

# An illustration of 50 years of social administration & social work in Greenland

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## Introduction

By 2018, Greenland has officially had an independent controlled social and labour administration for 50 years. The realization in 1968 took place 12 years before the signing of the Greenlandic home rule act in 1979. The taking over of the social and labour administration became a historical turning point for the introduction of a more organized and democratic social welfare system.



(Photo: The total staff of Nuuk's social service office in 1953)

## Two focus points

During this initial historic archive study we divided the project up starting with the first focus point from 1950-1979 and a second focus point from 1979 to 2018.



(Photo: The location of the social service office in Nuuk in the 1960s)

## The first focus point

In Greenland, in the early 1960s, there was no systematic or equal distribution of social services. Focus was on the technical planning of the urbanization process, housing and infrastructure. There was little sign of social planning.

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## Timeline



Nuuk in the 1960s



First class of social office workers 1966



The social & labour administration in 1968



Official Logo of the administration



Massive urbanization in the 1970s created the need for Blok P. It was the largest residential block in northern Europe at the time



A drastic increase in population & Urbanization demanded modern social systems



Ceremony following the Home rule act in 1979



First Greenlandic social reform commission 1980



First class of social workers 1988



School of social work pre BA 1988



Social reform report 2011



Social research conferences at University of Greenland 2017



Social workers w. BA-degrees 2018

This study provides a historical backdrop of the Danish ministerial and early Greenlandic social policy considerations. We looked at the planning behind the purpose of establishing early social action that led to the education of the first Greenlandic social office workers (not yet social workers) in 1966. In 1968 the Danish government and the Greenlandic country council established the social and labour administration of Greenland to be placed in the capital Nuuk.

## The second focus point

The time after 1980s and 1990s period prompted key social policy initiatives such as the first social reform commission and an actual (Greenlandic led) social workers education. During the 1970s Greenlanders traveled to Denmark in order to train as social workers. In 1988 the first class of Greenlandic social workers graduated in Greenland. Tough times for the public Greenlandic economy in the late 1990s and a lack of new social policies created a political pause, which was expressed in a stagnant process of forming new social legislation. The 2000s were about adjusting Greenland to the track of a modern welfare society in an international perspective, among other things, with a professional social reform commission. Today Greenlandic social workers graduate from the University of Greenland with BA-degrees and participate in research conference on arctic social work.

This short overview together with an article series aims to clarify the development of social work and show how the country moved from having a Danish run social system to having an independent Greenlandic run social system.

It has not been an easy or straight forward process but a process of a consistent focus on the important role that social work and social administration plays in nation building processes.

## Further Reading

(So far only literature in Danish)  
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 Arnfjord, S. (2016). Sociale forhold og socialpolitik i Grønland. In I. H. Møller & J. E. Larsen (Eds.), *Socialpolitik* (4th ed.). København: Hans Reitzels Forlag.

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