

## **Abstract**

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### **15. Public Futures by John Clarke and Janet Newman**

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Universalism, the Nordic Welfare Model and Public Sector Change

Universalism has been a leading ideology and principle behind the Nordic welfare state development. Explanations as to why the principle of universalism developed in these countries have focused on social democracy, Protestantism, agrarianism, the strength of the women's movements, cultural unity and the generally high level of public support for the state. As an idea or ideology it refers to comprehensiveness of social policy, high degree of de-commodification and de-familisation, strong political and popular support to the welfare state and extensive social rights of citizens. As an administrative principle universalism refers to certain kind of policy formulation and implementation, mainly to the essence and logic of redistribution.

As a governing principle universalism stresses equality and integrity as main characters in policy making. When benefits and services are described as universal means that they are universal to citizens who belong to a particular nation rather than universal to all people. In social policy the community is nearly always a state. Membership of the category of nation or folk is a part of the language of universalism. From this vantage point universalism refers to generalised trust and solidarity; equality within gender, class and regions; social and economical citizenship based on social rights; public responsibility for equality, tax financed social security; and inclusion with equal access and all-inclusive coverage.

In this paper our intention is, firstly, to look at different definitions of universalism and the ways the concept has been used in social policy literature. Secondly, we will evaluate the language and politics of universalism against public sector change. We ask, if universalism still represents a core value and principle in Nordic social policies. Is it possible to combine universalism with NPM driven public sector change, consumerism and new citizenship languages.

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