

## **Between voice and service – The role of voluntary organizations in a changing welfare society (ref no 2011-6699)**

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### **Problem and aim**

This project studies the voluntary sector's changing role in the local welfare society. The aim is to analyze how voluntary organizations representing marginalized groups are dealing with the potential conflict between representing and defend their users' interests, while in the same time acting as an efficient service provider commissioned by the municipalities. The processes referred to are that municipalities are increasingly procuring social services, including services from voluntary organizations, and that municipalities are developing new methods of influence and participation of voluntary organizations, such as users' forum or collaborative forum. Our ambition with the project is to contribute both empirically and theoretically to the research on the conditions for voluntary organizations which are operating within the area of social policy, and to generate new empirical knowledge of civil society at the local level.

### **Theoretical framing and methodology**

The project is inspired by neo-institutional organization theory, and governance theories with various forms of 'soft' regulation and various forms of network coordination in the public sector and organizational fields.

The study is comparative with case studies in Stockholm, Gothenburg and Malmö. The study is carried out mainly with qualitative methods such as document studies and interviews, but will also contain a quantitative survey of voluntary organizations in the three municipalities studied. The project focuses on three areas of the local welfare policy: disability, homelessness and violence against women. Changes in the 2000s are studied.

### **The status of the project, August 2013**

The case studies of the three cities are completed. The survey of the voluntary organizations is not completed yet. The reason is that the project is coordinated with a similar project that has received funding from FAS ("Medborgarnas röst eller kommunernas uppdragstagare: Ideella organisationers roller i lokala välfärdssamhällen", FAS dnr 2012-0686), which investigates the situation for voluntary organizations in the same policy areas but are operating in Swedish municipalities in general, and not only in the three metropolitan areas.

### **Findings so far**

The analysis of the case studies reveals significant differences regarding civil society's welfare policy role in the three cities. Their role as voice is acknowledged in a similar manner in the three cities, but their role as service providers is acknowledged and favoured very differently in municipal policies. The differences can to a great extent be explained by the existence of local networks and traditions, and also partly by differences in political majorities. We will in the concluding phase investigate the implications of this for the voluntary organizations and for citizens who live in the three metropolitan cities.

## **Publications**

Johansson, H., Nordfeldt, M. & Johansson, S. (2013) "Ideella organisationers roller i välfärdssamhället" kapitelbidrag till Johansson, S, Dellgran, P & Höjer, S (red) *Människobehandlande organisationer – villkor för ledning, styrning och professionellt välfärdsarbete*. Skall ges ut på Natur och Kulturs förlag 2014

Johansson, S., Johansson, H., Nordfeldt, M. (2013) *Governing voluntary organizations in a changing welfare state – Comparing the conditions in three metropolitan cities in Sweden*. (to be submitted soon)

Two other articles are planned together with a report in Swedish.