must be qualified.

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## Introduction

‘Critics have been better at describing the ways in which philanthropy paved the way for the state than in doing justice to its contribution to uncovering and understanding the problems it chose to tackle’ (Prochaska 1988).

The first kindergartens in Norway were established in the early twentieth century by a plurality of actors: religious and humanitarian organisations, e.g. the Red Cross, the Norwegian Housewife Association and the Norwegian Women’s Health Association, and kindergarten teachers educated at training schools for the care and education of young children (childcare academies) that grew in the Nordic countries from the late 1880s onwards.<sup>1</sup> The fate of such initiatives within the expanding welfare state has, however, been only marginally treated in macro-sociological research on the Scandinavian<sup>2</sup> welfare states. Instead, such initiatives are assumed to have constituted a by-gone phase in service provision, an early stage in the rise of the strong welfare state. The picture is that of individuals and organisations paving the way for the welfare state’s implementation of their successful experiments. This picture is based on several assumptions about the changing relationship between the state, local authorities and voluntary organisations. It is assumed

- that the ‘golden age’ of voluntary provision of services was before the Second World War and welfare state expansion;
- that increased welfare state provision replaced voluntary provision during the period of welfare expansion from the mid-1960s onwards; and
- that from the mid-1980s service provision is again characterised by the plurality of actors that characterised provision ‘before the welfare state’.

Such perspectives on service development predict a gradually diminishing role of voluntary provision. In this paper I challenge such linear narratives of development in strong welfare states. I do so by exploring the boundaries between welfare state (state, county and municipal) and voluntary provision of day care services for children in Norway, with occasional references to the experiences of Sweden and Denmark.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for definitions and data sources.

<sup>2</sup> Scandinavia is a name often used for the whole Nordic region (Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Greenland, the Faroe Islands (under Denmark) and the Åland Islands (under Finland). Strictly speaking, Scandinavia is however the geographic name for the two states on the Scandinavian peninsula – Norway and Sweden . However, for historical and cultural reasons, it also includes Denmark (Nøkleby 1997, p. 286). It is in this stricter sense that the term is applied in this paper.

Childcare services provide a good testing ground for the assumptions outlined above; childcare services have not only been seen as the corner stone of the strong Scandinavian welfare state, but have also been at the core of contemporary welfare debates. Although the analysis encompasses a disparate collection of non-statutory providers—humanitarian organisations, religious communities, parent co-operatives and self-help groups—the focus is on a sub-group of these non-public providers: humanitarian organizations established at the turn of the twentieth century. The reader will in particular become acquainted with the Norwegian Women's Health Association (*Norske Kvinners Sanitetsforening*, NKS)<sup>3</sup> and the Norwegian Housewives' Association (*Norges Husmorforbund*).<sup>4</sup> The provision of these organisations over time is contrasted with that of parent co-operatives.<sup>5</sup> The former were the largest providers in the first two decades after the Second World War, while the latter have increased their share of the childcare market at the expense of these 'old' organisations since the mid-1980s.

## 1. The broader context

This analysis refers to a country in which approximately half of all childcare institutions (with about 40% of the places) at the end of the 1990s were owned and run by voluntary organisations, congregations, firms, parent co-operatives and so on (Hanssen & Elvehøi 1997, p. 179; Wærness 1997). In 1996, 313 municipalities had some kind of non-municipal kindergarten provision (of these, three had no municipal provision at all), while 122 municipalities had only municipal kindergartens (Fimreite & Stenvoll 1999).<sup>6</sup> In Norway, childcare has since the early twentieth

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<sup>3</sup> The Norwegian Women's Health Association was established in 1896 following the political tension between Norway and Sweden at the time. There was widespread fear of war, and a group of women decided to form an independent women's association to aid the army medical corps and to assist with medical equipment in peacetime accidents. The preventive health work of the medical corps expanded after 1900 to include preventive health work for other groups, including mother and infant care (Strømberg 1980). The organisation had approximately 242,000 and 131,000 members in 1967 and 1997 respectively.

<sup>4</sup> *The Norwegian Housewives' Association* was established in 1915. Local societies of mostly middle-class housewives aimed at creating better homes by informing housewives on such matters as health, nutrition, infant care, household economy, and family legislation. The organisation had approximately 60,000 and 18,000 members in 1967 and 1997 respectively. The organisation's members are distributed in 25 districts and approximately 600 local associations. The Norwegian Housewives' Association changed its name in 1997 to Norway's Women and Family Association (*Norges Kvinne og Familieforbund*).

<sup>5</sup> Co-operatives are organisations that work to promote the consumer interests of their members. In other words, they are economic solutions between persons with common interests. A possible surplus of the co-operative benefits its members. The 1975 Day Care Act (§ 14) obliges all co-operatives to have a governing board, on which parents, owners and employees are equally represented. Following the Day Care Act §15 this governing board shall present propositions for a budget and give its opinion on changes in regulations and other issues of importance for the kindergarten. The governing board is also responsible for daily life in the kindergarten, for instance excursions, communal activities, arrangements, etc. (Woxholt 1992).

<sup>6</sup> The share of municipal kindergartens is largest in small municipalities, that is, with a population of less than 3 000 inhabitants (Fimreite & Ryssevik 1998).

century been provided by a plurality of non-public actors. This distinguishes Norway from Sweden and Denmark, where provision was concentrated among a few providers (among parents – and housing co-operatives, and among humanitarian organisations respectively) from very early on (Knutsen 1994).

A precondition for the plurality of actors involved in service provision in Norway was a long tradition of co-operation between local government and voluntary organisations in poor relief. It is not the point here to go into depth about the workings of the poor relief system in the Scandinavian countries. What is important to retain is that those who held political responsibility in the Nordic countries in the early nineteenth century had still not entirely decided whether they would in the future favour local government regulated by law or involvement of voluntary organisations. Three main alternatives can be discerned in the debate during that time (Jansson 1988, p. 324). The first was the idea of local government under direct central leadership. The second was the idea of a municipal rebirth at the initiative of the state with continuing central control over local community. The third was a variant in which the poor relief system should be financed and administered by local government, but case work on the ground should be carried out by voluntary workers who could bring the specific qualifications of private charity into the public sector. This was a variant that involved combining private and public initiatives in order to retain the advantages, and avoid the disadvantages, of both. The disadvantages of philanthropy were considered to be its arbitrariness and insufficiency in scale, while its advantages were its effective control because of the personal relationship established between the giver and recipient of poor relief. The greatest weakness of public poor relief was considered to be its inefficiency in determining need for assistance and in controlling that the available funds were spent where they were most needed (Åberg 1988, p. 410).

In the 1840s, reforms for more extensive poor relief were introduced as part of administrative reforms. This reorganisation was in line with the second alternative, implying increased involvement by the public sphere and imposing great demands on the resources of local government in terms of both funds and personnel who could carry out case work under the new system.<sup>7</sup> Gradually, however, a ‘third point of view’ in the poor relief system was formulated. From the mid-1840s onwards attempts were made to draw on the work of voluntary workers in the implementation of poor relief programmes. It is not a coincidence that the first women’s

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<sup>7</sup> The background for this ‘solution’ was the Protestant Reformation that had left plenty of space for secular power and made it possible to understand welfare tasks as a municipal responsibility. In fact, after the Protestant Reformation, the responsibility for poor relief had been formally transferred from the Church to the state when the Church could no longer afford to carry the responsibility for poor relief. The state and Church began to co-operate, but eventually the municipality broke away from the parish to form the main unit of local government. In Norway for instance, the 1837 Municipal Acts ensured local authorities a high



organisations in the Nordic countries were established at the time when the 'third point of view' was being tried out. The 'bleak and paltry' organisational front in the Scandinavian countries before the 1840s gave way to a period of establishments of nation-wide voluntary associations (Klausen & Selle 1996; Lorentzen 1995, p. 45; Seip 1984 a, b). The first wave of nation-wide voluntary associations in Norway from 1840 onwards had their origin in the temperance, language, missionary and labour movements.<sup>8</sup> The growth of these organisations was closely associated with economic, social and political changes in Norwegian society. This was a period of incipient industrialisation and rapid urbanisation (Strømberg 1980). Ideas imported from other European countries, the flow of which was facilitated by changes in the infrastructure of communication, stimulated debate and the formation of associations (Lorentzen 1993b, p. 88).

The 'third point of view' in the administration of poor relief lasted through the 1850s and 1860s. Then, in the 1870s the extent of the voluntary element was left to each municipality to decide for itself. The large humanitarian organisations that became the main providers of educational childcare services after the second world war were established in the second wave of organisational establishments, from 1880 to 1940. This period, from the end of the nineteenth century to the present may be described as the age of associations in Scandinavia.<sup>9</sup> During these years the temperance movement grew and the large national philanthropic organisations, with broadly defined objectives, were established. What were to become the main providers of childcare – the Norwegian Women's Health Association and the Norwegian Housewives' Association, and the Pre-school teachers Association – were established in 1896, 1915 and 1937 respectively.<sup>10</sup>

There is thus a long tradition in Scandinavia of conflicting ideologies and practices in relation to the responsibilities of the state, local authorities and voluntary organisation. In the tension between state, local government and voluntary organisation in poor relief openings were created for alternative initiatives in other areas (Åberg 1988). The unclear boundary between private and public spheres created a zone where women started to co-operate with local authorities. The voluntary organisations in which they participated were often subsidised. Norway lacked the social, class and economic conditions for large fortunes as in Britain (Lorentzen 1993a). Not only was there insufficient wealth among church and bourgeoisie in Norway, there was also no Norwegian aristocracy. Pioneering efforts in Norway were based on many small sources rather

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degree of municipal autonomy, making local initiatives possible. Common religious norms facilitated interaction between local authorities, voluntary organisations and professions (Villadsen 1990).

<sup>8</sup> The number of nation-wide non-governmental organisations, not much more than ten in 1850, grew at a moderate pace until 1880. According to the most reliable figures the number was then approximately forty (Hallenstvedt & Moren 1987).

<sup>9</sup> Klausen & Selle 1996, p. 102. Klausen & Selle refer to two Nordic sources to support this argument: Balle-Petersen 1976; and Bjørn 1976.

<sup>10</sup> Other large humanitarian organisations established during these years were: The Blue Cross (*Blå Kors*) in 1906, and the Norwegian Association for the Blind (*Norges Blindforbund*) in 1910.

than a few large ones (Lorentzen 1993a, p. 317). In this context, humanitarian organisations, pre-school teachers and religious communities, established the first childcare institutions with a combination of public and own resources.

## 2. When was 'the golden age' of voluntary service provision?

Traditional social policy discussion on voluntary organisations in the Scandinavian welfare states has emphasised their pioneering character.<sup>11</sup> It has become a truism that voluntary provision, despite its recent history, represented a stage in the development of the modern welfare state. According to this view, private individuals and organised philanthropy paved the way for the development of the modern welfare after the Second World War and welfare expansion during the 1950s and 1960s. The Second World War from this perspective marks the decline of philanthropy and the break-through of new and extensive public solutions to social problems.<sup>12</sup> It is this pioneering role of voluntary organisation that has received attention in historical macro-sociology. In fact, little attention has been given to voluntary action in 'the extensive historical, sociological and political science literature on the historical and comparative development of European welfare states' (Kuhnle & Selle 1992, p. 10).<sup>13</sup>

This depiction of philanthropy as a by-gone stage in welfare state development, at the expense of its more recent history, is perhaps understandable to some extent. After all,

'Charting philanthropy's evolution is a complicated business because of its many byways and cul-de-sacs, and because it has been so bound up with the evolution of the Welfare State in the historiography' (Prochaska 1988, p. xii).

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<sup>11</sup> The *vanguard or service pioneer role* is defined as the idea that the primary function of voluntary organisations is to pioneer in developing services and to pave the way for their adoption by statutory institutions (see Kramer's four distinctive roles for non-profit organisations in democratic welfare states in Kramer 1981). For a discussion of the different roles of the voluntary sector see also Billis & Glennerster 1998; Grindheim & Selle 1988; and Lorentzen 1993a.

<sup>12</sup> If we look at the core areas of welfare state provision, e.g. social security benefits in case of old age and unemployment, the Second World War does indeed represent a watershed. It seems, however, that if our analytical focus is moved from social security benefits to social care services and from the core areas of welfare state intervention to areas like youth and childcare, this watershed might lie elsewhere in time.

<sup>13</sup> Kuhnle & Selle refer to the following studies to illustrate this argument: Alber 1982; Baldwin 1990; Esping-Andersen 1990; Flora & Heidenheimer 1981; Rimlinger 1971; and Wilensky 1975. A similar argument is made by Lewis when she discusses the lack of attention to the voluntary sector in Titmuss' typologies of welfare (Titmuss 1974) and typologies influenced by his work (Lewis 1995, pp. 1–2). For review of welfare state research that has marginalised women's voluntary service provision see for example Koven & Michel 1990 and Jordansson & Vammen 1998. Voluntary service provision is however beginning to be reflected in a new generation of welfare state research with a comparative perspective: Alber 1995; Cohen & Hagen 1996; Janfelt 1999; Lewis 1998; Koven & Michel 1993; Sipilä 1997; Jordansson & Vammen 1998.

Hence the very human temptation to simplify and place in neat chronological order the providers involved in the development of welfare, and to conceptualise developments in evolutionary stages. Norwegian developments in childcare provision do, however, break with the chronological scheme that places voluntary provision “before” the Second World War and welfare state expansion. In fact, the kindergarten as we know it today, that is, as an institution where professional pedagogues work with groups of small children, hardly existed at all before the Second World War. The Norwegian voluntary sector was a latecomer in childcare, and there was no ‘golden age’ of childcare provision before the Second World War. The ‘golden age’ of philanthropic action in childcare does not precede, but rather coincides, the expansion phase of the Norwegian welfare state during the 1950s and 1960s.

This is not to say that there was no voluntary provision of services aimed at young children before the Second World War. A distinction needs to be made, however, between voluntary action aimed at relieving material distress associated with the ideal of mercy with the poor on the one hand, and voluntary action aimed at the child's need for care and education, on the other hand. Voluntary provision before the Second World War was primarily aimed at the former. In other words, we do in the pre-Second World War period still not find the modern kindergarten. Childcare institutions before the war were not institutions with small groups of children motivated by educational concerns, but rather ‘mammoth institutions for taking care of working class children for up to 11 hours daily’ (Dahl 1978, p.17). In Norway, institutions, asylums (*barneasyl*)<sup>14</sup> and crèches (*barnekrybber*),<sup>15</sup> for poor working class children were established by private individuals, women's associations, parishes and religious communities (Søsveen 1974).<sup>16</sup> These asylums and crèches were often established by women's associations that, in addition to inspection of the institutions, provided clothes, food, and equipment to the asylums and helped at different events (Korsvold 1990, p. 560). The women who were engaged in the running of asylums had no formal education like the professional educator in the post-war childcare institution.

The kindergarten as we know it today, with its emphasis on education and care of the child, has its roots in a reform-pedagogical reaction to these institutions for poor children. It was a reaction

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<sup>14</sup> Asylums were aimed at children aged three to seven. The first asylum was established in 1837 in Norway, in the 1930s in Sweden, and in 1854 in Denmark (Knutsen 1990, Janfelt 1999, Tussi Sjøberg & Vammen 1995).

<sup>15</sup> Crèches were for children under three. The first crèche was established in 1883 in Norway and in 1854 in Sweden (Knutsen 1990, Janfelt 1999, Tussi Sjøberg & Vammen 1995).

<sup>16</sup> The first asylum in Norway was established by the organisation The Friends of the Suffering (*De Nødlidendes Venner*) in Christiania in 1837, whose members were socially motivated individuals from the upper economic strata of society. Private individuals and foundations (for instance the Eugenia Foundation, *Eugenia Stiftelsen*) were also active. (Grude 1972). The first crèche was opened in Christiania in 1883 on the private initiative of a certain Mrs. Anette Kiær. Later, the Norwegian Salvation Army (*Frelsesarmeen*) became the most active provider, running approximately 15 crèches in the

to charity and a movement towards philanthropy.<sup>17</sup> This change was associated with a change in the conception of what constituted “good care” for this group of children in Scandinavia from the 1880s onwards.<sup>18</sup> At the basis of this change was the growth of a philanthropic thinking based on the principle of help to self-help. Help was now intended to be not only material, but also idealistic and ideological in kind. The central driving force behind this change in the conception of what constituted “good care” in the late nineteenth century was the kindergarten movement. This was an international movement that distinguished itself by its strong emphasis on education and the role of the professional teacher in care of young children (Broman 1991).

The movement grew in a context in which all Scandinavian countries were experiencing increasing industrialisation, urbanisation and migration, and growing class divisions (Hatje 1995). Closely related to the growth of industrialisation, and to the rise of the kindergarten movement in the Nordic countries, was the ‘discovery of childhood’.<sup>19</sup> Institutions for care and education were deemed necessary against the background that many homes were ‘failing’ in upbringing their children due to industrialisation, housing shortage, and the growing number of divorces.<sup>20</sup> The kindergarten movement found its ideological and pedagogical inspiration in German romanticism. The German philosopher and pedagogue Friedrich Froebel had a metaphysically permeated doctrine that emphasised child’s play.<sup>21</sup> Froebel’s thoughts about childcare reached Finland and Denmark in the late 1880s, and Sweden around 1890 (Hatje 1995). A central element in Froebel’s pedagogy was women’s special gift for educating young children. To influence this potential, training schools for kindergarten teachers were established during the last half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century in many European countries.

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country’s biggest cities in 1920. In 1923 there was a total of 23 children’s crèches in Norway (Søsveen 1974, p. 15, referred to in Lea 1982, p. 16).

<sup>17</sup> Philanthropy distinguishes itself from charity in that it is a modern conception of charitable effort that stresses the total well being of the individual rather than merely relieving distress (Ross 1968, p 72). Charity is more directly linked to the ideal of mercy, whereas philanthropy is seen as a step towards a sociopolitical intervention (Jordansson & Vammen 1998).

<sup>18</sup> Please note that although there is a change in the conception of care over time, this transition is not immediate. Asylums and crèches were not suddenly replaced by the kindergarten. In fact, in Denmark, many asylums (full-day care for children) were transformed into Froebel or parish kindergartens in the beginning of the twentieth century. A similar development took place in Norway in the 1920s. In Sweden the kindergarten was for long aimed primarily, like the children’s crèches, for the children of single poor mothers.

<sup>19</sup> Berggren has noted that the discovery of childhood, with the separation of the child from the adult and with childhood being seen as a specific period in life as described by Aries, came to the Scandinavian countries later than to France, around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (Berggren 1987).

<sup>20</sup> Anna Wulff, the Danish kindergarten pioneer (1874-1935) noted this in one of her speeches from 1922 (Hatje 1995, p. 152).

<sup>21</sup> For information in English on Froebel and his teachings, see for example Taylor Allen 1991. See also Nicolaysen 2000.

In Norway, this reform-pedagogical reaction to charity came later than in its Nordic neighbours. In fact, Froebel pedagogy reached Norway only in the 1920s.<sup>22</sup> The pedagogy reached the country through Norwegian women educated in Froebel teachings abroad (Hatje 1995).<sup>23</sup> These first kindergarten teachers joined forces with housewives before the war and established the first kindergartens in the country. The alliance between the profession and parents (housewives) found an organisational form in the *Committee for Housewives' Kindergartens* in 1937.<sup>24</sup> This committee, although it established some kindergartens during the late 1930s, only got really active after the war. Then, in 1946 to be more precise, this committee, joined by humanitarian organisations and religious communities, became *The Kindergarten Society* in Oslo.<sup>25</sup> In addition to functioning as a pressure group *vis-à-vis* the government, this group informed about educational childcare and raised issues concerning pre-school teachers' employment and pay conditions. Two participants in this Society, *the Norwegian Women's Health Association* and *the Norwegian Housewives' Association*, also established own kindergartens in these immediate post-war years. The former made day care provision the main issue in all its local branches around the same time, and the latter established its first kindergarten in 1948.<sup>26</sup> The care provided by voluntary actors during the 1940s and 1950s had two main features; it was part-time and aimed at children above three years of age. In other words, it was meant to supplement, and not replace, care in the home.

Although a few municipalities subsidised non-statutory kindergartens from the mid-1940s, these organisations relied primarily on voluntary work and resources from dues, legacies, and donations during the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>27</sup> In fact, the state only intervened in this non-public childcare market when it became apparent that the providers within it could not bear the financial

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<sup>22</sup> A possible reason for this late development in Norway is the fact that women's employment rate was lower in Norway than in its Nordic neighbours during this period (Korsvold 1990, p. 563).

<sup>23</sup> In fact, until the 1950s it was common that Norwegian women travelled abroad (to the other Nordic countries, to Germany, Austria, France, England and the United States) to be educated in new pedagogical principles (Korsvold 1990, p. 561).

<sup>24</sup> This committee consisted of the Society of Oslo Homes, the Pre-School Teachers' Association, and the Oslo branch of the Norwegian Housewives' Association.

<sup>25</sup> This umbrella organisation included the Society of Oslo Homes; the Oslo branches of the Norwegian Housewives' Association, the Pre-School Teachers' Association, the Norwegian Red Cross Child Aid (*Røde Kors Barnehjelp*), the National Association of Parish Nurses, the Norwegian Women's Health Association, and the Labour Party Women's Committee.

<sup>26</sup> Both of these organisations had gained experience in working with families and children through their activities directed at support and instruction of mothers in pre- and post-natal care since the early 20th century onwards. *Norwegian Women's Housewives' Association* informed about matters such as health, nutrition, infant care, household economy, and family legislation, while the *Norwegian Women's Health Association* (NKS) early established health centres for mothers and children.

<sup>27</sup> The first organisation to receive such municipal support was the Committee for Housewives' Kindergartens. In 1945 the municipality of Oslo provided the organisation with a small sum as a crisis measure, but from 1949 agreed to cover about half of the running expenses of the organisation's kindergartens.

burden of new establishments on their own.<sup>28</sup> State subsidies were only introduced in 1963.<sup>29</sup> According to the 1959 Day Care Commission:

‘In order to prevent the continued development in this sector (the voluntary sector) from stagnating because the economic burdens of establishment and running of institutions seem to exceed the ability of the organisations, it is necessary that permanent economic subsidies are given’ (Ministry of Consumer and Family Affairs 1961, Report from the Day Care Committee, p. 57).

This is the statement of a state wishing to encourage voluntary initiatives in the post-war welfare state rather than undermine them. The welfare state concentrated instead on relieving the family of economic burdens through cash transfers (e.g. the child allowance, housing support, free medical aid, and disability benefits). What developed during the 1940s and 1950s was therefore a parallel expansion of municipally provided social security benefits and voluntary provided services to families with young children. The non-public childcare market that developed was expected to largely run itself. Voluntary organisations hired and paid their own kindergarten teachers and established and shut down institutions without public consent. Each local association (of the Norwegian Women's Health Association and the Norwegian Housewives' Association, for instance) also had full responsibility for the modernisation, maintenance, and running of institutions although these had to comply with regulations of child welfare institutions from 1954.<sup>30</sup>

The result of this policy (or non-policy) of leaving childcare provision to voluntary organisations was clear: by 1960, non-public operators owned 85% of all kindergartens in the country (see Table 1).<sup>31</sup> It was perhaps because of structural affinities between philanthropic and state views on “good childcare”, that voluntary organisations could operate so freely in childcare provision in Norway. In fact, state views on childcare during the 1940s and 1950s mirrored the emphases in Froebel pedagogy adopted by the kindergarten movement: the strong emphasis on play, on the child's relationship with nature, on the value of the home, and on the gendered education of the kindergarten teacher (Korsvold 1990). In 1947, the Labour government set up two committees, a

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<sup>28</sup> In 1949, there was an article on the front page of the national daily newspaper *Verdens Gang* titled ‘The Housewives' Kindergartens at the verge of bankruptcy. Where is the municipality?’ Permanent state subsidies for childcare institutions were introduced in Norway only in 1963. In Denmark such subsidies were introduced in the 1920s, while Sweden introduced state subsidies in 1944. (Knutsen 1996, p. 86; Sipilä 1997, pp. 32-33).

<sup>29</sup> Denmark and Sweden introduced permanent state subsidies for childcare institutions in 1919 and 1944 respectively (Knutsen 1996, p. 86; Sipilä 1997, pp. 32–33).

<sup>30</sup> These regulations specified a number of requirements relating, for example, to the quality of premises and outdoor areas, the size of children's groups, and the educational qualifications of staff. See: *Forskrifter for daginstitusjoner for barn 1954, pkt. 1* (Regulations for day care institutions for children 1954, article 1). These regulations had their legal basis in the Child Welfare law of 1953 (effective July 1954) and were in force until the 1975 Day Care Act. See Ot. prp. no. 36, 1952.

<sup>31</sup> These accommodated 7,565 children, representing less than 2 % of the pre-school population aged 0-6 years.

committee for reforms and co-ordination in primary education and a committee for child welfare, that in 1951 presented their views on childcare. Both committees recognised two principles in care provided by voluntary organisations during the post-war period: first, that the kindergarten should 'supplement' and not 'replace', care provided in the home; and second, that part-time care was best for the child.<sup>32</sup> The kindergarten committee set up in 1959 confirmed these views on what constituted 'good care' for young children. The only really new element was the discussion of what the committee called 'society's industrialisation' (Korsvold 1993). The kindergarten was now in addition to compensate for the negative influences in the child's social environment. The committee placed special emphasis on the negative effects of traffic, and housing conditions (with less possibility for play). This concern with the social environment of the child is not very different from the kindergarten movement's concern with industrialisation and urbanisation at the end of the nineteenth century.

**TABLE 1. Operators of childcare institutions, Norway 1960**

Institutions run by	N
<i>Public operators</i>	
municipality	40
state	1
<i>Commercial operators</i>	
private enterprise	20
<i>Voluntary organizations</i>	
Kindergarten Society	44
local housewife association	30
neighbourhood co-operative	17
local parish	33
catholic order	7
Norwegian Red Cross Children's Aid	18
Norwegian Women's Health Association	8
private foundation	15
parents' association	15
other organisations and groups	11
<i>Total</i>	259

Source: *Ministry of Family and Consumer Affairs*, St. meld. 89, 1961–1962, pp. 12–13.

<sup>32</sup> According to the committee for reforms and co-ordination in primary education: 'longer stays than four hours in the kindergarten can easily be of more harm than benefit to the child' (Samordningsnemda for skoleverket XV. Tilråding om barnehager og utdanning av barnehagelærere. Oslo 1951, p. 7 . See Ot. prp. no. 36. 1952. Om lov om barnevern.

### 3. Voluntary provision during welfare state expansion

It has been shown that Norwegian developments in childcare qualifies the picture of a 'golden age' of voluntary provision 'before the welfare state'. The Second World War did not mark the replacement of voluntary provision by a strong welfare state. In fact, the 'golden age' of voluntary provision coincided with the development of the post-war Norwegian welfare state.

From the mid-1960s childcare provision began, however, to be seen as a legitimate field for state involvement.<sup>33</sup> The reports of the 1969-Day Care Commission eventually resulted in the Day Care Act of 1975.<sup>34</sup> I now take a closer look at childcare during the wave of welfare expansion in the 1960s, and in the decade following the 1975 Day Care Act.

The Norwegian municipality definitely became more active in childcare provision from the mid-1960s onwards although municipal kindergartens continued to be a predominantly urban phenomenon.<sup>35</sup> After the 1975 Day Care Act childcare services, whether statutory or non-statutory, had to be 'in accordance with public standards and norms' in order to qualify for public subsidies.<sup>36</sup> There is no doubt that the public share of all childcare institutions *did* increase in the period 1975–1985 (see Table 2). Despite this increased municipal provision, one can not, however, speak of a 'take-over' of non-public provision by the municipality like that which took place in Sweden. In Sweden, the non-public share of the kindergarten market dropped from 64 per cent in 1950 to 3 per cent in 1970.<sup>37</sup> In Norway, although the non-statutory share of the

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<sup>33</sup> The developments that led up to this point are associated with the following transformations: the diversification of family types and new conflicts about their status and relative merits; the emergence of the gender equality issue; and the entry of married women with children into the labour market (Ellingsæter 1995, Leira 1992). From the mid-1960s younger women were also making their entry into party politics and the women's movement. The first increase in statutory service provision started at the same time as women were gaining increasing power and influence in the Parliament (Sipilä 1997). These were also the years when a number of public documents stressed the harmful effects of increasing mobilisation and urbanisation on the child's family and wider environment (St. meld. no. 17, 1972-1973). It is also probable that by explicitly drawing new and professional knowledge into the debate on young children's development, the kindergarten profession and voluntary organisations had created the basis for the idea that children need professional educational care from early on.

<sup>34</sup> The other Nordic countries had updated their legislation on day care before Norway: Denmark in 1964, Finland and Sweden in 1973.

<sup>35</sup> The number of municipally owned kindergartens increased from 40 in 1960 to 98 in 1969; of these, 55 were in the capital.

<sup>36</sup> According to this legislation, *all* childcare institutions, also non-statutory ones, could be approved by the county governor: if the institutions operated during the daytime; if the institutions had children present for more than 20 hours per week; if the institutions had more than ten children present at a time; if the children were over three years old, and more than 5% were under three; and if those using the institutions had to pay for that use. The non-statutory institutions were also required to have a director in charge of the daily activities with an educational background similar to that of a director in institutions with public owners. This basically meant that the director had to have a qualified pre-school teacher education of three years (Leira 1987, p. 56).

<sup>37</sup> In order to explain this absence of a 'take-over' of non-public provision, Leira has pointed to the fact that Norway was industrialised and urbanised later than its Nordic neighbours. Considering that the municipalities that *did* provide childcare were urban and wealthy, this factor seems to have weight. It also



childcare market dropped from 84% in 1960 to 56% in 1970, voluntary organisations still operated more than half of the country's kindergartens (see Table 3). Voluntary organisations continued to play an important role in service provision also during the 1960s, a decade of rapid and extensive growth of state welfare.

**TABLE 2. Childcare institutions by ownership,  
Norway 1963–1975 (in %)**

Year	Public institutions (%)	Non-public institutions (%)	Total (N)
1963	20.9	79.0	258
1965	21.6	78.4	273
1970	35.8	64.1	402
1975	54.4	45.6	884
1980	53.6	46.4	2,554
1985	57.7	42.3	3,281
1990	58.9	41.1	4,649
1995	48.2	51.8	6,261

Source: *The Municipality Database at Norwegian Social Science Data Service/Statistics Norway.*

But this is only part of the picture. It is often forgotten that the 1975-Day Care Act not only encouraged childcare provision by local authorities, but also welcomed voluntary provision. In fact, in the preparatory work to the Day Care Act we read that care in other than public institutions 'in many cases functions well, as it is based on neighbourly relations, kinship and so on' (Ot. prp. no. 23, 1974–75, p. 25. Cited in Leira 1992, p. 86). The 'winners' in the debate leading up to the Day Care Act were in many ways, as noted by Leira, 'the local authorities, the voluntary organisations, the professionals, all of whom had strong interests in provision' (Leira 1992, p. 91). Local authorities were charged with the planning for day care provision, but were free to choose how to reach the quantitative objectives set by the state. This meant that they could choose who should provide childcare services. The 1975-Day Care Act established a uniform system of regulation of services, but not really a new division of responsibility between state, municipal and non-public sectors in providing them. Approximately half of all kindergartens remained in non-

seems that the demand for women's labour may have been stronger in Denmark and Sweden than in Norway, although Leira notes that this hypothesis is not easily assessed since there was a shortage of labour also in Norway throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Leira 1992). It also seems that the absence of a 'take-over' of non-public provision can be linked to the administrative structure. The success of Denmark and Sweden in using municipalities to extend childcare services was associated with reforms of administrative structures. While the number of local governmental units decreased remarkably in Denmark and Sweden, the reduction of local governmental units remained quite modest in Norway. The

public ownership (private enterprises, voluntary organisations, parishes and Christian organisations, parent and housing co-operatives, etc.) throughout the 1970s (see Table 3).

Also the type of care (in terms of hours of care, and age of children in care) provided after 1975 showed clear signs of continuity, rather than change, with the previous decade. The 1975-Day Care Act did not constitute a move away from the kindergarten as a supplement, rather than a replacement, of care in the home. In the period 1975-1985, the type of care preferred by the kindergarten movement and voluntary organisations continues to be part-time care for children above three. In fact, both municipalities and non-statutory providers actually reduced their provision of full-time kindergarten places in the period 1975–1980 (see Table 3). The growth was also strongest for children over three years of age (see Table 4). For the municipalities, providing short and half-day kindergarten places was the cheapest alternative<sup>38</sup>, while the main voluntary operators of kindergartens have not had a policy of using the kindergarten to facilitate women's full-time work. This particular provision profile, that is, part-time care for children above three, has been described as a 'deviation' from the Scandinavian model, or as 'liberal' or 'conservative' elements in 'social democratic' policies (Leira 1990; Moss 1990; Piachault 1984; Krøger 1997). Knowledge about voluntary childcare providers demonstrates that such a provision profile is not a foreign element in the Norwegian modern welfare state.<sup>39</sup> It is rather the expression of a view on 'good childcare' that had received the state's approbation since the 1940s.

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autonomy of Norwegian local authorities was never completely set aside (Fevolden & Sørensen 1993; Hansen 1991).

<sup>38</sup> Part-time kindergartens were an alternative for less affluent municipalities, or those with other budgetary priorities. The running costs were reduced by keeping the hours available to a minimum. The arrangement could typically imply that the municipality financed the operation of a kindergarten already owned by a voluntary organisation and dependent on volunteers and parents in its daily operation. From the perspective of many local authorities, part-time day care was as 'valuable' as full-time care in reaching the quantitative objectives set by central authorities.

<sup>39</sup> The observation that a large share of non-statutory providers *does* makes a difference for the type of care provided seems to be confirmed if we look more closely at Nordic childcare data. In Denmark, non-statutory owners have had a stronger preference than statutory owners for part-time care throughout the period 1970–1990. The share of part-time places among non-statutory owners was approximately 17–19% (versus 10–12% among statutory owners) in the 1970s and 10–15% (versus 5–9% among statutory owners) in the 1980s (Knutsen 1994, p. 70).

**TABLE 3. Children with full-day<sup>a</sup> kindergarten place by form of ownership, Norway 1975–1986 (in %)<sup>b</sup>**

Owner	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1986
Municipality	66.4	63.6	53.0	49.7	47.3	48.5	48.0	55.0
County	72.6	75.5	77.5	73.9	69.0	69.3	64.9	76.8
State	76.2	53.1	58.0	75.8	79.3	79.3	79.3	80.0
Private enterprise	41.1	54.0	54.7	54.7	49.9	35.6	44.3	80.4
Parent co-operative	46.2	34.5	20.3	19.1	16.1	17.1	17.0	24.3 <sup>c</sup>
Private organisation	48.2	35.3	26.5	24.6	22.5	23.2	21.4	31.8
Housing co-operative	48.2	55.5	35.6	41.0	47.5	40.0	37.5	x <sup>d</sup>
Parish/religious community	40.0	35.2	21.3	20.3	19.9	18.7	19.0	23.3
Other	53.4	43.7	37.8	40.5	34.6	54.8	52.9	— <sup>e</sup>
<i>Total</i>	<i>58.9</i>	<i>54.7</i>	<i>44.4</i>	<i>41.5</i>	<i>38.9</i>	<i>39.8</i>	<i>39.0</i>	<i>46.5</i>
<i>Total children with kindergarten place (in 1,000)</i>	<i>30,5</i>	<i>36,5</i>	<i>49,8</i>	<i>61,5</i>	<i>71,5</i>	<i>78,2</i>	<i>83,0</i>	<i>104,3</i>

<sup>a</sup> More than 31 hours per week.

<sup>b</sup> Share of children with full-day kindergarten place out of all children with kindergarten place.

<sup>c</sup> In 1986 this category includes children with full-day places in kindergartens owned by housing co-operatives.

<sup>d</sup> Figures for 1986 included in category 'parent co-operative'.

<sup>e</sup> In 1986 the 'other' category is not available.

Source: *The Municipality Database at Norwegian Social Science Data Service/Statistics Norway.*

**TABLE 4. Children aged 3–5 years in childcare institutions by form of ownership, Norway 1975–1986 (in %)<sup>a</sup>**

	1975	1979	1986
Municipality	66.4	73.1	72.5
County	45.2	48.9	50.3
State	76.2	47.2	54.1
Private enterprise	76.6	71.8	57.5
Parent co-operative	79.2	81.7	79.5 <sup>b</sup>
Private organisation	79.2	84.6	81.1
Housing co-operative	80.0	79.5	x <sup>c</sup>
Parish/religious community	78.4	86.1	83.7
Other	50.0	77.8	— <sup>d</sup>
<i>Total</i>	<i>69.4</i>	<i>75.8</i>	<i>74.7</i>
<i>Total (N)</i>	<i>21,169</i>	<i>54,202</i>	<i>77,871</i>

<sup>a</sup> As % of all children 0–6 years in childcare institutions.

<sup>b</sup> In 1986 this category includes children with full-day places in kindergartens owned by housing co-operatives.

<sup>c</sup> Figures for 1986 included in category 'parent co-operative'.

<sup>d</sup> In 1986 the 'other' category is not available.

Source: *The Municipality Database at Norwegian Social Science Data Service/Statistics Norway.*

#### 4. The notion of a new pluralist system of care

In a last stage of the analysis I wish to return to the source of inspiration for this paper, namely contemporary welfare state debates. Since the mid-1980s, voluntary organisations in Norway, like their counterparts in many other countries around the world, have found themselves expected to play a more central role in the direct provision of welfare services.<sup>40</sup> Contributions from a wide range of organisations and individuals have been seen as a potential way of invigorating the evolving modern Nordic welfare state. This view has been evident right across the left–right political spectrum (Kuhle & Selle 1992; Lorentzen 1993b).

A recurrent theme in the contemporary welfare debates on voluntary provision is that we are, from the mid-1980s onwards, witnessing the development of ‘a new pluralist system of care’. The notion of ‘a pluralist system of care’ refers to the propositions: first, that there has been a shift towards increasing welfare pluralism in the 1980s after a period of statutory take-over of service provision<sup>41</sup>; and second, that this new ‘pluralist system of care’ is a return to the pre-war period when a wide variety of non-public actors were involved in service provision. The proposition is that service provision, after welfare state ‘take-over’, by the mid-1980s reached yet another stage in its evolutionary development. This stage is presented as a “return” to the plurality of actors that existed before welfare state expansion. I wish to challenge such views of service developments in the modern welfare state by following developments in childcare provision into the 1990s.

I wish first to look more closely at the notion that the plurality of actors in service provision is ‘new’, that is, that voluntary service provision has ‘resurfaced’ from the mid-1980s onwards. This

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<sup>40</sup> Much paper has been expended since the mid-1980s on voluntary organisations in Norway. The government long-term programme for 1982-85 was presented by a Labour government and is perhaps the first that explicitly links the welfare state’s limited capacity to solve welfare problems and the role of voluntary organisations (St. meld. no. 79, 1980-81). See also: St. meld. no. 83, 1984-85, *Langtidsprogrammet 1986-89*; and St. meld. no. 4, 1988-89, *Langtidsprogrammet 1990-93*. For research on this so-called “re-discovery” of the voluntary organisation in public debate: Wærness 1987; Kuhle & Selle 1992; and Lorentzen 1993. For an overview of Norwegian research on the voluntary sector in Norway see: Selle & Lorentzen 2000, Selle 1996, 1998, 1999, Wollebæk, Selle & Lorentzen 2000. For an overview of women’s and feminist research on voluntary organisations see: Selle 1994, 1996, 1997 and 1998 and Wærness 1995.

<sup>41</sup> The concept of ‘welfare pluralism’ appeared on the borderline between research and politics around 1985. The concept covers a multitude of approaches to the provision of social services. In the early 1980s it was used mainly to point out the shortcomings of a state-centred model of welfare. A welfare system should give individuals the opportunity to choose the services which are best for the individual and, through efficient competition, the state could be stimulated to change (Hadley & Hatch 1981). An important component of the proposal of these welfare pluralists was a significant shift of power from the statutory to the voluntary sector. The concept of ‘welfare pluralism’ was also used to explore the structure of organisations within the statutory and voluntary sectors (Hatch 1980; Hadley & Hatch 1981). From the mid-1980s, the concept of ‘welfare pluralism’ underwent important changes. At the end of the 1980s it had other connotations than when it was first employed: it was linked to a management and market ethos that considered the possibility of public provision as second- or even third-best in competition with the private and voluntary sectors (Sainsbury 1989).

idea is based on the assumption that welfare state provision to a large extent took over voluntary provision during the expansion phase of the welfare state. If we look at figures on providers of care in childcare provision in the period 1985-1995 the picture is indeed one of a plurality of providers (see Table 5). But this plurality of providers involved in care is not new as has been demonstrated. In the whole post-war period the provision of childcare services has been characterised by a plurality of actors.

**TABLE 5. Childcare institutions by form of ownership,  
Norway 1985–1996 (in %)**

	1985	1987	1992	1994	1996
Municipality	55.2	58.2	52.6	48.3	46.3
County	2.0	1.6	1.2	1.2	1.0
State	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.3	0.4
Private enterprise	2.8	1.2	2.5	2.5	2.8
Parent co-operative	10.6 <sup>a</sup>	18.5	15.7	16.5	15.8
Private organisation	17.0	18.5	5.8 <sup>b</sup>	5.1	4.7
Housing co-operative					
Parish/religious community	11.9	7.6	7.2	6.1	5.6
Individuals			6.8	12.6	16.7
Other	– <sup>c</sup>	– <sup>c</sup>	7.7	7.4	6.6
<i>Total (N)</i>	<i>3280</i>	<i>3779</i>	<i>5263</i>	<i>6003</i>	<i>6409</i>

<sup>a</sup> As of 1985, the category 'parent co-operative' includes also kindergartens owned by housing co-operatives

<sup>b</sup> As of 1992, the category 'private organisation' here refers to: 'Housewife Association' and 'Norwegian Women's Health Association'. The other owners previously included in the 'private organisation' category are from 1992 included in the 'individuals' category. This category refers to private kindergartens with single owners. The most common form of ownership in this category of owners is the one-owner enterprise (*eneeierforetak*), but also other forms of ownership are possible, e.g. a limited liability company/joint-stock company (*aksjeselskap*).

<sup>c</sup> In 1985 and 1987 the 'other' category is not available.

Source: *The Municipality Database at Norwegian Social Science Data Service/Statistics Norway.*

If the plurality in provision is not new, then what changes are taking place in the 1989s? What happens in the 1980s and 1990s is that, after a period of relative stagnation during the 1980s, non-statutory providers start establishing an increasing number of kindergartens. From 1985 to 1990, the state, county and municipality together established more kindergartens than other providers (see Table 2).<sup>42</sup> Then, from 1989 onwards, non-public providers increase their share of

<sup>42</sup> The public share of new institutions was 62% in the period from 1985 to 1990. In this period the number of kindergartens increased by 1,368, of which 844 were public and 524 were private. These calculations are based on simple additions and percentages based on the total figures in Table 8 in Appendix 3.

the total childcare market. In that year, for the first time since 1970, non-public providers established more new institutions than the state, county, and municipality together.<sup>43</sup> In the period 1990 to 1995 the public share of the childcare market drops from 60 to 48 per cent (the non-public share of the childcare market increases from 40 to 52 per cent in the same period).

A closer look at childcare developments also qualifies the notion that the childcare market of the 1980s and 1990s is somehow a 'return' to the constellations that existed 'before the welfare state'. It is not appropriate to speak of a "return" to a constellation of providers that existed 'before the welfare state' for the simple reason that what constitutes the 'non-statutory sector', and the very nature of its relationship to the state, has changed over time. The non-public childcare market of the 1980s and 1990s is not the same as non-public childcare market of the 1950s and 1960s.

The main feature that distinguishes the non-public childcare market 'before the welfare state' and the non-public childcare market of the 1990s is the relationship between the providers within it. More precisely, the relationship between providers within it has shifted *from* voluntary organisations *to* other providers from the mid-1980s onwards. This change is evident both if we look at the childcare market as a whole, including both public and non-public provision (see Table 2), or only at the non-public childcare market (see Table 6). One of the most striking changes is the reduction in the share of institutions owned by private organisations (mainly large humanitarian organisations). The providers that have increased their share of the childcare market at the expense of the humanitarian organisations are primarily parents and "others". (see Table 3). The involvement of parents in childcare provision is in itself not new. In fact, in 1974 parent co-operatives had a 3% share of the childcare market. What is new is that parents increasingly mobilise their interests *only* through parent co-operatives. In 1974, parents were still mobilising their interests also in humanitarian organisations that had broad welfare goals.<sup>44</sup> As concerns the "others" category, which owners "hide" behind the "others" label and increase their ownership of kindergartens throughout the 1990s? As is evident from Table 7 the most important owner in the "other" category is the "foundation".

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<sup>43</sup> In 1989, the private sector established 134 new institutions while the public established 132 new institutions. In 1990, the respective figures were 186 and 153.

<sup>44</sup> During the first decades of the twentieth century parents mobilised their interests in the childcare market in umbrella organisations like the Committee for Housewives' Kindergartens (Komiteen for Husmødrenes Barnehager). Parents joined this committee as early as the 1930s via other organisations, the Society of Oslo Homes (Oslo Hjemmenes Vel) and the Norwegian Housewives' Association, in order to respond to their needs for organised childcare. Parents' engagement in an organisation like the National Association of Norwegian Pre-School Teachers (Norske Barnehagelærers Landsforbund), also a member of the Committee for Housewives' Kindergartens, can be seen as a 'professionalisation' of the parent role (Lea 1982).

**TABLE 6. Childcare institutions run by non-public owners, Norway 1985–1996  
(as % of all owners)**

	1985	1987	1992	1994	1996
<i>Owner</i>					
private enterprise	6.7	2.9	5.4	5.1	5.4
parent and housing co-operative	25.1	31.4	34.4	32.9	30.3
private organisation	40.2	46.5	12.7	10.2	9.0
parish/religious community	28.0	19.1	15.8	12.1	10.7
individuals			14.8	25.1	31.9
other	— <sup>a</sup>	— <sup>a</sup>	16.9	14.7	12.7
<i>% non-statutory childcare institutions</i>	42.3	39.7	45.7	50.2	52.3
<i>Total number of non-statutory childcare institutions</i>	1387	1502	2405	3012	3352

<sup>a</sup> In 1985 and 1987 the 'other' category is not available.

Source: *The Municipality Database at Norwegian Social Science Data Service/Statistics Norway.*

**TABLE 7. Forms of ownership in the 'other' category<sup>a</sup> by number of institutions  
and children cared for, Norway 1992 and 1997 (N)**

	1992		1997	
	Institutions	Children	Institutions	Children
<i>Owner</i>				
association	110	2800	93	2172
joint stock-company	32	1263	55	2015
foundation	164	5859	170	5974
accountable society	12	191	35	747
co-operative society	37	1365	26	1050
other	162	4476	164	4640
<i>Total</i>	517	15954	543	16598

<sup>a</sup> See Table 6.

Source: *Norwegian Social Science Data Services.*

Unlike the voluntary organisation and the parent co-operative, the foundation does not have members. The foundation is simply the estate/property. An important element in its establishment is therefore the existence of capital stock. This capital stock can be money, real property, movables etc. This form of ownership is in the childcare market becoming a practical way of organisation of parents who wish to establish kindergartens. The capital stock is in such cases

the kindergarten itself (owned or hired) with property, building and movables.<sup>45</sup> A closer look at the "Other" category confirms the move towards forms of organisation within the childcare market that are not membership-based and democratically built. The main trend seems to be for childcare to be increasingly seen as a problem of self-help and individual organisation.

Another feature of the childcare market in the 1980s and 1990s (that was not present in the 1940s and 1950s) is the growing importance of childcare in response to employed parents' needs. As will be recalled, voluntary organisations left an imprint on the type of care provided until the late 1980s. Part-time care for children over three, reflected the combined interests of the main providers during these years—local authorities and non-statutory providers. This provision profile changed somewhat with the growth of parents' involvement in provision. Like voluntary organisations, parent co-operatives have for long preferred to organise care for children over three years of age. In fact, the share of children in the age group 4–6 years was the same in the two groups of owners in 1975 (see Table 8). From the mid-1980s onwards, however, parent co-operatives have been providing more care than voluntary organisations also for younger children. Parent co-operatives are also increasingly offering full-day care compared to voluntary organisations (see Table 9). The increase in places offering more than 31 hours attendance weekly probably reflects the growing importance of childcare in response to employed parents' needs. This conclusion is qualified, however, by the fact that parents are also paying substantially more for childcare in the 1980s and 1990s than earlier.<sup>46</sup> This is linked to the fact that the period 1985–1995 is characterised by an increase in non-statutory institutions without any municipal subsidies (see Table 10).

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<sup>45</sup> For information on the forms of ownership for private kindergartens see Woxholt 1992.

<sup>46</sup> In the period 1992–1995 the parental fees for non-statutory kindergartens increased by 11%. In 1996 state support for non-public kindergartens covered about 39% of the running expenses in non-public kindergartens, parents 45%, local authorities about 9% and other contributors. The share of institutions owned by parishes and religious communities fell by 50% in the same period: from 12% in 1985 to 6% in 1996. See St. meld. no. 27 (1996-1997). *Om statens forhold til frivillige organisasjoner*. Vedlegg pp. 1–43, p.3.



**TABLE 8. Children aged 3–5 in childcare institutions by owner,  
Norway 1975–1995 (in %)<sup>a</sup>**

Year	Parent co-operative	Voluntary organisation
1975	79.2	79.2
1979	81.7	84.6
1986	79.5	81.1
1992	62.5	81.3
1995	58.9	77.5

<sup>a</sup> Out of all children in childcare institutions 0–6 years.

Source: *The Municipality Database at Norwegian Social Science Data Service/Statistics Norway.*

**TABLE 9. Children with full-day kindergarten place by ownership,  
Norway 1975–1995 (in %)<sup>a</sup>**

	1975	1976	1977	1978	1979	1980	1981	1986	1992	1995
<i>Owner</i>										
Parent co-operative	46.2	34.5	20.3	19.1	16.1	17.1	17.0	24.3	61.2	64.7
voluntary organisation	48.2	35.3	26.5	24.6	22.5	23.2	21.4	31.8	22.0	28.8

<sup>a</sup> More than 31 hours per week. Share of children with full-day kindergarten place out of all children with kindergarten place.

Source: *Norwegian Social Science Data Service.*

**TABLE 10. Municipal funding of non-statutory childcare institutions,  
Norway 1986–1995 (in %)**

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Municipal subsidies with conditions	59	57	52	50	43	40	37	36	33	32
Municipal subsidies without conditions	20	21	21	18	17	15	11	12	13	12
Without municipal subsidies	18	19	23	29	35	40	43	49	53	56
No response	3	3	5	3	6	6	9	2	2	–
<i>Total</i>	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<i>Total (N)</i>	1,436	1,502	1,592	1,726	1,912	2,174	2,405	2,695	3,012	3,246

Source: *The Municipality Database of the Norwegian Social Science Services/Statistics Norway.*

The non-public childcare market of the 1980s and 1990s has also undergone another change since the period 'before' welfare state expansion. More precisely, the conditions upon which non-statutory providers, and in particular humanitarian organisations, based their service provision have eroded from the mid-1970s onwards. The 1980s were supposedly the decade when 'the increasing support of decentralisation, deregulation and de-bureaucratisation opened new space to voluntary organisations in general and to social welfare organisations in particular'<sup>47</sup>. In practice, however, this was not the case. As we have seen, provision by voluntary organisations dropped considerably in the period 1985-1995. Why this decrease at the expense of other providers in the decade when they are 'rediscovered' and praised in public documents? Explanations of the problems faced by humanitarian organisations are often 'actor-less', that is, they link problems experienced by voluntary organisations to broad trends in society.<sup>48</sup> This is for instance the case in the first Norwegian public report on voluntary organisations, according to which the main reasons for the problems experienced by humanitarian organisations are found in the changing welfare ideology, the changing organisational landscape, and women's entry into paid employment. (NOU 1988) It is tempting to take these explanations at face value because they all *do* contain some element of truth. First of all, the organisational landscape in which humanitarian organisations found themselves *was* changing. In almost all Norwegian municipalities the growth of local branches of the large humanitarian organisations has stagnated from the 1980s onwards (Selle & Øymyr 1990, Selle 1999, 1998, 1997). There *does* also seem to be a link between the increase in women's employment and the organisations' increasing difficulties in recruiting new members. Local studies of humanitarian organisations have shown that the majority of their members had been housewives. Already in the 1970s the proportion of full-time housewives dropped from 81 to 56% (Skrede 1994). This trend continued in the 1980s.

The decline in voluntary organisations' provision of childcare services is, however, not only about organisations failing to adapt to their external environment. It is also about an eroding relationship between organisations and the welfare state. From the mid-1970s voluntary organisations have been expected to co-operate more directly with local rather than central government authorities.<sup>49</sup> By the mid-1970s voluntary organisations, used to communication in public committees and councils at the central level, were expected to represent their interests directly *vis-à-vis* local authorities. This trend accelerated during the 1980s with the increasing decentralisation of health and social services. The new divisions of labour between counties, municipalities and voluntary

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Fn. 41.

<sup>48</sup> I am indebted to Bjarnar 1995 for this point.

<sup>49</sup> The background was a new functional division of tasks between the central and local levels of government. The main elements in this reorganisation were: a revised method of drafting laws that gave local authorities more discretion; and the central government's increasing use of financial incentives to induce local government to take on new services (Fevolden & Sørensen 1993).

organisations made ownership relations increasingly unclear. The changes imply that large federal humanitarian organisations are expected to deal directly with local authorities in the newly reorganised local government system. The expectation for local branches of organisations to take independent decisions in each municipality did not fit well with the 'federal' structure of voluntary organisations relying on co-operation through consensus rather than rules imposed centrally. Positioning oneself *vis-à-vis* the local authority administration demands a strong advocacy profile and a more clear-cut division of responsibility between people in the organisation (owners, staff, volunteers, etc.) than the large humanitarian organisations had.

The relationship between voluntary organisations and the welfare state is eroding also because of increasing difficulties in obtaining subsidies to establish new institutions. The 1975-Day Care Act was adopted in a period inspired by economic optimism. During the 1980s, however, while the Norwegian state became steadily richer, local authorities experienced increasing problems in financing the social care services that they were responsible for organising. In childcare provision, state aims were ambitious. Despite ambitious goals of full provision by 2000 (St. meld. no. 4, 1988-1989) voluntary organisations soon experienced difficulties in getting funding from local authorities. Many local authorities during the 1980s developed an open policy of preferring cheaper alternatives for reaching state goals of provision. The 'advantage' of these institutions from the point of view of the municipality is that they do not burden local authority budgets, nor need to be subject to any significant degree of local authority control (Knutsen 1994). In fact, in 1989, approximately 30 per cent of non-public kindergartens in Norway did not receive municipal subsidies at all. As Table 10 shows, this trend continued into the 1990s. By the mid-1990s more than half of all non-public institutions receive no municipal subsidies at all. While political documents expressed the ambition to include voluntary organisations in service provision, what actually happened is that local authorities preferred new, and perhaps cheaper, forms of providing care for young children. In sum, the 'rediscovery' of the voluntary sector did not, at least in the field of day care provision, imply a greater role for the large humanitarian organisations in service provision. Developments in childcare makes it more appropriate to speak of a fast changing non-public childcare market rather than a return to the market that existed 'before the welfare state'.

## Summary

In this paper the notion that developments in childcare provision in a strong welfare state can be captured as an evolutionary movement from 'a golden age' of voluntary provision later subverted by ever-increasing statutory provision was challenged. This interpretation set the developments of provision in the context of the welfare state crisis in a new light. The main thrust of the argument in this paper is that voluntary service provision deserves closer scrutiny not only as a precondition for the rise of early welfare states but also as a sphere of intervention into family life that has developed parallel to welfare state intervention.

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## Appendix 1: Concepts

The term *voluntary social action* is a generalised concept that encompasses both philanthropic/voluntary action (at the individual level) and the voluntary organisation (at the level of the organisation in which such work takes places). The concept can be used in order to explore the values that society at different points in time have given voluntary work and voluntary organisations (Skov Henriksen 1995). *Philanthropic/voluntary action* is a concept tied closely to the activity performed by the individual inside an organisation or movement. The concept is tied to the individual, rather than to the work undertaken, and it follows that it is not *a priori* given what this work means to the individual. *The voluntary organisation* is defined as a membership organisation that is: a) formal and institutionalised to some extent in the sense of formal sets of rules; b) constitutionally or institutionally independent from government; c) self-governing in the sense of control of activities through own decision-making structures; d) based to some degree on voluntary participation in terms of money or time. The definition applied here is the structural/functional definition of Salamon and Anheier (Salamon & Anheier 1992, pp. 10–13). This definition has been adopted in analyses in the UK and Norway: Billis & Glennerster 1998, Lorentzen 1993a and Kuhnle & Selle 1992.

In Norwegian research and public documents the term ‘voluntary organisation’ often includes a large and heterogeneous group of organisations: women’s organisations; recreational and sports associations; religious communities; housing co-operatives and so on. In this article, ‘the voluntary organisation’ will in practice be restricted to the large humanitarian organisations established at the turn of the century. When the term ‘private organisation’ is used in the tables this refers to the ‘voluntary organisation’. The term ‘private organisation’ is used because this is the category applied in the Municipality Database at the Norwegian Social Science Services on which the analysis is based. The term ‘private organisation’ was kept in order to respect the original source.

In this article *childcare provision* includes provision for infants and very young children, and for children from age three up to school age. The definition of services applied in this study is limited to services that fall within the definition of kindergartens applied in the Norwegian 1975 Day Care Act:

‘kindergarten: an educational arrangement during the day for children under compulsory school age, and for children with similar levels of maturity’.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Norwegian Day Care Act of June 6, 1975, no. 30, p. 3. See Ot. prp. no. 23 (1974-1975).

In the preparatory work for the Day Care Act of 1975 it was made clear that the concept of kindergarten was meant to include all that had previously been covered by:

‘the concept of day care institutions for children with the exception of institutions for school children. According to this definition kindergarten will refer to what has so far been called day homes, kindergartens, pre-school classes, and family day homes. New forms of provision such as measures organised by parents will also be included in the concept of kindergarten as long as they are administered by persons with pre-school teacher training or similar education. The specification that the provision should be ‘during the day’ implies that children’s homes, children’s pensions and so on are not included in this law.’

It follows from this definition that this study excludes after-school activities for six-year-olds following the school reform of 1997 that lowered the compulsory school age from seven to six years.

## Appendix 2: Data sources

Data from Norwegian Social Science Data Service and Statistics Norway form the main data source of the paper.

Own calculations based on raw data on childcare provision has been another important data source. The Municipality Database at the Norwegian Social Science Services contains annual information on the ownership and operation of day care services. Data includes information on ownership of childcare institutions in the following categories: state, counties and municipalities; individual; foundation; private enterprise; private organisation; parent–teacher committee (parent co-operative); housing co-operative; Norwegian Church/religious community; others.

These ‘raw data’ are based on two types of public reporting: first, data from annual reports from the kindergartens in the period 1973–1979; and secondly, data from annual applications for subsidies from the municipalities in the period 1976–1995. These data were made possible after the 1975 Day Care Act. Both kindergartens and municipalities were then obliged by the Ministry of Consumer and Administration Affairs to produce detailed information about the number of kindergarten places available. These public reports were used by the Ministry to calculate the public subsidies for the running of kindergartens. According to the Ministry of Consumer and Administration Affairs there is reason to believe that these data include practically all kindergartens in the country.

Statistics Norway has in its publications presented some of these above-mentioned data in table form. ‘Raw data’ for all years was still ordered from the Municipality Database. The main reason was that Norwegian Statistics data did not provide information on day care provision broken down by ownership for *all* the years in the period 1963–1995. Also, the categories of ownership often change from year to year in the Statistics Norway data. Nor could the data document how type of care provided (part-time/full-time care, and care for young (one, two, and three year olds) /older children (four, five and six year olds) varied by ownership.

The theme of this article has grown as part of a larger study based on ‘in-house’ documents and interviews from Norwegian voluntary organisations.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The broader study was my M.Litt thesis in sociology at the University of Oxford (1998) The thesis was based on two main data sources: own analysis of data from the Municipality Database at the Norwegian Social Science Services on childcare provision broken down by ownership; and in-depth interviews with Norwegian politicians and with leaders and members within a selection of non-statutory associations in the period 1995-1998.