Preface

‘Norden’ or the ‘Nordics’ consists of five countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, and three autonomous areas: Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands. The Nordic region is a politically constructed entity with deep roots in history. There has been official political cooperation between the parliaments of these countries since 1950 and between the governments since 1970. The more long-standing civic cooperation between these countries has been all-encompassing. With this book we wish to elucidate the relational character of Nordic welfare states. The book provides a more versatile and dynamic perspective on these countries than the paradigm of the Nordic model enables. In this way, the normative groundwork of these societies will be exposed. The success of the Nordic welfare states in adapting to changing circumstances has been based on this relational groundwork.

Our ambition has been to offer an interdisciplinary reading of the development and recent transformations of the Nordic welfare states. The particular focus of this work is on the impact of neoliberalism, which has severely challenged the Nordic ethos of welfare and social citizenship. This confrontation is studied in a setting where threats related to planetary boundaries are at stake. Besides climate change and biodiversity loss, there are a number of other megatrends such as immigration, globalization and precarization, demographic ageing, and social, economic and political fragmentation which challenge the Nordic welfare states. The relational perspective of the book serves in analysing the multiple interlinkages between these phenomena and in unfolding how answers to these challenges have to be found together, based on trust and made possible in the framework of strong Nordic democracy.

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