

What's next for the media welfare state?

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ABSTRACT

This final chapter summarises some of the findings presented in the preceding chapters and asks what's next for the media welfare state. Continuing the discussion from previous chapters about the increasingly precarious situation of the media welfare state in a media landscape dominated by global actors and transnational policymaking, but also adding a discussion about the political challenges from right-wing populism, the chapter nevertheless ends with a positive vision for the future of the media welfare state, with a renewed role for the institution of public service media.

KEYWORDS: Nordic media, media welfare state, media system, media policy

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Media welfare in the Nordic countries

There are few people that are against welfare. Indeed, it seems stupid to be against welfare, since welfare is almost by definition “good”. Still, it can be argued that welfare as a concept is especially embraced in the Nordic countries: “Nothing concerns Norwegian voters more than welfare. The political party that is considered able to create the best welfare wins the election” (Knutsen, 2012: 179). In Sweden, the conservative parties (the Moderates and the Christian Democrats) and the right-wing populist party (the Sweden Democrats) have recently and respectively tried to frame themselves as the “new welfare party” – all of them claiming to take over this position from the Social Democratic Party. There are national differences between the Nordic countries when it comes to how central the concept of welfare is and has been in the political debate (Edling, 2019: 5). But even after decades of market reforms and concessions to the global economy, the concepts of welfare and the welfare state seem to, at least judging by the example above of the political debate in the Nordics, still retain rhetorical and political value.

The problem is, of course, that even though everyone likes welfare, there are disagreements about what it is and who should deliver it. This can be seen, for example, in debates about whether one should talk about “the welfare state” or “welfare society”. Few people think, given time to reflect, that political parties on the right and the left mean the same thing when they make proclamations about standing up for the welfare society. The Nordic countries also construct the concept differently in public the debate, with solidarity and equality being at the forefront in Sweden, community in Norway, and the effectiveness of the state to deliver on its promises in Denmark (Hellman, 2021). This is not to say that welfare in the Nordic countries is an empty signifier, but that it is a politically contested concept and that its popularity and brand value is partly dependent on its ambiguity (Edling, 2019: 1). For research however, this ambiguity is a challenge rather than an opportunity.

The media welfare state is a more recent coinage than the original concept of the welfare state. As such, it is exclusively used in academic contexts. The institutions, functions, and values associated with the media welfare state seem, however, to find support among Nordic citizens. As has been shown in this book (see Schröder et al., Chapter 1), Nordic citizens trust legacy media institutions to a higher extent than citizens in other countries. Furthermore, in a previous publication (Lindell et al., 2022), we have shown that, in Sweden at least, it is possible to speak about a media welfare *state of mind* among citizens.

However, even if media welfare state institutions are embraced by large segments of the citizenry in the Nordic countries, the institutional structures and measures of the Nordic media model is under increasing pressure. What will happen with the Nordic media systems if, on the one hand, state regulation is superseded by regulation on a supranational level (i.e., on the

European Union level) and, on the other hand, national media companies are challenged by global media actors that follow other rules and regulations as well as other traditions of accountability and responsibility compared with the traditional Nordic media companies? Furthermore, the chapters in this edited volume show that new issues constantly arise – issues that were not present when the foundations for the media welfare state were laid. What is the “media welfare state” response to these issues? Can they be handled by existing institutions?

In this afterword, we address the three questions hinted at above and discuss them one by one, in light of the contributions in this book. First, how does the media welfare state relate to the “regulatory turn” towards the global media companies, which mainly plays out on the European Union level? Is this a rebirth of the idea of the media welfare state, or are we rather seeing its demise, when state regulation of the media is handed over to supranational institutions? Second, what is the fate of the media welfare state in the age of global platforms? Is the media welfare state still relevant as a concept and as an empirical reality when global companies set the rules for media markets in the Nordics? Third, does the new media landscape call for a renewed understanding of the concept of the media welfare state? What is the media welfare we need in the age of digital platforms? In considering this last question, we argue that we need not only a normative analysis of the concept as such, but also a political analysis which takes into account the aforementioned politically contested nature of welfare, and media welfare in particular.

The regulatory turn in media policy and the media welfare state

The first two decades of Internet regulation, after the birth of the world wide web and the popularisation of the Internet in 1990s, were characterised by a liberal and hands-off approach. New regulations and laws were passed related to, for example, online copyrights, but in comparison to what was to come, Internet companies and platforms were left rather untouched by politicians in the Nordic countries, and elsewhere. This can perhaps be explained, at least partly, by a sense of optimism in relation to the Internet and online technologies, which were overall thought to have positive social, cultural, and democratic outcomes. The last ten years, however, have seen an almost complete reversal, both when it comes to laws and regulations and with regard to the general perception of the social, cultural, and democratic consequences of the Internet. As discussed in several of the chapters in this book, the European Union has passed directives aimed towards harnessing the power of the dominant US-based digital platforms and mitigating the consequences for European citizens, companies, and politics. The European

Union has tried to find a third way of Internet regulation, between the still rather liberal regulatory approach in the US and the heavily censored Chinese Internet (Stockmann, 2023). In this process, the European Union has managed to reach beyond its borders and influence Internet policy also in third countries (Kuner, 2017).

Judging by the analyses, discussions, and examples in this book, the Nordic media welfare states have remained relatively passive during this regulatory turn. Being members of the European Union (with Norway as the exception), the Nordic countries have implemented European Union Directives such as the e-Privacy Directive and the General Data Protection Regulation, which has led Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden to land in the top-five of countries that offer the best privacy protection in the world (see Flensburg & Sophus Lai, Chapter 8). The Finnish Council for Mass Media was also among the first to provide guidelines for the use of artificial intelligence technology in the media and thus provoked discussion about this in other European countries (see Romanova & Bergman, Chapter 2). Moreover, from a few examples where the Nordic countries take up a leading role in media policy debates, the general impression from the chapters of this book is that the authors wish the Nordic countries would reconnect to the legacy of the media welfare state and play a more active role in the media policy field. European Union membership can, of course, explain a lot of this perceived passivity, and as (mostly) members, the Nordic countries have been part of an organisation that pushes media regulations forward. On the other hand, several authors mention other European Union countries – France and Germany in particular – who on their own have been more active in relation to global platforms. What these examples seem to show is that it is still possible for individual member states to be active and create effective regulations, besides what is being done on a European Union level. If we are to summarise an argument that runs through many chapters in this book, it would be that the Nordic countries should, on their own or together, reconnect to the pillars of the media welfare state in the age of digital platforms, and formulate new policies that extend the four pillars into today's media landscape.

The media welfare state and the global platforms

While extending the principles of the media welfare state to today's digital media landscape is recommendable, the chapters in this book also show the many challenges associated with this goal. These challenges include, for example, the issues of mis- and disinformation on digital platforms and the prevalence of hate speech and toxic behaviour on social media platforms. At a European level, relating to these issues, steps have been taken to encourage self-regulation. The European Commission has developed a European Code of Conduct that has been signed by the four dominant digital platform com-

panies (Microsoft, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube). This initiative seems to have had some effect, at least to the extent that more of the “flagged” content is acted upon by the companies, as reported by Pöyhtäri in this book (Chapter 3). There is a need to get these global actors onboard in regulatory processes, since they are not only offering an arena for public discussion but also because they have the ability to form and mould commonly accepted norms and values in society. As Horowitz and Nieminen (Chapter 4) conclude, the spheres organised by digital platform companies can support human rights and public values, or they can work against them.

Within the Nordics, there seems to be a broad agreement between the different countries and policymakers that hate speech is a severe threat to democracy, and that this issue must be handled by democratic and political actors through regulation. The Nordic countries also show a relative similarity when it comes to how the issue of hate speech is handled. The main solution is so far increased and deepened “discussion and collaboration” (see Pöyhtäri, Chapter 3) between policymakers and the platform companies, a solution that seems to fit well with the tradition of consensus-oriented policy development in the Nordic media welfare state. There are, as Horowitz and Nieminen show in their chapter (Chapter 4), not yet many new tools to tackle the development of the “information disorder” that results from the rise of a platform society. On the contrary, the policymakers are simply thrown into this new reality. The global reach and power of these companies set further hurdles as they complicate the prospects for successful “discussion and collaboration”, since there is a greater distance – both physically and when it comes to their understanding of the purpose and role of such collaborative policy processes – than what has often been the case in previous processes of media change. The global reach and power of these companies also beg for more international collaboration (e.g., within the European Union) to find roads ahead for digital platform regulation.

The power and dominance of a handful of key players in the digital economy and the risk of abuse of market power is also discussed by Flensburg and Sophus Lai (Chapter 8) and Sjøvaag and Ferrer-Conill (Chapter 9) in their chapters on the ownership and control of digital infrastructure. While media systems analyses and discussions on the media welfare state have mainly tended to focus on legacy media and their institutions (e.g., public service television), the broader digital ecosystem on which legacy media are dependent has gained less attention in Nordic research. Several chapters in this book have tackled this specific question concerning the material resources and digital infrastructures that tend to refashion both how the media welfare state functions and the reach of traditional policy measures. The analyses of these material resources indicate both continuity and change, for instance, the traditionally strong focus on universality in Nordic (media) policy remains somewhat intact. As Flensburg and Sophus Lai (Chapter 8) conclude: “the

four welfare states [Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Norway] have played key roles in ensuring equal access in non-profitable areas and stimulating the development of publicly available digital services”. Other key elements of the Nordic media welfare states, such as, for example, the extension of cultural policy to issues of media and communication, and the consensual and cooperative solutions to media policy issues, have, however, been harder to uphold in a changing media ecology.

Several of the chapters in this volume have hence pointed to the fact that the changing media landscape has increasingly made the media welfare state more of an ideal than an empirical reality (see Flensburg & Sophus Lai, Chapter 8). Nevertheless, they have also underlined and provided examples of how policymakers, governments, and regulatory bodies, as well as at least parts of the industry, are making great efforts in adapting and maintaining these ideals in a “digital media welfare state”. However, no clear solutions have been found to the challenges posed by the digital development, but as underlined in many of the chapters of the book, these challenges might also revive and revitalise the ideas and ideals of the media welfare state. The challenges we face might even sharpen our sensibilities for what the basic values of media welfare are – or could be – and force us to think harder, not only about the normative content of the concept of welfare, but also about how such values could be put into practice in media policy. Furthermore, the rise of the European Union as a key player in media policy might warrant a shift in attention from a sole focus on the Nordic countries, and instead consider how we can rely on the legacy of the media welfare state to influence the development of media policy on the supranational level, including how “Nordic values” could influence the policy processes within the European Union.

Defining media welfare in the digital age

This takes us to the final contribution of this book: how to move forward with the concept of media welfare in the contemporary – digital – media landscape.

A general idea that recurs in the chapters throughout the book is to move beyond existing institutions and policy mechanisms. Much previous scholarly work on the Nordic media welfare state has tended to focus its attention on institutions such as public service television, or policies such as press subsidies – both of which have a uniquely strong standing within the Nordic region. Moreover, in general, legacy media have been the focal point of most writings on the Nordic media system. There are at least three reasons why the contributors to this edited volume find it necessary to look beyond these institutions and widen the concept of media welfare. For one thing, the legacy media themselves are increasingly dependent on digital infrastructures and global digital platform companies, as well as part of a transformed media ecology in which they are forced to act (see Ala-Fossi et al., Chapter 5). Secondly, an

increasing part of the publics' interaction with journalism and media content more broadly happens through digital platforms, in which a range of new and global actors have a strong position in the market, not least true for the younger audiences, as discussed by Schröder, Blach-Ørsten, and Kæmsgaard Eberholst (Chapter 1). New digital platforms and services, as well as new user practices and patterns, also put the media welfare state in front of sets of new problems, such as hate speech (Pöyhtäri, Chapter 3) and information disorder (Horowitz & Nieminen, Chapter 4), which calls for new approaches and solutions. Thirdly, the chapters by Kaun and Löfgren (Chapter 12) and Colbjørnsen, Larsen, Tallerås, & Liguzinski (Chapter 14) furthermore discuss the need to extend the concept of media welfare to sectors and activities that we do not immediately think of as "media", such as, for example, the library sector. It could, of course, be argued that books have always been a mass medium, that the library from the outset has been a "media house", and that it is only tradition and habit that place libraries in the realm of cultural policy rather than media policy discussions. Technological developments during the last 30 years (i.e., digitalisation), and the following reshaping of public institutions such as libraries as such, have, however, underscored the importance of including not only the library sector, but also other cultural institutions such as museums, which are increasingly hybrid media environments, within discussions of media welfare. The ongoing digitalisation and datafication of society further encourage us to think about new domains in relation to the concept of media welfare. Digital communication and media technologies are currently transforming the welfare sector more broadly, for example, through automation, new surveillance technologies, and artificial intelligence. In Chapter 12, Kaun and Löfgren therefore push us to widen the scope, and to think of both "data welfare" and "media welfare" when engaging with current and future digital challenges. The media welfare state cannot, if it ever could, be limited to questions about legacy media and traditional journalism.

It can, however, as has been noted by Ursula Huws (2020: 3) in relation to welfare more generally, "be difficult to separate the specific features of [welfare] institutions from the social goals that inspired their design". In order to do so, several chapters in this volume engage with the question of the normative content of welfare as such and take on the topic of how to define a desirable social goal. In the chapter by Moe, Enli, and Syvertsen (Chapter 11), the environmental issues of media policy are highlighted, an area that has not gained sufficient attention in the past, but that arguably must be included in media welfare discussions for the future, in light of the ongoing and global environmental crisis. Horowitz and Nieminen (Chapter 4) introduce a rights-based approach to tackle the question of what media welfare is and how it can be motivated. As noted by the authors, the rights-based approach to media policy has gained traction in recent years, especially

in the European Union and in relation to discussions of new, digital media. Starting from an idea of human rights, and hence individuals as the bearers of intrinsic rights, the chapter defines four basic communication rights – access, availability, privacy, and dialogical rights – as the starting point for welfarist policies in the media area. This connects to a wider international discussion of the basis for “just” media policy, in which a range of authors have suggested different possible moral foundations for media policy. Except for the right-based approaches, the literature in the field has mainly dealt with the capabilities approach, developed from Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum (Couldry, 2019; Hesmondhalgh, 2016) and the concept of media justice, with or without explicit references to Rawlsian political philosophy (Fenton et al., 2020). Using such discussions and insights from political theory and political philosophy might be one way to reinvent media welfare in the digital era.

Our own approach in this area is slightly different. We have, following Raymond Geuss, suggested the need for a “realist political philosophy”, rejecting the tendency in political philosophy to start every discussion with a definition of “rights” or “values” and instead start from how the “social, economic, political, etc., institutions actually operate in some society at some given time, and what really does move human beings to act in given circumstances.” (Geuss, 2008: 9). This means that we agree with other authors in this book, that the maintenance of the media welfare state cannot only be about guarding and reinforcing the existing institutions. This is because these institutions were built in a fundamentally different media landscape and were designed to take on challenges that are only partly the main challenges of the media systems of today. It also means that in order to look ahead or move forward, the primary challenge is not to devise new sets of rights or values. Social values such as universalism and decommodification are, in the Nordic countries, widely recognised as key constituents for the welfare state in general and for media welfare. They are not in any way uncontested – a point we come back to – but they still resonate with people across the political spectrum, when it comes to the provision of goods that are central to the concept of welfare. One way forward then, we argue, is to look to the existing institutions, not so that they can be preserved for eternity, but for two distinct but related reasons. First, existing institutions warrant our interest and analysis so they can be transformed in a way that allows them to meet today’s challenges. This also entails that if we need new institutions or regulations, we should start by looking at the ones we already have to serve as inspiration. Second, the role existing institutions play – the social goals they are set to fulfil – have historically been negotiated in political struggles. For example, the media welfare state was built on compromises between democratic principles and market interests, and from ideals and values about universality that have been fought for by political actors. The media welfare state has, for a long time, managed to get sufficient support from a large

enough number of key actors, and it is an approach that has support among the Nordic citizenry (Lindell et al., 2022). The existing institutions of the media welfare state, then, afford our critical interest, since their histories and institutional structures can help us unpack and analyse the processes of political action that are, so to say, embedded and “hidden” behind and within the seemingly stable institutions of the media welfare state, as well as to assess the viability of achieving similar political goals and compromises in the present situation. This is important since, as the chapters of this book suggest, one of the key questions at the moment is how we can maintain and extend these compromises into the future, or in other words – how “media welfare” can survive in the future. This is in itself not an easy question, but one that seems more important than devising new normative frameworks.

For some, however, the compromise between democratic principles and market interests in the media welfare state already appears to be broken. We have ourselves, in analysing the situation in Sweden, argued along those lines (Jakobsson et al., 2021). The privatisation, financialisation, and re-administration of the Swedish social welfare system has led Sweden to the top among country rankings measuring inequality (Hort et al., 2019), and this neoliberal turn has not left the media system unaffected. International trends and developments that set Sweden on this path to inequality might, however, now push Sweden and the other Nordic countries in a different direction. European media policy is said to be “on new paths” and the *laissez faire* approaches that have dominated European media policy for several decades is giving way to something new. It has been described by Christina Holtz-Bacha (2022) as a move from the “single market” to “European values”; and from “neoliberalism” towards a “value based approach”. From a Nordic perspective, now might thus be considered an opportune moment to revitalise the institutions of the media welfare state and to develop them into new areas. This is also a moment when the Nordic countries should make themselves heard in Europe, so that the turn to “European values” does not mean a turn towards insular discussions about a European identity, but instead about the democratic elements that should be at the centre of media policy, over and above the needs of the market.

One thing that has not been addressed in this volume and that stands in the way of such a revitalisation of the media welfare state is, however, right-wing populism, a political trend which has also taken hold in the Nordic countries. We have already seen the consequences of right-wing populist rule for journalism and the media in countries such as Poland and Hungary, where the media’s ability to hold those in power accountable has been severely diminished. If right-wing populist parties continue to grow in the Nordic countries, this might have implications for the media welfare state. Right-wing populism demonstrates, as discussed in the introduction to this chapter, the contested nature of social welfare and media welfare. While right-wing

populist actors might not be against, for example, the idea of public service media, their vision for public service media companies is different from universalist ideas of public service media for all citizens, instead emphasising national values and excluding parts of the population with other cultural identities and linguistic competences.

Right-wing populist actors also often hold negative views on commercial legacy media companies, instead favouring so-called alternative media outlets as well as social media platforms. One reason for this is the notion that right-wing populist ideas were initially marginalised by key media outlets. Correct or not, this has certainly changed in recent years as right-wing populist parties have become a major political force in several of the Nordic countries. Right-wing populist ideas have, during this period of growth for the parties, become normalised in national media (Ekman & Krzyżanowski, 2021; Krzyżanowski & Ekström, 2022). Despite this normalisation process, right-wing populist actors still resent the so-called mainstream media. Social media platforms, on the other hand, have tended to amplify right-wing populist voices and have thus been at the centre of the media strategies of these political actors. Although right-wing populists have also sometimes criticised social media platforms for their content moderation policies, populist communicators have clearly favoured digital platforms over traditional media outlets.

Following from these observations, we might thus speculate that should right-wing populist parties be given increased influence over media policy developments in the Nordics, this would lead counter to what the chapters in this book have argued is important in order to preserve and develop the media welfare state into the future. In contrast, it would lead to an abandonment of the universalist principles of the media welfare state, diminished support for legacy media institutions, and a weakened support for regulatory measures when it comes to social media platforms.

In devising a realist position on the future of the media welfare state, the following is what we have to start from: a private media sector dominated by global companies with little to no democratic control or accountability; a still popular public service institution, although with an aging audience and with limited possibilities to broaden its offer into the digital realm; and a political landscape still dominated by entrenched neoliberal ideals of privatisation and market solutions, with some signs that this era might have come to an end, but with new political challenges for the media welfare state in the form of right-wing populism. One might, from this description, be tempted to say that a realist position should be equal to the fatalist position that the end of the media welfare state is inevitable. From this vantage point, it is only a matter of time before the media welfare state is all but forgotten. Instead of this negative conclusion, we would, however, like to propose that an alternative is possible. This rests on two different but complementary strategies – on the one hand, forcing a shift in the business model of the dominant digital

platforms, which is the root cause of many of the problems discussed in this book, and on the other, offering an attractive alternative to the same platforms. These are by no means original ideas, but seem to us to be the most important strands in this ongoing discussion, and we end this book by placing them in conversation with the ideas and analyses offered in this volume.

The business model shared by many of the dominant digital platforms requires that companies gather as much information as possible about their users and employ that information in order to maximise traffic on their platforms (Zuboff, 2019). This is the only way for these companies to increase their revenue, which mainly comes from advertisement. It is this business model that drives companies to disregard, or downplay, things such as the value of a truthful and respectful dialogue, instead optimising for increased traffic, regardless of whether this means also maximising things such as disinformation and hate speech. It is also this business model that makes it necessary for the companies to downplay concerns about privacy and allows them to create filter bubbles and engage in algorithmic discrimination. We share the concern voiced by Bennett (2023) that many of the policy solutions put forward in this space are focused on single concerns, such as disinformation, hate speech, privacy, algorithmic discrimination, and so on, but without a consideration of the underlying problem. It is true that some of the policies put forward by the European Union in the last years have had consequences for the advertisement business model, but this does not seem to have been the main concern, but rather a consequence of trying to solve other problems. Some of the legislation in this area has also caused problems for other organisations and individuals, when they need to comply with privacy regulations that are perhaps less relevant for them than for the platform companies. The European Data Protection Supervisor suggested in 2021 that “European legislators should consider a ban on online targeted advertising based on pervasive tracking and restrict the categories of data that can be processed for such advertising methods” (Woollacott, 2021). This might be seen as a too radical solution and risk, as Bennett (2023) put it, “killing the golden goose”, but it should be given proper consideration since upending the advertisement business model is as close to a one-size-fits-all solution that we can come.

Regulating the dominant platforms is, however, not enough; there is also a need for alternatives. Graham Murdock (2005, 2018) has argued that public service media is the most strategically placed actor to further a future built on the idea of universalism and democratic participation, as an alternative to the enclosed spaces of private digital media platforms. Murdock argued that universal access has been a core idea in the development of the Internet, as exemplified by the world wide web, the open source movement, and Wikipedia. Although these ideas and technologies have been successful in their own way, they have been superseded by later developments that

have put Internet users within walled and private ecosystems, whose main goal is to maximise profits by exploiting the data generated by users within these ecosystems. Public institutions, such as public service media companies, museums, libraries, and universities, are present online, but they do not act in a concerted way to offer citizens an alternative to the centralised platforms of the dominant private actors; instead, they increasingly rely on the infrastructures erected by these private companies. Murdock's idea then, which he shares with many others, is that public service media companies are uniquely positioned to serve as a hub, or a platform, through which the public can be given access to the vast array of offerings from these different public institutions. Furthermore, they should be made available in such a way that they invite and make possible a public discussion and further creative productions, inspired, or provoked, by these offerings.

Practical or not, this idea resonates with the spirit of many contributions to this book, which has emphasised the need to build from the existing ideas and institutions of the media welfare state, but transform those institutions in a way that make them relevant today and in the future. One way to do that might be to act upon the seemingly simple realisation that the media welfare state has always been something more than radio or television, also resting on public institutions such as libraries, which has been vital in giving citizens access to media technologies and media content. The idea is thus not so much to expand the remit of public service media, but to connect citizens with the information, ideas, data, and cultural materials that our public institutions are already housing and producing. The obstacles to realising this are, of course, enormous, and neither is this all there is to the future of the digital media welfare state, but it is one source of inspiration for how to build an alternative to the Netflixes, Facebooks, and Google Searches of the world. This is also in line with the ideas outlined in a report published by the Nordic Council of Ministers by The Nordic Think Tank for Tech and Democracy (2023: 6), which recommends the promotion of “innovation and implementation of technology that supports open digital public debate to create alternatives to large online platforms” and giving “public service media a strong digital mandate for online presence, content creation and development of platforms for democratic debate online”.

This vision is, as emphasised by Murdock (2018) and by the chapters in this book (see Flensburg & Sophus Lai, Chapter 8; Ala-Fossi et al., Chapter 5; Moe et al., Chapter 11), not only about content and public conversations, but also about the infrastructure that makes those conversations and the sharing of that content possible. Ala-Fossi and colleagues (Chapter 5) argue that it might not be possible to separate the idea of public service from the material infrastructure that once was constructed to realise that idea. Relying on the private infrastructure now being built by the global tech companies not only further entrenches these companies' position of power, but also reproduces

the unsustainable and ultimately undemocratic nature of that infrastructure, which doesn't take the environmental concerns of future generations into consideration. The dark side of the media welfare state (Moe et al., Chapter 11) has been the ecological footprint left by the broadcasting stations, television and radio sets, electricity consumption, and so on, that has been somewhat neglected in the literature on media welfare. Such concerns cannot be left to the discretion of private companies, since although they have developed energy-conserving ways to store data and ways to recycle limited resources such as precious metals, their quest to constantly accumulate more data and to expand their operations ultimately comes with a huge cost. Since a public alternative to the private platforms would not rely on advertisement as a source of income, there would be no need for the creation of an immense collection of data that would cast its shadow over the cultural and democratic achievements of the institutions of the media welfare state. If there is to be a future for the Nordic media welfare state at all, these are concerns that should not be forgotten.

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